

THE INTERCULTURAL AND COMMUNITY CULTURE SCENES OF LONDON AND VIENNA

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural and community culture facilities and activities are in a prime position to help bridging the gaps between different parts of the population. The present contribution deals with the specific scenes in London and Vienna and analyses the underlying cultural policies. The comparison of those two settings shows that London has bigger institutions with a longer tradition to offer than Vienna. The intercultural and community culture scene of Vienna has developed more recently and is of a smaller scope. With Culture for all Londoners, London has developed a concise cultural strategy. Vienna has no such strategy to offer – the issue is only addressed in the recent government agreement of the Social-Democratic Party and the Liberal Party. However, what both documents are missing, is a specific policy in favour of intercultural and community culture activities. Therefore, the author's recommendation to both administrations is to develop such strategies.

Keywords: Intercultural dialogue, cultural facilities, urban development, London, Vienna

INTRODUCTION

European metropolises and cities deal quite differently with the diversity of their population. In handling the challenge of diversity, intercultural and community culture facilities and activities play an important role. London and Vienna are the capitals of two countries with different dimensions and historical backgrounds. Therefore, these two metropolises were chosen as examples for a comparative study of different approaches in the field of intercultural and community culture activities.

This paper starts with an overview of specific theoretical aspects, first providing some concise information on the underlying research project. The main chapter describes the intercultural and community culture scenes of the British and the Austrian capitals and analyses their respective cultural policies. In the concluding chapter, a comparison of the two metropolises' activities in the given field is drawn and a short outlook is given.

THEORETICAL ASPECTS

Let us first cover some of the most important theoretical issues in the given field. The most comprehensive concept of cultural urban development, which strongly emphasises the micro-level of specific urban areas, is Franco Bianchini's and Lia Ghilardi's Cultural Planning Approach (2004). Bianchini and Ghilardi depart from a broad definition of culture, so-called E-culture. They propose including all cultural resources of an area (neighbourhood, quarter, district, town, region, etc.) and creating two-way relationships between cultural activities and other political fields such as architecture, urban planning, housing, economics, social affairs, education, and tourism [1].

The current discussion on arts, culture, and migration shows different key aspects: The most important is cultural diversity, which refers to “the range of different cultures that are to be found in a given region or state, and to the manner in which these cultures coexist and the basis of that coexistence” [2]. Other key aspects are, e.g., intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity policies for the arts, and intercultural cities [3].

Intercultural cities are agglomerations with an ethnically diverse population, which – by a variety of measures – try to turn diversity deficits into diversity advantages [4]. In 2008, the Council of Europe launched its Intercultural Cities programme, which is devoted to “capacity-building and policy-development”. According to the programme, cities will develop “intercultural strategies for the management of diversity as a resource”. [5] [6]. In 2021, 145 cities took part in the Intercultural Cities network, most of them in Europe [7].

In general, cultural facilities are defined as venues such as theatres, cinemas, galleries, exhibition spaces, music venues, and multi-purpose locations [8]. In our context – with reference to European cities – we can distinguish between two types of cultural facilities: Intercultural facilities or centres serve the purposes of intercultural dialogue and cultural exchange [9]. Venues of community culture (or minority culture) conduce to the artistic and cultural self-representation and to the empowerment of specific ethnic groups. The boundaries between intercultural and community culture facilities and activities are sometimes blurred.

RESEARCH PROJECT

Data presented in this contribution stem from a specific research project currently carried out by the author at the Institute for Urban and Regional Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. The project focuses on the investigation of the possible positive effects of intercultural and community culture activities on intercultural dialogue, participation, inclusion, mutual understanding of different people, a stimulating and peaceful cohabitation, the amelioration of cultural and other infrastructures, to a reduction of social and spatial imbalances and to a positive development of peripheral areas. For this purpose, the author applies the research methods of document analysis, field research, participant observation, and in-depth interviews with key actors in the given field.

LONDON AND VIENNA

In European metropolises and cities there are numerous institutions and facilities promoting intercultural dialogue and diversity in the arts as well as locations and associations of community culture. In the following, London and Vienna serve as examples. As we will see, the structures of the intercultural and community culture landscapes of the two metropolises differ considerably.

London, the capital of the United Kingdom, is probably Europe’s most diverse metropolis [10] [11]. As such, London has acquired much expertise on intercultural as well as community culture issues. This makes it worthwhile to investigate developments in the British capital. The debate on intercultural and community culture issues has been going on in the United Kingdom for quite some time. The 2002 UK Race Relations (Amendment) Act obliges all public institutions to prove that they are working towards racial equality. This is an important step towards equality in the field of arts and culture [12].

In 2019, Greater London, which comprises the City of London and 32 boroughs, had a population of 8.96 million [13] [14]. The Mayor and the London Assembly – which together form the Greater London Authority – govern Greater London [15]. By its administrative structure, Greater London is divided into Inner and Outer London. Clockwise, the 12 statutory Inner London boroughs are Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster, Camden, Islington, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Greenwich, Lewisham, Southwark, Lambeth, and Wandsworth. The core of Inner London is the City of London [16]. Sadiq Khan succeeded Boris Johnson in the function of the Mayor of Greater London in the spring of 2016. Justine Simons is Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries [17].

In December 2018, Sadiq Khan and the London Assembly presented the new culture strategy Culture for all Londoners [18]. As recommended by Bianchini and Ghilardi [19], the well-defined culture strategy tries to link culture with many other aspects of urban life, that is, with urban development in general, outskirts development, identity, neighbourliness, creative industries, health and well-being – and even with climate change. The most important among the 85 properly defined actions [20] are the London Boroughs of Culture (Waltham Forest in 2019, Brent in 2020), Culture Seeds – a scheme of tiny grants for grassroots cultural activities, a pilot project for the advancement of the cultural engagement of volunteers, the support of “cultural activities and interventions that increase participation, engagement and community cohesion” [21], the implementation of a “Cultural Infrastructure Plan to support and safeguard cultural places and spaces” [22], the Good Growth Fund, as well as the launching of a new culture and education district at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

The cultural strategy’s basic aim is to include all Londoners. Nevertheless, reference is being made to “diversity advantages” [23], “building strong, diverse relationships within and between community groups” [24], public art which raises awareness of the “complexity of the city, its diversity and how it influences our perception of the world around us” [25], maintenance and support of the “diverse heritage” of different neighbourhoods in London [26], as well as to the protection of “diverse cultural spaces and programmes” [27].

In London’s rich intercultural and community culture scene, we first find intercultural theatres such as Arcola, Bush, Immediate, and Kiln [28]. Intercultural multi-use facilities include the Bernie Grant Arts Centre, Watermans, the Rich Mix Cultural Foundation, Pan Intercultural Arts, and the Albany. Furthermore, there are intercultural programmes in the fields of theatre, music, the fine arts, and more, which are displayed at established institutions such as the Royal Court Theatre, National Theatre, or Lyric Hammersmith.



Figure 1. The Bernie Grant Arts Centre in Tottenham, North London.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bernie_Grant_Arts_Centre_JL_001.JPG



Figure 2. The Rich Mix in Shoreditch, East London.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22371870>

The Yaa Centre and Half Moon represent community culture facilities. More frequent than those are community culture touring companies such as Talawa, Tamasha, Out of Joint, One Dance, Dash Arts, Kali Theatre, New Earth, and Chinese Arts Now. Additionally, there are quite a number of community culture festivals as well as some intercultural festivals.

Most of the facilities listed above are situated in Inner London. Some facilities, including Kiln Theatre (in the Northwest of London), Bernie Grant Arts Centre (North), and Watermans (West) are located in Outer London, i.e., on the outskirts of the British capital. The Bush Theatre pursues neighbourhood policies, the Albany acts as a community resource, and the Bernie Grant Arts Centre tries to contribute to the regeneration of the

surrounding area. Quite a few of the facilities and organisations such as Arcola Theatre, Bernie Grant Arts Centre, Yaa Centre, Tamasha, One Dance, and Kali Theatre offer labs and training for young artists. Community culture facilities and touring companies aim at different ethnic minority groups such as black people or people from East and Southeast Asia.

The second city of our little survey is **Vienna**. At the beginning of 2021, the Austrian capital, which comprises 23 districts, counted 1.92 million inhabitants [29] [30]. Vienna's current Mayor is Michael Ludwig, who has been in power since 2018. Likewise, Veronica Kaup-Hasler has been Vienna's Councillor of Culture since 2018 [31].

The Vienna administration yet has to deliver a cultural strategy for Vienna. In contrast to the government agreements of the previous government coalition between the Social Democrats and the Green Party (2010 to 2020), the government programme of the new coalition for progress between the Social-Democratic Party and the Liberal Party only offers some general statements in favour of diversity, inclusion, and participation. One of those pronouncements is the following: "Culture plays a central role in making cities inclusive, safe and resilient. For this to happen, the diversity of urban society has to be reflected in all areas of arts and culture. We want to see an expansion of multilingual offerings and measures that enable diversity in the audience and on stage." [32].

As in the case of London, a short description of Vienna's spatial structure shall first be given. The wider city centre comprises the districts one to nine on the right bank of the Danube and inside the ring road Gürtel [33]. The outskirts of Vienna are made up of the districts ten to twenty and the district twenty-three on the right side of the Danube and the districts twenty-one and twenty-two on the left side of the river.



Figure 3. Brunnenpassage in Ottakring, in the West of Vienna (2018 – this and all forthcoming photos by Walter Rohn)

Vienna's intercultural and community culture scene is quite small and has developed only recently. Under the heading of intercultural activities, we have institutions and locations, festivals, associations, and intercultural programmes at large cultural institutions.

Community culture comprises institutions and associations presenting a regular programme and locations with sporadic activities.

The first part of our survey of specific activities in Vienna deals with intercultural activities. The theatre laboratories Lalish (18th district of Vienna) and DiverCITYLAB (10th) are the first to be mentioned under the heading institutions and locations [34]. Aslı Kışlal directs DiverCITYLAB, the school for young actors. Brunnenpassage (16th), which presents different art forms such as theatre, literature, and cinema as well as participatory formats such as different choirs and dance classes, is Vienna's most important project in this field. The social institution Caritas established Brunnenpassage in 2007 and still supports the facility, which is directed by Anne Wiederhold. In a broader sense, Kulturhaus Brotfabrik (10th) is an offshoot of the Brunnenpassage. Kulturhaus Brotfabrik, which is located at a former bread factory, runs two additional sites in the tenth district: Stand 129 and Favorit. Brunnenpassage and Kulturhaus Brotfabrik act as neighbourhood centres.



Figure 4. Nenad Vasilić and Marija Blagojevic at Stand 129 in Favoriten, in the South of Vienna (2017)

Kulturraum Neruda (4th) and Centro Once (11th) offer music from Latin America, while Café Derwisch (16th) presents different music styles. Hinterland Gallery (4th) and Philomena plus (2nd) deal with fine arts from the Middle East.

Wienwoche and Salam Orient are intercultural festivals offering various art forms. In Between at the Akzent theatre (4th), the International Accordion Festival and the KlezMORE Festival Vienna present music. With the exception of In Between, all festivals stage concerts, performances, etc. at facilities and places all over Vienna. Wiener Vorstadttheater and daskunst – the latter is also led by Aslı Kışlal – are associations in the field of theatre. Moving Cultures and BlueSimon specialise in music. Kùltür gemma! provides grants to migrants for training in cultural facilities and Diverse Geschichten supports the writing of screenplays. Furthermore, large cultural institutions in the city

centre such as the Burgtheater, Volkstheater, Museumsquartier, etc. inter alia present intercultural programmes.



Figure 5. Aslı Kışlal's production of "Doyçlender: Almanci" at theatre Werk X Petersplatz in Innere Stadt, in central Vienna (2015)

The second part of our tour deals with community culture. Under the heading institutions and associations, the Croatian Centre and the Burgenland-Croatian cultural association in Vienna (both in the 4th district), as well as the Croatian cultural association Progress Austria-Vienna (15th) serve the Croatian community in Vienna. For people with a Serbian background, the Serbian Centre (7th), Serbian cultural centre Stevan Mokranjac (10th), and others act as anchors. The Yunus Emre Enstitüsü (9th) is the Turkish cultural institute. The cultural institutions listed above represent the countries where the greater part of the people who have moved to Vienna originate from. Furthermore, there are, e.g., the cultural institutes of the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, and the United States of America (all in the 1st district), Hungary (2nd), Bulgaria and Italy (both 3rd), France, Romania, and Russia (all 4th), and the United Kingdom (7th). Recently, the Latin America Institute (9th) has been incorporated into the network of adult education in Vienna. The following locations sporadically present events of community culture: the Akzent theatre (4th) stages theatre productions from Croatia, Serbia, etc. Hallmann Dome, Arena34, and Kral Eventhalle (all 10th) are large halls where pop stars from the former Yugoslavia and from Turkey perform. Restaurants and cafés at Ottakringer Straße (16th/17th) sporadically present concerts and other cultural events. Multiplex cinemas such as the Hollywood Megaplex Gasometer (11th), Lugner City (15th), and Millennium City (20th) inter alia show films in Croatian, Serbian, and Turkish languages.

In this chapter, an overview over institutions, locations, associations, festivals, etc. in London and Vienna, which have performed before the Covid-19 crisis and which still exist, was given. We hope all activities will survive the crisis!

COMPARISON BETWEEN LONDON AND VIENNA AND OUTLOOK

According to its history of immigration from overseas, London has a long tradition of intercultural and community culture facilities and activities. In Vienna, activities of that type are more recent. Intercultural theatres and multi-use locations are more frequent in London than in Vienna. In the given field, London has quite a large number of bigger institutions such as the Arcola Theatre, Kiln Theatre, the Bernie Grant Arts Centre, Watermans, and the Rich Mix Cultural Foundation. The largest intercultural (transcultural) venue in Vienna is Brunnenpassage, which is quite small in comparison to its London counterparts. In the field of community culture, Vienna has more institutions to offer than London. To Vienna's larger facilities, we must add the three concert locations Hallmann Dome, Arena34, and Kral Eventhalle. In contrast to that, London houses more community culture touring companies.

With the exception of Kiln Theatre, Bernie Grant Arts Centre, and Watermans, all intercultural and community culture venues in the British capital are situated in Inner London. By contrast, the majority of intercultural and community culture facilities of the Austrian capital is located on the outskirts of Vienna.

While many London-based venues offer online events to bridge the closures during the Covid-19 epidemic, the Arcola theatre has created its new open-air facility Arcola Outside. Some of Vienna's locations such as DiverCITYLAB and Brunnenpassage are also presenting online events.

In their concepts for culture, both administrations refer to the diversity of their populations and to the advantages that diversity brings [35] [36]. With Culture for All Londoners, the administration of the British capital has developed a definitive cultural policy. Vienna has no such strategy to offer. The only document referring to cultural policy in Vienna is the section on culture in the government agreement of 2020.

There is not much of an explicit policy towards intercultural and community culture activities in either London or Vienna. London sees its cultural policy as a strategy for all citizens. Of course, there are references to several aspects of intercultural and community cultural affairs. In its government agreement of 2020, Vienna states that "the diversity of urban society has to be reflected in all areas of arts and culture" [37].

The population of both metropolises is getting increasingly diverse. Intercultural and community culture facilities and activities can help to bridge gaps between different parts of the population and can contribute to the bettering of living conditions. Specifically, ventures of that kind can foster intercultural dialogue, participation, inclusion, mutual understanding among different people, and a stimulating and peaceful cohabitation. Furthermore, they may contribute to the amelioration of cultural and other infrastructures, to a reduction of social and spatial imbalances, and to the advancement of peripheral areas. Therefore, the author recommends that the administrations of London and Vienna develop an explicit political strategy in favour of intercultural and community culture activities.

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