



universität
wien

DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

The Exploration of Potential: An Ethnography of Improvisation in Vienna

Verfasser

Manuel Wagner

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magister der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)

Wien, Juni 2012

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 307

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie

Betreuerin / Betreuer:

Dr. Tapio Nisula



Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my family for supporting me, Tapio Nisula for his trust and support in this work, Luke Baio for checking my English, and my interview partners (in order of appearance in the process): Martin Kilvady, David Zambrano, Johannes Stolba, Franz Hautzinger, Hans Tschiritsch, Frans Poelstra, Georg Blaschke, Nilolaus Selimov, Vera Rebl, Sebastian Prantl, Christian Apschner, Robert Trappl, Kerstin Kussmaul, and last but not least: Lore Heuermann. All my interviewee's names were rendered anonymous in order to protect their privacy. Furthermore I would like to thank the *Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology* for cleansing my mind from eurocentric, male, heteronormative, first world biases, dichotomies, and other historically inherited nonsense, therefore providing the principal techniques for self-reflexivity and thoughtfulness.

Beginning Remarks:

All the terms, concepts and definitions are written in a gender-neutral intention. The statements from the data used are not to be seen in any way as representative for a complete artistic, professional or social area. The statements of my interviewees have only been rendered anonymous partially, with the intention to let them speak as freely as possible within this thesis. The views and statements are not formulated to attack or offend any specific culture, religion, profession, race, gender or sex. The provocative and critical statements are, however, meant earnestly.

In some depictions of phenomena, it can be useful to speak in an oversimplified manner. I nevertheless do not think that such things as dichotomies actually exist.

I would like to thank the reader in advance for understanding my decision to write this thesis in English language. Since I am not a native speaker (which is probably clear by now already) I excuse myself beforehand for the *Germanisation* of the English language. I used this work as an opportunity to enhance my skills, therefore I translated all the German literature myself (no offence intended).

List of Contents

Introduction.....	1
-------------------	---

I

Framing Improvisation

What are we talking about?.....	5
Improvising in the Performing Arts.....	6
From Improvisation to Composition and Back Again.....	10
Contact Improvisation.....	12
The Course of Dance Improvisation in Vienna.....	15
Rudolf von Laban (1879 – 1958).....	18
The Performing Arts as Liberation Format.....	20
Altering Social Choreography.....	21
Happenings.....	24

II

Theoretical Considerations

The Body.....	27
Pragmatism.....	28
Improvisation and Mimesis.....	29
Dear Vienna: This is gender and the body. Have you met before?.....	32
Techniques of the Body.....	34
Walking.....	35
Enskilment.....	37

Generating Knowledge

Perception.....	38
Understanding in Practice.....	41
Wayfaring.....	42

Methodology

Theory as Process.....	47
Sensory Ethnography.....	49

Participant Observation.	52
The Field	
Spaces	56
Vera Rebl's Valid Street Protest.....	59
Interviews.....	61
Interviewed Personalities.....	63

III

Findings

Bundled Statements from Interviews.....	69
The Effects of Improvisation on the Lifecourse	
From Hyperawareness to Saturation.....	81
Do you have time for improvisation?.....	86
Improvisation and Sexuality.....	90
Tuning and Swarming.....	94
Anthropotechnique.....	97
Conclusion.....	104

Appendix

Alternative Space for Improvisation in Vienna.....	108
Outlook: The End of Postmodern Armchair Anthropology.....	109
References.....	112
Abstract English.....	122
Abstract Deutsch.....	123
Curriculum Vitae.....	125

Introduction

This diploma thesis represents a Viennese ethnography of improvisational dance. In the following pages, I elaborate on some aspects I think will be relevant in order to understand the field of artistic improvisation and the implications it can have for society. The motivation to write about corporeal improvisation lies in the transformative impact my explorations in improvisation have had on my personal life. The thesis is subdivided into three parts, although, like all the concepts in this work, are to be understood as porous. Bits and pieces of every single part can be found in all the other parts:

Part I: I start with an introduction to the frame of research, my primary hypotheses, and the different approaches to improvisation within the performing arts. Later, I recount the historical background of contemporary dance in Vienna, and close with a section on the power of social transformation, inherent to the performing arts.

Part II: In the second part, I compress the theory and the methods I used. I give an overview about how I conducted the ethnography and participant observation, as well as the interviews. I close this middle part by describing the field itself, and an enumeration of further information about my interviewees.

Part III: In the third and final part, I will present the findings. I start with bundling the statements from my interviewees into sets of categories, according to the questions posed. Later I will highlight the most relevant insights into the effects of improvisation on the lifecourse, interwoven with the findings from literature. I finish with a conclusion where I consolidate the most important outcomes of this work.

Overview

The fieldwork to this thesis was conducted in the period from May 2011 to April 2012. The *field* consists of three main spaces: *Werkstätten- und Kulturhaus* (WUK), *Tanz Atelier Wien*, and the *Tanzquartier Wien*, in which I conducted various participant

observations of what I will refer to as *jams*¹. I conducted 14 interviews, all of which took place in Vienna. All of the interviewees are working as independent artists in the contemporary art scene of Vienna. Ten of those in the field of dance, two in the field of music, one in the fine arts, and one is active in the Institute for Artificial Intelligence. Every single informant has, however, profound experience in improvisation. With this thesis I want to provide a Viennese ethnography which accentuates first and foremost the data from the 14 interviews I conducted, secondly the material I derived from participant observation of the actual range of possibilities to improvise in Vienna and finally the diverse approaches and theories currently discussed in the social studies about and along improvisation. I consciously avoided to insert images or tables in order to provide a pure textual thesis that allows to be read fluently.

But this is not a work about some elitist artistic practice, accessible for just a few. In my opinion, everyone can and should dance. If you think that dance is something you need to do in fancy studios, taking expensive technique classes, think again! Dance has been around for a while and there are not many things you need to take with you in order to move your own body. I regard dance as being present in potentially all the movements we do everyday: It is potentially everywhere to be found, free to be explored, in every step we take. This thesis has relevant implications for every-body.

So far, so good. Sorry for being late introducing my own person: I am currently a 27-year-old male caucasian student of anthropology, who mainly danced for the last 16 years of his life in Vienna (see *Appendix* for biography). Since the anthropological way of generating data works through the scientist's physical being, my subjectivity will be, willingly or not, very present in this work. But whatever that means, I think that for those interested in dance and improvisation, relevant statements and argumentations can be found in the following pages.

Note: The statements of my interviewees have been rendered anonymous. Their pseudonyms are derived from Spanish; *El Loco*, *La Boca*, or *La Jefa*.

¹ *jams*, or *free improvisatory jams*: The improvisational sessions or gatherings including practitioners of the performing arts, the fine arts, visual arts and applied arts. By that I mean both professionals as well as laywomen and laymen. A place where dancing, making music and experiencing drama within the jam happens improvisatory.

Part I

Framing Improvisation

What are we talking about?

Improvising in the Performing Arts

Contact Improvisation

The Course of Dance Improvisation in Vienna

The Performing Arts as Liberation Format

Framing Improvisation

At the beginning of this research process in May 2011, I questioned whether my choice to investigate in the field of *Dance Improvisation in Vienna* was a clever idea, since it is a topic that was essential for the formulation of my own identity as well as to the course of my professional development. I have come, by now, to the conclusion that it really was a good idea because it disenchanted me from certain preconceptions and presumptions I unintentionally took on over the years. Scholarly work can often be very cleansing, because it tidies out assumptions we normally would not falsify, and with subjects so close at heart, you do not always want that to happen. What came out of this really renders me optimistic: With this thesis I intend to contribute to more collegueship among the contemporary Viennese community of independent artists.

My initial hypotheses at the beginning of the research were as follows:

-) Improvisatory practice over a prolonged period of time provides a more intense sensorial growth, than the 'normal' lifecourse would provide.
-) I understand sensorial growth synonymous with emancipation. We need to further facilitate emancipation if we want to reach gender equality in this country.
-) If more people would do research on corporeal improvisation on a regular basis and with the intensity accurate for the individual development of sensorial growth, many

of the dichotomies and biases still present in the Austrian society at large, as well as scientific community could be counterbalanced.

The above-mentioned hypotheses derive from my own experiences in improvisation: During improvisation one can experience more densely one's own and others boundaries of social identity, but also society at large. One can perceive the constraints and potentials of one's own physical, emotional and intellectual capacities. Further it is possible – along with improvisational practice on a regular basis – to perceive in more clarity the social, cultural, perceptual, and gender-related totality in which we all live together. Finally, I think that ensemble improvisation has the potential to enable every individual to let go of egoistic, racist and xenophobic attitudes and ideals. Improvisation is a way of perceiving one's own potential. Once rendered conscious, one can decide whether she or he is at ease with the conditions of the self, and find innovative strategies to consciously alter them. Those strategies are not always to be found in the *normal* lifecourse, because they hide in the shade of mundaneness and are seldom made explicit. I do not state, however, that after making personal frontiers visible – and therefore likely to be altered – one has to revolutionise her/his life completely. Quite the opposite can be the case: Maybe you go back to your old habits, but you will act them out with a completely different intention and/or awareness. So, in my conception, regular artistic corporeal improvisation is an exceptional tool for emancipation. This specific way to achieve emancipation from gender-roles, patriarchal and compartmentalising stereotypes equals sensorial and personal growth, as I understand it. And the best thing about it: Everyone can do it!

I further regard corporeal improvisational practice as *rehearsal for life*. By that I mean that within improvisational dance, one can anticipate and playfully experience real-life constraints, but react 'out-of-normal' to them. The result is a creative and playful approach towards the challenges we face every day, providing the improviser with the skills for encountering these problems with not only our intellectual, but also all the corporeal and sensorial capacities we possess. I personally realised these effects of improvisation, as they provided me with the 'tool kit' for a more emancipated reflection on my cultural background, my social identity. What I learned in improvisation is the skill of creatively approaching personal issues and transforming them into potential: Every problem can be regarded as a challenge along which personal and sensorial growth can take place.

I learned falling to the floor and moving on it without getting injured. I learned that the way I move is culturally preconditioned, and that I can critically reflect on whether I want movements to have the meaning imposed by my cultural background. Through improvisation, the architectural space around us becomes an environment with various playful movement options. I learned how to work towards a consciousness for limiting the damage done by physical strain and psychologically stressful life situations. For me personally, the state-of-mind during an improvisation has saturated my perception of everyday life. Today I look back on about 8 years of excessive experience in corporeal artistic improvisation. I acknowledge that by now it has become a way of life: Exploring and enjoying the human physicality of everyday actions in a playful and personal way.

What are we talking about?

I would like to start off by giving you an idea of what I mean when I speak about improvisation. The topic of this thesis, to put it in a nutshell, is what can happen during an artistic event, where people dance, make music, and act. The time is spring 2012, and my name is Manuel Wagner, your host for the evening. Here is what you need in order to limit the focus on the phenomenon is question:

-) starting from 20 square meters of space (could also be outdoors),
-) at least 3 people (with interest in music, dance, acting, etc.),
-) a suggested minimum of one and a half hours time (or until you are exhausted).
-) you call it: ‘*open jam session*’,² and see what happens.

For this research process, solely a definition of improvisation in dance would not suffice, since the other areas of the performing arts are just as present in the practice

² *contact jams* are defined by Kaltenbrunner as follows (1998:165): “*An especially interesting form of collective dancing, which is not to be found in ballet or modern dance, found inclusion very early on in contact improvisation: the Jam. A group of people meet and dance together – without a teacher or any kind of leadership. Contact Jams are about exchange, mutual learning process and enjoyment. A non-hierarchical common relationship, in contrast to normal dance classes where someone passes on his or her knowledge or skills*”

of improvisation, as I understand it. Nevertheless, there have been various scholars that could not deliver an extensive description of improvisation within hundredths of pages. One major focus of mine was to provide a readable thesis, and it is thus impossible to take into consideration all of the facets of improvisation. Therefore, I will limit the scope of this first part to a few definitions and uses of improvisation mainly in the field of dance.

To display an etymology of improvisation is a classic start: Lampert (2007:13), in her detailed contribution on artistic dance improvisation, states that the expression *improvisation* comes from Latin *improvisus*, meaning *not foreseen/unanticipated*. The Italian expression *improvvisare* means *to compose poetry from scratch*. In French *improviser* signifies *to talk*, and dates back to the term *improvisation* from 1807. The word *Improvisation* was integrated into German language in the course of the 19th century. Originally incorporated from French it gradually replaced the term *Stegreifdarbietung* in the German-speaking countries.

Next I will provide a short definition of dance, coming from Judith Lynne Hanna. She defines dance as human behaviour being both derived from movements of everyday life, as well as “other than ordinary motor activities”, mostly having aesthetic value for the dancer herself (Hanna 1988:46).³ The further elaborations on the phenomenon of improvisation are always only concerned with developments in the Euro-American (*Western*) culture. Since the fieldwork took place in Vienna, cross-cultural comparison could unfortunately only sparsely be included in this work.

Improvising in the Performing Arts

Particularly in the field of dance, improvisation is and always was much less present in composition and education than in music and drama. Only at the outset to the 20th century did improvisation start to play a more important role. (Lampert 2007; Hanna 1988; Reynolds 2003). Improvisation in dance can be used in a formal way to create choreography, which I suppose to be the most common use of improvisation in

³ For an extensive description of definitions and in-depth elaborations on dance see Hanna 1979.

artistic dance practice.⁴ Since this piece of work is not created within the reach of the *Department of Theatre Studies*, but for the *Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology*,⁵ I discuss the concepts both necessary to elaborate more closely on the subject and simultaneously highlighting implications for social and cultural studies.

El Flaco, a famous choreographer and extremely skilled dancer told me about his personal motivation to do improvisation. On one side it is important for him because of the social component: meeting your friends, doing research together, and on the other, more personal side:

“I’m being creative within the exercises. You know how to make yourself feel good through moving. This for sure a good motivation: You feel like crap, then you move and you feel great. So that’s it!”

El Maestro, who is active in a dance department, teaches improvisation to the next generation of choreographers and dancers of Vienna. He mentioned that improvisation for him is mostly about the development of artistic responsibility, listing three basic points. Firstly improvisation means self-perception, secondly it is about perceiving yourself in regard to the totality of space you are located in. Finally it is about connecting and interfering with others in space, without ever losing the first two aspects of artistic self-responsibility.⁶ After these introducing remarks about some of the reasons for dancers to practice improvisation, I would now like to bring up a few musical approaches, similarly influential for my general interest in improvisation.

A musicologist’s first guess where to obtain information about such a phenomenon as improvisation would be *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Michael Collins mentions that *extemporization* can be used interchangeably with *improvisation*, and that because of its volatile nature “it is one of the subjects least amenable to historical research” (Collins 1980:32). Lampert points out the different forms of *where* improvisation is applied in musical practice: “in variation, fugue,

⁴ Internationally renowned choreographers like Pina Bausch, William Forsythe, Anna Theresa de Keersmaker and Alain Platel propelled the European approaches to improvisation in dance in the last decades.

⁵ This will get more obvious in the second part, where I present my working methods and the theories I encountered throughout my literature research.

⁶ See *From Hyperawareness to Saturation* in Part III.

cadence, (...) chance music, aleatorics and the indetermination” (Lampert 2007:13).⁷ Referring to the traditional improvised music in Asia, Collins describes a shared characteristic concerning the frequency of its obligatory features, displayed in terms of “density”; a musical form with *high density of obligatory features* leaves less potential for improvisation, or interpretation than a *low-density form* (Collins 1980:52). Applying this consideration of *density* to classical and jazz music, we can see that the frame of improvisation can range from macroscopic to microscopic dimensions, constituted mainly by the social environment in which the artists work and perform (Sudnow 1987, cited in Cook 1990:112):

“Psychologically speaking, both jazz and classical pianists are improvising, (...) the difference is merely in the nature of the constraints within which this creativity operates”

Thus, the appreciation of musical performance and the degree of its improvisatory features is altered by its cultural context. It is the specific social environment in which improvisation is assessed. In the history of jazz music, representing the most famous genre for improvisation in the 20th century, certain evolutionary steps can be retraced. Each of which having equivalents in social movements and emancipatory achievements. In the 1920s, the element of the virtuoso solo-sections of jazz as art music was its most prominent characteristic, which it did not lose until today. It was also known for its danceable rhythms and grooves, which contributed to jazz’s commercial spread in the early beginnings. In the 1930s, Swing was the most prominent trend, represented by the many *Big Bands* of that time. A cult around star-soloists was evolving. In the 1940s, Bebop was emerging with its virtuoso and emotionally-laden solos. In the decade of the 1950s, cool jazz started to take shape, making way for free jazz in the 1960s. In the 1970s, Fusion was amongst the most prominent trajectories in jazz-evolution. In the 1980s and afterwards, the complexity of postmodern trends and styles takes over. In jazz music, as well as in dance, the pool of material the improviser draws on could not possibly be invented in the very moment. Rather, the human being in the spotlight draws on her or his longstanding repertoire of *musical worldview* that has but one intention: “to fill the duration of the concert with musical development” (see Knauer 2004:10-30).

⁷ Just to name some important figures: Pierre Boulez, John Cage, Karl Heinz Stockhausen, who all created open formats of composition.

EL Horri, renowned Jazz trumpeter talking about improvisation explained that for him improvisation is in its essence about playfulness: “An area, where you’re finally allowed to do something, where you can invent something yourself”. With the age of 13, after visiting a free jazz concert of Hannibal Marvin Peterson, Horri was motivated to achieve that freedom he believed to see in the performance of free jazz musicians. He studied jazz to find this personal liberty, but soon learned that what he sought after was not to be found in ‘institutionalised freedom’. That is why he started to experiment by himself and with similar-minded artists. If you, like Horri, happen to look back at an improvisatory knowledge based on more than 30 years of practice, the initial focus may have changed: “It’s more about working really, but by that I also mean theoretical work, that one has to apply in real-time and interactive” In Horri’s classes improvisation is used as a pedagogic tool: In order to perform musical improvisation you need to “internalise musical dramaturgy”, that is, put as simply as possible: “it starts somewhere, then there is a climax, or not, and at some point it comes to an end”. If you then include all the capacities you have intellectually, as well as in terms of your musical and emotional skills, you can achieve freedom again – within real-time and interactive⁸ – probably two of the most important challenges for an improviser. Another way to describe musical improvisation, in El Loco’s words:

“The best way to explain it, is to regard it as craft, just like while preparing food: For some reason some ingredients are missing, and you have to replace that with something similar, or different, so essentially it’s about inventing something: That’s a real improvisation”

While introducing newcomers to improvisation, however, Loco further talked about limiting the scope of your attention to a small frame, or “score”,⁹ you will find that everyone can and will improvise. That is also musical *variation*, in essence:

“Because, let’s suppose you just take three notes, phrase them differently, just try out. First like this, then like that. It’s basically like watching children learning language: first they start mumbling and gurgling: ‘bababab’ but actually what they do is exercising! And that’s playfulness on a high level. It’s probably the best way to do it”

If we turn our focus to drama, we look back on a great tradition of improvisation. Lampert is stating that spontaneous free play with or without guidelines was to be

⁸ By that, El Horri meant the life-interaction among improvisatory performers on stage.

⁹ See La Boca’s definition of “scores” in the next section.

found already in the folk comedies of ancient Greece, in medieval dramas and also the Italian Commedia dell'Arte. All of them different in their approach to *impromptu acting*. Nevertheless, *it wasn't until the 20th century, though, that genres like Dadaism or Surrealism staged the practice of improvisation explicitly* (Lampert 2007:14). At the very core of both theatrical and dance performance lies *mimesis*,¹⁰ *to achieve response with a corporeal gesture* (Ebert 1999:22). One of the manifestations of improvisation in theatre came to be known as *Tanztheater*. Kurt Jooss (1901–1979), the grandfather of this German performance genre and later Pina Bausch (1940–2009) worked intensively with improvisation as a central tool for the creation and performance of their productions. In the most renowned approaches to improvisation in theatre, Keith Johnstone is regarded as an influential figure since the 1950s and 1960s in Europe (Tomruk 2007:19). Johnstone worked improvisatory with word associations, free associations, intuitive responses, status play, mask work, etc. His book *Improvisation and the Theatre* was a very amusing read. One of his paradigms for improvisational scores was that “no action, sound or movement is innocent of purpose” (Johnstone 1979:41). Therefore, every action a human being performs also implies a certain status, open for evaluation through the social environment. Also Ruth Zaporá deserves mentioning, since she created *Action Theatre* in California in the 1970s, a style that represents an improvisational approach to theatre, that incorporated the social protest and emancipation movements of that time, having the objective to deconstruct hierarchies, racial and gender barriers, and *ultimately even the barriers between performance and real life* (see Ruster 2003:9, cited in: Tomruk 2007:25). After having displayed some of the basic approaches to improvisation in dance, music, and drama, I now would like to shortly turn to a description of the relation between composition/improvisation in the practice of artistic work.

From Improvisation to Composition and Back Again

Many of the concepts and definitions of improvisation I encountered throughout the research phase for this thesis were somehow ambiguously located in-between composition/improvisation. Trisha Brown and Richard Bull used *structured improvisation*; the former understands it as an excellent method to generate

¹⁰ See also *Improvisation and Mimesis* in Part II.

choreography, provided that you limit the frame of improvisation. These game-frames are called *scores*, and are derived from jazz music. It basically means putting limitations or structures on improvisations in order to invent and find new material (Foster 2002:28). What that means in detail, La Boca will explain for us:

“For me, score is a structuring of reality. You put up rules for games that render a specific situation in space more likely, and others less likely to happen. But what’s always a general principle in improvisation: What others do differently as expected, within such scores or even exceeding them, is principally always right”

Schechner calls these systems for the structuring of reality *nets*, since it connotes the qualities of a “porous, flexible gatherer; a three-dimensional, dynamic, flow-through container” (Schechner 1993:41). People like Bull and Boca – being both professional musicians and dancers – regard improvisation and composition as part of one and the same thing, regarding “structure and discovery as interdependent” (Foster 2002:44). If we look at Richard Bull’s working methods from the 1960s, we realise that he essentially did not ask his performers to pursue transcendental, esotericist realms of artistic expression. Quite on the contrary his performers were actually just expected – as pragmatically as possible – to encounter the *unknown*. A new style of choreography was invented, rearticulating itself every time it was applied in live performance. El Pelado, a renowned choreographer from Vienna, who experiments extensively in improvisation since the early 1980s, labelled his own technique “real-time composition”. Along with this term, something has already implicitly been stated: Improvisation is not the absence of composition. This is especially true, since you always have your body (a lifelong instrument) with you on stage as a dancer, you never go out there without any coinage: “There is a lifetime of preparation and knowledge behind every idea that an improviser performs” (Berliner 1994:63, cited in: Cvancara 2004:60). Duke Ellington (1899 – 1974) commented on this in 1962 (Ellington 1962:31, cited in Knauer 2004:36):

“It is my firm belief that there has never been anybody who has blown even two bars worth listening to, and didn’t have some idea about what he was going to play before he started”

I always wondered whether we should speak of improvisation as a *technique*, or rather as an *anti-technique*, antagonistically refusing to be graspable. The working

process of this thesis has provided me with the insight that this concern of mine “is one of degree rather than of kind” (Cook 1990:112). In other words, a *tabula rasa* is actually never given during an improvisation. It would be more beneficial to regard improvisation in a jam, or a performance as a momentary excerpt of a bigger development as artist and social being. A snapshot of the lifecourse of a person who wants to express and share her/his current state of being-in-the-world. So, to close this section about the various approaches to improvisation in the performing arts, one can describe improvisation as a playful approach to experimentation, invention and discovery. But this playfulness may manifest itself more vividly along certain frames, *scores* or *structured realities*, rather than in the meaningless ideal of ‘absolute’ freedom.

Contact Improvisation

Since my own background lies in the corporeal dimension of improvisational practice, the single most important technique or approach in this regard is *Contact Improvisation*. Forty years ago this specific style of improvisation was coined *Contact Improvisation* by Steve Paxton who never intended to produce institutionally or hierarchically transmitted body knowledge. Quite on the contrary, as Paxton said himself, *contact improvisation itself is to be perceived as the teacher* (Novack 1990:184; Kaltenbrunner 1998:34). In other words, there are no technical ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ in contact improvisation, as long as nobody gets harmed in any way.

Contact Improvisation was described as having similarities with “embrace, wrestling, martial arts, and the jitterbug, encompassing the range of movement from stillness to highly athletic” (Kaltenbrunner 1998:12).¹¹ The main focus is obviously to stay in contact with the other improvisers. This is mainly achieved by physical contact, but could also be installed in spatial relationship for example. The initial principles, put up by Paxton in the very beginnings of contact improvisation, were concerned with isolating the physical experience of touch from the psychological and social coinage inherent to our movements (Foster 2002:97). We have to bear in mind: the principal

¹¹ See also Steinman 2005:88; Novack 1990:8.

focus of the improvisers is not on aesthetics, nor on the achievement of results or a final product of the research process. Rather, what is persecuted throughout the duration of the contact improvisation is the pure physical challenges that emerge by dancing in contact together over a prolonged period of time.

The problem with physical touch is that its cultural meaningfulness – in the context of contact improvisation – is sometimes getting in the way of earnest improvisatory exploration. What happens during a *jam*, is generally not carried over into any social consequences: “After an exciting dance (...) you don’t need to get married straight away!” (Kaltenbrunner 1998:35). I came to learn – along with extensive physical work in various *jams* and dance projects I attended over the last years – that there is no need to overvalue the social meaningfulness of touch. To be touched and to have close physical contact with the people we love is a basic need of all human beings. But the parameters of the social significance or meaningfulness of touch in this society is in my opinion mostly overvalued. The experienced contact improviser will critically reflect on the constraints her or his social environment frames around physical touch and re-evaluate them in relation to personal needs. In my own personal development, I could observe a more and more relaxed attitude towards physical touch. Improvisatory practice gradually decreased the meaningfulness and the significance I learned to ascribe to close physical contact in a social environment like my own. I thus emancipated myself from general assumptions of what it means to touch a person and gradually learned to lose the fear of physical encounter with others, since improvisatory practice has taught me where my personal boundaries lie. Another reason why corporeal improvisation can be a potential *field of healing* is because of the state of *both mental and physical ease* (El Chico) that can occur during prolonged jams. This ease partly attunes itself by giving up the need to understand, interpret and analyse everything that happens during a jam. In improvisation, rational thinking lacks behind physical action significantly in time. The data from my participant observations and my interviews has shown that over time, improvisers develop a certain trust in the bodily capacities and a relation of intimacy towards it. This relationship can be strengthened by improvisatory practice; a bond of affection that most people cannot create during their normal lifecourse. In other words, improvisers exploring their individual potential do not only learn about connecting to other people, they learn about connecting to their own physicality as human beings.

Contact improvisation, because of the social context from which it emerged, always stressed to a social nature of dancing together and was, by some, even called a “folk dance” in the first ten years of the form (Novack 1990:11). As such it was also perceived of embodying the prominent ideologies of the early 1970s in terms of gender roles and social hierarchies (ibid.). Therefore, no separation was drawn between professional contact improvisers and laywomen and laymen. Also consciously there was no *director* of the jams in a sense of hierarchically employed status. The aim was to develop one’s own movement possibilities in an egalitarian environment. This later changed, as more experienced movers were searching for worthy counter-figures in improvisation with equal strength, speed and flexibility. The transformative potential¹² of *contact improvisation* lies in the most obvious physical tasks during the dance. To cut back the many esotericist approaches that developed along and around *contact improvisation* in the *Hippie Era*,¹³ I would like to display the frustration of Steve Paxton, concerned about the future trajectory of this new way of dancing:

“I want to go on record, as being *pro-physical-sensation* in the teaching of this material. The symbolism, mysticism, psychology, spiritualism are horse-drivel. In actually teaching the *stand* or discussing *momentum* or *gravity*, I think each teacher should stick to *sensational* facts. (...) *Personally*, I’ve never seen anything occur which was abnormal, para-physical, or extra-sensory. Personally I think we underestimate the extent of the ‘real.’” (Paxton cited in Novack 1990:81–82, italics in original).¹⁴

In the course of my professional career as a contemporary dancer as well as in the period of the fieldwork I conducted for this thesis for diploma, I realised that most of the people engaged in artistic improvisatory practice overemphasised a somewhat arbitrary ‘spiritual’ or ‘energetic’ component of this corporeal practice. The data I derived from the field clearly underlines that sticking to the pure physical tasks that emerge by themselves during a *jam* – a certain *pragmatism* – is more beneficial for a personal development, since what we call ‘para-normal’ phenomena’ today can be the ‘perfectly normal’ in tomorrow’s scientific discourse.

¹² See *The Effects of Improvisation on the Lifecourse* in Part II

¹³ By that I mean the historic period of political movements towards youth culture, emancipation, and against discrimination and war starting in the 1960s in North America.

¹⁴ The interested reader can find out more about Contact Improvisation in the magazine installed by its founders, the “Contact Quarterly” [contactquarterly.com].

After *contact improvisation* reached a certain level of prominence, it was less about the individual research on how everyone's body finds its own way to technique, and more about how contact improvisation *should look like*. La Boca commented on this issue in the Viennese context as follows:

“It was suddenly more about this global agreement, to roll over one another, but for me that has absolutely nothing to do with the actual idea behind it. In the beginning of contact improvisation it was about fundamental research. I see that this initial principle has gone astray in most contemporary forms of contact improvisation. I conceive it as a tremendous limitation and impoverishment of this whole research project”

In my opinion, *contact improvisation* represents a possibility to get involved in the playful exploration of one's own capacities as a human being. The best possible approach to improvise in contact with others is to organise a space where equality is the most prominent paradigm; Everybody is allowed to move in her or his peculiar way. The tasks and challenges that spontaneously emerge out of the improvisation ultimately shape the most formidable score possible: A current self-adjusting reflection on the individual's lifecourse, addressing important emotional, physical or personal issues by rendering them into challenges. Personal or sensorial growth is being fostered through simply concentrating on these challenges emerging out of the improvisatory playfulness.

The course of dance improvisation in Vienna

Since dance improvisation in Vienna essentially originated out of the North American social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the following section shall provide a short pursuit of the historical developments of dance until 'contemporary improvisational dance' as we can observe it in Vienna today came into being.

Amort and Wunderer-Gosch edited a book on Austrian dance history, providing relevant insights into the specific development of Viennese dance tradition. Initial performances of artistic dance in Austria had an event-like character. Some 400 years ago, ballet was adapted from King Louis XIV of France, who installed ballet in his

court merely as serving a form of “amusement for the aristocracy”, and employed to “glorify the ruling house” (Oberzaucher 2001:21). In the palaces and residencies of the House of Habsburg, always heavily oriented towards French and Italian high culture, it was not until the 18th century that ballet emancipated itself from foreign aesthetics (Dahms 2001:29). Ballet, from its infancy on, always had a strong imperial connotation. Not only in my opinion did it not fully pour off that characteristic until today. Also Reynolds talks about “the historical role of the dancer as an elite acrobat” (2003:398). A more positive implication of classical ballet was the appreciation of the woman as the epitome of the dance art. Although, as many authors stated, it was not until the wake of the 20th century that women were individually honoured for expressing themselves as strong characters on stage.¹⁵ Hanna recognises a “rebellion against male domination” manifested by an expressionist corporeality of pioneering women of that time. Braking free from stereotypes like women’s “sex-linked irrationality”, and re-emphasising their ‘natural’ emotionality – as opposed by a ‘natural’ rationality patriarchal society – those women expressed themselves in a newly claimed self-governed discipline (Hanna 1988:131).

The dancer had already become “a synonym for the modern woman” before the turn of the century (Oberzaucher-Schüller 2001:69).¹⁶ Those forms of expressive, exhibitionistic dancing where consciously staged barefoot, with unconfined hair, and “uncorseted garments”. Furthermore, as Reynolds states, those *New Women* where perceived as “strong, independent, physically daring, self-sufficient (...) In much of what they did, they lacked role models of any kind” (Reynolds 2003:1). Because of the expressionist flavour of these ‘new dances’, some of the performers where already working with improvisational approaches to reach a certain degree of authenticity which was part of the “show” (Reynolds 2003:18). The further political development in Europe made the career of these new forms of expressive dance – such as the

¹⁵ For an extensive description of the developments in dance in the last 100 years, I can highly recommend Nancy Reynolds work *No Fixed Points – Dance in the 20th century* (2003). For more information about men in dance see: GARD, Michael (2006). *Men who Dance: Aesthetics, Athletics & the Art of Masculinity*, Peter Lang Publishing; New York.

¹⁶ Important female pioneers in this new form of dance where: Loïe Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Maud Allan, Ruth St. Denis, Gertrude Barrison, Grete Wiesenthal, Gertrud Bodenwieser and Rosalia Chladek (see also Hanna 1988:33; Reynolds 2003:1).

*Ausdruckstanz*¹⁷ – impossible. So it came that until the 1930s, “Vienna lost some of its most formidable protagonists of free dance” (ibid.). Many traces and try-outs of new techniques for dance – such as *Eurythmie* propagated by Rudolf Steiner – came to cease in the wake of the Second World War.¹⁸ When the Nazis were gaining strength in Austria, however, they condemned more experimental approaches in the arts as *entartet* (German for *degenerated*):

“Most of the theories of art that had developed since World War I had become suspect, including the ideas motivation experimental dance. The Nazi party attacked modern art as a symptom of the “sickness of European culture” and, through a program of systematized terror, forced artists to return to sentimental symbolic realism” (Reynolds 2003:104).

After the Nazis took over Austria in 1938 a regrettable and often hushed-up period of Vienna’s history began. It is difficult to cope with the fact that about 65.000 Austrian Jews were killed in the concentration camps of the Nazis in Austria alone (URL 1). Many other cultural, social, philosophical, artistic, humanistic and scientific developments came to a halt. Therefore, “the majority of Vienna’s Modern Dance world” was forced to emigrate after the arrival of Hitler, and it was *not until the end of the 70s that an awareness of the loss of the Ausdruckstanz set in* (Amort 2001:87). I guess all of the authors writing about the historic development of artistic dance improvisation would agree that the Second World War was the main reason for the big artistic hole that was ripped into Europe’s history. Reynolds (2003:105) mentions the German artists who tried to continue their investigations after the war, facing the fact that “their earnest and enterprising young progeny in America had outdistanced them”. El Arri also talked about the above-mentioned historic gap that was caused by repressive Nazi policy, and can still be felt in the cultural landscape of Germany and Austria. Consciously simplifying the basic fact that:

“The current situation with improvisational dance in Vienna is really shaped by this collective hole: There was no Modern Dance tradition, also no Neo-classicism. In the first

¹⁷ “also called ‘expressionist,’ ‘interpretive,’ ‘absolute,’ or ‘ecstatic’ dance” (Reynolds 2003:78). Its main initiator was Mary Wigman: “For the first time, dance was looked on as a vehicle for conveying important ideas. To attain this high seriousness, it was necessary to ‘retrench’ or ‘regress’: to scrutinize the expressiveness of dance’s essential medium — movement — and that movement’s initiation directly form the emotional core of the individual” (ibid.).

¹⁸ Rudolf Steiner described eurythmy as “visible language” and “visible singing”, with its basic aim that “word and sound themselves should be moved.” (Kazda-Seelig 2001:73).

decades of the 20th century there was Ausdruckstanz, and then it more or less continued with the contemporary approaches in the early 1980s”

We take a short detour here, to glimpse on the approach of Rudolf von Laban, who represents one very early example of improvisational approaches to dance in Vienna:

Rudolf von Laban (1879 – 1958)

Right after war the first work on the didactics of dance improvisation was published by Rudolf von Laban in 1948: *Der Moderne Ausdruckstanz in der Erziehung* (Lampert 2007:17). Since Laban was one of the forefathers for the later development of modern dance in North America, and one of the first pioneers to apply improvisation didactically in Europe, here is a glimpse into his approach:

“Rudolf Laban and his pupil Mary Wigman, discovered that because dance is mimetic, it projects the deeper levels of the human psyche with a unique directness. In the territory charted by their personal explorations, a new phenomenon emerged: dance that dealt with the ongoing life of the culture and the zeitgeist” (Reynolds 2003:78).

Laban already integrated movements from daily life into his choreographies and scrutinised them in his improvisational classwork. He was also performing in alternative spaces like halls and courtyards and sometimes experimented with the setting of the stage “by placing dancers in the seating sections or arranging audience participation” (Reynolds 2003:80-83). This represents an attempt way ahead of its time, that later provided “a basis for dance and movement therapies after the middle of the century” (Reynolds 2003:81), and was not repeated seriously until the experimental concepts of the 1960s and 1970s in New York. Just recently, I got to know Elisabeth Sefcik-Arnreiter, a former student of Laban. I met her at an improvisational dance performance, where she was a juror. Today being a ninety-year-old lady, she was talking about the great ambience of freedom that Laban was establishing for his students in class. It was very inspiring to listen to someone of that age talking about dance improvisation under the conduct of a legend. After all, improvisational approaches in dance did exist – even if not extensively documented – for a long time already. After this short digression, we continue our historical overview of improvisational dance in Vienna.

The 1950s and 1960s were a period where *for the first time in history, improvisation was applied consciously on stage*, thus breaking with the old traditions of staged representation of dance techniques (Lampert 2007:15). It was further due to the so-called ‘dance boom’ in North America, that these developments of the 1970s took shape (Amort 2001; Reynolds 2003). But what was this ‘dance boom’ all about? The above-mentioned authors talk about this boom being *primarily an American phenomenon, linked to a burgeoning youth culture* and the national prosperity of the United States of that era. Radiating from American popular culture (clothing styles, fast food, the entertainment industry, etc.) the boom was quickly infecting Europe but also Israel, Australia, Canada, South Africa, Japan, China and Southeast Asia. According to Reynolds this boom nurtured on the new development of the “middle classes accepting high culture in general” (Reynolds 2003:493).

If you happen to know Vienna, you will probably understand why I quote Gustav Mahler at this point, who is believed to be the originator of the following statement: “If the world is ever coming to an end I move to Vienna because there, everything happens 50 years later”¹⁹ It was not until the latter half of the 1970s that the free artistic dance scene of Vienna manifested itself under the shade of broader international developments of social transformation and emancipation. Except for some small left-overs, the free expressionistic dance style from the pre-war period was rendered extinct by Nazi policies and cultural enforcements. The awakening new dance scene of the late seventies “knew little about its forefathers” (Amort 2001:141).

Gradually, more and more renowned European choreographers started to perform at the new and innovative formats of Viennese Festivals, such as *Wiener Festwochen* and the *Wiener Tanzwochen*, later to be known (from 1988 on) as the *Impulstanz Festival*. The now internationally established Festival, curated by Ismael Ivo and Karl Regensburger, has had such an important impact on the Vienna dance scene that the Austrian dance historian and dance critic Andrea Amort subdivides her review of the historic development in the Vienna free dance scene in *before* 1988 and *after* (Amort 2001:146). As already mentioned in the introduction, this work is not intended to spread the notion of dance as an elitist practice ‘withheld for the lucky few’. My intention lies exactly on the other side of the coin: I see dance in all the movements

¹⁹ I found no evidence that would confirm it really was Mahler who said: *Wenn die Welt einmal untergehen sollte ziehe ich nach Wien, denn dort passiert alles 50 Jahre später.*

we perform everyday. From waking up in bed in the morning (or wherever you prefer to rest) until we go back there, we conduct a corporeal investigation. As we will see in the next section, this exploration can have an impact not only on our lives as individuals, but also on society at large.

The Performing Arts as Liberation Format

This final section of the first Part of this thesis for diploma takes a quick look at the various manifestations of performance groups and theatre collectives, working with improvisation since the 1960s and 1970s. Here, the lines and boundaries of the manifold forms and shapes that emanated so densely in that era are hopelessly blurred. Some examples of these young performing art styles were labelled:

Abstract Expressionist, Dadaist, Fluxus, Pop Art, Action Painting, Happenings, Contact Improvisation, New Dance, Tanztheater, Butoh, Minimal Music, Absurd Theatre, etc.

Some of the most relevant collectives, located in New York City in the 1970s and 1980s are displayed in this next enumeration:

The Judson Church, The Grand Union, The Living Theatre, Pilobulus, New York Chamber Dance Group, Daniel Nagrin's Workgroup, The Open Theater, The New Lafayette Theater, Jerzy Grotowski's Polish Lab Theater, The Workgroup, Sounds in Motion, etc.

With this third and last enumeration, I display some of the influences, non-Western body techniques and philosophy had on the development in the performing arts at that time:

Asian and Indian philosophy and martial arts: *Tai Chi, Zen Buddhism, Daoism, Shiatsu, Butoh, Kinesiology, Aikido, Karate, Yoga*, Chinese and Japanese Calligraphy, etc. but also Brazilian *Capoeira* and *Candomblé* for example.

On the one hand, the performing arts gave insights into their working methods rendering visible what transformative implications experimental theatre has for society. On the other hand, social developments like the women's movement, protests against the Vietnam War, protests against racial and gender-related discrimination in North America were all pushing the artists in research to ask questions about these issues and how to transform and redefine obvious social injustices. By watching the experimental performers of the Judson Church, taken as an example, the audience "gained the palpable sense that structures governing social and political life could be changed" (Foster 2002:61). The developments in jazz starting in the 1920s prepared the ground for the *Bebop Revolution* in the 1950s and later developments like the *Beat Generation*, *Rock Music* and *Youth Culture*, connected to the social movements in the 1960s and 1970s in North America. It is beyond doubt that experimental approaches in the performing arts were a constituting part of these social movements, as well as constituted by them. The musicians (Foster 2002:26):

"dazzled listeners with the possibilities for maneuvering outside and against the system. Their adeptness at the unpremeditated elaborated a nonconformist stance, a set of rhythmic and harmonic parameters for exploration dramatically divergent from a mainstream culture"

In my conversation with La Roja, she recalled the first jazz concerts she witnessed to have more of these democratic qualities, since she could observe a certain kind of dissociation from elitist high culture: *a kind of liberation I always perceived as a democratic act*. So the people could, for the first time since hundredths of years, *eat and drink, engage in conversations while the music was playing. That really was something revolutionary at that time*, she explained.

Altering Social Choreography

Besides jazz and improvisational performing arts, the youth and feminist movements with counter-establishment ideologies manifesting themselves in *Rock* or *Punk*, the occupation of public space, drug consumption, and many other forms and trends of that time were further examples of protest-lifestyles. The main enemy of these social liberatory movements emerging in the 1960s and 1970s were the inequalities and subjugations in the modern Western nation state, as well as their violation of human

rights if legitimised by ‘necessary war acts’, which gradually provoked an “awakening consciousness of the body as an instrument of power” (Thomas 2004:16; O’Connor 1997:167) in the middle class. Further, the protest was directed against regulating mechanisms, which Foucault described as *discipline* (“Disziplin”, Foucault 1995:175), which I understood to be *methods which enable the meticulous control of bodily activities and the permanent subjugation of its forces to usefulness and docility*. The body is the surface on which the power execution of the modern nation state unfolds its impact:

*power constellations put their hands on it, coat it, mark it, train it, force it to work, obligate it to take part in ceremonies, demand gestures from it. This political occupation of the body is bound to its economic output, by the means of complex and interrelated conditions*²⁰

So, in short, what the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s were raising up against was the aim of the modern disciplinary regulations of the nation state to *simultaneously enhance the manageability and the usefulness of all the elements of the system*.²¹ An artistic approach towards your own body – with this I am referring to eight years of playful but earnest research experience – renders movements and gestures not necessarily ‘useful’, in a capitalist notion. What it certainly does is enhance the pleasure of moving *per se* as well as the creative application of bodily capacities to specific everyday situations, providing everybody with unforeseen possibilities with and through his or her own physicality. With corporeal improvisation, we can reassess cultural meaning ascribed to movement. We can scrutinise certain patterns of everyday movement until they lose their specific cultural significance.²²

²⁰ “Die Machtverhältnisse legen ihre Hand auf ihn; sie umkleiden ihn, markieren ihn, dressieren ihn, martern ihn, zwingen ihn zu Arbeiten, verpflichten ihn zu Zeremonien, verlangen von ihm Zeichen. Diese politische Besetzung des Körpers ist mittels komplexer und wechselseitiger Beziehungen an seine ökonomische Nutzung gebunden” (Foucault 1995:37).

²¹ “gleichzeitig die Fügsamkeit und die Nützlichkeit aller Elemente des Systems zu steigern.“ (Foucault 1995:280).

²² It is like a game me and my brothers invented when we were young: We repeated the word *water* for so long that all of a sudden, the connection *water = liquid transparent source of life* was not there anymore. I recommend trying such an experiment, since it reaffirms the insufficiency of language, and reminds us that spoken word is just another human invention. Its validity, therefore, has to continuously be re-examined in a critical way.

This is exactly why corporeal improvisation potentially contains forms of civil disobedience; it encourages questioning the “social choreography” we are all moving in (Foster 2002:60). It allows also for non-purposeful exploration of the human potential. At this point the reader might ask if social order is endangered if we move out of line according to one’s own individual choreography. The individual improvisatory interpretation of social choreography does not necessarily mean that it destroys its totality. Some of the experimental groups like the *Judson Church*, or the *Living Theatre* were actively encouraging all visitors of their performances to take part in the making of the performance, since they revealed the capacities of all participants not only to understand, but also to “experience the possibility of collective overthrowing relations of domination in favor of more equitable distribution of the rights of citizens” (Foster 2002:61). They staged the ongoing processuality inherent to the constitution of democracy asking all citizens to re-examine “their identification with the process of interrogating and reconciling social inequalities” (ibid.). In the interactive performance formats of the 1960s and 1970s it was possible to make explicit “the oppressive power of hegemonic normativity by championing erratic, spontaneous impulses over established social protocols” (Foster 2002:63). In focussing on movement material from everyday life, those ‘casual’ aesthetics – or rather ‘counter-aesthetics’ – made it possible for citizens to recognize their own corporeal possibilities as social acts, opening them up for scrutiny and discourse. Performers of the Judson Church raised an awareness of the improvisatory nature of everyday life within the onlookers/participants. That is how they managed to challenge “the elitist prerequisites for dancing established in ballet and modern dance, and represented dance as a form of labor, rather than a mystical or transcendental experience” (Foster 2002:63). The Living Theatre, as well as choreographers from The Judson Church whose performances worked across and exceeding the boundaries between stage and pedestrian life, tried to “illuminate and celebrate an experience of daily life to which, theoretically, all individuals had equal access” (ibid.). Therefore, the message of equality, emancipation, respect, responsibility and emancipation has been actively propagated by the revolutionary performance formats of that era. Also a reconsideration of the pure, physical task seems to have been re-emphasized in the era of reformative performance arts. An alteration of *Social Choreography*, as I understood it, is an ubiquitous process inherent to all societies. My specific interest in the phenomenon of improvisation thus lies in the role it can play for every

individual's emancipation. It is, in my experience, only after this emancipation that maturity is reached by an individual.

Happenings

A special form of events that can alter the build-up of society are called *Happenings*. The term *happening* comes from one artistic event of Allan Kaprow named *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1959) which was originally not intended to give name to a new and ambiguous trend in artistic events of the fine arts (where they basically lost their 'fine' characteristic). Improvisational jams are not happenings *per se* but show various features similar to those artistic events, that were called to life by New York's experimental painters from the 1960s. Becker describes the spatial aspect that happenings address as *happening on every place of reality, arranging it, and thereby transforming the space itself into a piece of art* (Becker 1965:11). Becker also quotes Otto Mühl, a well-known representative of the counter-mainstream *Aktionismus* movement in Austria, who worked with similar artistic events called *Material Acts* ("Materialaktionen") describing them as *paintings that outgrew the frame of the picture to become the material act* (ibid.). What makes happenings so familiar with improvisational jams, is their affinity with musical and theatrical staging as well as an activation of the audience (Becker 1965:13):

Everyone who encounters a happening, acts along. There's no public anymore, no actors, no exhibitionists, no onlookers, everyone can change his behaviour in any way she wants. Every single one now has the responsibility for her own limits and transformations. Nobody is being reduced to a nothing, like in theatre. There's no 'function of the onlooker' any more, no wild beasts behind bars, like in the zoo. No stage, no words of poetry and no applause.

One can feel the enthusiasm of that era by reading those lines. Art historian Michael Kirby regards happenings like the ones *Second City* organised, not as *improvisation* but merely "indetermination" (Kirby 1965, cited in Foster 2002:45). Furthermore, some artists thought the expression *Happening* should be replaced by *Intermedia*, since the latter was a category that could unify poetics, music, painting and acting as well as *Fluxus* and other action arts and performance styles that constitute so-called *Happenings* (Wick 1975:7). Finally, I think the most important similarity between

Happenings and *jams* is the communitarian aspect. It is about a community of artists coming together to work improvisatory and reflect on current social issues. Just as the communitarian aspect was a major constituent in the beginning of *contact improvisation*, it also was in the early 1960s when *Happenings* were performed, since also in *jams* the dissolution of onlooker/performer is an important factor. Although I would not state that improvisational jams in Vienna in 2012 should be labelled *Happenings*, they show similarities in the effects they can have on the individual's lifecourse (see *Part III*).

Part II

Theoretical Considerations

The Body

Dear Vienna: this is Gender and the Body. Have you met before?

Techniques of the Body

Generating Knowledge

Methodology

The Field

Vera Rebl's Valid Street Protest,

Interviews

Theoretical Considerations

Here I present my most important theoretical considerations about the body, creativity and gender.²³ It was unsatisfying to split the researched literature between the two sections theory/methods, because most of the theoretical considerations actually have very practical implications for methodological work and influence my heuristic process. Therefore, I want to seriously allow for more flexibility in my conceptualisations and thus will not emphasise their compartmentalisation unnecessarily. Generally, I try to argue against compartmentalisation and dichotomising elaborations in scientific knowledge production, also knowing that the theoretical approaches I will try to display in the following section are just as much part of the process of the fieldwork, the methods and the arguments, since theory is *processual* in its nature (Glaser & Strauss 2008:9).

²³ I will not enter the debate around *dance* as a scholarly problem. This is due to spatial and thematic reasons (this thesis is meant to be an anthropological work). For more information about dance studies I can recommend the works of Hanna (1987-88), Thomas (1993-2004), and Novack (1990). Csordas mentioned several studies about dance here: Csordas 1999:190. In general, these authors lament that even today, scientific inquiries about dance are strikingly seldom.

The most prominent scientific debates in this still very young 21st century are buzzing around the Body and his Senses, Neurology, Perception and Consciousness, New Social Networks and their inflatable effects on social movements. For such a thing as improvisational events, all of them would be very important to deal with. Since I am a one-man department, those are limited to a few excerpts of the most sense-making approaches I could encounter.

The Body

The ‘body project’ of mainstream academic discourse has flourished since the 1990s (Shilling 1993/2008, Thomas 2003, Csordas 1999, Brandstetter 2003). The social and cultural studies have heavily drawn on the achievements and argumentations the feminist and other social movements (starting in the 1960s) have broken loose (Thomas 2003:34). The publication *The Body and Society* by Bryan Turner in 1984 marks a cornerstone in the renewed interest of the social studies in the body. Other important triggers for heating the debates around the body were issues concerning gender, biopolitics, identity, the environment, emancipation, equal rights and justice (Thomas 2003:58). The body has long been neglected and ‘taken for granted’, lingering somewhere in the underground of the social studies (Csordas 1999:172).²⁴ If we still are to understand what humans actually do when they are involved in constituting *culture*, we have to keep the body in mind: “[the] body is an existential condition of life – of course we have bodies, but there are multiple modes of embodiment, and it is the modulations of embodiment/ that are critical for the understanding of culture“ (Csordas 1999:181). Thus in the social studies, the body simultaneously is “the principal topic or object of analysis” (ibid.) and at the same time what we are.²⁵ There is another important statement of Csordas that I would like

²⁴ Since dance is a non-verbal form of communication, solely by having that characteristic it was mostly categorised as being ‘non-rational’, as Ward states (Ward 1993:16).

²⁵ This is even true for those readers, who might make their living just by thinking. In my understanding, even if one spends all her life thinking, it still remains an embodied activity. Although I will not (for spatial reasons) enter the discourse around the cognitive studies, I consider all the mental processes as embodied.

to display in these considerations about the body as ‘problem’ in the social sciences. It is the well-known “paradigm of embodiment”:

“the body is not an object to be studied in relation to culture, but is to be considered as the subject of culture, or in other words as the existential ground of culture” (Csordas 1990:5).

Csordas wants this paradigm of embodiment to be set in relation to two other approaches, namely the *Phenomenology of Perception* by Merleau-Ponty (1945), and Bourdieu’s notion of *Habitus* in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972).²⁶ But even by drawing on these two constituting elaborations of the new paradigm, Csordas detects problematic dualisms he wants to render extinct (subject/object, practice/structure, or agency/structure). *Practice Theory*, as represented by gentlemen like Pierre Bourdieu or Anthony Giddens in his *Theory of Structuration*, is not being discussed in this thesis for diploma for spatial reasons. Rather, I will later mention the first Frenchman to introduce the *habitus*-concept: Marcel Mauss (see Mauss 2006 [1935]) and his concepts about the body and its techniques.

Pragmatism

Connected to Csordas’ analysis of the body as the “existential ground of culture”, we can add the concept of *Pragmatism*, familiar to the *Practice Theory* approach in the social studies. The former approach is concerned with the alteration of bodily interaction of social beings and their environment throughout the lifecourse. Change sometimes happens “as a result of consciously formulated actions, undertaken in situations of considerable autonomy” but also happens in everyday-life-situations over which individuals have little control (Shilling 2008:1).²⁷ The concept of *pragmatism* articulates a critique against those scholarly debates that “travel so far from the biological organism” (Shilling 2008:2). In their concern about social

²⁶ Published in English language in 1977, where he defines *habitus* as follows: “We can define ‘habitus’ loosely as the attitudes, dispositions, and taste that individuals share as members of a field. In Bourdieu’s terms, taste is neither individual nor random, but organized by reference to social positions, practices, and institutions. *Habitus* is an ‘acquired system of generative dispositions.’” (Bourdieu 1977: 95, cited in Wainwright 2004:100).

²⁷ Therefore, emancipation (rendering conscious our social constraints) is one of the basic requirements for personal and sensorial growth, as will become clear in the further elaborations of this second part.

imagining and the meaning ascribed to objects in society, cognitive science moves in the realm of the thoughtful, while neglecting the organismic reality of human beings. But the concept of *Pragmatism* is not new at all. According to Shilling it dates back to Charles Sanders Peirce's formulations in the early 1870s, and was later continued by the Chicago School. *Pragmatism* has similarities with the double-sidedness of the *habitus* being both constituting/constituted:

“Instead of identifying either the collectivity or the individual as absolute starting points, it recognised that action was undertaken by individuals always already within a social and natural context, yet possessed of emergent capacities and needs that distinguished them from, and also enabled them to shape actively, their wider milieu” (Shilling 2008:4).

But where the everyday actions of human bodies in motion cease to be sufficient to solve problems that we encounter, pragmatism emphasises the creative action as essential quality of our social acts “after habits have ceased to be effective” (Shilling 2008:19). This innovative quality inherent to all social agents involves many attempts and strategies of problem-solving, even such as the “dramatic rehearsal” (ibid.). This is getting very close to my own argumentation, since I regard improvisational practice as a *rehearsal for life*: Today's rehearsal of embodied emotional and intelligent actions is arranging the *habitus* of tomorrow.

Improvisation and Mimesis

So how do sociologists and anthropologists think about the creative alteration of social acting of *enminded bodies in motion*?²⁸ To begin I would like to draw on the observation made by Hallam and Ingold. They are mentioning the fact that in general the diverse anthropological and sociological considerations were more about creativity, and less about improvisation (Hallam and Ingold 2007:1). Moreover they talk about the fact that improvisation is what everyone does all the time, and therefore should be regarded as “cultural imperative” (Hallam & Ingold 2007:2). What also

²⁸ This circumstantial formulation of our obvious state of being as humans is only relevant in the context of current debates in the social studies (the expression *enminded bodies* comes from Ingold (2000:171) and will further be the term I use analogous with *human beings*). Of course I am aware that these formulations might provoke the assumption that my intention here is to enumerate truisms. However it might come across; my formulations are intended to reassess major scholarly fallacies of the past.

comes up in their ingenious elaboration on *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation* is the common fallacy of the social sciences to read improvisation “backwards”²⁹ (in regard to the outcomes of improvisation), rather than “forwards” (in regard to the processuality of improvisation). A fallacy because it is fatal to regard the aspects of a social phenomenon just in terms of their “consumable products”, rather than understanding the potentiality of improvisation lying in its transformative and crescent potential for society as a whole and every individual as a part of it (see Hallam & Ingold 2007:3). Another criticism of theirs regards the opposition creativity/imitation. Drawing on the work of Hughes-Freeland and her study of Javanese dance, they state that *mimesis* “is not the simple, mechanical process of replication that it is often taken to be” but that its creative quality can be found also “in the maintenance of an established tradition” (Hallam & Ingold 2007:5). That is why the continuity of tradition is in essence a highly creative practice, even if you try to copy the cultural knowledge in question as precisely as you possibly can.

Here, the principle of *Mimesis* comes into play. Mimesis is defined essentially as a practice that “does not copy the world” but instead “other mimetic acts”: “Mimeticism imitates the working not the work, the saying rather than the said” (Peters 2009:101). In other words, mimesis can be regarded as the *incorporation of images and schemes of the outside world of bodily expression into individual sensory impressions* (Wulf 2007:124). Etymologically speaking the expression mimesis comes from Greek *mimos* (μῖμος) that carries a wide range of connotations and meanings, which can include: *imitation, movement-repetition, representation, mimicry, receptivity, but also more generally nonsensuous similarity, the act of resembling, the act of expression, and the presentation of the self in the social environment* (Treichl 2005:23). With the invention of print in the 16th century, the body and its movements were gradually subjugated under the supreme rule of the written words and signs. Mimesis was functionalised as the mere visualisation of words. So, in other words, a critically reassessed recount of history is displaying the development of the body as *content*, to a body forced to be merely an *expression of the organisational structure of language*: “Print does not only convey meaning, it reproduces a *certain kind* of meaning” (Leeker 1995:101, cit. in Treichl 2005:27).

²⁹ John Liep provided an excellent example of such a ‘backwards reading’, not challenging the polarity of innovation/convention with his approach at all. In my opinion Liep’s work represents a dead-end approach in sociological discourse about creativity.

What the social studies criticise harshly is the historically grown *standardisation of the ascription of meaning* from the 16th century onwards, that rendered the body (for long the depicted as the feminine realm) *subordinate to signs*. Vision was attributed as the highest sense of the human species: It was raised to the same level as *comprehension* (Postl 2001:27).

Since the skills for comprehension were long restricted to male use, application as well as its reproduction through men, the patriarchal domination of knowledge-production was incontestably set on track for the next 300 years of human evolution. Corporeal being-in-the-world, body-knowledge, the joy of movement, emotionality, and senses like touch and smell were constituted as dangerous and alluring oppositions that lead away from rationalist and thoughtful behaviour (Postl 2001:28). This introduced a kind of utopian thinking that neglected the pragmatism and embodied reality of our corporeal state of being. Along with this evolution, the feminine was created as a counter-domain, inhabiting the irrational, the emotional, and the embodied (ridden by bodily needs). In my conception, a renewed and reinforced interest and trust in bodily needs and demands is long overdue. Especially because even today we have not been able to decipher how our brain and thought processes work (all of which embodied phenomena) we should trust in our bodies more. At many occasions (as in dangerous situations in jams, where bodily reflexes are activated) my body reacted long before I ‘knew what was going on’. My growing experience in bodily practice renders me more and more convinced that *body knowledge* is highly underestimated by the social sciences, and its knowledge-producers (see Part III).

Since we are all involved in innumerable mimetic acts every day, the question that interested me was which of those actions can be regarded as improvisatory, creative or innovative in a specific social context? Since improvisation is defined always in relation to the specific socially constituted frame it could exceed, it is crucial where the boundaries of this frame are set. For the Austrian social context that is easy to answer: In Vienna it is already regarded as unconventional to be a white, male, heterosexual man *but at the same time* a dancer. But what about other social contexts? Here I would like to take a quick look at the thoughts that Ingold and Hallam have for us. Creativity, they argue by drawing on Friedman, is commonly supposed to break with socially imposed convention, but:

“It can be unconventional to be conventional, just as it can be traditional to change. Even the most creative of individuals, by this account, can never fully escape what Friedman (2001) has called the ‘iron cage’ of social constraint, since their nonconformity – if it is not to be dismissed as mere idiosyncrasy – must ‘make sense’ within a more widely inhabited universe of meaning and accord with its communicative conventions. Creativity (...) cannot totally cut loose from the social whole, lest it register as madness” (Hallam & Ingold 2007:6–7).

I think what the above-mentioned excerpt clearly shows is that – observed from an anthropological perspective – the messages and statements the ‘shocking’ performances ‘creative individuals’ (or: *artists*) in our society deliver are not very relevant. What is of high anthropological interest, however, is how the historically grown conventions about ‘unconventionality’ are manifested in every single one of us, and whether we are at ease with these circumstances.

Dear Vienna: this is gender and the body. Have you met before?

In the year 1935, Marcel Mauss wrote the following lines: “The body is man’s first and most natural instrument. Or more accurately (...), man’s first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body.” (Mauss 2006 [1935]:83). Along with the emancipatory developments of the 20th century, the instrument of the female half of Western population was scrutinised extensively in order to reveal questions concerning reproduction technologies, emancipation and sexuality, and the attempts of contemporary feminism to reclaim the female body have not ceased, since their instrument is not yet back in feminine hands (Novack 1993:34). I do not want to display conventional definitions of *gender*, because I do not believe in the dichotomy of *sex* = “male/female distinctions founded on biological determinants” and *gender* = “socially acquired” sex (Thomas 1993:xiv). At this point, something gets clear: In our Western culture, the ‘natural’ prerequisites are culturally formed. That is exactly why the use of gender is highly important: Taken-for-granted ‘truths’ are actually only true within a certain cultural framework at a certain time in human evolution. What remains interesting, is that:

“the feminine body, as the prime site of sexual and/or racial difference in a white, masculine, western political and sexual economy, is peculiarly the battlefield on which quite other struggles than women’s own have been waged” (Jacobus 1990:2).

What Jacobus, Fox Keller and Shuttleworth want to bring up with their argumentation is that in the 20th century, Gender Studies are by now reshaping the perception and experimentation of scientists, but that feminine bodies “are themselves a constitutive part of wider social discourses that are informed and shaped in their turn by economic, class, and racial ideologies” (Jacobus 1990:3). This means, that the debate around the feminine body always was, and still is shaped by many “intersecting and competing discourses” (Jacobus 1990:4). In the end, this points to the fact the ideology and practice of science itself still is “sexualized and territorial” (Jacobus 1990:6). What a critical revision of the history of modern scholarly discourse reveals is nothing less than the fact that women were (and are sometimes still today) regarded as the *object* of science, rather than *scientific subjects* (Jacobus 1990:10).

One of the current signs for a renewed cultural “encoding” of gender-roles in favour of a more equal distribution of rights, is the changing debate around the male body: Meuser locates a shift that points to a crumbling in the walls of patriarchal rule, since male bodies are more than ever visually displayed as objects of *fashion* in the public sphere, as well as discussed in medical debates about men’s health. (Meuser 2005:286). Another sign for the transformation of historic gender roles can be identified along with the gradual disintegration of the “bourgeois subject” that was initially constituted along the exclusion of women, (supposed) lunatics, and the peoples subjugated by colonial rule (Bertulozza 1994:12). In short: The bourgeois subject was highly idealised while other cultural contexts were devalued;³⁰ all well-known dynamics for the legitimisation of chauvinism, fascism and nationalism and their cruelties against others (Bertulozza 1994:13).

To close this section about gender, I guess it is enough to simply display a recently published study about the situation of gender-equality *made in Austria*:

³⁰ For a powerfully-written historic account of European history and colonialism see: WOLF, Eric R. 1997 [1982] *Europe and the People without History*, University of California Press, Berkeley (et al.).

In the latest *Gender Gap Report* of the *World Economic Forum*, Austria currently holds the shameful rank 103 out of 134 states total. Countries like Nicaragua or the United Arab Emirates, stay closely behind Austria. Just recently, alarming numbers have been published in a EU-wide report, rendering Austria to be the last but one (no. 25 of 26) in a ranking in equal salary. The difference of income between men and women in Austria currently amounts a shocking 25,5% (URL 2). Another alarming message comes from the latest report from the Minister for Women and the Public Service, currently held by Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek. This report, made public on the 2nd of March 2012, shows clearly that most gender inequality in Austria lies in the fields of *payment and career options* (URL 3). I cannot say why Austria is lacking behind so noticeably within the international rankings concerning the gender gap. But it definitively is time we start bridging that gap!

Techniques of the body

Everyday we perform many bodily actions that are traversed by our previous knowledge of how to fulfil those tasks. This experience is something helpful and necessary, because it saves us the trouble of inventing and discovering the world anew every single day. Theoreticians of the social sciences like Marcel Mauss stated that the invention and the tradition of the use of these techniques, or body movements, “are essentially social things” on which *all social life depends to some degree* (Schlanger 2006:18). Knowledge-transmission, as Mauss regarded it, is handed down to the next generation with the techniques of manual and bodily actions, which can be seen as *traditions of efficiency* (physically and cognitively). So even the seemingly most ‘natural’ everyday actions like walking, sleeping and standing, are actually being constructed by the *specifically located social collective* and “are open to approval, recognition and evaluation” (Polhemus 1993:19). Therefore, the heuristically most valuable way to look at society is in terms of the physicality of the human life that lie in “the coordination of articulated motions by which it functions and by which it embodies and conveys meaning” (ibid.). These efficient traditional, and innovative bodily acts confirm the social nature of the *habitus*:

“I call technique an action which is effective and traditional (and you will see that in this it is no different from a magical, religious or symbolic action)” (Mauss 2006 [1935]:82).

Ingold and Vergunst talk about the fact that it was not really until 1972, when Bourdieu introduced his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, that voices were raised for a renewed investigation of the approaches Mauss had delivered more than 40 years before that. Back then in 1935, Mauss was introducing the *habitus*-concept “to distinguish it from the merely idiosyncratic ‘habits’ of individuals” (Ingold & Vergunst 2008:1). But these physical actions also always had a psychological, emotional, as well as a thoughtful dimension, and were thus not merely bodily actions, mechanically performed. They are conceptualised to be both “means and mediums for the production and reproduction of social life.” (Schlanger 2006:20), therefore representing simultaneously human progress at large, as well as sensorial or personal growth within every single one of us. Mauss spoke, in this context, about the “*homme total*” which regards human beings, while performing their corporeal and technical *habitus*, as “total” because they “set in motion the biological, psychological and sociological dimensions of their being” (Mauss 2006 [1935]:77). So when I use this term in the following pages, I mean the human being engaging the social world with all of our capacities.

Walking

As a specific example of one technique of the body I would like to present the skill of walking. It was not until 2008 that Ingold and Vergunst put walking on the agenda “as a serious topic for comparative ethnological inquiry” (Ingold and Vergunst 2008:1), since they think that a careful, ethnographic analysis of walking “can help us rethink what being social actually means.” (ibid.). Drawing on Csordas and Sheets-Johnstone, they state that:

“Amidst the clamour of calls to understand the body as an existential ground for the production of cultural form, rather than only as a source of physical and metaphorical means for its expression (Csordas 1990:5), we tend to forget that the body itself is grounded in movement. Walking is not just what a body does; it is what a body is. And if the body is foundational to culture, then walking – or thinking in movement – is ‘foundational to being a body’ (Sheets-Johnstone 1999, 494)” (Ingold and Vergunst 2008:2.).

The two authors also provide several astonishing examples of other cultures' dealings with the technique of walking. It can be especially central for a culture to transmit – onto the next generation – a kind of embodied knowledge imperative for survival. For the *Batek*, living in the rainforest of Malaysia, walking is not just walking. While moving through the forest – the body-technique the European urban citizen (or *flâneur*)³¹ would describe as *walking* – the *Batek* actually perform far more complex actions for survival like “observing, monitoring, remembering, listening, touching, crouching and climbing” (Ingold & Vergunst 2008:5). Since we enrich our knowledge about the world along with the movements we perform, a member of the *Batek* society returns home incommensurably more matured than we do. The interesting observation that can be made by scrutinising seemingly simple body techniques is there is no ‘natural’ way of performing them:

“In emphasising these variations [of walking, M.W.], my purpose is not to claim that the feet and gait of the barefoot hunter–gatherer who ‘runs, creeps and climbs’ (Watanabe 1971) are somehow more ‘natural’ than those of the striding, boot-wearing European. As Mauss recognised in his essay on body techniques, there is simply no such thing as a ‘natural’ way of walking, which may be prescribed independently of the diverse circumstances in which human beings grow up and live their lives” (Mauss 1979:102, cited in Ingold 2011:48)

Recently – inspired by the above-mentioned quote of Ingold – I observed myself while walking through Vienna. What I realised is that especially after prolonged sessions of sitting (the scientist’s most perfected technique), my way of walking is rather strange. I need some time to ‘get into the body’, but even if I manage to do so: I sometimes feel that not two single steps are the same. Why I mentioned this here is because it represents the fact that taken-for-granted bodily actions are not ‘natural’ at all. They are far more culture-specific, personality-specific and even specific to the daily mood of a human being. For an outstanding onlooker, the walk of a person might not differ much from day to day, even if it is subjectively perceived quite contrarily. What urges me to call for a renewed scrutiny of body techniques is the fact that our movement seems to be much less ‘natural’, ‘quotidian’ or ‘habitual’ than it has been hitherto assumed by the social studies.

³¹ See TESTER, Keith (ed.) 1994. *The Flâneur*, Routledge: USA, Canada.

Enskilment

At the end of this section about the body and its techniques,³² I want to introduce the term *enskilment* as defined by Tim Ingold, to put beside the *Techniques of the Body*. I do this because I want to provide a second point of view on bodily practices in use in society at large as well as in corporeal improvisation in particular. In Ingold's understanding, *skills* are not techniques of the body but "the capabilities of action and perception of the whole organic being (indissolubly mind and body)", he continues:

"skills are not transmitted from generation to generation but are regrown in each, incorporated into the modus operandi of the developing human organism through training and experience in the performance of particular tasks" (Ingold 2000:5).

Ingold regards *enskilment* as oppositional to mere mechanical repetition: It is continually *opening up the system* (the system of everyday physical movements), rather than *gradually cementing it*. As an example he illustrates the blacksmith who mastered the discipline of smithery. Working on a hoof, she will perceive her own motions as differing in ultra-miniature levels. The apprentice, if we speak of a dull one, only perceives the same movements repeated hundredths of times:

"The essence of skill then, comes to lie in the improvisational ability with which practitioners are able to disassemble the constructions of technology, and creatively reincorporate the pieces into their own walks of life. In this ability lies life's power to resist the impositions of regimes of command and control that seek to reduce practitioners to what Karl Marx (1930:451) once called the 'living appendages' of lifeless mechanism. Thus skill is destined to carry on for as long as life does, along a line of resistance, forever undoing the closure and finalities that mechanisation throws in its path" (Ingold 2011:62).

Having dealt with various theoretical considerations about the body, techniques of the body like *walking* and *enskilment*, I now turn to concepts of how knowledge-generation and movement are inextricably linked.

³² It is not common to formulate that we simultaneously have *and* are the instruments of our daily conduct (*enminded human bodies*).

Generating Knowledge

Here I will display theoretical considerations about *perception*, *understanding in practice*, and *wayfaring*. Those three concepts are drawn from the work of Tim Ingold, who therefore represents the single most important source for the theory-section of this thesis. Nevertheless I hope to be notably displaying my own thoughts and notions about how a phenomenon as corporeal improvisation stands in connection to all the theoretical observations I display in this thesis for diploma. The reader might not always see how the following considerations are connected to the phenomenon in question, namely *corporeal improvisatory practice*. I strongly believe that improvisation is a specific form of knowledge-generation that remarkably exceeds the intensity of the quotidian way to learn about the world. This is so because a playful exploration of the individual potential is strongly encouraged by improvisatory practice. This conviction motivated me to write an ethnography about improvisation in the first place: As my experience as a professional dancer as well as the data from this work clearly show; all the capacities of a human being might be dramatically enhanced by practicing corporeal improvisation on a regular basis. These capacities represent intellectual, emotional, communitarian, spiritual as well as bodily *enskilment* and are fostered through physical movements. How we generate knowledge in detail will be discussed in the following section.

Perception

The first observation, along with Ingold's argumentations, concerns the question about how our perception works. This is important since one of my hypotheses is that improvisation is in essence itself the perception and exploration of potential, both on a personal and cultural level. Since I further regard artistic corporeal formats for improvisation as a potential to alter one's own perception of reality, I provide the most plausible conceptions and definitions of perception I could find during the phase of my literature research. Besides elevating embodiment to a paradigm for scientific inquiry, Csordas explained the way we perceive our being-in-the-world along with Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. In this approach, phenomenological perception begins in the body, and ends in objects. Further, the body for Merleau-

Ponty is “a certain setting in relation to the world“, or a “general power of inhabiting all the environments which the world contains” (Csordas 1990:9). Basically, Merleau-Ponty regards perception as a bodily experience, where the body is not an object, but a subject. Embodiment is the condition for us to ‘have’ objects in the first place. His work suggests that ‘culture’ as we know it, does not rest in objects and representations, but more likely in the bodily processes of perception by which these come into being (Csordas 1999:183).

In *The Perception of the Environment* (2000), Ingold is elaborating on perception, referring to James Gibson’s earlier studies on that topic. Here, perception is not the achievement of a mind coincidentally located in a body, but of “the organism as a whole in its environment, and is tantamount to the organism’s own exploratory movement through the world. If mind is anywhere, then, it is neither ‘inside the head’ nor ‘out there’ in the world” (Ingold 2000:3). Another way to explain how perception comes into being, is to follow Howes’s considerations, rendering perception “not just a matter of biology, psychology or personal history but of cultural formation.” (Howes 2005:3). Therefore; how we perceive is altered by our social environment. If we want to reach sensory emancipation, we have to do critically reflect on our culturally influenced perceptual style. According to Constance Classes, perception was historically male-biased, placing the different senses in a hierarchical order:

“In the European hierarchy of the senses, the sensibilities of women traditionally ranked low. While men had mastery of the ‘higher’ senses of sight and hearing, women were linked with the ‘lower’ senses of touch, taste and smell” (Classen 2005:70).

Without having the capabilities to rectify or falsify the above-mentioned statements, what should be critically monitored by scholarly discourse is what was called the *sensorial turn* in social sciences. It seems to be a historically inherited devaluation of the refinement of bodily senses that prevented social scientists of the past to emphasise their sensual skills in their investigations. Howes noted that the classic “opposition between sense and intellect”, has led to the scholarly bias that “the expansion of sensory awareness (except in the case of sight, the ‘rational’ of the senses) entails a diminution of intellectual activity” (Howes 2005:6). Moving in and out of the young discipline called *Anthropology of the Senses*, Ingold has both critical

comments, and affiliations with this young field of inquiry.³³ But within the come-up of the *sensory turn* – as Ingold critically observes – Cartesian Dualisms were sometimes not erased but rather reaffirmed. This is so because the insights of an *Anthropology of the Senses* were mostly attributed to a cognitive (mindful) rather than an existential (bodily) ground of culture, *compartmentalising and hierarchizing the senses on a culturally biased scale* (Ingold 2000:283). Howes also noticed this problematic in the development of this young approach, since sciences itself underlies the culturally specific perception of its agents:

“Just as scientists usually fail to consider cultural factors in their study of perception, they usually fail to recognize that science itself is a product of culture. Scientific paradigms, in fact, are themselves heavily influenced by perceptual paradigms” (Howes 2005:4).

An *Anthropology of the Senses* may need time to come up with more self-reflexive accounts that truthfully go beyond *Cartesian*³⁴ dualisms, which are still more present today than commonly assumed.

Another phenomenon that I encountered repeatedly in my participant observation was the fact that many of the practitioners of corporeal improvisation talked about the hegemony of *vision* in central European cultural contexts. Dance, being a form of non-verbal communication provides the practitioner with everyday experience that counterbalances this historically inherited hierarchized ranking of our five-sense-sensorium. In this regard, Ingold comments on the *career of vision*, representatively for other scholarly dealings with other senses in the past. To further propagate the participatory quality of perception “we have progressed from a notion of vision as a mode of speculation, to one of vision as a mode of participation, and finally to one vision as a mode of being” (Ingold 2000:266). If we could regard all the other senses as modes of being as well – rather than impulses of a mechanical unit called ‘the body’ – we would arrive at the equality of emotional, corporeal, spiritual and mindful intelligence for future investigations of the social studies (see *Methodology*).

³³ He enumerates the most important figures in the build-up of the establishment of the *Anthropology of the Senses*: McLuhan, Carpenter and Ong, Stoller, Howes, and Classen. (Ingold 2000:250).

³⁴ See BORDO, Susan R. (1987). *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture*, State University of New York Press. Here Bordo gives an overwhelming report about the anti-corporeal and anti-matriarchal effects Rene Descartes’ (1596–1650) *Meditations* had on the modern sciences and philosophy: She mainly argues against a historically inherited “masculinization of knowledge and thought” and a “transcendence of the feminine” that has still to be well and truly overcome (Bordo 1987:9).

Understanding in Practice

In the long history of humankind, a ‘self-made evolution’ can be observed because by “contributing to the environmental conditions of development for successor generations, organisms – including human beings – actively participate in their own evolution” (Ingold 2000:292). But how does this evolution take place? One way to describe this kind of learning is to use Lave’s term “understanding in practice” which she opposes to “the culture of acquisition” (Lave 1990:323, cited in Ingold 2000:416). Lave criticises the commonplace techniques of knowledge-acquisition in institutionalised learning. I can personally support her critical statement when she denotes approaches of cognitive science that regard *understanding in practice* merely as *theory of learning*:

“effective action in the world depends on the practitioner’s first having acquired a body of knowledge in the form of rules and schemata for constructing it. Learning, the process of acquisition is thus separated from doing, the application of acquired knowledge” (ibid.).

Drawing on Lave’s above-mentioned consideration Ingold divides between *enculturation* (internalisation of collective representations) and *understanding in practice*, which he describes as “a process of enskilment, in which learning is inseparable from doing” (Ingold 2000:416). But how does such an *understanding in practice* look like during a Jam? Sensorial growth through improvisation is intensified *exactly because* one can learn to give up the need to intellectually understand or reflect on everything that is going on. The data from my fieldwork clearly shows that rational thinking has to make room for physical understanding in practice, if one does not want to get hurt during a *jam*. A conscious reflection on the things that happened during the improvisatory trajectories of bodies in space can be conducted when the jam is finished. If we dig deeper in our considerations about knowledge-generation, it is then through ‘stepping out’ of the current of everyday habits that learning can take place at all. What would be more suitable for the quest of stripping objects, gestures, movements and articulations about our social world from their cultural meaning than the practice of improvisation? This ‘stepping outside’ of those everyday activities “in which the usefulness of these objects resides” is an attempt of the improviser to recover the personal meaning that was “initially lost through our disengagement from

the current of practical action” (Ingold 2000:417). The next and last section in my description of various theoretical considerations about improvisation brings together the before-mentioned concepts of culturally biased perception (Howes 2005; Classen 2005) as well as *understanding in practice*³⁵ as *enskilment* (Ingold 2000).

Wayfaring

This last, most recent and in my opinion most relevant point Ingold makes is his contributions concerns concept of *wayfaring*.³⁶ It is central to Ingold’s elaborations about how the human way of being-in-the-world actually comes into being (2011:12): *“It is, literally to be embarked upon a movement along a way of life. The perceiver-producer is thus a wayfarer and the mode of production is itself a trail blazed or a path followed. (...) To be, I would now say, is not to be in place but to be along paths. The path, and not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming. (...) Thus rephrased, my contention is that wayfaring is the fundamental mode by which living beings inhabit the earth”*

Ingold elaborates on the generation of knowledge by commenting on the (pre-) historic movements of humans on the surface of our planet: “knowledge” he states “is being produced along the movement that people took in human history” (ibid.) Nevertheless, those hundredths of thousands kilometres were not ‘travelled’, but mostly walked. As we have seen in the section about *Techniques of the Body*, walking is not a dull set corporeal activities, but “dextrous movements” along which we as human beings generate our knowledge (Ingold 2011:17):

“Thus locomotion and cognition are inseparable, and an account of the mind must be as much concerned with the work of the feet as with that of the head and hands. What goes for walking also goes for other skilled activities that have a similarly itinerant character”

³⁵ See LAVE, Jean and CHAIKLIN, Seth (eds.) 1993. *Understanding Practice: Perspectives on Activity and Context*, Cambridge University Press.

³⁶ The concept of wayfaring underlines my rejection of the debates around *Emplacement* and *Performativity*, which do not get me anywhere. The former, in my opinion is a pure enumeration of possible definitions about where space ends, and place begins. The latter debate is of a very similar nature: if something is or is not performance, lies in the eye of the beholder, (or the accompanying wayfarer) not of the ‘performer’. For me, debates around Performativity and Emplacement are doomed to lead to a dead-end, and have thus been consciously excluded from this thesis for diploma.

Transport, on the other hand, does not generate much knowledge. Humans do not learn about the world solely by sitting in a plane, train, or car (except maybe if they have the most illuminating conversation along the way). Being propelled across the world the traveller does not move herself. Instead he is being moved by the means of transport. That is also why nowadays the majority of people inhabiting the northern hemisphere generally possess the material means to purchase a round-the-world trip, but he or she can return without having learned much. That is also why wayfaring is a process that does not cease to be once a destination is reached: “Indeed the wayfarer has no final destination, for wherever he is, and so long as life goes, there is somewhere further he can go” (Ingold 2011:150). To set the concept of wayfaring in analogy with corporeal improvisation, one could draw on the universally known proverb *the journey is the reward*: “Here it is the movement itself that counts, not the destination it connects. Indeed wayfaring always overshoots its destination, since wherever you may be at any particular moment, you are already on your way somewhere else (Ingold 2007:78–81). Concerning this last aspect, Ingold prefers to speak of *inhabitants* rather than *locals* of a certain geographical region, since locality would re-emphasise a fixedness that would not suit the long history of the wayfaring human species. In order to define how exactly this knowledge-generation that takes place along with, or through movement, Ingold coins what he himself calls an awkward neologism: “alongly”, as in ‘inhabitants integrate their knowledge *alongly*’:

“Inhabitants, then, know as they go, as they journey through the world along paths of travel. Far from being ancillary to the point-to-point collection of data to be passed up for subsequent processing into knowledge, movement is itself the inhabitant’s way of knowing. (...) Thus instead of the complementarity of a vertically integrated science of nature and a laterally integrated geography of location, wayfaring yields an alongly integrated, practical understanding of the lifeworld” (Ingold 2011:154).

What goes for the *wayfarer* also goes for social scientists, since they are humans too. That means that also scientific knowledge is generated within the practice of wayfaring (Ingold 2011:155). I think it is getting clear by now, why these explanations fit splendidly to the topic of improvisation. If you watch a *jam* taking place you can observe the abstracted and microscopic version of what Ingold describes to have taken place in the history of humanity: People are wayfaring improvisatory through space, learning about themselves and the world as they go. For

me this seems a much more plausible explanation for the *conditio humana* than saying human beings *apply their knowledge in practice*, which has quite a mechanistic aftertaste. Ingold proposes a perspective on knowledge-generation, amplifying the idea that humans “know *by way of their practice*” (Ingold and Kurttila 2000:191/192, cited in Ingold 2011:159). That means that during the simultaneous engagement of humans in both perception and action, “knowledge is perpetually ‘under construction’ within the field of relations established through the immersion of the actor–perceiver in a certain environmental context.” (ibid.). Therefore, if knowledge production takes place *alongly* our movement through the world, I guess it would be important to know how one can intensify the degree of awareness put into one’s movement, since it would exponentially boost the generation of knowledge one can experience through wayfaring.

Bringing these considerations back into the field of artistic practice, let us have a look at the next excerpt of Ingold where he suggest changing the expression *landscape* into *taskscape*, since movement ultimately leads to *enskilment*. I understood the concept of *taskscape* as very applicable to corporeal improvisation, since I could observe these movements during my participant observation: *Taskscapes* are, in short, the challenges we encounter during our movement through the world. According to the degree of self-knowledge, we can render these challenges beneficial for our personal and sensorial development. Let us take, as an example, the improviser who wants to confront her or his fear of speaking or singing in front of other people. Because this is a difficult challenge for her or him personally, the improviser concerned with personal growth will realise the opportunity to confront her or his personal issues and try to outgrow them in the presence of other participants in a *jam*. If gradually enhanced, such a confrontation with personally difficult situations will be highly beneficial for the personal growth of the improviser. Therefore, the difficulty of the *taskscape* we can encounter during any improvisation depends on the capabilities of the improviser to perceive potential for personal growth, according to the degree of trust in oneself. What the participants of an improvisatory *jam* actually do, is that they:

“make their way through the taskscape (...) as do walkers through the landscape, bringing forth their work as they press on with their own lives (...) To read creativity ‘forwards’ entails a focus not on abduction but on improvisation (...). To improvise is to follow the ways

of the world, as they open up, rather than to recover a chain of connections, from an end point to a starting point, on a route already travelled” (Ingold 2011:159).

So, in short, knowledge is generated by wayfaring through the *taskscape*. Following the considerations of Ingold, we have seen that improvisation can be regarded as *wayfaring*, essential to the *conditio humana* and to how we as humans generate knowledge. My argument points to my initial assumption that personal and sensorial growth can be fostered through corporeal improvisation. I further assume that the more knowledge is generated, the more an emancipatory process begins to take place within *enminded bodies* (the more we know, the more we come to anticipate the limits of our knowledge). Closing this purely theoretical section of this thesis for diploma we can summarise that if corporeal improvisation is *wayfaring through the taskscape*, the more we improvise the more knowledge we generate in our lifecourse. If we want to foster personal and sensorial growth within the individual *enminded body*, improvisation represents a formidable tool to do so.

Methodology

This section is concerned with the methodology I put into practice during the phase of my fieldwork. Trying to find different approaches to anthropological methodology, I stumbled over several notes and single pages in my old folders from the introductory phase of my studies, including notes about Malinowski.³⁷ He “was not the first person to use fieldwork methods but was the first to systematically record and later to teach his students the canons of the method” (O’Reilly 2005:7). I chose to write an ethnography because this seemed to be the most suitable method for a field such as contemporary improvisational jams in Vienna. Since writing an ethnography is a process of knowledge-generation that is based on the ethnographers’ own experience, it is essential to offer viewpoints of these experiences of reality “that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced” (Pink 2009:8). Summarising many definitions of ethnography, O’Reilly explicates that (2005:3):

“ethnography at least (in its minimal definition) is iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), drawing on a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives (and cultures), watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, and producing a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience, that acknowledges the role of theory, as well as the researcher’s own role, and that views humans as part object/subject”

In my research on methodology, I encountered the above-mentioned notion of the iterative-inductive character inherent to ethnography. I was simultaneously caught in a process of deduction and induction; of starting to recognise schemes of theoretical considerations I started to formulate from my field experience, and at the same time reading about what I could focus on during the participant observations and interviews I conducted. To say this again in O’Reilly’s words: “Iterative implies both a spiral and a straight line, a loop and a tail (...) inductive implies as open a mind as possible, allowing the data to speak for themselves as far as possible” (O’Reilly 2005:27). Having read this it becomes clear that O’Reilly is regarding the trajectory of the research process more as a spiral, rather than a straight line, in which you go

³⁷ MALINOWSKI, Bronislaw 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. New York: Dutton.

forward *and* upward, circling around a continual reassessment of the methods at work. O'Reilly mentions the *critical realist* approach which I understood as being very similar to *Pragmatism*, since it tries to stick as close as possible to social 'facts':

"Social scientific understanding requires both empirical evidence and theoretical argument, and may lead to the description of social structures that differ from or even contradict those described by the actors themselves" (O'Reilly 2005:56).

Another point to think about during the research process is whether to conduct an *overt* participant observation, or a *covert* one, which I expect to evolve out of the field-situation by itself. In some circumstances, however, it is better to decide beforehand because if your true identity is being uncovered in the wrong moment, you can get into trouble (also if it is 'just' a disappointed informer). I mostly stayed covert, because I did not want to attract attention in a *jam*. But also if people knew I was a professional dancer, what they could never assume was that I was even trying to take mental notes while doing the most awkward movements.

The anthropological stay in the field is commonly assumed to be at least a year because "this is for many groups seen as a natural cycle during which most rituals and events will be observed no matter how a culture divides up its time" (O'Reilly 2005:93). By coincidence, it has been exactly one year since I started to work with Vera Rebl's A.D.A.M. (Austrian Dance Ability Movement) performance group, for the street event *Invalidstreet 2011*. However that might be, O'Reilly also states that this one-year cycle is not mandatory for a positive outcome of an investigation. During the research process I tried to be highly self-reflexive, confidential and exact to guarantee that none of my informants was represented in a way that she or he would experience negatively. I really hope I managed to contribute to the solidarity among the members of the contemporary art scene in Vienna, and not to the antagonism that can sometimes be felt here.

Theory as Process

I would like to shortly bring in the concept of *Grounded Theory*, a methodology originally applied by sociologists (Strauss and Corbin 1997:vii). This has been elaborated on especially from Anselm Strauss already from the 1960s onwards. To

put the concept in a nutshell, I want to display the main points that we need for capturing the intention of *Grounded Theory*:

-) The researcher is drawing on her or his own experiences while analysing the data,
-) The theories that are produced are seen as modifiable, qualifiable, and open to negotiation,
-) The research is essentially inductive: theoretical ideas have value but researchers are sceptical of them until they are grounded in data,
-) Grounded theory researchers hope their work has relevance for other academic and non-academic audiences (so research and intellectual endeavour are not divorced from people's daily lives)" (Strauss and Corbin 1998:5, cited in O'Reilly 2005:200–201).

Back in 1967, Glaser and Strauss formulated the main points for a grounded theory for the social and cultural studies, stating that the "adequacy of a theory for sociology today cannot be divorced from the process by which it is generated" (Glaser and Strauss 2008 [1967]:5). The above-stated argument could be supplemented with the notion that the adequacy of a theory for anthropology today cannot be divorced from the *individual* by which it is generated (with all its parameters of social identity, education, gender, spiritual and ideological assumptions, etc.). Glaser and Strauss propagate nothing less than a new paradigm for sociological methodology that is not logical, but phenomenological in its essence since the theory-generation from data means that hypotheses and concepts are not only linearly derived from the data, but are "systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research." (Glaser and Strauss 2008 [1967]:6). Without going much deeper in the elaborations on grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss's most important statement is probably that the processuality of grounded theory is closely bound to the data from the field since it represents an "ever-developing entity" and not a "perfected product" (Glaser and Strauss 2008 [1967]:32). Therefore it "is written with the assumption that it is still developing. Theory as process, we believe, renders quite well the reality of social interaction and its structural context" (ibid.).

It was very inspiring to let the pressure of premeditated assumptions about the investigation decrease, and really see what was speaking to me from the data I have collected. That is also why during the interviews, in case of uncertainty, I always let the interviewees finish the sentence and formulate their own conceptions about the phenomena in question. By doing so, I prevented this research process from becoming just a costly (in terms of time) reconfirmation of what I already knew beforehand.

Therefore, coming out of this short section about processual theory, I would like to remind the reader to regard my theoretical statements merely as a *current excerpt* of my considerations about society, the body and improvisation. After reading this thesis for diploma – concerned with the field of improvisatory practice in Vienna 2012 – we will be wayfaring further and might even disregard some of the statements being made here about the cultural context of improvisation.

Sensory Ethnography

We have already experienced many ‘turns’ in scientific inquiry: the *reflexive turn* (*Writing Culture* Clifford and Marcus 1986) where the traditional production of ethnographic knowledge by former ethnographers was harshly criticised. Next was the *body turn* with the already mentioned “paradigm of embodiment” (Csordas 1990) that rendered the body as subject and existential ground for culture, rather than object. In the late 1980s we have arrived at the *sensorial turn*:

“The ‘senses,’ in fact, are not just one more potential field of study, alongside, say, gender, colonialism or material culture. The senses are the media through which we experience and make sense of gender, colonialism and material culture. And, in McLuhan’s words, the medium is the message” (Howes 2005:4).

In the following passage I will discuss in more detail what *Sensory Ethnography* exactly seems to be, and about how I implied this new approach within the social sciences in my own fieldwork. If we go back in time a bit, common sense in the Middle Ages considered sensualists as blasphemers. But with the Enlightenment, the senses after being “long despised and attributed to the interesting but improper domain of the devil, were recognized as man’s most valuable servants, and were rescued from their classical disgrace to wait on him in his new venture” (Langer 1942, cited in Stoller 1989:7). Pink enumerates some ethnographic accounts, formulated along sensory ethnography and concerning issues like *housework, laundry, gardening, leisure practices such as walking, climbing, clinical work practices and homelessness, but also nursing, interventional radiology and anaesthesia*. Pink also displays some of the sensorial categories that were being researched in the wake of the 21st century.

These are amongst others: *audition, smell, taste, touch and visual culture*. What makes sense to me, is to highlight the multisensoriality of the embodied encounter between informants and ethnographer which is especially applicable in the field of contemporary improvisational dance in Vienna. So, what we have here is another emphasis of the importance of embodiment as a paradigmatic principle, that is to be applied in the fieldwork an ethnographer does, since the researchers body and the bodies of others are “central to the practical accomplishment of fieldwork” during a participant observation (Coffey 1999:59, cited in: Pink 2009:25). The two most important issues coming from this embodying approach to the field is how the knowledge between informer and ethnographer, and between the informers themselves is being transmitted, and how the individual intends and embodies this knowledge as *embodied agent*. The next important point towards an understanding of sensory ethnography is to acknowledge one’s own subjectivity in the field. Pink called this the paradigm of “sensory subjectivity” (Pink 2009:52), which is not to be regarded as a flaw, but as a given fact that needs to be addressed formally. Since *Sensory Ethnography* deals with the scientific research along all of the senses, I give an example of someone who worked with publishing ethnographies of sound: Steven Feld, whom I first heard about in the lectures at the *Department of Musicology* in Vienna, is a good example. He was working and recording among the *Kaluli* of Papua New Guinea.³⁸ I remember listening to an excerpt of his soundscapes. It was interesting to learn that the ‘background’ sounds of the forest are part of the songs the *Kaluli* sing. The recordings illustrate how a blending of these two levels of soundscape is being practiced musically. This amalgamation is of course culturally meaningful, and thus shapes the perception of the *Kaluli*-worldview. Other fields of inquiry of sensory ethnography belong to the fields of *Theatre Anthropology* (Hastrup 1998; Barba 1995), *Ethno-Mimesis* (O’Neill 2008) and the film genre of *Ethno-Fiction* (Jean Rouch since 1949; see Pink 2009:147). Another formidable example of embodied sensorial ethnography is David Sudnow’s account of jazz piano, “from a player’s perspective”, in which his aim is not to provide an explanatory, but a descriptive and “phenomenological account of handwork as it’s known to a

³⁸ FELD, Steven 1982. *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics and Song in Kaluli Expression*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

performing musician, without consulting the expert opinions of other practitioners (...) or other professional students of conduct” (Sudnow 2001:3).

I want to note that after reading about the relatively new approach of *Sensory Ethnography* I sometimes had the impression that a lot of truisms are being formulated: When in the history of humankind did an encounter of people *not* have a multisensorial and corporeal dimension? Pink thinks that over time, the sensory paradigm will have a desirable impact on the social studies. This impact can add new layers “of knowing, which, when interrogated theoretically, can challenge, contribute to and shift understandings conventional to written scholarship” (Pink 2009:153). Stoller, in this respect, argues that the scientific knowledge-production in anthropology has to “take a sensual turn”, in order to “transform the fundamental relationship among our writers, texts and readers” (Stoller 1989:56). This transformation would imply that in sensory ethnographies the people located in the field themselves “should become the authors” (ibid.). I want to note here, that I am all too well aware of the limitations of textual representations of others. You would have to be an exceptionally gifted author (like Patrick Süskind) to be able vividly describe the olfactory worldview of a person that orientates her or himself mainly by smell. And even then; words will remain words, and the physical experience as well as the lived reality of human beings cannot be reduced to textual reports. Nevertheless, if ethnography is conducted with high sensory awareness and an enhanced focus on the corporeal reality of *enminded bodies*, the written reports will get a step closer to represent the *irreducibility of human experience* (O’Reilly 2005:3).

The ethnographer has to be highly aware of the culturally acquired sensorium with all its biases that is essential for the creation of every ethnographic report, since one “cannot perceive, conceive, speak, or write in a cultural vacuum” (Stoller 1989:139). Therefore, I conclude, what is basal to the new discipline of *Sensory Ethnography* is for the ethnographer to concentrate on her or his own examination and enhancement of the personal multisensoriality, if regarded as *enskilment* needed for conducting proper ethnographic material. For me, these statements call for a physical and perceptual training of anthropologists that ensures a refinement of their sensorial capacities. We should not try to naively relive our childhood in scientific research by reporting narcissistic accounts of how we emotionally experienced the process of investigation, but to make explicit the very central heuristic methodologies in

practice: Our individual perception. Or, in short, to humanise our written reports, knowing they ultimately are but textual excerpts framed by the constraints of socialisation. This is both true for the informants in question, as well as for every anthropologist.

Participant Observation

I will spare the reader Malinowski's suggestions of how "to grasp the natives' point of view" (O'Reilly 2005:9), but I nevertheless have to say something about the specific setting of my own fieldwork: Since I happen to be a professional dancer, I was not perceived as an 'outsider' within the field. Therefore the challenge for me was more about getting 'out' of my common behaviour in a *jam session*, and more into an *observer-awareness* for generating empirical ethnographic data. It was a very interesting experience trying to perceive two states of awareness at the same time: a scholarly, observational awareness and my professional knowledge as a dancer. Since I want to take the paradigm of embodiment in scholarly investigation seriously I wanted to follow Csordas' suggestions of not only attending *to* the body while conducting participant observation but also *with* it, since the body is "now understood as a tool for research" (Csordas 1999:184). Entering a *jam* and moving along with the other participants, I got a corporeal, pragmatic sensation of what the "subject of culture" (Csordas 1990:5) feels like. During my stay in the field, I experienced myself differently. This other feeling, caused by consciously focussing on doing the fieldwork, is what Pink calls the "sensory apprentice" (2009:69):

"The idea of the ethnographer playing a role of apprentice who learns about another culture by engaging and learning first-hand the practices and routines of local people"

I was always taking notes either during the jams when I was not participating, or, if I was involved physically, right after the sessions. I also used these notes as an orientation for the structure of this thesis for diploma. Nevertheless, I knew that these notes "are a way of reducing events, and are inevitably selective" (O'Reilly 2005:99). Since participant observation consists of both participation and observation, it is helpful to keep in mind the conception O'Reilly puts forth, commenting that the ethnographer has to engage in several kinds of double-involvement during the stay in

the field, since “as a participant observer you are someone who is observing as well as taking part.” You have to stand back *and* think along. You have to simultaneously “be unobtrusive and yet ask questions, to join in and yet remain an outsider” (O’Reilly 2005:97).

A sensory approach that highlights the multisensoriality of ethnographic data-generation also acknowledges the limits of verbal articulation. In my participant observation, therefore, I tried to perceive with all of my senses which is not difficult in a setting like *improvisatory jam sessions*: It is anyway beneficial for every improviser participating in a *jam*. I thus sometimes consciously closed my eyes to emphasise my hearing, smelling, and touching sensations. Since I am a professional dancer making my living with my body-instrument (that I simultaneously am), I can grasp the implications of the following comment by Okely, when she talks about sensory observation as drawing “on knowledge beyond language”, regarding this knowledge as “embodied through sight, taste, sound, touch and smell”. She also talks about bodily movement and “its vigour, stillness or unsteadiness” that is being absorbed by the ethnographer (Okely 1994:45; cited in Pink 2009:64). This section is concerned with *Participant Observation* as a set of skills for qualitative anthropological data-generation. Thus the following considerations deal with the problematic predominance of a “cognitive style” in our perceptual socialisation.

The problem of *vision*, as criticised by many authors involved in a reassessment of the methodology of data-generation in the social studies concerns the predominant status of *vision* in scholarly inquiry. Ingold states that the reduction *to* vision in the Modern Western Civilisations has been accompanied by the reduction *of* vision itself. In essence it is about a general balance among all of the senses, without privileging any single one of them. Therefore, to overemphasise the other senses or to devalue the sense of sight is not a solution. It could even cause other dead-ends in the development of the social studies:

“One cannot escape this reduction, inherent in the rhetoric of visualism, simply by erecting an antivisualism in its place (...) For its source lies not in any bias towards the eye over other organs of sense, but in what Johannes Fabian (1983: 123) calls a particular ‘cognitive style’ – one that is likely to prejudice our understanding of all kinds of perceptual experience, whether predominantly visual or not” (Ingold 2000:282).

One possibility to get out of this *cognitive style*, has been mentioned by El Chico, commenting on the effects a jam can have on the perception of reality by solely closing the eyes:

“The optic space, or space-time, renders our environment very clearly. Our sight is something really quick: If you enter a room, you instantly check the spatial relations you’re in. That’s also something our sight is trained to do: to compartmentalise, limit and grasp, to structure, so to say. That’s also how our world is regulated dominantly: society, politics, the rational and mechanised world we live in. But if I deactivate this sense of sight, I enter a more diffuse, more morphogenetic, a less clearly defined space, so to say. Space transforms into something like a dark, slimy mass, through which I can move. That’s changing my perception totally, also my self-perception. I become what the space is to me. Finally, there’s no distinction: I am what surrounds me”

Therefore, while conducting participant observation, the ethnographer has to remain critical to the own sensorial bias: A balance between all the senses in a scientific report would be desirable, since our own “philosophico-cultural bias can often delude our field perceptions, conditioning us to see things which have no importance or meaning to the people we study” (Stoller 1989:57). Especially in the field of contemporary improvisatory dance, other experiences than the often overemphasised visual impressions are just as important: Other participants in a jam might be stored in your memory because of their specific body constitution and surface (central to contact improvisation), their way of enjoying movement, their comments on specific situations in an improvisation or their smell, in addition to their outer appearance. So in a way the setting of my participant observation is in and of itself favouring a multisensory style of ethnography: A balance of all the senses at one’s disposal is highly favoured by a field like contact improvisational jams. In the end of this section about Participant Observation as a central set of skills for the anthropologist I would like to mention something about research ethics.

Ultimately, for O’Reilly, the most simple way to ensure a proper ethical handling of ethnographic material is to try “to ensure that you cause as little pain or harm as possible and try to be aware of your effects on the participants and on your data” (O’Reilly 2005:63). I think it is more than clear that an increased sensitivity with any material derived from what happens during an improvisation is a general must. People

are using these free spaces to enjoy their own movement as well as moving together with others undisturbed.

Now if you, in retrospect, recount every little detail of the various awkward and ambiguous situations (you can experience in every jam), the positive effect of improvisation would be lost. The data I derived from my participant observations points to the fact that it takes several years of intensified improvisational practice to be able to dance ‘naturally’ in the presence of onlookers. Corporeal improvisation can be a field of healing and self-exploration, but it takes years of work and a sharp intention to actually overcome the challenges one can meet during improvisation *jam sessions*. Conducting a ‘participant observation’ while rolling on the floor, keeping the eyes closed for a prolonged period of time, trying to get to know people according to their body surface and physical constitution already implies having to face a sensorial superstructure of mere ‘observation’. The manifold subjective impressions one can experience in a *jam* should probably not be opened for scholarly scrutiny. What can be relevant for anthropological inquiry is the effect that improvisation has on most practitioner’s lives I encountered in jams: The majority experiences corporeal improvisation to sharpen the senses (like a *martial art*), to foster the capability to embark on others’ needs and boundaries (communitarian aspect), and to come at ease with oneself (to enjoy the way of being an *enminded body*). Improvisation means tolerating the way of individual expression as well as being proactive in exploring the current personal issues as *challenges*, rather than insufficiencies of one’s personality.

The Field

The setting of the field for this thesis consists of various formats for artistic improvisational practice in Vienna: *Tanz Atelier Wien*, *WUK*, *Tanzquartier Wien*, and finally the streets of Vienna. The timeframe of the investigation lasted from May 2011 to May 2012,³⁹ and still continues while I write these very lines on my computer. I took as a starting point the image of an inexperienced visitor to Vienna wanting to participate in a contact jam. Who can she/he ask? Where are the other people interested in corporeal improvisatory events to be found in Vienna? After a quick look into the world wide web, various possibilities to attend to improvisatory events in Vienna become visible. Therefore, I focussed on three spaces for improvisation that were not far to seek, and conducted three participant observations in every location. Besides I was involved in regular improvisatory trainings with *Danceability* where improvisation is the principal tool for generating movement material. The data from my ten participant observations in the three above-mentioned spaces, as well as my involvement in various dance projects directed by Vera Rebl throughout the last twelve months gave me considerable insights into the contemporary art scene of Vienna. I knowingly applied even more sensitivity during the conduct of my ethnographic investigation since I am writing not only about my own field of professional work, but my own cultural context. The statements of the 14 conversations with the experts had to be treated with immense care, since I knew this thesis for diploma will be read by some artists of the contemporary art scene of Vienna. In the next section I give a short overview about the three spaces I conducted participant observations in, as well as the three improvisations in public space I participated in during the investigation for this thesis.

Spaces

As mentioned before, I will not enter the debate around *space, place, or emplacement*. This debate – along with the debate around *performativity* – have not yet managed to catch my attention in a pragmatic sense, since they represent two dead-ends to anthropological inquiry. It goes without saying that no dancer could disregard the

³⁹ See *Curriculum Vitae* in the Appendix for the various dance projects of that period.

problem of *space*, since it is essential for dance (space to train, rehearse, perform, move). What seemed interesting to me, are Foucault's conceptions of space, describing that the urban environment fell prey to the regulative mechanisms of the modern nation state, in terms of *enclosure* ("Klausur", Foucault 1995:182). In order to keep the nation-state's business undisturbed, it is important that the people are spatially compartmentalised. This happens along with several governmental techniques: The "disciplinary space" is architecturally enclosed, as in convents, boarding schools, barracks and factories. It strives for *parcelling* ("Parzellierung", Foucault 1995:183) the number of subjects or elements that need compartmentalisation. This happens in order to keep the masses controllable, individuals need to be prevented from *uncertain dispersion, unforeseeable disappearance, undirected wandering about or even dangerous agglomerations*.⁴⁰ Interestingly enough, a space for improvisational inquiry seems to represent quite the opposite. People can move around freely in a preferably non-compartmentalised space in order to discover alternative forms of social realities (see *Part III*).

For my participant observation I limited the spatial field to the three most convenient and easy to find locations for improvisation in Vienna. All three of the spaces are providing platforms for corporeal improvisational jams, mostly visited by dancers alone. From time to time also a musician or two would end up in one of these spaces, but that happens only rarely. The people coming to the jams are from about 18 to 80 years of age. Women and men both are represented equally, if not with a slight female majority. The visitors come from all social classes, cultural and racial background. Since in this thesis for diploma, my interviewees hold a more pronounced position than my notes from my participant observations, I will only display the spaces in short:

⁴⁰ "gegen die ungewisse Verteilungen, gegen das unkontrollierte Verschwinden von Individuen, gegen ihr diffuses Herumschweifen, gegen ihre unnütze und gefährliche Anhäufung: eine Antidesertions-, Antivagabondage-, Antiagglomerationstaktik" (Foucault 1995:183).

WUK (Werkstätten und Kulturhaus)

Address: Währinger Straße 59, A-1090 Wien, web: [wuk.at].

The room 1407⁴¹ in *WUK* represents one of the oldest spaces for improvisation in town. El Pelado told me stories of wild improvisations in the early 1980s, that were going on there. The floor consists of parquet, and the Jam happens every Friday and Sunday evening from about 8 p.m. until whatever time the jam ends. El Fligó told me about one legendary jam that even lasted until 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning. The room is not accessible easily, since it is located in the fourth floor, with no elevator to reach it. Current Costs for participating in the jam: 3€. Average duration of the two weekly sessions: 4 to 5 hours.

Tanz Atelier Wien

Address: Neustiftgasse 38, A-1070 Wien, web: [tanzatelierwien.at]

Sebastian Prantl's *Tanz Atelier* is admired by most visitors that enter this calm space for the first time. It is a space consciously maintained in a clean and somewhat sacred ambient atmosphere. It has white walls, four columns and a parquet flooring magnificent for sliding and turning. Prantl, inspired by eastern philosophies, keeps the space free from commercial overexploitation. That is why most people's experience it as a sanctuary. It is located in the mezzanine, but has a wound staircase, difficult to overcome with wheelchairs. Current costs to participate in a monthly jam: 5€. Average duration of the session: 3 to 4 hours.

Tanzquartier Wien

Address: Museumsplatz 1, A-1070 Wien, web: [tqw.at].

The *Tanzquartier* consist of three spaces for training. All of them have black dancing floor surface, standard for contemporary dance spaces. It is easiest to access amongst the three spaces I present here. It is located in the first floor, accessible because there

⁴¹ Go to: [ci.nspire.net].

is an elevator. Current costs to participate in *Sharing the Dance*, the jam hosted by Kerstin Kussmaul and Christian Apschner: pay as you wish. Average duration of the monthly session: 3 hours.

Coming from three spaces that are framed within a certain personal or institutional constraint, I now turn to the fourth space I investigated in: the streets of Vienna. I do this by highlighting what was the starting point for my fieldwork: A street improvisation/demonstration/happening organised by Vera Rebl.

Vera Rebl's Valid Street Protest

The initial departure of my participant observation was in May 2011 when Vera Rebl contacted me, asking if I wanted to assist her in a street performance/demonstration event. In order to force the renaming of the *Invalidenstraße* in the third district of Vienna, this event was happening for the second time this year. It is called *Invalid Street/Invalidenstraße*,⁴² and because of the discriminating name of the street, rendering people with special needs/talents as 'not having any value to society', it has to be changed. Since it is a street performance, the communitarian as well as political characteristics of the demonstration remind of a *Happening*. Vera Rebl, the initiator and main coordinator of this event, is particularly against *Sonderschulen* (separate schools for 'handicapped' children). The problem with these separated schools is that you press people with learning difficulties into a ghetto-situation. They are being excluded, put in homes, and therefore invisible to society. If the classroom represents the society we live in, there *have to be* minorities, handicapped and mentally disordered individuals represented and ready to be encountered. Rebl locates a main problematic in Austrian society:

"Our society puts children with special talents into separate schools, the old generations into nursing homes. And if nowadays you happen to be smoker or overweight, society tells you that it's your own fault if you get sick. But I think it's just not that easy. People don't always have the capacities to get out of bad habits on their own. And if you think this through, what's the consequence of such a society? That the sick, old and weak are not supported anymore?"

⁴² [invalidstreet.wordpress.com] You can also sign the online petition on the webpage.

That's really an evil line of thought. I think these ideals of being young, elastic and fit can be very dangerous for a society, and it already produces enough unhappy individuals nowadays”

Connected to the above-mentioned statement from Vera Rebl I would like to bring in an observation by Birdwhistell that is concerned with the incorporation of new members into society:

“The child is born into a society already keyed for his coming. A system exists into which he must be assimilated if the society is to sustain itself. If his behavior cannot, after a period of time, become predictable to a degree expected in that society, he must be specially treated. In some societies the nonassimilator will be allowed to die; in others he may be given special institutional treatment. This special treatment can range from deification to incarceration. But ultimately the goal is the same: to make that child's behavior sufficiently predictable that the society can go about the rest of its business” (Birdwhistell 1971:6).

Although in Austria “nonassimilators” will probably not be allowed to die, there still is a massive exclusion and dismissal of people with special needs/talents. The classes of Vera Rebl consist of people with mixed abilities and capabilities, and are highly improvisatory. Why structured improvisation is the best tool for Rebl's approach to dance and choreography is because the visitors of her classes sometimes have limited possibilities in movement. To balance this difference, improvisation is “the ideal technique to render everyone equal again” (int. Vera Rebl). I myself came to be extremely enthusiastic about improvising with *Danceability*, but to a much greater extent than I initially expected at the beginning of the fieldwork. The mixed-ability performance crew of Vera Rebl, consisting of incredibly authentic and strong characters with a more straightforward attitude than most of the professional dancers I met before. The greatest inspiration is the freedom to investigate without unnecessary elitism, vanity or artistic aesthetics getting into the way of the exploration and discovery of movement material. I had the pleasure to participate in improvisations with a higher degree of authenticity and immediacy than ever before in my whole career as a dancer. Or, to say it in a nutshell: Improvising was never before more about improvisation. What Rebl's joy of teaching consists in, she expresses in the following quote from our conversation:

“For me it's incredibly thrilling if a completely heterogeneous group of dancers improvises. If just people in wheelchairs, or just Flamenco performers dance, that's not as interesting for me, because it's exactly about overcoming this gap: In improvisation you always have to let

go of expectations of what will happen next, because other people can have a entirely different plan with it. And this challenge, to dance with someone sitting in an electric wheelchair, or someone who can't control his or her muscle tension, well that's a challenge on one side, but if you manage to succeed in the challenge, it's an incredible feeling on the other hand!"

With *Invalidstreet*, Rebl and others⁴³ try to force political change in Austria. They fight for more equal rights and integration of people with mixed abilities and capabilities (the 'disabled') into 'able bodied' (the 'normal') society. She claims more equality, and less marginalisation of people who simply do not fit into common parameters of how individuals should be thinking, moving, working, understanding, and perceiving in our achievement-oriented society.

"Just because there was a mister Mozart, I find nobody should feel clumsy playing the piano. That would be horrible, wouldn't it? And there are many corpulent, insecure and unhappy people that don't dare to dance because of this pressure of mainstream society, with all its standardised aesthetics, role-models and clichés. And if a corpulent person dances anyway, it's often regarded as ridiculous. That I find puts the Austrian society in a very poor light. If you tell a corpulent Brazilian that he can't dance because he or she is too fat, that person would burst into laughter. But if you tell that to people here, they take it very serious, very personal, and might even give it up"

I guess what a lot of 'able bodied' people cannot fully grasp, is their own potential. Especially in Vienna, famous for its grumpy attitude, the 'state of the art' people could learn a lot *about themselves* while working with the 'disabled'. Then they would see, that maybe their own ignorance is invalid. Maybe it is time to make 2012 the year where everyone rethinks his or her own potential. After doing so one might come to the harsh conclusion that her or his own way of thinking and moving through the Austrian social environment is 'invalid'.

Interviews

The 14 interviews I conducted were "loosely structured", and the questions posed were mainly "open-ended" (like O'Reilly 2005; Pink 2009; and Beer/Fischer 2009

⁴³ Like the Viennese version of Augusto Boal's *Teatro do Oprimido* [tdu-wien.at]

advise). The reason for this is not a lack of focus, but the willingness to let yourself be surprised by data from the field, rather than knowing what you want to hear in advance: “the whole point of not fixing an interview structure with predetermined questions is that it permits freedom to introduce materials and questions previously unanticipated.” (Foote Whyte 1981:35, cited in O’Reilly 2005:118). During the 14 conversations I had, it was really more about maintaining a relaxed, informal atmosphere with my interviewees, being the *common way to do ethnographic interviews* (see O’Reilly 2005; Beer/Fischer 2009). I always had my *Mate*⁴⁴ with me: an Argentinian beverage with a similar effect as coffee. It was sometimes *the attraction of the day*, because many people do not know it in this part of the world. Besides drinking Mate I had, in advance, thought hard about the areas of discourse to pose questions in. These are being displayed in detail in Part III. In short, the data I collected was furnished around the following categories:

Personal Approach to Improvisation, Improvisation and its Origins, Sexuality and Improvisation, Vienna and the Body, Current Formats of Improvisation in Vienna, Future Formats of Improvisation

An interview conducted by the sensory ethnographer must include not only what is communicated “verbally through metaphor” but also what is being told through *gesture, actual touching, sounds images and even other sensory impressions like the taste of offered food and drink during a conversation* (Pink 2009:82). Since I translated all the interviews myself, I oriented the translation along what was happening simultaneously in the physical reality while the words were originally spoken. I was very careful not to manipulate the interviewees with my own presumptions. It was a painful decision, because sometimes I tend to recognise my own thoughts and intentions in people that actually do think and act quite differently. In order to ensure the most scientific data-generation possible I held back commenting on most associations I felt contained in the words of my interviewees, and let them speak instead of me. O’Reilly observes on this that the mind often forgets it is also a body: “The type of response you want to a question is demonstrated

⁴⁴ The mate consists of the *mate* (the vessel), the *yerba* (the weed), and the *bombilla* (kind of straw to drink). It is drunk mainly in Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, but also in the south of Brazil. It has activating effects that come in handy in longer conversations, since it enhances the ability to listen carefully.

in how the question is worded but also in your body language and the interaction between you and the participant” (O’Reilly 2005:121). But of course, auditory attentiveness was not only active during the interviews I conducted. Since constantly relevant statements can be “unadulteratedly uttered by the informants” (O’Reilly 2005:115):

“For ethnographers, interviewing, and listening go on all the time. There may not be a clear distinction between doing participant observation and conducting an interview. A good ethnographer will take any opportunity to listen and to ask questions of individuals and groups whilst participating and observing”

During the 14 conversations with the experts, however, I did not expect to have every category answered in every interview. Spontaneous questions and further categories emerged during the conduct of the interviews. This has been a conscious choice, since I was aiming “to produce a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience”, and therefore “questions will mostly be unstructured and the approach informal” (O’Reilly 2005:126). My general approach along with the methodology of ethnographic inquiry was to apply the skills I acquired in improvisatory practice to the process of data collection. In this context it was about spontaneously and honestly following what is being perceived as potentially interesting in the very moment of the conversation.

Interviewed Personalities

In this last section of the second part of this work I will shortly summarise the categories of questions for the interviews. After doing so I will shortly introduce the interviewed personalities one by one, display links to their homepages where you can find further information about their current projects and biographies. In Part III of this thesis the bundled statements of the interviews are being collected in order to provide concrete statements to the categories in question. Other, more specific statements were included in all the rest of this work, as you might have noticed until now. I always had a written copy of the questions with me during an interview. Depending on how the conversation would go about, I would react improvisatory with my questions. Therefore, I tried to practice improvisation also in this respect, not wanting

to let a stiff or rigid state of mind interfere with a flowing and dynamic conversation.

The questions I posed were grouped as follows:

) Personal Approach:

Why do you practice improvisation?

Where lies your main interest in improvisation?

) Historic connection:

Do you think that improvisation is still associated with the “Hippie Era”?⁴⁵

Is there still a political implication in doing improvisation in 2012?

) Sexuality and contact improvisation: Personal and social boundaries?

) Vienna and the Body:

Do you feel that the Viennese approach to the body is in some way specific?

What about gender-roles? Are those processed in improvisations?

) Formats⁴⁶ of improvisation in Vienna:

Are the formats for improvisations in Vienna satisfying?

What other formats (concerning style, time, and space) would you prefer?

Are there enough possibilities for interdisciplinary work in Viennese Jams?

In the next section, that simultaneously represents the last section of Part II, I present the interviewees in short and in chronology. All of the conversations took place in Vienna. Two of them in August 2011 and twelve in April 2012. You may realise that exactly what I criticise in the section about Vienna and Gender, (the big Gender Gap, and the injustice in this country concerning gender and equal pay, etc.) is somehow findable in my own presentations: the relation of men–women interviews is dramatically male-biased (only 3 are female). But in my defence: the constellation of interviewees is in *no* way to be understood as representational. To counterbalance this impression, I want to mention that out of the 28 participants of improvisatory events I

⁴⁵ This was the time where the origins of contact improvisation are to be found (see Part I)

⁴⁶ By *formats* I mean the various locations or opportunities that are provided by the organisers of different *jams* in Vienna for interested individuals. These formats are framed mainly by spatial and timely boundaries, but also strongly altered by the intention of the improvisers participating in a *jam*.

talked to in the field, 23 were female and only five were male, since in numbers a slight domination of female participants in dance classes can be observed in the improvisatory community in Vienna. Thus, also if the final constellation of voices that are made audible in this thesis is in no way representational, I hope one can still regard my selection of people as interesting.

Martin Kilvady (*1974)

Interview setting: Impulstanz 2011, at Arsenal.

Interview length: 45 min.

You can find his biography and more information on: [lesslovaks.com].

David Zambrano (*1959)

Interview setting: also caught him at Impulstanz 2011, at Arsenal.

Interview length: 23 min.

Visit his own webpage: [davidzambrano.org]

Johannes Stolba (*1982)

Interview setting: WUK Beisl.

Interview length: 71 min.

Informations about the jams he is organising in WUK: [ci.nspire.net]

Franz Hautzinger (*1963)

Interview setting: At Franz's.

Interview length: 109 min.

All current information on his peculiar webpage: [franzhautzinger.com]

Hans Tschiritsch (*1954)

Interview setting: At Hans's

Interview length: 73 min.

Take a look at his newest inventions at: [tschiritsch.e-artist.info]

Frans Poelstra (*1954)

Interview setting: Naschmarkt at Café Deli

Interview length: 68 min. (Georg Blaschke passed by coincidentally)

I'm very sorry, you'll have to look for more info at: [unitedsorry.com]

Georg Blaschke (*1965)

Interview setting: Naschmarkt at Café Deli

Interview length: 58 min.

You can find everything about him at: [georgblaschke.com]

Nilolaus Selimov (*1962)

Interview setting: His office.

Interview length: 42 min.

Find him on the page of his ex-dance company: [tanztheater-homunculus.at]

Vera Rebl (*1959)

Interview setting: at Vera's

Interview length: 81 min.

See the current projects of this very busy lady at: [danceability.at]

Sebastian Prantl (*1960)

Interview setting: Tanz Atelier Wien, later a Café in the 7th district.

Interview length: 83 min.

Find his workings on the homepage of the Tanz Atelier Wien: [tanzatelierwien.at]

Christian Apschner (*1964)

Interview setting: at Christian's

Interview length: 46 min.

Information about his treatment and philosophy: [retune.at]

Robert Trappl (*1939)

Interview setting: outside the Institute for Artificial Intelligence

Interview length: 73 min.

He is head of the Research Institute for Artificial Intelligence: [ofai.at]

Kerstin Kussmaul (*1969)

Interview setting: Stadtpark

Interview length: 43 min.

Her courses, and current projects at: [gravityhappens.net]

Lore Heuermann (*1937).

Interview setting: Stadtpark

Interview length: 79 min.

Admire her works at: [loreheuermann.at]

Part III

Findings

Bundled Statements from Interviews

The Effects of Improvisation on the Lifecourse

From Hyperawareness to Saturation

Do you have time for improvisation?

Improvisation and Sexuality

Tuning and Swarming

Anthropotechnique

Conclusion

Findings

In this third and final part the most relevant findings are presented and discussed. I start by listing the findings closest connected to the statements of my interviewees. Later, the effects of improvisation on the lifecourse are presented and discussed that derive from the data of the interviews, the participant observation as well as literature. Finally I will conclude this thesis for diploma by quickly summarising the main statements and insights from all the work in connection to the hypotheses listed in the very beginning of this work. Since we talked a lot about interrelation of phenomena and the dissolution of dichotomies already in the first two parts of this work, it may occur that some statements are found more than once in the following elaborations. I consciously tried to avoid having important interconnections cut for the sake of compartmentalisation – which I try to actively dissolve with this work – since it is hard to rigidly categorise sets of phenomena that are really interconnected.

Bundled Statements from Interviews

Here I will repeat the question-set or category from the interviews and then the bundled statements out of all the 14 conversations I could summarise. I do not want to give the impression that all interviewees agree on every point, but there is quite a noticeable common ground to the statements recorded. Since I display in a summarising fashion, a certain degree of generalisation was applied. I nevertheless find the amount of concordance outstanding.

) Why do you work with improvisation?

The playfulness: Finding an uncomplicated, playful way to deal with the frame of improvisation, whatever that might be: some steps, some notes, some persons with special talents, or capacities, space, etc. Improvisation is an organic approach to structure: You can work on choreography or composition while improvising. Therefore it is a creative source for the generation of material.

For some interviewees, improvisatory techniques can be compared to the way children approach the world: immediate, free of preconceptions, playful and scrutinising at once: This explorative way to approach the world, however, is not senselessly fooling around, but actually exercising. Children do it in such an unrestrained way, most adults of our Western culture have lost the comprehension for.

Furthermore, improvisation is an excellent tool in pedagogy because it throws the improviser back onto her- or himself. This then propels the investigator to critically reflect on her or his way of learning and exploring the unknown. Therefore, improvisation can contribute to artistic emancipation from predominant aesthetics in dance, music and drama.

Why most of my informants work with improvisation is grounded in the fact that the practice of improvisation itself is enjoyable. By chance or conscious decision, one enters spheres of enhanced learning about oneself and the social environment. According to the degree of self-awareness, one can challenge and explore the personally uncharted terrain in one's own pace, rendering the practice of improvisation something healthful.

) Improvisation and its Origins?

Depending on the knowledge of people coming to a *jam*, some participants know about the historic origins of contact improvisation and some do not have a clue about these social movements from the 1960s and 1970s of North America. It is important how a Jam is labelled, because it will alter participants' expectations and therefore the modality of the jam.

) Does improvising still have political implications in 2012?

For most of the interviewees this stopped to happen in the 1970s. In essence they think that most of the artists' work in Vienna is not political anymore. Another point is that some of the work can be regarded as political, but the artists themselves did initially not intend their work to be perceived as political.

In the Europe of the early 1980s, the spirit of anti-establishment social movements was still stronger. Also here in Vienna, El Pelado and others were occupying the WUK at that time. But it seems that on its way over the grand lake, most of its intensity and philosophic background was lost. Since in Europe a different demographic composition of society is present, certain social movements did not have the same degree of heterogeneity of people as prerequisite for growth. It was mostly the artistic techniques and approaches that were adopted, but not philosophy and action.

Interestingly enough, almost all of the interviewees said that of course you *can* see a political implication in people doing contact improvisation nowadays: The decision of two people to get together in a room and start to roll over and under one-another has a political implication. El Chico even called it "revolutionary" to improvise in *WUK*.

Another way to regard improvisatory corporeal practice as political would be the notion of freedom: If a space is open for investigation, egalitarian, without leadership. One could regard a *jam* as an 'alternative society' for the time being. Just as *Happenings* form events of alternative communitarian action with political implications, statements and critique. *Jams* can be seen as platforms for non-institutional knowledge-production and -consummation that stand in stark contrast to our stringently regulated, law enforced society.

It strongly depends on the onlooker if the political is perceivable in improvisation. Since my informants have exquisite knowledge of improvisation and its historic development, political content is readable in improvisational practice. To render it visible for a wider audience, however, you have to consciously communicate clear political images or statements in performances, or take action in specific public places with strong political connotations.

If you recall the remarks of Vera Rebl's Streetprotest (see *Part II*), it can already be regarded as a political statement to not perform with corpulent people. Since our preconceptions of beauty and aesthetics are so predominant, we do not even consciously think about it anymore. But then again: Would we regard ballet as political, just because of its conservative aesthetics? Depending on the individual's way of looking at it, we could.

) Improvisation and the art market:

An important concern of all the interviewees was that the performing arts should not lose themselves in elitism and vanity. With these two key elements of artistic idleness, artists exclude the public discourse, and just go for those performances that sell better. If it is about making money or pleasing the crowd, contemporary art is definitively the wrong profession. Experience shows that artists concerned with material profit tend to lose political brisance. Furthermore the personal and professional development is not ensured for artists that pursue capitalist surplus.

It depends strongly where you perform improvisation, since in the very beginnings of contact improvisation, the public was an integral part of it. That goes hand in hand with the demonstrations and occupations that were on the everyday agenda in the 1960s and 1970s in North America. Some artists of that time saw it as obligatory not to perform in theatres and grand stages, to further propel their political messages.

One reason why improvisation is not so well-known in Vienna is because it is difficult to sell a 'product' which is processual. Improvisation is scarcely compatible with business because of its risky, semi-structured dramaturgies that are set on stage

in real-time and interactive. That is why improvisation stays a minority program: if you take the experiment too far on stage it is not as consumable and sellable anymore.

El Fligó mentioned Nancy Stark Smith in this context. She spoke of “gaps” that can open up while improvising with very loose scores. These *gaps* have transformative potential for the artist, but if one fails in the struggle to make something out of it, most spectators feel fooled or made indignant by the artists, since it often antagonises their expectations of a performance.

The way performative structure is prepared can be a criterion for the organisers’ invitation of artists, since no pre-selection would be too great of a risk for business. Some of those organisers may think that improvisation equals *not being prepared well enough*. So, really, it is a question of market economy of a ‘product’. Within the fine arts, as La Roja observed, this economisation of artistic work has long reached its worst forms. She mentioned Damien Hirst as representing this mixture of clever artist/shameless capitalist, minding his business at the ‘art stock market’.

) Gender and improvisation:

The general remarks of my interviewees concerning gender and improvisation pointed towards the fact that women predominate the profession in sheer numbers. You can also observe this in dance classes, where women mostly outnumber men. However the numbers of male/female participants in dance classes and workshops may be distributed, most of my interviewees stated that most influential and powerful positions in the institutionalised performing arts are still predominantly held by men.

In dance, La Jefa remarked that men who are interested to improvise in her classes are anyway ‘no typical men’. What she means by saying that is the fact that to a certain degree, men engaged in the field of improvisatory practice generally emancipated themselves at least partially from classical gender-roles. Thus, although corporeal improvisation would be an excellent opportunity to rethink those social categories, those men that really would need their gender to be updated “don’t make it to our training”. She rather thinks, however, that the gender of men will be an important field for future investigation, since it is still more of a taboo subject in our society.

La Boca said that an artistic scene like the one around contact improvisatory practice in any way attracts mostly people who self-reflectively deal with gender in their private lives. Interestingly enough, she observes that the most frequent constellation in contact improvisation is for a woman and man to dance together. Next there are women and women, and least of all men with men dancing together.

In the fine arts, Roja observed that her life-long fight for the equality of women cannot stop in 2012: Still today, women are dramatically underrepresented in the famous exhibitions and festivals. In the discipline of visual arts, it seems that again men are holding most of the prestigious positions. But, she concluded: “Looking at Austrian Politics it is evident that the best are not the ones holding the top positions.”

) Sexuality and Improvisation

Improvisational jams are definitely a good opportunity to explore one’s sexual and emotional boundaries. But here again, what is experienced sexual in a *jam*, is highly subjective. El Chico commented on this:

“During Jams, I can also experience and enjoy sexuality. But not differently from all the other sensations you can experience during a jam: A sexual improvisation can be as enjoyable and also as weird as any other form of dancing together. I guess it depends on your own boundaries, and those of your partner”

More experienced improvisers are mostly looking for specific intensified qualities during a jam. Sexuality is amongst one of them, but does not enjoy special attention.

One very common notion amongst most of the interviewees, being themselves highly experienced improvisers, goes back to the origins of contact improvisation in the early 1970s. Steve Paxton proclaimed, to not let sexual and psychological issues interfere with the functionality of the improvisational exploration. If you, without suppressing your sexuality, let it be a part of the dance just as all the other qualities it can involve you will learn most from it. Improvisation is a chance to perceive human physicality in a pure, experimental and playful way that is not primarily focussed on the sexual dimensions of such an engagement. The cultural meaning or significance of certain movements, body parts and gender roles is more likely to be reassessed and questioned rather than reaffirmed during a *jam*.

One interesting comment from El Chico on sexuality in Viennese improvisational jam formats was as follows:

“The question about sexuality in improvisation is actually a broader one: In our society at large, most people don’t creatively deal with their own sexuality. Most of them don’t even consciously address it to a degree where they find out about their personal preferences. They just adapt conservative notions from mainstream culture”

To close the presentation of the findings for this question-set about sexuality, one can say that in general my interviewees regard sexuality more as a hindrance for practitioners of improvisatory practice on a profound and regular level. Since the dynamic and athleticism of the dance demands full awareness, it is more comparable to a martial art rather than to swinger clubs. For newbies the supposed sexual quality of improvisation can come quite as a shock. This initial confrontational potential surely depends on the individual’s own level of sexual emancipation. El Cabrón humorously commented on this:

“I never even considered going to an improvisation trying to get to know women. That would be like going to the nude beach to find a partner; the chances would be even worse. I think you’d have better chances in a random bar, than in a contact jam”

) Vienna and the Body:

Many of the findings derived from the interviews show that the Viennese relation to the body is worthy of improvement. I quote Chico again here, representatively:

“Many people who come to the jams the first time are shocked: they are distraught by the strange way people move on, over, through one-another, and the sounds they make doing this. There you see the ‘normal’ conceptions of our society clash onto those of the improvisational community: It can be a shocking experience for some”

Loco, Horri and Boca reported about the fear and stress that is indoctrinated in musical education concerning the symbiosis musician–instrument. This observation can be mirrored by the often complicated and restrained relationship the majority of Austrians have to their bodies. Most of my interviewees stated that the relationship to “man’s most natural instrument” is often in some way distorted and neurotic. To include improvisatory practice in Vienna’s institutional education after secondary

school would be regarded as beneficial by most of my interviewees in order to counteract such a phenomenon of mainstream society.

Bodywork in Austrian society, as El Cabrón observed, is mostly associated with the build-up of muscles in fitness centres⁴⁷ and body techniques like *jogging*, *Nordic Walking or skiing*. A soft movement quality (like in Tai Chi) is mostly regarded as an improper body technique for male Austrians, since it does not comply with male gender-stereotypes currently in power. Especially in the scientific community my interviewees located an exceptional lack of embodiment.

A critical comment concerning the subliminal presuppositions present in the Viennese improvisational community comes from La Boca. This presupposed ‘agreement’ of the actions performed in a *jam* is expected to be met by all the participants. It seems to be caused by the fear that in improvisatory events culturally predefined boundaries could be trespassed, which would then be anticipated as dangerous. Since improvisational jams are expected to be an experimental field, participants seem to have the need to know beforehand how far the experimentation will go. Boca said it is often disappointing

“that we always seem to need an agreement, as background security. Thus the self-conception of Vienna’s contact improvisation community to be open-minded is actually not true. There definitely are clear agreements, where the limits have to be. Therefore certain interesting areas are not available for exploration”

) Time frequency and format of jams?

Most of the interviewees stated that a good frequency of improvisational jams would be two or three times a week for several hours, depending on the daily condition.

The recommended length of a session is from 3 up to 72 hours (including periods of rest). For lesser-experienced participants it is more helpful to enter prolonged *jams* (starting from 3 hours minimum) since the process to abandon common ways to perceive time and other bodies needs a few hours in the beginning. Over time the duration ‘to get into’ an improvisation is shortened gradually.

⁴⁷ As represented by the renowned native Austrian Arnold Schwarzenegger.

After about one and a half hours, participants of a *jam* start to understand their daily physical and emotional condition and their location in the totality of the jam. After this warm-up phase, the conductor of a session can experience the *whole space moving as a totality*, as the experience of my interviewees shows.

One dangerous mistake concerning the length of improvisations would be to exceed the limits of one's physical or emotional and psychological capacities to an extent that is harmful for the individual. Another considerable mistake would be to apply the same criteria of our achievement-oriented society to improvisation. Lore Heuermann provided me with an example of her own work:

"I can't paint well if I just have two hours of time. That's not helping. If I'm working with an ensemble of dancers I need two weeks to enter the group, get to know the music, the scenography, the setting. I have to get to know every single performer. When all this is accomplished, all the work seems to run by itself"

) What formats or platforms do you dream of?

What I found as a general consensus amongst almost all the interviewees working in the contemporary dance scene of Vienna, was that generally they are content with the possibilities for students of dance, music and drama to find enough educational infrastructure for the acquisition of basic skills in all the styles of the performing arts. Furthermore, also if the subsidies for dance and other performing arts are gradually dwindling in the last years, there are still many possibilities for professionals to get subsidies and support from the City of Vienna. However, those independent artists active in the contemporary scene expressed their specific disappointment with the *Tanzquartier Wien*.⁴⁸ It should have been the common nominator of the contemporary art scene, providing performance and training space to the freelancers that needed it most. As it turned out a lot of dancers avoid getting near it. Points of criticism regarded the financial infrastructure as much too costly and unpropitious, the access

⁴⁸ These statements are intended as a summary of critical statements about the cultural institution *Tanzquartier* from the side of professional artists of Vienna's independent art scene. Since Apschner or Kussmaul are giving monthly improvisational workshops in *Tanzquartier*, I did not include any of their statements concerning this issue.

to the space as too bureaucratic, and the spatial compartmentalisation as “not living up to this city’s architectural and innovative standards”.

Without wanting to attack *Tanzquartier* I nevertheless feel obliged to shortly recount a story that, as I was told, has occurred about five or six years ago within this institution. La Jefa told me she wanted to participate in a release class in *Tanzquartier*, but since she uses a wheelchair to move about, she could not perform all the exercises ‘as they should be done’. Being an experienced and skilled professional, she would not have had any problems finding her own way to make use of the exercises – just to concentrate on the arms and the upper body for example – but the teacher and the receptionist refused to let her participate in this ‘open’ class:

Teacher: ‘You wouldn’t be happy in my class’

La Jefa: ‘I suggest you could let me see for myself, couldn’t you?’

T: ‘Yeah, we’re rolling on the floor.’

J: ‘I *can* roll on the floor, I have no problem with that.’

T: ‘Yes, but we stand up!’

J: ‘But I can interpret that, no?’

T: ‘No, I think it’s not good for you, and you wouldn’t be happy, and me neither, and...’

J: ‘The program says: ‘open for all levels’, don’t I have any level?’

Receptionist: ‘Yes, it is open for all levels but if someone like *you* is coming, you have to call in advance and ask.’

J: ‘So what am I now? Am I an alien, or what?’

La Jefa has a very strong personality. With this short second-hand report of the conversation that happened in *Tanzquartier*, I surely do not intend to raise the reader’s sympathy for the ‘poor disabled people’, because they mostly do not ask for sympathy. What they ask for is to be treated equally. I just brought this up because it seems that some of the institutionalised spaces for contemporary performing art are not meeting their commitments in a way that many professional artists hoped they would.

We come to the last point of this final set of categories for question of the 14 Interviews I conducted. It concerns the artists' notion that the contemporary art scene significantly lacks of solidarity. Although admitting that they are not always passionate about being a part of this professional community, they all miss a certain kind of uniting spirit. Since the prices for space in Vienna are rising rapidly, it is ever more important to provide affordable, accessible space for everyone, preferably without any physical or bureaucratic barriers (see *Appendix*).

) The Scene's desire for more Solidarity

El Loco said that what disappoints him most is the current importance of money over solidarity in the contemporary art scene of Vienna. Applying for subsidies⁴⁹ and getting money renders most artists fearful of losing this accomplished advantage. As a result, everyone is *cooking his own soup*,⁵⁰ fearful of losing material benefits:

“What good does it do for the people? Nothing! Quite the contrary: The creative potential gets bound-up and solidified in materialism, therefore it needs attention and a lot of energy to keep it that way, blocking all possibilities for new circulations of that creative potential”

El Arri was stating that he really likes the scene, and everyone involved: “I'm very enthusiastic about the scene, I enjoy being a part of it, I think it's great! What I don't like, however, is the distribution of resources”. The problem is that, in his opinion, this distribution is not giving enough opportunity and freedom to research in alternative performance contexts and spaces around in Vienna.

Solidarity among the artists is a precondition for the survival of the contemporary scene, since a unified statement can have a more dramatic impact on local subsidy measures. El Horri and other interviewees stated that if the resource of space dwindles more in the future, then maybe the best way to articulate protest is to go an occupy a public park in order to reclaim space for improvisation in Vienna:

⁴⁹ Since there is a very limited amount of subsidies for Vienna's contemporary art scene, there is a natural competition amongst the contemporary artists in Vienna. This, in its essence, is not necessarily a bad thing. What motivated me to display the statements surrounding the distribution of subsidies were the many claims of my interviewees for more solidarity amongst each member of the scene.

⁵⁰ This phrase signifies that everyone is only concerned with his or her personal benefit in the distribution of material resources, regardless of the greater good for contemporary arts in Vienna. In other words, what bothers El Loco is the egoistic purposes with resources intended for the totality of the scene; “jeder kocht da sein eigenes Süsschen”.

“But regarding the space-problem in Vienna: Maybe it is good to go to a park, because there you have publicity, you have space, and if you go and improvise with a bunch of people for a year or so, it will have an effect, no question! (...) Maybe you could even see it like this: Every time one of you gets arrested, it’s actually a gain for the whole campaign, cause you can say: ‘Look, we get arrested for improvising publicly, so better give us proper space to do so!’”

La Roja probably has been politically active from the very moment she was born. She said that sadly enough political history is repeating, and you can observe a certain kind of swinging movement from left to right. She consciously avoided being a party member of any political formation, and has to remark the following observation:

“It seems that it has to repeatedly come to a certain point in the course of history, and then, when the nationalists are getting too powerful again, there is a countermovement to the left. I already thought: ‘That can’t be it: This two-sided, monotonous movement’, but it seems to be a recurring principle in our society, which renders me rather sad”

In the end a lack of solidarity limits every artist’s possibility for professional work. If subsidies get less and less in the future, how could anyone afford to put an ensemble with more than 4 or 5 performers on stage? What if a contemporary choreographer wants to deliver a statement that needs twenty people to be communicated adequately? El Pelado notices:

“Jams are the last events where you see a group of more than 20 performers doing something together. It seems that if this trend continues, the only possibility for us to come close to giving bombastic statements will be to organise demonstrations. Then we can deliver our messages big-time once again”

After having presented the bundled statements of all the 14 conversations I conducted during the one-year duration of my ethnographic investigation, I now turn to the effects a continual practice of corporeal improvisation can have on the lifecourse. I tried to discuss the findings in close reference to the data generated from the field. Again I want to excuse for potential statements that occur multiple times in the following pages. Since I regard many of the insights as interconnected, the characteristics of the findings can sometimes seem very familiar.

The Effects of Improvisation on the Lifecourse

This section concerns the effects improvisation can have on your everyday life. Since I have been extensively working and exploring within the field of artistic corporeal improvisation for about 8 years, I by now have sufficient proof of the advantageous effects improvisation can have on the lifecourse. I would say that improvisation has had the most significant impact on how I perceive and live. But there are dead-ends to this beneficial practice as well. I find it highly objectionable if the motivation for being an improviser is entering an elitist community. Vanity, or the individual's joy of reaching superior fitness in order to outclass others would be other reprehensible motivations within the artistic exploration of human potential through improvisation. Another problematic factor in an urban environment (where you are probably situated while reading these very lines) is *hyperesthesia*.⁵¹ I observed this along with extensive working periods as professional dancer: You sensitise your perception to a point where the exhaust gases of the automobiles, the noisiness of the city, the rough and grumpy inhabitants of an urban environment can get too much to endure. Since Vienna currently is the number one in Mercer's worldwide ranking concerning the "quality of living" in cities,⁵² I do not want to give the impression that this city is a dangerous place to be (it really is not). Therefore, when I recognised signs of *hyperesthesia* in other colleagues who complained about their misery, I often recommended joining a convent in the countryside. Too much of a sensory refinement is not really beneficial in an urban environment. In the following section I will discuss the positive effects improvisatory practice might have on the lifecourse, if the improviser is bold enough to face personally difficult issues, and actively work them out within improvisatory practice. These effects are being displayed as follows: First I talk about the skill of *Hyperawareness*, where the improviser learns to perceive not only from a subjective point of view, but also as the totality of the improvisation could be observed from an outside onlooker. Connected to this is the effect of *saturation*: the experience in a jam is – willingly or unwillingly – gradually altering everyday social actions, since along with improvisatory practice one learns to decide which physical and psychological states are most beneficial for personal growth.

⁵¹ Hyperesthesia involves an over-average increase in sensitivity to stimuli of the senses.

⁵² [mercer.com/articles/quality-of-living-survey-report-2011], accessed on the 21st of May 2012, 13:00 CET.

Later, I will elaborate on common time-perception and time-use, and the problematic implications it can have for the corporeal dimension of the lived reality of *wayfaring enminded bodies*. I will argue that along with practicing the skill of improvisation, an emancipation from common considerations of time-use can be a possible outcome of extensive and longstanding attendance in *jams*. Afterwards, I take a closer look at the interconnection of sexuality, dance and improvisation, since corporeal movements seem to always have a sexual connotation. This can again be problematic and put the practice of improvisation in bad light, which I want to counterbalance with my argumentations. Furthermore, I will shortly mention the *tuning-effects* improvisatory practice has on the participants of a jam, and why humans can benefit from *swarming* in an improvisation. In the end of presenting the main insights about the effects of improvisation on the lifecourse, I will close with *anthropotechnique*, a section concerned with more concrete characteristics and implications a beneficial practice of improvisation can inhere, derived from the data of my fieldwork, as well as literature.

From Hyperawareness to Saturation

Ingold reminds us that what Mauss called *habitus* is actually very graspable in physical motion, and not only discursive matter. It is an intrinsically social activity that can be found walking down a city street, because “its sociality does not hover above the practice itself, in some ethereal realm of ideas and discourse, but is rather immanent in the way [of] a person’s movement” (Ingold 2011:43). This movement, situated in a social environment, can literally be *everything*. So what I assert here is nothing less than regarding improvisation as a tool to work directly on our *habitus*: To alter or transform our habitus, so to say. This is nothing new, obviously: we do it every day. There also might be many individuals that do it consciously for their personal benefit without critically reflecting on what they actually do. But I think, nevertheless, that the conscious and emancipatory alteration of our habitus needs a certain quality only to be found in ensemble improvisations. Why an ensemble? Because it seems that something in the *conditio humana* provokes an exponentiation

of knowledge-generation when we experience within a group of people: For the time being, we do not only have access to the brain capacity of the totality of the group but we also share – willingly or unwillingly – the corporeal knowledge of all *enminded bodies* of the group.⁵³ Victor Turner called this phenomenon *communitas*.⁵⁴ El Loco was elaborating on this in his own words. He recounted an experience from one of the singing workshops he gives. He specialised in overtone-singing which he uses impressively in his musical performances. He recalls a situation from one of the workshops he held:

“With these groups; someone tries something new (...) and suddenly, the tone is there: something loosens up and the tone gets better. She realises that and everyone else realises it at the same time. Because she radiates this feeling of accomplishment, which is noticeable also visually, the others are witness to this progress. (...) That’s why it’s real, also for her, because it’s really happening; every single one makes a step forward, that’s how it works”

But how could this effect be ‘materialised’ into a practical technique of improvisation? I would like to bring in El Cabrón at this point, because he mentioned an essential skill for every human being. You can learn it at certain classes of improvisatory technique for ensemble work:

“What was an important issue in the 1980s was equality, justice; you don’t push someone else against the wall, everyone has his or her right. I did some workshops for ensemble improvisation, where it was about ‘how do I put others in the foreground? Enhance others? How can I step back to put others in the spotlight?’ It was about learning that, and then, within the totality, you would also get your strong moment, just like in a jazz band basically”

What El Cabrón is talking about here, Gary Peters calls *hyperawareness*, which in short is the *fundamental relationship between the improviser and the totality of the improvisation* rather than among the improvisers themselves (Peters 2009:2). As mentioned in the beginning of this section, I understand *hyperawareness* as the attempt of the subjective participant of an improvisation to interpret her or his own actions in a *jam* as well as the actions performed by all the other participants as

⁵³ As a matter of fact, *enminded bodies* did also learn from organisms that were not even supposed to have a ‘mind’ in the first place. The most ingenious inventions have been derived from what we call ‘nature’.

⁵⁴ For further information about Turner’s concept of this phenomenon, consult: TURNER, Victor (et al.) 2009. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Aldine Transaction: New Brunswick.

observed from an outside onlooker: How could the current situation in a *jam* be interpreted/perceived from outside? How could I contribute to enhance one or more of the statements currently made by others? (also reduction would be an enhancement in this case) What part do I play in the totality of the current action?

Hyperawareness is a specific form of *enskilment* that El Horri talked about when he mentioned the most basic skills for a musical improviser. In regard to the performance of concerts, composed *both interactive and in real-time*, for El Horri it is mainly about internalising musical dramaturgy. You do this by bringing up the big guns, read: all the capacities you have:

“Everything! All of it! Of course also your intellectual capacities, why not? That’s actually giving you the freedom in the first place because you still, or even more so, can do whatever you like. It’s also about being conscious about the dramaturgy. You go for it, but not until you’re completely entangled in it. Apart from listening inside, you need to hear it from outside as well, because finally you’re playing for the audience”

The choreographer/performer El Pelado reaches *hyperawareness* through regularly asking profound philosophical questions in an improvisatory manner – he confronts this challenge by putting himself on stage. He has been one of the pioneers of the Viennese corporeal improvisers active since the early 1980s, therefore representing one of the most renowned and experienced improvisers in town. Despite of that it was only in April this year, when I attended to one of his performances that I witnessed the following interview-scene El Pelado recounted for me in the conversation we had:

“And the reporter also asked me again ‘so was that all planned now?’ and I said: ‘Of course! It’s called Trans Art Works; the concept is the materialisation of the work in the moment of performance’. That’s the moment most people remark: ‘But then you JUST improvised!’ and I always have to legitimise the approach of real-time composition once again: ‘Why JUST improvised? What’s the bad thing about it?’”

Hyperawareness seems to be a rather infamous skill in Austria. One of the characters very much preoccupied with changing this is El Maestro. He is active at the very heart of what can be regarded as the pool of Austrian potential for future improvisational formats in Vienna: He is holding a very important position in an institution partly teaching in contemporary improvisation. This institution also incorporates acting, jazz music, musical theatre, and dance. In the latest workshops

also students from the *Academy of the Applied Arts* joined the courses, working in the field of *social design*. I was very glad to hear this kind of merging takes place here. Nowadays El Maestro is mainly teaching improvisation, which he regards as the most important tool for learning about dance, choreography and about oneself. El Maestro provides us with just another description of *hyperawareness*:

“it is about entering this totality, without at the same time losing the feeling for where the others are in the room. These are really important skills: to be conscious about all the movers in the space around you, and knowing simultaneously what it looks like from outside. That’s an essential for mastering improvisation”

Every action we perform during an improvisatory event is basically the same as the actions we perform in everyday life. The only difference is that in real-life situations, we cannot revoke our actions: They will have consequences in our social environment. Therefore an experimental approach to everyday life and the quotidian interactions with the individuals we encounter in our social environment are highly precarious and need indefinitely more justification than the actions performed within the frame of an improvisation. During improvisatory events, however, all of our conscious as well as our subliminal action-repertoire derived from everyday life experience is available as an area of inquiry. Therefore, if a conscious investigation in improvisation is practiced over a prolonged period of time, the effect of *Saturation* causes a significant and altering impact on quotidian being-in-the-world (our *habitus*). The finding of the *saturation effect* derives solely from the conversation with La Boca. It seems to me that the skill of *hyperawareness* is a good example on how improvisatory practice can influence our everyday life, if we are bold enough to integrate newly explored physical and mental states from improvisation into our quotidian life. La Boca ingeniously described *saturation* as follows:

“Here the notion of saturation comes into play, because practice is something you do on a regular basis. And practice also means that you become what you do. So, in this regard, improvisation is the practice of states; of state of minds, or physical states, in which I like to linger, in which I’d like to live my life, and that’s exactly what I exercise in improvisations”

And without further commenting, the second ingenious remark from La Boca:

“In principle, it’s a somatic question. The physical experience of reality. But this corporeal experience from improvisation; to be able to lift a man for example, surely does something to

me. It will change the way I approach men in normal life significantly, that's beyond doubt. The only mistake you could make in this regard, is to 'compartmentalize', that is: If your experiences from improvisation stay in one reality, while you life outside of improvisation stays in another. It wouldn't be beneficial to deal with those experiences as separate from each other"

Since during an improvisational event, there is a 'natural' constellation of onlookers and performers – just like in real life – everything you do can be regarded as a social act. El Maestro compared the situation in a *jam* with going to work by public transport. You also have to deal with a physical mass of people, “a closeness full of manifold odours and types of people”, which is not much different from a *jam*. That is the reason why in improvisational inquiry our everyday boundaries are challenged and not some abstract or elitist body technique. It is really us and our personal issues, not some artificial clown-other and its freakishness. El Maestro, a rhetorically talented man, has made the following observation:

“Things you have to deal with in your everyday life, you also will deal with in improvisation. You have to get together with people you'd rather not meet in private, or who are just not really likeable for you. Maybe there's a fight going on between you and others, etc. So you constantly have to surpass your own boundaries, because the improvisation asks for it. And what that means, this expanding of your boundaries, this demand for self-questioning about certain patterns in your life, your behaviour; Well that's already the first step towards a political consciousness. (...) And if you think of contact improvisations, where women are carrying men around, a lot of important statements are made implicitly”

To close this section I would like to summarise the above-mentioned statements central to the effects of improvisatory practice on the lifecourse:

Hyperawareness is a skill you can learn in ensemble improvisations; *an internalisation of dramaturgy*, or the awareness for what is happening simultaneously both inside the improviser (the sensorial subjectivity of experience), and looked at from the outside by the people who attend to performances or jams (composition and communicated dramaturgy of the totality). By trying to perceive the holistic dramaturgy of a group of people improvising together in a space, the individual learns to exceed the personal boundaries of subjective perception. Since an objective point of view neither exists (where could it possibly be located?) nor is relevant in my opinion, the sheer struggle to reach such a point of view renders possible a personal

growth beyond the limits one assumed for oneself. In my opinion, *hyperawareness* is a practical tool to overcome pessimistic assumptions we have about ourselves, and our human potential. But even the supreme example of an optimist might not anticipate where these boundaries lie. Along with the practice of improvisation for several years, newly explored states of physical and mental well-being, might replace former quotidian states that were not critically assessed in the past, and cause what La Boca described as *saturation*.

Saturation means that you are yourself both in improvisatory practice and in everyday life. You can, therefore, consciously alter or transform your *habitus* during improvisation, intentionally changing who you are and how you interact in your social environment. The enjoyable physical and mental states one can experience during an improvisation can lead to the saturation of these states into the individually preferred quotidian states of being. When you learned to use the floor of a space in a different manner than your fellow men and women in your social environment, improvisation can provide you with the courage to do so during your everyday life, because *you have learned to enjoy it, no matter what the others say about it*. This courage to move, think, touch, and solve problems different (or maybe even contradictory) than common cultural rudiments results from improvisatory practice. How to make use of one's body as well as the cognitive capacities regardless of the cultural constraints we all live in requires gathering up all of one's courage. This courage is powered by a regular and continual improvisatory practice that enables the individual to encounter and get comfortable with various alternative states of being-in-the-world. Then, it is only about finding out which of these states are the most healthful, honest and beneficial for personal and sensorial growth.

Do you have time for improvisation?

I claim you do not! The difficulty of taking time for beneficial improvisatory practice, as I understand it, is not to be underestimated since it demands not only time but also a space to move and the right composition of trustworthy people for ensemble improvisation. The following section is thus concerned with the impact improvisatory

practice may have on the common way to perceive time and make use of it. Therefore I argue for a significant investment of time in improvisatory corporeal practice since it is a prerequisite for the beneficial effects of improvisation to unfold. Furthermore the problematic compartmentalisation of time in a Central European cultural context is being critically discussed.

As displayed in the bundled findings of my interviews, my informants clearly stated that a certain frequency (up to 3 times a week) and intensity (starting from 3 hours minimum), over a period of several years is required to improvise on a profound level. Only by doing this the positive effects of *Hyperawareness* and *Saturation* – as discussed in the previous section – can be experienced to achieve an effect on the lifecourse of the individual. Gradually over time, the intensity and regularity of improvisatory practice can be decreased since the healthful and beneficial states of physical and psychological being-in-the-world have saturated the quotidian wayfaring of the individual *enminded body* (Ingold 2000:171). At a certain point in the longstanding improvisatory *enskilment* (Ingold 2000:37) one does not even need to practice improvisation *per se* anymore; it will have become the principle way of approaching the challenges of everyday life.

Measuring time is done quite differently in other societies. Ingold brings up the ancient example from imperial Swedish anthropologist Martin Nilsson, who was investigating in Madagascar in the first decades of the 20th century. To indicate the duration of time, the indigenous population of Madagascar makes use of means derived from their daily business; “rice cooking” means half an hour, the frying of a locust” a moment. Taking a cigarette break would equal “the time in which one can cook a handful of vegetables” (Nilsson 1920:42, cited in Ingold 2000:325). Another example comes from Edward P. Thompson, speaking about medieval England, in which duration could be expressed by how long it takes to *cook an egg, say a prayer and even to have a pee*. Though the latter of these time-spans, known as “pissing while”, Thompson finds a “somewhat arbitrary measurement” (Thompson 1976:58, cited *ibid.*). Since the Industrial Revolution, the Western conception of time changed fundamentally. Foucault talks about the manufactures of the 17th century that orientated their timely organisation towards those used in convents, since these religious orders have *mastered discipline* (Foucault 1995:191). But in order to put this clerical productivity to use in the course of the *Industrial Revolution* it had to be

refined, thus we began measuring in quarter-hours, minutes and seconds and started to compartmentalise the *quality of timely use*. This was achieved through *constant surveillance, pressure of the overseers and the avoidance of all sources of dispersion*⁵⁵. It was about installing a *totally useful time* (“vollständig nutzbare Zeit”, Foucault 1995:193). Therefore ‘free-time’, ‘business-time’, ‘spare time’ and ‘holidays’ were invented. Time and money in the historical development of that era have become almost inextricably interlinked. Ingold, drawing on Thompson elaborates:

“With industrial capitalism, labour becomes a commodity measured out in units of time, goods become commodities measured out in units of money; since labour produces goods, so much time yields so much money, and time spent in idleness is equivalent to so much money lost. The result is not only a demarcation between work (time that yields money) and leisure (time that uses it up), but also a characteristic attitude to time as something to be husbanded. Thompson calls this attitude ‘time-thrift’ (Thompson 1967:83; cited in Ingold 2000:328).

Historically looked at, along with the rise and maturation of industrial capitalist societies, there was a transition from what Thompson calls “task-oriented time” to “clock time” (Ingold 2000:328). Along with this transformation, Foucault recognises that by rendering time a measureable unit, it gets controllable and graspable by the regulative mechanisms of modern nation states. ‘Duration’ is the tool for control, the possibility to scrutinise in detail, to punish and correct the ‘untimely’ behaviour of the working force. Ultimately focussing on installing total domination over the individual’s serviceableness, *power saturates time*, thus making it available for a maximum of control and utilisation, but also instrumentalising it to a degree where exploitative assignment can take place (Foucault 1995:206). Since duration is forced into a linear quality pointing to productive outcome, the use of time in the modern Western world can be called *evolutive* (“»evolutive« Zeit”, Foucault 1995:207). A good counter-approach to time use is the state of improvisatory practice, since it is not pointed at a ‘product’ at the end of the process. Although also in my understanding of improvisation there is a certain expectation to experience an enjoyable time, beneficial for personal development. At least there is no expectation towards a concrete *point of delivery* (a final product that has to be sellable to the public sphere) that has to be met, since the approach is explorative and experimental and therefore

⁵⁵ “ununterbrochene Kontrolle, Druck der Aufseher, Vermeidung aller Quellen von Störung und Zerstreuung” (Foucault 1995:193).

the challenges during improvisation come along the process itself. The problem nowadays, in my opinion, is that work time is mostly defined in *opposition* to leisure time, therefore the latter is forced to carry a somewhat undefined, absent-minded and disperse connotation. What adds to the grievance of time use in our modern Western nation states is that *if the economic exploitation separates work force from product, we can state that disciplinary enforcement inextricably links a heightened serviceableness with a deepened subjugation*⁵⁶ (Foucault 1995:176). I want to propagate, as a counter-proposition, that along with improvisatory practice, the perception of time as “task-oriented” is reinforced. Moreover, since corporeal improvisation is physically exhausting *and* psychologically refreshing it lies exactly between ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ time and again reminds us of the deficiency of such a dichotomy. I further argue that because of the data generated in the course of this ethnographic investigation as well as derived from my own experience as a professional dancer I know for certain that it is highly beneficial for the human being to regularly take enough time to fulfil abstract tasks that emerge out of momentary associations, impulses and apprehension in a context of fellow human beings. By doing this, we can enter states last experienced in our early years of the lifecourse, where playful engagement with the *taskscape* (Ingold 2011:159) was the principal way of *wayfaring* through the world. If you at this point think that I am merely idealising childishness, I did not make myself clear enough. What I am talking about here is that because of our socialisation, personally inherent approaches to human playful-explorative ways generating knowledge about the world and ourselves have become altered and, sadly enough, mostly suppressed and exchanged for common notions about what it means to ‘grow up’. If ‘growing up’ means that personal growth is inhibited by social constraints of assimilating individual ways of *wayfaring* under mainstream stereotypes, I would prefer ‘growing down’. Also ‘growing *alongly*’, as Ingold’s before-mentioned elaborations described would be preferable to a hierarchical ‘evolution’ of maturing from ‘stupid childishness’ to ‘reasonable adulthood’ and its enforced social constraints of movement. Since I generally argue against compartmentalisation in any way, also the categories of ‘child’, ‘teenager’ and ‘adult’ cannot force me to feel stupid rolling around on the floor, if I honestly can

⁵⁶ “Wenn die ökonomische Ausbeutung die Arbeitskraft vom Produkt trennt, so können wir sagen, daß der Disziplinarzwang eine gesteigerte Tauglichkeit und eine vertiefte Unterwerfung im Körper miteinander verkettet.“ (Foucault 1995:176).

enjoy it. It actually asks for a certain kind of boldness in Austrian society to neglect what potential onlookers might think, say or feel when watching another ‘grown-up’ individual of the same cultural background engage in playful-explorative corporeal investigation like improvisatory practice. Once again my argument is for the emancipation against common parameters of potential in our society. Minutes, hours, day, weeks and years, as useful as these units may be are just a practical invention. Therefore, the common compartmentalisation of time as represented so predominantly should not be understood as a paradigmatic principle for how we can make use of our time. If we put ‘clock time’ before our ‘body-time’ we have become slaves to this particular human invention ourselves. Ingold argues that a certain ‘task orientation’ is “the primary condition for our being at home in the world” (Ingold 2000:329). This principal condition for humans to make use of their time has been instrumentalised in modern capitalist societies. To close this section about the use of time I want to encourage the reader to reserve a bit of time every week – even if it is just for few minutes to start with – to take time for playful-explorative improvisation: To start to move by simultaneously resisting the urge to understand and analyse your actions. By doing this, I firmly believe, we enter beneficial and unanticipated alternative states of physical and psychological well-being that are not oriented towards productivity and therefore starkly healthful in essence. Personal and sensorial growth, physical fitness and an alternative perception of ‘efficient’ time-use will be the effect of such a corporeal engagement, if practiced ideally; on a regular and long-standing basis.

Improvisation and Sexuality

One of the loosely structured question-sets for my interviews was concerned with sexuality. It seems that sexuality is inherent to all forms of dancing. According to my own experience improvisational dance provides a formidable opportunity to explore and mature one’s own sexuality in a way that does not aim at having sexual relationships with fellow improvisers. Judith Lynne Hanna has important considerations about the relation between sexuality and dance in Western societies.

Being both anthropologist/dancer, she published a detailed elaboration about dance and many of its cultural and social dimensions as early as 1979, in her book *To Dance is Human*. In her later work, *Dance, Sex, and Gender* from 1988, she comments on the interconnection between dance and gender, sex and sexuality. Essentially she states that dance can challenge common expectations of a society “for each sex’s specific activities, whether dominance patterns or mating strategies” (Hanna 1988:xiii). Furthermore, dance has qualities that can “arouse viewers and influence their attitudes and opinions” (ibid.). Thus, when the audience perceives a dance as violating “expected male and female roles and their conventional expressions” both performers and observers are led to reflect about “altered life-styles” (ibid.). If you grant me another reference to improvisational events – where we find a ‘natural’ constellation of onlookers and performers⁵⁷ – this observation is highly relevant for my hypothesis about sexuality and improvisation (see *Conclusion*). Movements as well as language are full of patriarchal patterns and stereotyped latencies (see Bordo 1978; Hanna 1988; Hanna 1979; Thomas 1993; Jacobus 1990; Bertulozza 1994; Postl 2001; Pfister 1997). Dance seems to be inextricably linked to sexuality, because even when the contours and shapes of the body are obscured by costume and the style of movement, “signs and symbols of sexuality may be read into the dance and erotic or lustful feeling aroused” (Hanna 1988:5). In other words: “Whether theorists think sexuality inherent to dance, or whether dancers intend to convey sexuality, the spectator may perceive it” (Hanna 1988:155). Furthermore, what is discussed as ‘gender identity’ is strongly inscribed in dance movements for both sexes. Dance is a constitutive field for the sexual relations among women and men of a society, since it offers models of “gender attitudes and behaviour” (ibid.). But this does not mean that dance inevitably contributes to a revision of traditional gender-roles and conventions about sexuality: The messages communicated with dance “may lead to reinforcing ongoing models, acquiring new responses, weakening or strengthening inhibitions over fully elaborated patterns in a person’s repertoire” (Hanna 1988:12). It seems plausible to assume that improvisation is a field of

⁵⁷ As a matter of fact, an improvisational event lasting for several hours will assuredly cause people to sit down and watch, since constant exhaustive movement (carrying around others, running, sliding, dancing, trembling, etc.) can only sparsely be carried out for the full duration of the jam (trust me, I tried it). Therefore, most actions participants carry out in a jam are being observed, which willingly or unwillingly renders them *the* topic of interest for the duration the *jam* lasts. Normally *jams* cause a critical self-reflection on those actions, but in a non-judgemental way that has normally no consequences in quotidian life of the improviser.

investigation towards one's own culturally inscribed sexuality, therefore representing simultaneously a possibility for the deconstruction of inherent gender inequalities or as a reconfirmation of them. At the same time, however, since dance is by all my interviewees, interlocutors and interlocutresses from the field regarded as slightly female-dominated, the gender inequalities are not overcome simply by engaging in dance-practice: The most influential figures in the Euro-American popular dance world are managers, choreographers and opera-directors, *most of them male, of Western origin, and white* (Hanna 1988:127). Of course, bringing examples from the literature from the 1980s might be a bit outdated, but my data shows that these inequalities still persist 24 years later. Foucault was mentioning the *aphrodisia*, which he understands as *acts, gestures and touch, which create a certain form of lust*. ("Die *aphrodisia* sind Akte, Gesten, Berührungen, die eine bestimmte Form von Lust verschaffen", Foucault 1989a:54). I do not regard these above-mentioned intentions as beneficial for personal growth along with the practice of improvisation, since they are anyway inherent to movement and can dangerously deflect the attention of the improviser and cause physical injury. As already stated in the first part of this thesis for diploma (see *Contact Improvisation*), to inscribe sexual meaning to touch can be quite harmful in a fast and physical improvisation, since your attention is not fixed on the readiness and attentiveness to what is happening in the speedy mesh-up of bodies during improvisational events.

One way to render the constraints around sexuality in dance more visible is to follow Novack's comparison between partnering in ballet (*pas de deux*) and in contact improvisation. The contact duet does not attempt to "represent romantic love or any other narrative content", since it has no gendered codification of movement vocabulary: "the vocabulary that exists (such as rolling, falling, counterbalancing) is available for both men and women" (Novack 1990:128). By observing the ballet *pas de deux* on the other hand, Novack locates a cluster of body techniques of "outward presentation, control of space, strength and support for the male, and strength tempered by delicacy and dependence for the female" (Novack 1990:132). Returning to the example of partnering in contact improvisation, one can observe "a lack of gender distinction and [an] uncontrolled flow in space and a combination of supporting and dependent movement for each and every dancer regardless of sex" (ibid.). Nevertheless, as mentioned in Part I of this work, Steve Paxton, the name-

giver and one of the founders of contact improvisation “separated the dance form from direct psychological and sexual encounter” (Novack 1990:166.) since it can be harmful not to do so.⁵⁸ Practitioners of contact improvisation who engage in this corporeal technique for a prolonged period of time value physical improvisation especially because it is *not* about sexuality in the common understanding (where its objective must be intercourse), but about an engagement “in movement uncharacteristic of gender roles (...) neither confrontational nor sexual” (Novack 1990:168).

To close this section about dance and sexuality I can state that subliminal stereotypes of what it means to be male and female have a strong impact on the movements performed improvisatory events in Vienna in 2012. To assume that sexuality in our contemporary society is more repressed as compared to the historic development in Europe is a fallacy (Foucault 1986:66). If we want to exceed the currently existing boundaries of sexuality, corporeal improvisation is a formidable tool to do so. Sanctions and regulations of sexuality are a necessity if a nation state wants to ensure the continuous and controllable development of the population. Social constraints and repressive stereotypes about sexuality are not to be accepted by emancipated citizens, and are open for discourse. Improvisational dance can provide a platform for emancipation as well as reconfirmation of gender roles and conventions about sexuality. To improvise means to confront one’s own sexual boundaries and barriers, since sexuality is always inherent to dance. Kaltenbrunner observes that “all surfaces and areas of the body are used as shared surfaces in contact improvisation. This also includes areas of the body usually considered as taboo” (1998:61). Thus exceeding these taboos in a respect to one’s own and others personal limits should be the general principle in improvisational jams. Exactly because a jam is a place for exploration, those actions do not have the same significance as actions of quotidian life. Contact improvisation “promotes a playful dexterity with these aspects and a way of ”flexing and stretching comfort zones” (ibid.). Since everybody has the basic need for close physical contact, the worst thing one can do is to neglect this central aspect to human

⁵⁸ In a physical and psychological way: Normally self-protective mechanisms are activated along the practice of contact improvisation, monitoring the appropriateness of the actions performed automatically. There has to be an exceptional composition of people to deactivate this controlling mechanism. But since the boundaries of exploration are set by the totality of participants in a jam, they will always vary since every constellation of people allows for different sets of agreements.

life. Within the context of Austrian society, where the exploration of sexuality is significantly sanctioned by gender-stereotypes, close physical contact in an improvisational event can easily be confused with sexuality (int. La Boca, El Pelado, Disculpe, and El Chico). Therefore, corporeal improvisation is an excellent tool to dissolve confusion around sexuality on an individual level. I believe that observed in a larger scale such a beneficial sexual exploration and emancipation would contribute to the dissolution of gender-stereotypes in society at large. Nevertheless; if improvisation unfolds its emancipatory potential depends on every individual's readiness and boldness to open her or his own boundaries to improvisatory exploration.

Tuning and Swarming

Improvisational Jams can also be regarded as “social rituals for tuning every participant” (int. El Fligó). Fortunately the Austrian government has no direct influence on the actions performed in improvisational events in Vienna. Thus, *tuning* becomes a somewhat ambiguous term I try to concretise in the following section. Back in 1979, D'Aquili and Laughlin spoke about the controlling properties of ritual and saw its main function in structuring people's “perceptions and orientations, decision procedures, and action opportunities” (D'Aquili and Laughlin 1979:264). Looked at improvisation in this regard, *tuning* can be seen as operating “intentionally or unintentionally as a social control device” that can alter the ways we perceive and take action in our social environment (D'Aquili and Laughlin 1979:265). In the same book, they highlight the findings of Professor Barbara Lex, which are not unlike the states I myself have been witnessing in prolonged improvisational jams. Working extensively in the field of public health, ritual trance and the Native American community (URL 4), she found that rituals involving trance are causing:

“neurophysiological tuning in the central nervous system of the individual and synchronization of the tuning effect among all members of the group (...) There is probably a significant tuning component to rituals of social orientation (...), wherein the collective action is directed to the accomplishment of some effect (curing, wholesale exorcism of epidemic, and the like” (ibid.).

Another remark concerning the phenomenon of *tuning* – highly adaptable to bodily *enskilment* through improvisation – comes from the anthropologist Tim Ingold. In his understanding, it is “the very ‘tuning’ movement in response to the ever-changing conditions of an unfolding task that the skill of any bodily technique ultimately resides” (Ingold 2011:46). In other words, the process of human *wayfaring through the taskscape* essential to how we generate knowledge about the world is constantly and gradually altered, or *tuned*. Another reason why *tuning* occurs along with improvisation lies in what Johnstone calls the *trance-inducing effects of crowds* of people. That is probably the reason why in some repressive dictatorships the gathering of more than a handful of people is illegalised: “Crowds are trance-inducing because the anonymity imposed by the crowd absolves you of the necessity to maintain your identity” (Johnstone 1979:156). For me, this is also central to the process of emancipation: Only after letting go the anticipations about one’s social identity can we exceed the boundaries we assume in ourselves and experience personal growth.

A topic closely linked to the above-mentioned notions about *tuning-effects* of improvisatory events is the concept of *swarming*. Van Eikels wrote about the political implications of certain movements of groups of people, stating that *swarming* inheres group intelligence that – if we look at some examples of animal swarms – *can enable the individual to perform actions that would otherwise lie beyond its capacities* (Van Eikels 2007:34). This assertion seems to formidably underline my own assumption why improvisation ultimately leads to personal and sensorial growth, since the individual learns about herself or himself by having the opportunity to access a pool of capacities shared by all participants of a jam. The American media scholar Howard Rheingold calls the human equivalent of these intelligent swarms “Smart Mobs” (Van Eikels 2007:41). The sociometrician Mark Granovetter talks about “transmission probabilities” in this regard (Van Eikels 2007:48), stating that ‘weak social ties’ among human beings (if people do not know each other well), are more beneficial to the degree of information-exchange than within a group of people than have ‘strong social ties’ (close friends and family). I bring this in because of the fact that fortunately an improvisational jam does normally not consist of your family and close friends. Therefore, if you agree with the notion of Granovetter, we look at an enhanced transmission of knowledge that contributes more vividly to a personal and sensorial growth than the normal lifecourse would. This is so *exactly because a*

heterogeneous group of people is coincidentally moulded together. Ultimately, this coming together of individuals with ‘weak social ties’ during an improvisatory event like a *jam session* leads to an enhanced transmission of knowledge amongst all the practitioners.

To close this section, one can summarise that the *tuning* effect taking place in an improvisation surely does not imply that the knowledge of every participant is assimilated and therefore deprived of its individual significance, but that the attentive improviser can experience personal growth because her or his social identity, unknown by other participants, does not have to necessarily be maintained. Also the before-mentioned concept of *Hyperawareness* does apply formidably to *tuning*: Since one’s own actions are in relation to the totality of the group, the individual *tunes* the actions performed. But this does not mean that one’s actions get diminished within a jam: In a boring situation, the timid individual might feel the urge make a powerful move or verbal statement to put a dynamic energy in space, therefore overcoming her or his own insecurity. Moreover, if *swarming* can encourage to overcome presuppositions of one’s personal capacities, the situation during an improvisational event can reveal new potential of physical, emotional and intelligent potential of the individual *enminded body*. Ultimately, it is very plausible to state that by respectfully and physically encountering other human beings you do not personally know, one schools the flexibility and adaptability towards others, enriching the personal knowledge about alternative social realities and therefore contributing to a critical reassessment of one’s own social identity. Learning to move together with a stranger, one learns to take care about and protect oneself as well as to flexibly adapt to unknown situations, therefore fostering tolerance for ways of being-in-the-world that may differ significantly from the worldview of close friends and family. Ultimately such beneficial effects like *tuning*, *swarming* and *hyperawareness* might be emphasised when the participants of a corporeal improvisatory event come from a different cultural background. But, as my own experience as well as the data from the physical participation in the course of my fieldwork clearly show, cultural difference is not problematic in a non-verbal and abstract *taskscape* like improvisatory *jams*. Rather the contrary is the case: The bigger the cultural difference, the more attentiveness has to be applied, since the objective in a jam is to be able to read, understand and react to the improvised actions of others. The highest degree of

knowledge-transmission and knowledge-generation might be located where the weakest social ties are found.

Anthropotechnique

Right in the beginning of this last finding displayed in this thesis for diploma, I want to confess that I borrowed the heading from Peter Sloterdijk, reading about his observations on the problem of exercise in philosophy. Since I did not find this book's translation in English, here is my own: *You must change your life: On anthropotechnique*,⁵⁹ but we will come to his elaborations later in this section. First I will list a number of bodily skills that are being practiced in the course of long-standing improvisatory practice. What I intend to achieve here is to integrate the most important characteristics involved in corporeal improvisation from the perspective of a dancer/anthropologist. I state that along with the regular practice of such bodily engagement, a whole set of techniques of the body is necessary to endure corporeal improvisation without wearing down the body. The most beneficial body techniques an improviser acquires – willingly or unwillingly – over the years along with the practice of corporeal improvisation are listed below. These essential body techniques derive mainly from my own experience, but were also supplemented with data from the field. All of these clusters of various techniques of the body, or rather; *techniques of the enminded body* are very useful for the conduct of everyday social life. Also if you might not prefer to perform one or all of the following movements (or skills) on a regular basis, unanticipated circumstances may demand it from you. Therefore, it is better to rehearse the physical readiness or spontaneous adaptability to such real-life situations:

) *falling and rolling on hard surfaces without getting harmed*: moving on *concrete* as well as naturally hard surfaces like forest ground is not harmful for bones and joints after some years of practice. Spontaneous falling is compensated with a continuation of the movement impulses initially not caused or planned by the individual as known

⁵⁹ In German: *Du mußt dein Leben ändern: Über Anthropotechnik* 2009 Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main. Anthropotechnique. The first one to use this term was *Mouravjev* in the 1920s, but back then its political and ideological connotations were still objectionable (Sloterdijk 2009:628).

from *Aikido* or other *Asian Martial Arts*.

) *reflexive and immediate bodily reaction to unanticipated impacts and manipulations on the body*: especially in contact improvisation the sometimes unfamiliar partner might lift, throw, jump on or stop you in an unanticipated way only your body reflexes can compensate. A permanent awareness and responsibility for oneself is installed in the experienced improviser to prevent him or her from injury.

) *multi-layered quality of tonicity*: the improviser may experience simultaneously a *strong softness*, or a *powerful fluidity* of the body that can be experienced at the same time, therefore allowing for a nonverbal communication during contact improvisational partnering of incredible rapidity. The interchanges of the active/passive role of the partners can switch several times within a second without corrupting a dynamic and fluid conversation in movement.

) *explorative perception of the environment*: other bodies, the architecture of a space as well as natural landscapes and obstacles are perceived as potential playground, transforming the most dull landscape into an inspiring *taskscape* (Ingold 2011:159) that can innovatively be overcome or used to practice virtually any bodily skills. The culturally acquired ways of perceiving and making use of our architectural as well as natural landscape are being stripped of their significance, and superseded by playful pragmatism.

) *anatomical perception of bodies*: the bodies of other participants are not only perceived in a quotidian way: the skeletal and muscular structure of human bodies or the sheer physicality can be perceived in an almost medical way. Although the experienced improviser does not acquire medical expert knowledge, the basic understanding of treating, stretching, and correcting blocked and twisted body parts is greatly enhanced, enabling the experienced improviser to cure little maladies and injuries of her or his own and others bodies, as well as to maintain a healthful compensation of physical strain throughout the lifecourse.

) *exploration of individual talents and habitual behaviour*: The experienced improviser will strongly perceive personal strategies of *wayfaring improvisatory*, and eventually get bored by the own habitual approaches to spontaneity. By changing them in an individually innovative way, habitual behaviour is made flexible, alterable and responsive to our social environment. Furthermore the individual talents and qualities of one's own personality are made visible, forcing the experienced

improviser to – willingly or unwillingly – gradually get to know her or himself.⁶⁰

In the processed literature for this thesis for diploma I recognised many of the above-mentioned body techniques displayed in the writings of philosophers coming from a time up to two millennia ago, and even older. Foucault devoted his final investigations to the self-techniques of the ancient world, admitting that he may have overemphasised the dominance of the regulating mechanisms over individuals throughout his lifecourse: *More and more I'm interested in the interaction between oneself and others, the techniques of individual mastery, for the history of forms in which the individual acts upon himself, for the techniques of the self.*⁶¹ The stoics like Seneca, Epiktet and Marc Aurel recommend entering a dialogue with oneself, in order to better reflect on one's lifecourse. These practices were called *epimelēsthai sautou* (Greek: “to care for oneself”, or “to attend to oneself”; Foucault 1993:28). This recommended care for oneself was closely-knit to medical thought and action: Plutarch has even stated that philosophy and medicine *form one and the same area* (Foucault 1989b:75). But medicine was not seen as an intervening technique of experts, reserved for emergencies or the application of remedies, but defined as a lifestyle. What differs strongly from our contemporary health care system is that gradually *the individual should not need any consultation with the doctor anymore*, since *dietics* were intended to foster autonomy (I read: emancipation) in medical concerns.

Bringing the above-mentioned techniques of the ancient world into a contemporary philosophy, we continue to follow the elaborations of Peter Sloterdijk. He talks about a complex set of phenomena that touch upon the practices of self-enhancement reaching from Classical Antiquity to current times. His observations concern the

⁶⁰ The selection of essential body techniques derives from my own experience. Stanislav Grof provides other examples of “ancient and aboriginal” body techniques that can be applied additionally to emphasise the effect of improvisatory practice: “work with breath, (...) sound technologies (drumming, music), dancing and other forms of movement, social isolation and sensory deprivation, sensory overload (a combination of acoustic, visual, and proprioceptive stimuli during aboriginal rituals, extreme pain, etc.), physiological means (fasting, sleep deprivation, purgatives, laxatives, blood letting [Mayas] painful physical procedures), meditation, prayer and other spiritual practices, psychedelic animal and plant materials” (Grof 2009:5).

⁶¹ “Vielleicht habe ich die Bedeutung der Technologien von Macht und Herrschaft allzu stark betont. Mehr und mehr interessiere ich mich für die Interaktion zwischen einem selbst und anderen und für die Technologien individueller Beherrschung, für die Geschichte der Formen, in denen das Individuum auf sich selbst einwirkt, für die Technologien des Selbst“ (Foucault 1933 [1988]:27).

various domains in school and military institutionalism, craftsmanship and more recent approaches in medicine, the arts and science. Also the realm of modern sports, accompanied by hygienics since the middle of the 19th century are of important concern (Sloterdijk 2009:525). The main characteristic of an *Anthropotechnik* lies in its auto-malleability: At its extremes, the auto-malleable quality inherent to *anthropotechnique* can be regarded as a hyperadaptation; a so-called *preconditioned rush for the need to accomplish even the most unlikely movements, such as prestissimo-runs on the piano, that were stabilised in a virtuoso habitus in preceeding exercises* (Sloterdijk 2009:503). Sloterdijk's basic assumption, which I believe to be crucial for the explorative and improvisatory engagement in body techniques is that *every performed gesture, starting from the second time it is performed, forms and further dictates the development of its performer*. If we acknowledge the full significance of this principle, Sloterdijk states, *we arrive at the certainty that there is no meaningless movement* (2009:505).⁶²

All the above-mentioned techniques and philosophical approaches to physical exercise render *anthropotechnique* a set of techniques of the *enminded body* beneficial for personal and sensorial growth, in essence actively fostering *deautomatisation* or *dehabituation* of wayfaring. A question closely connected to this concerns me every day:

Why can we not have more trust in the knowledge and 'intelligence' of our own bodies? My body has up until now – and still continues to do so everyday – surprised me with actions I did not know I could perform: quick reflexive manoeuvres and the most rapid solutions to unanticipated and potentially dangerous situations were performed 'autonomously by my body' (although of course I *am* my body). It is if through the practice of *anthropotechnique* we learn to enjoy being 'surprised by ourselves' – an *enskilment* of a somewhat paradoxical or schizophrenic quality. It seems that the highly praised "cognitive style" (Ingold 2000:282) of our perception always lacks behind the actions we perform; understanding them only in retrospect. But how could we possibly be smarter than ourselves? Kaltenbrunner talks about this phenomenon by stating that the human body *has its own autonomous intelligence*. He also

⁶² If you recall our discussion of the various approaches towards improvisation applied by the performing arts, Keith Johnstone spoke of exactly the same principle for improvisational theatre in 1979.

mentions the *'responsive body'*, a body capable of autonomous decision making and instinctive reaction (1998:55–56).

In improvisation, you are confronted with 'extreme' (because unconventional) bodily situations like disorientation (upside-down and whirled around by the contact improvisational partner) or an unexpected fall you have to compensate, etc.: These skills of rolling and bouncing on hard surfaces without getting hurt is probably at best regarded as "body techniques of the child" in the West. Just as Kaltenbrunner observes on the sets of bodily techniques you learn in contact improvisation; *probably not many people have rolled around on the floor a lot since their childhood* (Kaltenbrunner 1998:105). Why is that so? I ask myself. Why do *adults* in my society reject the playful and spontaneous investigation of the capacities of human corporeality merely as 'fooling around' or 'childish playfulness', or as Schechner observes: "In the West, play is a rotten category, an activity tainted by unreality, inauthenticity, duplicity, make believe, looseness, fooling around, and inconsequentiality" (Schechner 1993:29). The act of playing is not so different from the deprivation techniques of the ancient stoics:

"disequilibrium intentionally introduced into apparently stable systems forces the search for a new balance. The steady-state of tradition's invented body-mind, becomes "daily," while introduced disequilibrium provokes the invention of new "extra-daily" techniques which, in their turn, become daily" (Schechner 1993:40).⁶³

Improvisation as well as play, for Steinman, are practices "of basic survival skills, a celebration of life: imagination, adaptability, concentration are all intrinsic to both processes. So in a way, improvisation *is* play" (Steinman 2005:100). It is play in a non-competitive form and only with abstract tasks to fulfil. This provokes a kind of incomprehension in sturdy rationalists because it has become so unconventional in Central European conceptions of efficient time use, both in the separately perceived *clock time* as well as *task-oriented time*. But, I criticise, even grown-up individuals with more open-minded conceptions about such physical practices would never follow the inner urge to roll around on the floor 'like a child' also if it would feel good. I am very sorry to say this: We have to get rid of this horse-drivel. Have we become to 'civilised' to recapture the floor? Over the centuries, the industrial

⁶³ I want to recommend the works of Shilling (1993, 2008) and Schechner (1993) as well as Steinman (2005) for everyone interested in more detailed elaborations on the topic of playfulness. Due to spatial reasons, unfortunately I could not include more material on this here.

countries have unlearned to squat (see Ingold 2011:40). What will be the next technique we forget – maybe walking?⁶⁴ We all have rolled around as children, but that was merely called ‘playing’. But this ‘playing’ does not cease to inhere relevance when we get older, we just found a different name for the same thing: ‘work’: “To improvise, the performer learns to disregard the line our culture draws between child play and adult work” (Steinman 1995:100). Common sense makes the assumption difficult that *playing* can also mean to earnestly practice and enhance specific personal emotional issues, or to refine one’s own bodily and psychological fitness. Aesthetic concerns are no justification for the abandonment of possible fields of physical knowledge-generation. I can ensure you that generating but rational knowledge is not enough for optimal personal growth. We have to know our body well to be good scientists, good humans.

To close this section about improvisation as *anthropotechnique*, I want to summarise that along with improvisatory corporeal practice a set of techniques of the *enminded body* highly relevant for everyday life are – willingly or unwillingly – practiced and refined if the improviser practices over a period of several years. Moreover, the improviser enters ‘a dialogue with her or himself’, learning ‘to attend to oneself’ in a self-reflexive fashion that can have medial and healing quality and fosters basic understanding of a beneficial approach and discipline with one’s own body, similar to the body techniques of *dietics* and *asceticism* of Ancient Antiquity. *Anthropotechnique* further has an immanent *auto-malleable* effect on the improviser, rendering every movement meaningful, since it alters the performer’s bodily engagement with the world *from the second time it is being performed*. Autonomous ‘body intelligence’ hitherto unexplained by scholarly discourse is a phenomenon we can trust, since it causes inspiring surprise almost happening every single day of our quotidian life, informing us about own unanticipated capabilities of our body. Finally we have seen that improvisation essentially is play, mostly neglected as ‘childish’ because of aesthetic conventions of what it means to be ‘adult’. *Anthropotechnique*, which I use analogously with improvisatory wayfaring of the *enminded body* represents, in my opinion, a form of *enskilment* beneficial for every-body. It can be a basic principle humans may apply to foster personal and sensorial growth, emphasising the growth quotidian life normally provides. Since we generate

⁶⁴ If I look at *Segways Personal Transporter* or *Nordic Walking*, I think it might be closer than we think.

knowledge about the world by *wayfaring* through the *taskscape* the lifecourse normally provide, improvisation can prepare the individual to engage these challenges in a more beneficial way and with the full human potential: as *femme totale*, or *homme total*.

Conclusion

Improvisation basically needs a space, people and enough time to take place. It can be organised by anyone, it is not necessarily a costly event to organise, since it can take place in public spaces like parks. Further in the first part of this thesis for diploma, where I introduced several definitions and approaches from the performing arts, it became clear that improvisation and composition are not separated concepts, but rather two ends of the same practice, different mostly in a matter of degree. Furthermore, various approaches to improvisation from the different performing arts were displayed, as well as the application of improvisatory approaches for the generation of artistic material. Here we learned that improvisation is never starting from scratch but always within certain boundaries that are not principally limiting the improvisation, but actually emphasising the degree of sophistication the *enskilment* of an improviser has reached. I later recounted the historic development of corporeal improvisation in the Central European cultural context, displaying how international influences especially from North America of the 1970s were altering the trajectory of postmodern artistic work. An awakening consciousness of the audience as well as the body as an instrument of power can be observed in that historic period. Here we learned that improvisation can be used to alter and transform one's habitus. Contact improvisation, the style of improvisation most suitable to describe the corporeal practice central to this thesis for diploma is in its essence concerned only with the sheer physicality of the tasks that emerge out of staying in contact with other improvisers, and can be harmful when other concerns block out this main principle. Finally, we learned that improvisatory practice potentially contains forms of civil disobedience since it encourages questioning the 'social choreography' we are all moving in, as well as stating that I regard improvisation as today's rehearsal of embodied emotional and intelligent actions that arranges the *habitus* of tomorrow.

In Part II of this work, I introduced several theoretical concepts of how improvisation, the body and gender are regarded in the current scientific discourse, emphasising always my intention to deconstruct and critically reassess any compartmentalisation or dichotomisation in the various concepts, phenomena or theories displayed in this work. I later presented the most plausible theoretical elaborations I could find on techniques of the body and knowledge-generation showing that body techniques are

in fact way less ‘natural’, ‘quotidian’ or ‘habitual’ as commonly assumed and can and should therefore fall under critical scrutiny. The ultimate theoretical finding was *wayfaring*: it is the principal way of being-in-the-world and central for to how humans generate knowledge through movement. I mentioned recent reports concerning equal payment for men and women in this country that clearly showed that the gender gap (in numbers) is far from being overcome in Austria in the year 2012. I then displayed my methodology, critically introducing sensory ethnography as well as highlighting the processual approach I applied in this work. In the end of the second part I talked about the street as potential field for improvisation in order to actively change social conduct, raise awareness and fight injustices and discrimination. I then presented the spaces where I conducted my participant observations throughout the one-year process of fieldwork for this thesis for diploma.

In Part III, I tried to clearly arrange all the findings, displaying first the bundled statements summarised under the question-sets of all the interviews I conducted. Later I presented the effects of long-standing improvisatory practice on the lifecourse, mentioning first *Hyperawareness* and *saturation*, and later talking about healthful time-use along with regular improvisation that is principally not product-oriented, and therefore represents a strongly healthful way to spend one’s time in modern society. I further shortly mentioned the *tuning* effect such ‘rituals’ as *jams* can have on the participants, and displayed *swarming* as another factor for the enhanced knowledge-generation in improvisatory events. I closed the section about the findings with *Anthropotechnique*, touching on various philosophical considerations about the techniques of the body that were aimed at fostering personal emancipation from medical experts and strengthened the individual’s capability for survival through controlled and disciplined deprivation-techniques. It became clear that since *anthropotechnique* has a principal auto-malleable quality there can be no meaningless movement, since it shapes its performer from the second time it is being performed. Moreover, *anthropotechnique* is in its essence the deautomatisation of habitual behaviour, cleansing our personal everyday *habitus* from its mechanistic flaws. It therefore contains the potential for rendering the improviser more resistant to exploitation by contemporary capitalist endeavour since it raises awareness and installs a fundamental body-knowledge or body-intelligence in the individual, enabling her or him to recognise beneficial and healthful as well as harmful and

leaching forms of movement. This is why corporeal improvisatory practice can ultimately foster emancipation simply through enhancing and rendering conscious the process of knowledge-generation of the *wayfaring enminded body*.

Concerning my initial hypotheses, let me re-evaluate them and see where the process of this work has led me:

) Improvisatory practice over a prolonged period of time provides a more intense sensorial growth than the 'normal' lifecourse would provide.

It seems plausible, at the end of this work, to state that in the optimal case, when an individual practices a loose and personally innovative exploration with her or his own body in motion, a more intense sensorial growth can take place. Since other practitioners in a *jam* are mostly unfamiliar to the improviser, these 'weak social ties' can provoke a significant enhancement in the transmission of knowledge. Depending on the regularity and consistency of an improviser, as well as her or his boldness to address personally difficult issues, more knowledge can be generated than by *wayfaring through the taskscape* of quotidian life.

) I understand sensorial growth synonymous with emancipation. We need to further facilitate emancipation if we want to eliminate discriminating policies and regulations.

As I argued in the section concerned with the persistent gender-gap in Austria, much emancipatory work has to be done to reach equality and justice in this country. Improvisation can help to critically address one's sexuality as well as contribute to a reconfirmation of common gender-stereotypes adapted along with individual socialisation. Sensorial growth can contribute significantly to emancipation, since it is a process of reassessing our social constraints that are the principal frame in which our perception and interpretation of sensual experience is built up. With the right set of techniques of the body, this personal growth can be used analogous with emancipation.

) If more people would do research on corporeal improvisation on a regular basis and in the intensity accurate for the individual development of sensorial growth, many of the grievances still present in Austrian society at large could be counterbalanced.

This last hypothesis is also connected to my final outlook. I think that a regular basis of intensive, playful, creative and explorative movement would definitely have a very positive effect for most of us. Improvisation, for me, means reassessing the personal approach to one's corporeality and invigorates the pleasure and creative application of one's physical capacities. Therefore, this hypothesis can be rectified: By enhancing our knowledge about how we simultaneously *have and are* our bodies, the beneficial and healthful ways of being an *enminded body* would be emphasised. This could have a significant impact on society, ultimately rendering it into a more tolerant world for individual ways of human knowledge-generation.

Appendix

Alternative Space for Improvisation in Vienna

My interviewees all encouraged me to organise my own space for improvisation. The perfect space would have to have the following properties:

-) Not financed by subsidies, not institutionalised,
-) In a neutral space, immune to branding,
-) With no fixed location, nomadically moving through the city,
-) Accessible for everybody and affordable.

Disculpe motivated me to take action and install another platform for improvisatory events in Vienna: “I think is just a matter of you wanting to do it, and then finding the people wanting to be a part of it, and then just do it! It’s like a Nike-commercial!”. As a matter of fact, the Viennese independent art scene is having a problem. El Maestro remarked that space is a dwindling resource in Vienna. El Arri also talked about this problematic development: affordable space is harder and harder to find, while the demand is rising inversely proportional:

“And the prices will rise even further of course. Within the last ten years or so, prices for space have risen by 40%, and this trend will continue in the next decade, or probably get even worse. (...) That’s an ironic contradiction, because many people are searching for space, but they are all closing. The resources at hand are not enough to obtain the spaces that exist, but new and cheap space is not being provided”

Despite the problematic spatial situation in Vienna, I think that the preconditions for innovative and non-institutional formats – seen from a Viennese context – are there. Motivated by my interviewees, I will engage in searching for possibilities to create improvisational space in Vienna. After all, what this city needs is more easily accessible space reserved solely for non-productivity-oriented movement research.

Outlook: The End of Postmodern Armchair Anthropology

The provocative title for this section was chosen consciously.⁶⁵ Throughout my studies in the *Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology of Vienna*, I was simultaneously working as a professional contemporary dancer in Vienna. What this double-formation revealed to me was that many students of anthropology as well as their tutors are spending most of their time sitting at a desk. It is a necessity, as I have come to realise in the course of the process for this thesis for diploma, but also has its flaws. I am not sure whether Social scientists working with concepts like the *paradigm of embodiment* and *sensory ethnography* take their theoretical and mindful considerations entirely seriously. If so, why are the institutionalised social sciences not demanding physical training as accompanying education for their students? Why is the way we generate knowledge in the world, namely through *wayfaring*, not addressed pragmatically within the course of studying anthropology?

If we do not want to engage in something called *postmodern armchair anthropology*, the scientists writing about our being-in-the-world should not spend most of their time in front of a computer (guess where I'm located while writing these very lines), but rather out there in the world. Throughout the process I underwent in the course to compose this thesis, I *wayfared* as little as never before in my life. I normally enjoy the privilege of getting paid for professionally investigating in my personal movement-capacities and ways to improvise on a sophisticated level that is worth putting in front of an audience. This demands for a beneficial personal growth, since you learn to critically reflect on your talents, but even more on your insecurities and the personal limits and boundaries. Therefore, drawing on the significant improvisatory experience of the passed eight years or so, I know that corporeal improvisation will gradually enhance our movements, therefore also enhancing the way we understand and represent the knowledge generated. What this implies for the scientific community of the social studies – constituted by those agents supposedly specialised with the generation of knowledge – is a difficult challenge we face: It is not enough to possess the knowledge of the world, we have to put it in practice in

⁶⁵ This is a reference to the old critique on the anthropologists from the 19th century, who were due to organisational reasons or maybe just because of inertia, writing about foreign cultures without ever visiting the actual place. They did the work from their own offices, never leaving the room. That's why the devaluing analogy of "armchair anthropology" was formulated by critics.

order to scrutinise its validity. In other words: rational intellectualism has to be counterbalanced with an emotional and corporeal intelligence, in order to generate relevant data, and to compose reports about it. The social scientist concerned with the body cannot merely think about everything relevant, but has to move through it, test it with the very sensorium we have been given, see if the theories hold. In the future I would like to see more anthropologists with high intellectual, methodological, emotional as well as corporeal professionalism. Since we produce written accounts of social phenomena, we are overly concerned with how to express in the most scientific way possible the various phenomena our research is concerned with. What we rarely do, however, is to step out of the realm of a textual (visual) world, or out of the “cognitive style”, as Ingold mentioned elsewhere (2000:282). We try to describe phenomena of non-verbal quality, but have no profound experience whatsoever of how to engage the world non-verbally.

If you remember my lengthy display of Ingold’s concept of wayfaring as the practice of knowledge-generation in Part II of this thesis, you might remember that he states nothing less than a new paradigm for scientific inquiry, namely: “To move is to know” (see Ingold 2011). If we further recall Foucault’s elaborations on the various manifestations of power in the modern nation state, we see that power not only regulates, but also generates knowledge. Therefore, *knowledge and power are inextricably linked* (Foucault 1995:39). Coming from this we can conclude that movement itself is power, or in other words, if scientists would equalise the corporeal as well as the mindful knowledge-production, we would produce knowledge that would be incomparably more relevant and influential in further development of society. You could sum up by saying: Let us move from the *Paradigm of Embodiment* to the *Embodiment of Knowledge*, and therefore to the paradigm of social scientists to acting according to their scientific findings and insights. In other words, to paradigmatically oblige every scientist to truthfully embody the full knowledge they claim to have: Not only in publications and presentations of their scientific work, but in the very actions of their everyday life, because – as Albert Einstein supposedly said – *Those who have the privilege to know, have the duty to act*. The social scientist who mainly writes and talks about the body is himself *not yet living up* to his intellectual insights. Furthermore, it is dangerous to see the body as central to culture, and at the same time forgetting that we all *are* bodies: the paradigm of embodiment is nothing

but warm words if the social scientist's being-in-the-world is mainly defined by finding words in a book and typing their individual interpretation into a computer:

An intellectualisation of the mind cannot be taken seriously without a parallel intellectualisation of the body.

References:

- AMORT, Andrea (2001). 'Vom Selbstverständnis des Neuen Tanzes seit den siebziger Jahren', in: Amort, Andrea/ Wunderer-Gosch, Mimi. *österreich tanzt: Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Böhlau Verlag Ges.m.b.H., Wien (et al.), (138–154).
- BECKER, Jürgen (ed.) 1965. *Happenings*, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.
- BEER, Bettina/ FISCHER, Hans 2009 [2000]. *Wissenschaftliche Arbeitstechniken in der Ethnologie*. Dietrich Reimer Verlag GmbH, Berlin.
- BERTOLUZZA, Eva/ GITZL, Martina/ RALSER, Michaela (eds.) 1994. 'Der weibliche Wahnsinn zwischen Ästhetisierung und Verleugnung', in: *Pathos – Psychose – Pathologie. Der weibliche Wahnsinn zwischen Ästhetisierung und Verleugnung*, Wiener Frauenverlag: Wien (11-29).
- BIRDWHISTELL, Ray L. 1971. *Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body-Motion Communication*. London: Lane.
- BRANDSTETTER, Gabriele 2003. 'Staging Gender: Körperkonzepte in Kunst und Wissenschaft', in: Franziska Frei Gerlach (ed.) *Körperkonzepte: Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Geschlechterforschung*. Münster [et al.] Waxmann, p. 25 – 45.
- CLASSEN, Constance 2005. 'The Witch's Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity', in: David Howes (ed.) *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Cultural Reader*. Berg Publications: Oxford, New York (70–84).

- COLLINS, Michael [et. all.] 1980. 'Improvisation', in: Sadie, Stanley (ed.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Volume Nine: Iacobus – Kerman, Macmillan: London [et al.], (31 – 56).
- COOK, Nicholas 1990. *Music, Imagination and Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- CSORDAS, Thomas 1990. 'Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology', in: *Ethos* Vol. 18. No. 1, Blackwell Publishing, (5-47).
- CSORDAS, Thomas J. 1993. 'Somatic Modes of Attention', in: *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 8, No. 2, Blackwell Publishing (135-156).
- CSORDAS J. Thomas, 1999. 'The Body's Career in Anthropology', in: Henrietta L. Moore (ed.) *Anthropological Theory Today*, Blackwell Publishers Inc.: Malden, (172-205).
- CVANCARA Karoline 2004. *Improvisation im Jazz als Kommunikationsmittel: Persönlicher Ausdruck und Nonverbale Kommunikation durch den musikalischen Augenblick*, Dipl.–Arb., Buchbinderei Obermeier: Wien.
- DAHMS, Sibylle 2001. 'Vienna as the Centre of the Reform of Ballet in the 18th Century', in: Amort, Andrea/ Wunderer-Gosch, Mimi. *österreich tanzt: Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Böhlau Verlag Ges.m.b.H., Wien (et al.), (29).
- D'AQUILI, Eugene/ LAUGHLIN, Charles D./ McMANUS, John, 1979. *The Spectrum of Ritual — A Biogenetic Structural Analysis*. Columbia University Press, New York.

- EBERT Gerhard 1999. *Improvisation und Schauspielkunst – über die Kreativität des Schauspielers*, Henschel Verlag, Berlin.
- FOSTER, Susan Leigh 2002. *Dances that Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown Connecticut.
- FOUCAULT, Michel 1995 [1975]. *Überwachen und Strafen: Die Geburt des Gefängnisses* [übers.: Walter Seitter], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- FOUCAULT, Michel 1986 [1976] *Der Wille zum Wissen*, übersetzt von Ulrich Raulff und Walter Seitter, Suhrkamp Verlag, Deutschland. Originaltitel: *Histoire de la sexualité, I: La volonté de savoir*.
- FOUCAULT, Michel 1989a [1984] *Der Gebrauch der Lüste*, übersetzt von Ulrich Raulff und Walter Seitter, Suhrkamp Verlag, Deutschland. Originaltitel: *Histoire de la sexualité, II: L'usage des plaisirs*.
- FOUCAULT, Michel 1989b [1984] *Die Sorge um sich*, übersetzt von Ulrich Raulff und Walter Seitter, Suhrkamp Verlag, Deutschland. Originaltitel: *Histoire de la sexualité, III: Le souci de soi*.
- FOUCAULT, Michel 1993 [1988] *Technologien des Selbst*. [übers. Michael Bischoff], herausgegeben von Martin/ Gutman/ Hutton. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer
- GLASER, Barney G./ STRAUSS, Anselm L. 2008 [1967] *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Aldine Transaction: New Brunswick/New York.

- GROF, Stanislav (2000). *Psychology of the Future – Lessons from Modern Consciousness Research*. State University of New York Press, New York.
- HALLAM, Elizabeth/ INGOLD, Tim (eds.) 2007. *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. Berg Publications, UK.
- HANNA, Judith Lynne 1987 [1979]. *To Dance is Human*, University of Texas Press: Austin.
- HANNA, Judith Lynne 1988. *Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance, and Desire*. Chicago/ London: Chicago University Press.
- HANNA, Judith Lynne 1988b. *Dance and Stress: Resistance, Reduction, and Euphoria*, AMS Press Inc., New York.
- HOWES, David (ed.) 2005. *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Cultural Reader*. Berg Publications: Oxford, New York.
- HUGHES–FREELAND, Felicia 2007. ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent: T.S. Elliot for Anthropologists’, in: Hallam, Elizabeth/Ingold, Tim (eds.) *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. Berg Publications, UK.
- INGOLD, Tim 2000. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. Routledge, London and New York.
- INGOLD, Tim/ VERGUNST, Jo Lee 2008. *Ways of Walking: ethnography and practice on foot*. Ashgate Publishing; Hampshire/Burlington.

- NGOLD, Tim 2011. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*.
Routledge: London/New York.
- JACOBUS, Mary/ FOX KELLER, Evelyn/ SHUTTLEWORTH, Sally (eds.) 1990.
Body Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science, London/ New York:
Routledge.
- JOHNSTONE, Keith 1979. *Improvisation and the Theatre*, Faber and Faber; London.
- KALTENBRUNNER, THOMAS 1998. *Contact Improvisation: moving – dancing –
interaction* (trans. by Nick Procyk), Meyer and Meyer: Aachen.
- KAZDA-SEELIG, Renate 2001. ‘The Viennese Relationship between Eurhythmymy
and Dance’, in: Amort, Andrea/ Wunderer-Gosch, Mimi. *österreich tanzt:
Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Böhlau Verlag Ges.m.b.H., Wien (et al.), (73).
- LAMPERT, Frederike 2007. *Tanzimprovisation: Geschichte – Theorie – Verfahren –
Vermittlung*, Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld.
- LIEP, John (2001). *Locating Cultural Creativity*, Pluto Press, London.
- MAUSS, Marcel 2006. *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*. Durkheim Press:
New York/Oxford.
- MEUSER, Michael 2005. ‚Frauenkörper – Männerkörper: Somatische Kulturen der
Geschlechterdifferenz’, in: SCHROER, Markus (ed.) 2005. *Soziologie des
Körpers*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

- NOVACK, Cynthia J. 1990. *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture*. University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin.
- NOVACK, Cynthia, J. 1993. 'Ballet, Gender and Cultural Power', in: Helen Thomas (ed.) *Dance, Gender and Culture*. Macmillan Press: London, (34 – 48).
- OBERZAUCHER, Alfred 2001. 'At the Beginning was the Event', in: Amort, Andrea/ Wunderer-Gosch, Mimi. *österreich tanzt: Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Böhlau Verlag Ges.m.b.H., Wien (et al.), (21).
- OBERZAUCHER–SCHÜLLER, Gunhild 2001. 'The Free Dance Scene in Vienna until 1938', in: Amort, Andrea/ Wunderer-Gosch, Mimi. *österreich tanzt: Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Böhlau Verlag Ges.m.b.H., Wien (et al.), (69).
- O'CONNOR, Barbara 1997. 'Safe Sets: Women, Dance and 'Communitas'', in: Thomas, Helen (ed.) *Dance in the City*. Macmillan Press: London(149-172).
- O'REILLY, Karen 2005. *Ethnographic Methods*. Routledge, USA, Canada.
- PETERS, Gary 2009 *The Philosophy of Improvisation*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London.
- PFISTER, Gertrud 1997. 'Sport – Befreiung des weiblichen Körpers oder Internalisierung von Zwängen?' In: Klein, Gabriele / Liebsch, Katharina (eds.) *Zivilisierung des weiblichen Ich*, Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, (206–248).
- PINK, Sarah 2009. *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. SAGE Publications Ltd., London.
- POLHEMUS, Ted 1993. 'Dance, Gender and Culture', in: Helen Thomas (ed.) *Dance, Gender and Culture*. The Macmillan Press LTD: London (3-15).

- POSTL, Gertrude 2001 ‘(Über) den Körper sprechen: Materialität und Diskurs in der gegenwärtigen Gender-Debatte’, in: Waniek, Eva/ Stoller, Silvia (eds.) *Verhandlungen des Geschlechts. Zur Konstruktivismusdebatte in der Gender-Theorie*, Turia und Kant: Wien, (117-134).
- REYNOLDS, Nancy/ McCORMICK, Malcolm 2003. *No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth Century*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- SCHECHNER, Richard 1993. *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*, Routledge: London/USA/Canada.
- SHILLING, Chris 1993. *The Body and Social Theory*, Sage Publications London.
- SHILLING, Chris 2008. *Changing Bodies: Habit, Crisis and Creativity*, Sage Publications: London [et al.]
- SCHLANGER, Nathan 2006. ‘Introduction. Technological Commitments: Marcel Mauss and the Study of Techniques in the French Social Sciences’, in: Marcel Mauss 2006. *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*. Durkheim Press: New York/Oxford.
- SCHROER, Markus (ed.) 2005. *Soziologie des Körpers*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- SLOTERDIJK, Peter 2009. *Du musst dein Leben ändern: Über Anthropotechnik*. Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main
- STEINMAN, Louise (1995). *The Knowing Body: The Artist as Storyteller in Contemporary Performance*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley CA

- STOLLER, Paul 1989. *The Taste of Ethnographic Things*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- STRAUSS, Anselm/ CORBIN, Juliet (eds.) 1997. *Grounded Theory in Practice*, Sage Publications, London [et al.]
- SUDNOW, David 2001 [1978] *Ways of the Hand: A Rewritten Account*. The MIT Press: Cambridge, London.
- THOMAS, Helen (ed.) 1993. *Dance, Gender and Culture*. The Macmillan Press Ltd: London.
- THOMAS, Helen 2003. *The Body, Dance and Cultural Theory*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke [et al.]
- THOMAS, Helen/ AHMED, Jamilah (eds.) 2004. *Cultural Bodies: Ethnography and Theory*. Blackwell Publishing: Oxford [et al.].
- THOMPSON, Edward P. 1991 [1963]. *The Making of the English Working Class*, Penguin Books, London (et all.).
- TOMRUK, Özge 2007. *Training fürs Leben; Methoden improvisierten Theaters: Action TheaterTM und Forumtheater, Aisthesis-Bewusstsein-Veränderung*. Dissertation, Universität Wien.
- TREICHL, Helga M. 2005. *Technik, Medien und Gender: Zum »Paradigmenwechsel« des Körpers*, Turia + Kant: Wien.

- VAN EIKELS, Kai 2007. 'Schwärme, Smart Mobs, Verteilte Öffentlichkeiten: Bewegungsmuster als soziale und politische Organisation?', in: Gabriele Brandstetter, /Christoph Wulf (eds.). *Tanz als Anthropologie*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag: München.
- VIERA, Joe 1971. 'Arrangement und Improvisation' – in: *Reihe Jazz*, Vol. 3, Universal Edition, Vienna.
- WAINWRIGHT, Steven/ TURNER, Bryan S. 2004. 'Narratives of Embodiment: Body, Aging, and Career in Royal Ballet Dancers', in: Helen Thomas/ Jamilah Ahmed (eds.) *Cultural Bodies: Ethnography and Theory*. Blackwell Publishing: Oxford [et al.] (98 – 120).
- WARD, Andrew 1993. 'Dancing in the Dark: Rationalism and the Neglect of Social Dance', in: Helen Thomas (ed.) *Dance, Gender and Culture*. The Macmillan Press Ltd: London (16-33).
- WARD, Andrew 1997. 'Dancing around meaning (and the Meaning around Dance)', in: Thomas, Helen (ed.) 1997. *Dance in the City*. Macmillan: London, (3-20).
- WICK, Rainer 1975. *Zur Soziologie intermediärer Kunstpraxis – Happening, Fluxus, Aktionen*. Dissertation der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität zu Köln
- WULF, Christoph/ BRANDSTETTER, Gabriele 2007. *Tanz als Anthropologie*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag: München.

notes:

- 1: KRIPPNER, Stanley 2011. 'Trance and the Trickster. Hypnotic-like Effects in Shamanic Healing Rituals', presentation at the symposium "Consciousness, Personality and Healing"; 3rd 4th of June 2011, at the Landesverteidigungsakademie, Stiftgasse, Vienna.

Hompegages:

-) URL 1: Numbers of Killings of Austrian Jews in the Second World War:
[<http://www.doew.at/ausstellung/shoahopferdb.html>], accessed on the 17th of April 2012, 15:15 CET.
-) URL 2: EU ranking concerning equal payment, and salary difference
[<http://www.profil.at/articles/1008/560/263087/oesterreich-gleichberechtigung-erfolgsgeschichte>], accessed on the 17th of April, 11:30 CET
-) URL 3: Current Report of Gender Inequality in Austria:
[www.bka.gv.at/DocView.axd?CobId=46836], accessed on the 20th of April, 11:00 CET.
-) URL 4: Information on Professor Barbara W. Lex: [Part III]
[www.legacy.com/obituaries/wickedlocal-belmont/obituary.aspx?n=barbara-w-lex&pid=147459594], assessed on the 20th of April, 12:15 p.m. CET.
-) URL 5: *Statistic Austria*, the link to the Body Mass Index of 2006/2007:
[statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/gesundheit/gesundheitsdeterminanten/bmi_body_mass_index/index.html], accessed on the 21st of May, 9 p.m. CET.
-) Al Jazeera live stream for international news:
[aljazeera.com/watch_now]
-) Arte News Journal, available in German and French language:
[videos.arte.tv/de/videos#/tv/list/]

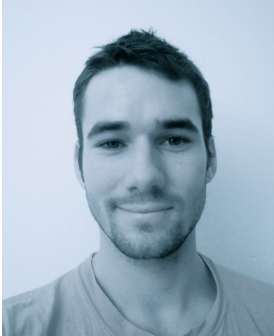
Abstract English

This thesis for diploma deals with improvisation in various aspects of the phenomenon in a Viennese context. It consists of three parts: The first part displays definitions and approaches of improvisation as it is used and perceived from the perspective of the performing arts, where I provide a historic overview about the development of improvisation as a tool for dance and performance. Later, I portray the various forms of experimental approaches of performance collectives and groups from the 1960s and 1970s. In the end, I discuss Foucault's notion about the regulative disciplines of the modern nation state, and fact that improvisation can be used to alter and transform one's habitus, thus making available an alteration to 'social choreography', which ultimately holds the potential for social reformation. In the second part of this work, I introduce several theoretical concepts about the body and gender, *Techniques of the Body*, and the process of knowledge-generation following the arguments of Tim Ingold. Later I introduce processual methodology as well as *Sensory Ethnography* as major orientations for conducting my one-year participant observation. In the third and last part I arrange all the findings, displaying first the bundled statements of all the interviewees together and later the effects of improvisation on the lifecourse. These central findings and insights to this thesis for diploma are *hyperawareness*, the *saturation-effect*, observations on timely use in a Central European cultural context, the phenomena of *tuning* and *swarming*, and as a final finding the beneficial aspects of *Anthropotechnique* as I understand it. I close this thesis with a conclusion where first the central statements are consolidated and where I finally re-evaluate my initial hypotheses.

Abstract Deutsch

In dieser Diplomarbeit, welche aus drei miteinander verflochtenen und zueinander durchlässigen Teilen besteht, wird das Phänomen *Improvisation* aus unterschiedlichen Perspektiven beleuchtet. Zentral für meine Beobachtungen sind vor allem die Entwicklungen und Möglichkeiten für die Praxis von Improvisation in Wien. Zuerst stelle ich diverse Definitionen und Gebräuche aus den darstellenden Künsten vor. Danach kommt ein grob angerissener historischer Überblick über die Entwicklung von Improvisation im Tanz, gefolgt von Betrachtungen im künstlerischen Umfeld der Postmoderne. Hier befinden sich die wichtigsten Impulsgeber im New York der 1960er und 1970er Jahre, die wesentlich zu einer Verbreitung von improvisatorischen Ansätzen im Euro-Amerikanischen kulturellen Kontext beigetragen haben. Indem ich die Ansätze von Foucault zu den regulativen Mechanismen staatlicher Kontrolle erläutere, wird ersichtlich das uns Improvisation zu einer aktiven und selbstbestimmten Gestaltung unseres *Habitus* ermächtigen kann, was von den reformistischen Theatergruppen aus dieser Zeit auch vehement propagiert wurde. Im zweiten Teil dieser Arbeit stelle ich meine theoretischen Überlegungen zu den Themen Körper und Geschlecht, Techniken des Körpers, den Prozess der Wissensgenerierung anhand von Konzepten von Tim Ingold dar. Letztlich präsentiere ich die prozessuale Methodologie welche in dieser Diplomarbeit zur Anwendung gekommen ist, und reflektiere in kritischer Weise die junge Disziplin der *Sensory Ethnography*. Im dritten und letzten Teil präsentiere ich alle Erkenntnisse die ich aus dem Forschungsprozess gewinnen konnte. Zuerst führe ich Erkenntnisse aus den Interviews in Form von zusammengefassten Kernaussagen zu jeder Interviewkategorie an. Danach werden Effekte von langjähriger körperlicher Praxis von Improvisation auf den Lebensweg besprochen, wobei *Hyperawareness*, der *Durchdringungs*-Effekt, Überlegungen über das in Zentraleuropa üblich Zeitverständnis, *Tuning* und *Swarming* zentrale Punkte der Argumentation darstellen. Indem ich mich an einem Begriff von Peter Sloterdijk anlehne, spreche ich von *Anthropotechnik*, um die Präsentation der Forschungserkenntnisse abzuschließen. Am Ende dieser Arbeit über Improvisation in Wien resümiere ich noch einmal kurz die zentralen Aussagen dieser Diplomarbeit in einer *Conclusio* wobei ich nochmals auf die anfangs genannten Hypothesen zurückkomme und diese neuerlich kritisch bespreche.

Curriculum Vitae

<p>name: Manuel Wagner, 01.10.1984</p> <p>profession: performer/choreographer/student of anthropology</p> <p>specialisation: improvisatory techniques</p> <p>contact: serth@gmx.at</p>	
--	--

Born in Vienna on the 1st of October 1984. After spending my childhood in the countryside in lower Austria I moved back to Vienna to visit the *Ballet School of the Vienna State Opera* which simultaneously offered a regular high school formation for the common duration of eight years. As a professionally educated ballet dancer I carried out my mandatory community service, working at the *Caritas Wien* from 2003 to 2004. Later I chose to continue my life as a dancer, working in various performances and projects in Austria and abroad (see below). In 2007 I began my studies in Cultural and Social Anthropology at the *University of Vienna* while simultaneously working as a contemporary dancer.

professional work

March/April/May 2012: Invalidstreet II: Street demonstration against discrimination
‘Battle Jam’ ‘Battle Jam II’ ‘Battle Jam III: Real Time
Improvisation in the Albert Schweizer Haus in Vienna.
concept: Vera Rebl*, Music: Melissa Coleman, Karl Ritter,
Jury: Alfons Haider.

December 2011: Residency in ‘Theatre Marni’, Brussels. One week of non-
performance oriented research with a small improvisational
Showing. Host: Simon Mayer.

November 2011: ‘Do not forsake me oh my Darling’, Concept: Nikolaus Adler. WUK
Vienna.
‘Wiener Blut’: Traditional Viennese Opperetta, performed in Fou
Zhou/China. Organiser: „Wiener Operettensommer“

October 2011: Composition and performance of the song ‘Happy Metal’ Shooting in
the *Szene Wien*.

July 2011: Performing as a dancer and musician at the ‘Spiel’ Festival in Andorf,
Upper Austria

- May 2011:* Assistance and dance performance for Vera Rebl in the context of the project: 'Invalidenstraße/ Invalid Street'. Workshops and Streetperformance.
- January 2011:* Dancer in the Austrian Talent Show 'Helden von Morgen', Choreography by Ferdinando Chelalo
- September 2010:* Shooting for a stop-motion animated music video. 'I am Cereals' by Galaxy (Movement-Concept) *
- July 2010:* Participating in the second Module of the 'International Choreolab', at Donau University Krems.
- June 2010:* Choreography and Acting for 'Lindt' – Australian TV-Spot. Director: Michael Bindlechner, Production: Frames Filmproduktion GmbH, Vienna.
- May 2010:* Choreography and Dancing for the Music Video 'Nur an Mich' by Luttenberger & Klug, directed by Stefan Ruzowitzky, Production: Close-Up Filmproduktion GmbH, Vienna. *
- February – April 2010:* Choreography and Movement-Coaching for the Opera 'Der Freischütz', directed by Stefan Ruzowitzky, Theater an der Wien, Vienna*
- January 2010:* Four Season Hotel: Shadow Performance Istanbul with the flowmotion dance company
- December 2009:* „Artist Galla“ 09 in Oslo. Shadow Performance with Flowmotion at a charity television live-show
- September 2009:* 'Cartography Bodymemento' Donau-University Krems. Seminar on Choreography and Architecture, with Gus Solomons, Gil Clarke, Sebastian Prantl, Johannes Birringer, Michael Brainin
- July 2009* workshop 'Deltebre Dansa', Spain*: Artistic Director: Roberto Olivian
- June 2009* 'cutsteps' public space corporal interventions, soloimprov. Vienna
- May/June 09:* 'Apollon – Musagete', together with the *Wroclaw Chamber Orchestra* Wroclaw (Poland), Neuberg an der Mürz (Styria) Tanz Atelier Wien, Sebastian Prantl
- February – April 09:* 'generations dance lab' teaching improvisation workshop, at TAW 'Dance with a Statue' Music video Choreography/Dance* Szene Bunte Wähne Festival in Vienna: 'trendsetter'- choreo/dance
- January 09:* 'Nature in Fashion' in the Palmenhaus Schönbrunn, Vienna. Choreography and Organisation of a fashion-performance resulting out of an europe-wide project combining photography & fashion design.

- November 08:* 'Moment/Memento', Tanz Atelier Wien
choreo./light engineering assistance 'Austrian Hairdressing Award 08'
- October 08:* 'Alternative Hair Convention 2008', Royal Albert Hall, London
Photoshooting for 'MISS', edition 12/08
- September 08:* 'Me<le>A' in cooperation with the LOGOS Ensemble and the Tanz
Atelier Wien, St.Peter an der Sperr, Wr. Neustadt
- February – June 08:* 'KAIROS Volume II',
'Dorfplatz Neubau(en)',
'european dance festival' Cyprus 08,
'KAIROS Volume III' at the Festival Österreich Tanzt, in the
Festspielhaus St.Pölten
all performances directed by Sebastian Prantl
- March - December 07:* 'KAIROS' Workshop Tanz Atelier Wien,
schoolworkshops vienna, choreographic assistance of
Sebastian Prantl
- October 07:* actor in the movie 'Pepperminta', director: Elisabeth Charlotte Rist,
- November 06 - February 07:* Travelling in South–America
Various workshops in contemporary dance in Buenos
Aires, Florianopolis, Mendoza, La Paz, Lima and Quito
- October 06:* 'K.u.K. – Hofbanket', Bad Ischl, directors: Domino Blue and Tom Blue
- July 06:* 'Fest der Flüsse'; group– and soloperformance (improvisation), with Fabiana
Pastorini
- June 06:* 'Raumfransen' Interdisciplinary Installation, in the Vienna Rathaus, in
Cooperation with Students of the University of Applied Arts in Vienna,
- March 04 - March 06:* Dancer in the Viennese contemporary improvisational dance
Ensemble 'Tanzatelier Wien', artistic director: Sebastian Prantl,
performing and assisting in Austria, Bratislava and Cyprus
performing in the following projects: 'Spazio Divertimento' in
cooperation with the Vienna Choir Boys, Palais Coburg, Vienna
'Ante Prima' – Duo: Tanz Atelier Wien 'Land Body Scape' in various
contexts in Vienna (Odeon Theater), St.Pölten, Dance Festival
Cyprus 05, Impulstanz 05 'Land Body Scape - research project' together
with Silvia Both's Tanzpool and TAW 'Dreaming of Bones' Group
Research, Tanz Atelier Wien
- July 04:* Impro performance directed by Mathilde Monnier at Impulstanz04

languages:

German (mother tongue)

English (expert level)

Spanish (intermediate lv.)

Portugues (enhanced basics)

French (basics)

instruments: Guitar, Bass, Voice, Percussion

various spaces of time:

since February 07: Studies of Social- and Cultural Anthropology in Vienna
(currently writing thesis, finished approximately in June 2012)

November 06 – March 07: Voyage in South America to explore the cultural contexts
of Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador

September 03 – September 04: Community Service at “Caritas” in Vienna

July/August 2003: Voyage in China: Beijing, Yan Tai, Quing Dao, amongst other
things: 2 weeks of Kung Fu Training in the south of Yan Tai
(Shandong province).

September 95 - June 03: Ballet School of the Vienna State Opera, and regular
Higschool professional training in the techniques of
Classical Ballet, Historical Dance, Stage Acting, Gymnastics,
Folklore, Modern Dance, Jazz Dance, Pas de Deux, Main Role
in Benjamin Britten’s Peter Grimes (as John), performed at the
Vienna State Opera.

***Links:**

rehearsal footage of the opera ‘Freischütz’ – directed by Stefan Ruzowitzky
[youtube.com/watch?v=QY8vhmBS6_4]

‘Nur an Mich’ – music by Luttenberger & Klug, directed by Stefan Ruzowitzky
[youtube.com/watch?v=Hj_Y0T3ojNY]

‘Dance with a Statue’ – music by wemakemusic, directed by David Wagner.
[youtube.com/watch?v=1t9r5MX9qfY]

‘Galaxy’ – music by I Am Cereals, directed by Mike Kren.
[youtube.com/watch?v=u4rGfWoMdkw]

‘Danceability’ – A mixed ability performance group of people with special
needs/talents directed by Vera Rebl
[www.danceability.at]