

***Echtzeitmusik.* The social and discursive contexts of a contemporary music scene**

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1 The Echtzeitmusik scene: an introduction

The Echtzeitmusik scene is a contemporary music scene that emerged in Berlin in the mid-1990s. Far removed from “official” culture, the scene was for a long time hidden in the basements and backyard spaces of (former) squats (cf. Gottstein 2010), where only a relatively small circle of musicians and the occasional listener were engaged in what seemed like quite an unusual musical practice. For the most part, the music was improvised and highly experimental in approach, although it did undergo transformations over time: at first free and unrestrained, it entered a barely audible, highly reflected upon phase, very often quiet but noise-like, before emerging in the richly detailed and eclectic form found today. Also, what began as a small, homogenous, comprehensible and locatable community of musicians evolved into a broad and musically diverse scene stretching across several Berlin districts in small, often temporary venues. The sense of community and commonality, as well as identification with the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ and the ideas it stood for, would also change in form and degree over the ensuing years.

The Echtzeitmusik scene and its music seem very much a product of their historical moment and context. Throughout the years of its existence, the scene managed to survive outside the rules of the mainstream economy, thereby representing an alternative to the prevailing socio-economic order. Though not explicitly political, the scene acted as a subversive force through the form and organization of its activities, which proved capable of on-going reproduction independent from economic conditions. Such subversiveness could also be seen in the uncompromising attitudes of the musicians, who assume highly risky positions, both existentially and socially, in order to pursue personal aesthetic ideals. The resulting music – quiet, noise-like, weird, uneasy, unbearable, intriguing, demanding, ephemeral – can be interpreted in this context as a commentary on and critique of the everyday environment, characterized by speed, loudness and “all-at-onceness” being enhanced by new and on-going technological developments. It has also challenged traditional listening habits and introduced new modes of listening. In this regard, the practice of the Echtzeitmusik scene was not unique, but part of a broader trend among many critical experimental arts, which often experimented with concepts such as silence, noise, simplicity, musical asceticism and reduction.

Parallels can thus be seen not only in the fellow improvised music scenes of Vienna, London or Tokyo, but also in many experimental styles of newer electronic music, like clicks'n'cuts and glitch electronica or the minimalistic, analytical textures of the artists from the *Raster-Noton* label¹, to name a few examples.

The conditions of access to the scene (or to more or less professional music-making) and the type of culture produced in it fit the *Zeitgeist* as well. The idea of art in everyday life produced by “ordinary” people already has traditions of its own. Yet, recent times and technological developments have increased even more the emergence of a huge array of practices in the area “beyond” or “in between” the existing categories, ranging from amateurism to high professionalism. New types of artists emerge who have different positions towards tradition and the available media, which have made it possible to create complex creative and artistic work beyond conventional or official traditions and expectations. A musician in the *Echtzeitmusik* scene might also typically be a musical autodidact, without a conventional education in music-related subjects, or coming from a Rock or Jazz background. Her/his approach to her/his own instrument and to music in general is free of a feeling of obligation to any tradition in particular. In addition, Free Improvisation by its very nature grants equal access to everyone (in theory), meaning that anyone with the requisite creativity or curiosity could take on music-making at a nearly professional level, develop original playing techniques or build original instruments.

Certain features of the *Echtzeitmusik* practices can be readily perceived on an experiential level. First, the music is most often improvised (i.e. it is not composed and does not feature recognizable song structures) and displays a relatively high degree of experimentation (with respect to performance techniques, instrumentariums, concert situations and so on). Further, the music has a certain sound identity that extends beyond genre specification, consisting almost exclusively of noise in all its forms and volume levels. Very often, the music – which in any case has little in common with standard notions of music as something that usually has melody, harmony and/or rhythm – is reduced entirely to the

¹ Its full name is *raster-noton. archiv für ton und nichtton*, www.raster-noton.net.

presentation of the materiality of sound, with focus on each sound's distinctive features. The music does not necessarily offer emotional or experiential pleasure, but rather requires active intellectual engagement as well as patience. Nevertheless, the sounds and practices found in the scene are quite differentiated. An attempt to describe a typical Echtzeitmusik concert today would yield not only adjectives like “free”, “improvised” and “experimental”, but also comparisons to New Music, Performance Art, experimental Electronic Music, Sound Art, Noise and Free Jazz, depending on the context and setting. Moreover, some believe that Echtzeitmusik by definition encompasses all of these genres (cf. Möbius - Schick 2010: 3). Therefore it is rather misleading to use terms like “Berlin improv scene” or similar as synonyms for the Echtzeitmusik scene.

There has always been a tendency for the musicians related to the Echtzeitmusik scene to define themselves by opposition to Free Improvisation on the one hand and New Music² on the other. Indeed, the scene first came into being by distinguishing itself from its most obvious correlates: Free Improvisation and Free Jazz and their respective representatives in Berlin. At first, this distinction was not aesthetically or ideologically driven; in both regards, this supposedly new practice held much in common with the tradition of Free Improvisation. Much more important was its divide from the already existing Free Jazz and improvised music circles in Berlin that centred around the *FMP*³ label and the *Total Music Meeting* festival, which many of the musicians no longer related to. Under the new name – ‘Echtzeitmusik’ – they began to delineate their own space within the city and its cultural life. Only later did the designation ‘Echtzeitmusik’ begin to imply practices that were conceptually different from Free Improvisation, although improvisation stayed among the main working methods. At the same time, the Echtzeitmusik and New Music scenes began to interact, revealing many similarities as well as differences in approaches and attitudes. The scenes finally maintained their own identities, mainly due to perceived differences on aesthetic, socio-cultural and economic levels.

² ‘Neue Musik’ in German. It is a term designating new, avant-garde music, primarily in the academic context, in the 20th and 21st centuries.

³ *Free Music Production*, www.fmp-online.de.

Unlike scenes in which different bands play music of the same genre in a few dedicated venues, whereby the band members do not mix that often and are in general divided from the audience, the Echtzeitmusik musicians, curators, venues and even audience members are tightly intertwined and constantly interacting through new projects and collaborations. It is characteristic for each musician to be creatively involved in numerous long-term (as opposed to *ad hoc*) collaborative projects and to play relatively often in dedicated venues throughout Berlin. One of the main reference points for scene insiders and outsiders alike is the www.echtzeitmusik.de website. Although it does not list Echtzeitmusik events exclusively, it does represent the underlying scene quite well, providing information on venues, concert dates and musicians' names and projects, for the benefit of both the musicians and interested audience. As a well-organised alternative to the economies of institutionalized culture on the one hand or music industry on the other, the Echtzeitmusik scene has managed to compete relatively successfully for audiences and attention. Yet even so, the scene has often seemed unable to reach beyond its underground⁴ roots and image as well as its alternative milieu and move in the direction of the so-called "high-culture"⁵. However, the strong aesthetic sensibilities and professionalism found in the Echtzeitmusik scene certainly contribute to the demand for a re-evaluation of the distinction between the supposed "high" and "low"⁶ arts, together with many other newly arisen

⁴ Underground as "outside the mainstream" <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/underground>, accessed April 25, 2012. As such it is mostly situated in the sector of pop culture or (often synonymous) low culture. Also: "A genre in music and other forms of media intended for an elite audience, that is often characterized by its high levels of originality and experimentation, and does not conform to typical standards, trends, or hypes as set by the popular mainstream media" and "Art, opinion or organization that exists outside of mainstream society or culture. Also known as 'independent' or sometimes 'counter-culture'". <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=underground>, accessed April 25, 2012.

⁵ "High-culture" refers to the official, established culture that is subsidized by public means and that usually includes opera and concert houses, their ensembles, symphonic orchestras, museums, galleries and big theatres (cf. Grésillon 2004: 122).

⁶ 'Low' is very often equalized with 'pop' or 'popular' and, in contrast to 'high', refers to something trivial, clichéd and ordinary (cf. Wilson 1997: 11/2). However, the notions 'pop' or 'pop culture' have in the meantime established a much broader meaning than just trivial culture for the masses, or, in the case of 'pop', of just one musical genre. The scientific discourse about pop culture began through the work of the Birmingham *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* (CCCS) in the 1960s and 1970s, focussing on subcultures and youth cultures in Britain. Gabrielle Klein defines 'pop' as stretching on three main levels: 'Pop' like industry, like culture and like lifestyle (cf. Klein 1999: 122). She argues that even though 'Pop' products are characteristically aimed for mass entertainment, its roots are to be found in underground movements of the late 1950s and the 1960s, where 'Pop' was still largely related to subversive and avant-garde artistic expression (ibid.). 'Pop' continued to provide a context for many new, avant-garde artistic

practices that have also blurred this distinction (cf. Claisse – Hoffmann – Ungeheuer: 2002).

1.1 What is ‘Echtzeitmusik’?

The term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ literally means real-time music. That is how improvised music is mostly defined as well, in the sense that the conception and the realization of music happen at the same time, in the moment of performance. The term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ was introduced in the mid-1990s in Berlin by a group of young improvising musicians around a club named *Anorak* as an act of distinction from the already existing Free Improvisation and Free Jazz circles in Berlin. This “new” music was also improvised, but the musicians who introduced the term believed that their music was moving along different paths than the improvised music already played in Berlin. The term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ was supposed to accentuate values such as spontaneity, authenticity, individuality and uniqueness (implied in the meaning of ‘echt’ as true, genuine, authentic, real), which “normal” improvised music had allegedly already lost, becoming largely predictable in sound and gesture. The term appeared relatively often on the flyers of the above mentioned club *Anorak* during its existence in the mid-1990s, designating events featuring improvised music played by a relatively recognizable group of musicians.

Although improvised, music played in *Anorak* was indeed quite different than the other free improvised music, which could have been a result of the social status of the musicians, their age and experience, their socio-political attitudes and the spaces they used and that became a part of their identity. The musicians in *Anorak* had various musical backgrounds, their approach was unrestrained, and the music more open to all possible influences. After *Anorak* permanently closed in December 1997 and the early scene went through a phase of dispersion and re-focussing, the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ vanished as well, apart from still occasionally circulating among musicians who had seriously started to search for an alternative, more adequate designation of their musical practice. However, by naming the central website announcing concerts and venues www.echtzeitmusik.de in the year 2000,

practices and movements beyond the academic context. According to some aspects, the Echtzeitmusik scene could rather be seen as belonging to this ‘Pop’ avant-garde context.

the term 'Echtzeitmusik' gradually began to be connected to a distinguished new generation of Berlin improvisers. Around that time they were working on a reduced, quite withdrawn, not very expressive or intuitive, but rather reflexive and conceptual approach to collective improvisation, often called 'Berlin Reductionism'.

The term 'Echtzeitmusik' has often been held as synonymous to the notion of the so-called Berlin Reductionism, since it reappeared in the scene when the "reductionist" aesthetics dominated, and since the term 'Berlin Reductionism' was both rather unpopular and limiting and more intensely used in the English-speaking world. However, the "reductionist" aesthetic was, even though highly influential, still just one of the phases in the development of the scene, which was in the meantime highly diversified. Definitions provided in the booklet for the festival *Echtzeitmusiktage* held in September 2010 described Echtzeitmusik very broadly, as something that has always been "characterised by a multitude of styles" and whose "bandwidth stretched from electro-acoustic music, new reductionism, noise, jazz, avant-rock, pop/songwriting, new composed music, performance, sound-art/installations all the way through to rock and club music (techno, electronic)" (Möbius – Schick 2010: 3). Such relativizing of the denotative content of the term increases at the same time its discursive potential, as it can easily and flexibly correspond to the ever changing scene (cf. Wicke 2004: 166). Finally, the most recent definition on the website www.echtzeitmusik.de⁷ locates Echtzeitmusik as "mainly concentrated around the venue ausland (Prenzlauer Berg) and the concert series Labor Sonor (at KuLe in Mitte) and quiet cue (Neukölln)". Also, it is insinuated that not everything published at the website is Echtzeitmusik, but that there is supposed to be a difference between "Echtzeitmusik events and related improvised and experimental music concerts in Berlin".

Echtzeitmusik is thus quite difficult to understand as a genre; it is rather a designation for a particular local music scene with its particular history. Concretely, it refers to one particular phenomenon encompassing certain names, venues, concert series and aesthetics as documented in the book *echtzeitmusik berlin* –

⁷ Accessed January 10, 2012.

*selbstbestimmung einer scene / self-defining a scene*⁸ (Beins – Kesten – Nauck – Neumann 2011). The artists active in this scene are mostly all involved in music and they do partially share similarities in aesthetics, approach and attitude, even though they highly value their individuality as well. Yet, the connections between them still seem to be strongest on the personal level. In addition to that, they all share the same social position and space, as well as similar conditions for living and working manifested in milieu and lifestyle. What makes them different from other Berlin scenes situated in the same environment is a certain common knowledge and symbolic level of identification.

1.2 Framework of research

In the previous decades numerous new forms of artistic production and types of artistic communities and scenes, that are independent of institutional background and have a relatively low economic potential, emerged both in the virtual and the real world. Therefore it is necessary for contemporary research to consider those new, (independent) scenes as new social, cultural, economic, and local phenomena (cf. Kruse 2003: 145). The Berlin Echtzeitmusik scene is itself certainly a unique contemporary cultural phenomenon as well. For a researcher it can serve as a paradigm of contemporary free and non-institutional artistic communities and independent cultural practices through its models and mechanisms of social interaction, inner organization and sustainment, emergence of hierarchical and power relations, as well as specific characteristics and aspects of generalizing identity constructions. Understood in this way, the Echtzeitmusik scene will in this research be used as an example to observe and discuss factors and processes of formation, distinction, establishment and maintenance of contemporary independent music communities in the Berlin-specific version.

The newest musical practices, especially those from non-institutional contexts, have still rarely been a subject of scientific research, be it musicological, sociological or of any other related discipline. For example, in the preface to the first in the *Arcana* book series, in which artists are invited to write about their own

⁸ Later in this text referred to as ‘the Echtzeitmusik book’.

music, John Zorn (cf. 2000: v) criticizes the lack of “serious” writing about the music of the New York Downtown scene⁹ at the time: “It is understood that a critic’s job is not an easy one, but it is a source of great surprise and disappointment to me that after more than twenty years of music-making in the New York scene, except for the occasional review in trade magazines/periodicals (which because of the context in which they appear and the speed with which they are written don’t really count anyway), not one single writer has ever come forward to champion or even to intelligently analyse exactly what it is that we have been doing. Indeed, they hardly seem able even to describe it.” A similar observation concerning “the underdevelopment of theorization about the complex musical praxis of improvised music” was observed almost ten years later by the *Trio Sowari*, whose members were therefore inspired to write down “27 Questions for a Start” – a start of a discussion that resulted in the above mentioned book by the Echtzeitmusik scene about the Echtzeitmusik scene (Trio Sowari 2011: 113).¹⁰

That science, with its established methods and approaches, keeps avoiding the newest artistic practices is not surprising. Those practices are namely challenging their related disciplines by falling out of the existing research frameworks, usual methodological procedures and available tools. Moreover, the nature of the newer

⁹ Kyle Gann (2006: 2ff) identified a difference between Midtown, Uptown and Downtown in the musical circles of New York. Midtown composers “continue to write symphonies and concerts, wear tuxedos and formal attire to concerts”, e.g. John Corigliano, William Bolcom, John Adams (cf. *ibid.*: 2). Uptown music is the “consecrated” avant-garde, it “became the musical culture of academia, with its own concerts, stable of expert performers, and well-funded support system”, and is written by composers like Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter, Roger Sessions etc. (*ibid.*: 3). Downtown is on the other hand “a movement that began in private lofts in Manhattan, performed by composers in their own living rooms” as a “deliberate rejection of Uptown elitism” (*ibid.*: 3f). The early Downtown composers include La Monte Young, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Pauline Oliveros etc. Gann identifies many styles and movements that emerged in New York Downtown since the 1960s (cf. *ibid.*: 11f): the conceptualists in the 1960s (La Monte Young, Takehisa Kosugi, Nam June Paik, Yoko Ono); minimalism that came around in the 1970s and “turned establishment” in the early 1980s (La Monte Young, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Terry Riley, Laurie Anderson); in the 1980s the activities of the saxophonist John Zorn caused “a shift of Downtown activity away from classically trained composers to jazz-based musicians” (*ibid.*: 12), whereby Zorn stated that he did not feel related to Cage, Oliveros or minimalists, but rather to free jazzers and European avant-gardists (cf. *ibid.*: 13); in the late 1980s came two composing styles deriving from minimalism – the so-called post-minimalism and totalism; the recent developments see many musicians “whose reference points are overwhelmingly from popular musics” (*ibid.*: 14). On the New York Downtown scene see also Gann 1997 and Gann 1998/2012. In the series of books titled *Arcana. Musicians on Music*, edited by John Zorn, one can find articles by many musicians and composers active in the New York scene, among others (cf. Zorn 2000, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010).

¹⁰ Similar to Zorn’s *Arcana* series and the Echtzeitmusik book, also the book *Sound Unbound*, edited by Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid (Miller 2008), delivers a compilation of texts in which artists themselves describe their work.

artistic phenomena often requires an interdisciplinary approach. It is a similar case with the practices in the Echtzeitmusik scene. Due to the nature of their musical output, which is based in the practice of improvisation, the classical musicological approach will have difficulties, as the music lacks in terminology, value scales and usual reference points in the sense of composed works, notations, authorship and so on (cf. Polaschegg 2011). The music thus has to be approached through different ways, e.g. by listening and analysing related discourses. On the other hand, the non-musical aspects, especially those related to the notion of the community, socio-economic milieu and context, seem to represent unavoidable determinants of the practice as well. The Echtzeitmusik scene and its practices by their nature and actuality require an ethnographic approach whereby the interpretation of the found is almost necessarily interdisciplinary. That is for example characteristic in popular music studies (cf. Wicke 2003; Tagg 1982), but also present in many other disciplines due to their own development and the development of their subjects.

1.2.1 The scene as the object of study

The phenomena that are related to the notion of Echtzeitmusik in Berlin could be defined in different ways and with different focuses to meet different research interests and approaches. In any case, whatever these phenomena are defined as, they cannot be a fixed object, but must presuppose an unstable structure in a state of permanent change. Apart from that, neither the social nor the aesthetic aspects of these phenomena have an adequate and unequivocal terminology. In search for an adequate term to designate the conglomeration of the Echtzeitmusik phenomena in Berlin, the term 'scene' self-imposed, as it is contained in the already broadly accepted designation 'the Echtzeitmusik scene'. Although some critics claim that it is not possible to call "it" a scene at all because the practices and aesthetics diverge so much in it, it seems that exactly because of that it *can* be called a scene. According to some definitions, a scene is not a coherent or exclusive form, even though it is thematically focussed (cf. Hitzler – Niederbacher 2010³: 15; Pfadenhauer 2005: [9]). It could instead be understood as a loose network in which an indefinite number of individuals and groups form a community, even though they do not necessarily have to be personally involved with each other.

The term 'scene' represents one of the most common designations for local musical communities in popular music discourse. Concretely, it refers to the local and insider form of the music world, comprising "venues and events with the corresponding audience and bands, local insiders and the whole spectrum of activities directly or indirectly connected to music"¹¹ (Wicke – Ziegenrucker W. – Ziegenrucker K.-E. 2007: 722). Some other definitions specify that the term 'scene' is mostly used "to refer to a group of people who have something in common, such as a shared musical activity or taste" and that it is "most often applied to groups of people and organizations, situations, and events involved with the production and consumption of particular music genres and styles" (Cohen 2008: 239). Will Straw (1991: 373) understands a musical scene as composed of an array of different musical practices "interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation", whereby a 'community' would for him refer to a group that is rather stable and "whose involvement in music takes the form of an ongoing exploration of one or more musical idioms rooted in a geographically specific historical heritage" (Straw 1991: 373). Ruth Finnegan (2007) on the other hand chose the designation 'musical worlds' to differentiate the 'worlds' of various music genres in the town of Milton Keynes, borrowing from Howard S. Becker's notion of 'art worlds' (cf. Finnegan 2007: 31f; Becker 1982). In sociology, cultural studies and urban studies, a scene does not necessarily have to be related to music, but to any common activity, object of interest or identification. Scenes as such are an important part "of any city with its name (imagine a city that could not claim any scenes)" (Blum 2001: 9).

Some authors have provided discussions about the usage and adequacy of the term in popular music studies. Relating to the sector of independent music, Holly Kruse (2003: 145) argues in favour of the term 'scene' as opposed to 'community' or 'art world' because it encompasses "both the geographical sites of localized musical practice and social and economic networks that exist within these contexts". Anja Schwanhäußner (2010: 45) finds the term applicable "when one wants to imply that

¹¹ „...die Veranstaltungsorte und Veranstaltungen mit dem dazugehörigen Publikum und den dazugehörigen Bands, die lokalen Insider und das ganze Spektrum an mittelbar oder unmittelbar mit der Musik verbundenen Aktivitäten. Dahinter steht die freilich irrige Vorstellung, das Ganze sei wie eine Bühnenszene, die sich mit einem Blick überschauen ließe“ (Wicke – Ziegenrucker W. – Ziegenrucker K.-E. 2007: 722).

an event, an object, a topic or a musical style has a social structure and is contextualized through social action”¹². She also favours the term regarding her research about the techno scene in Berlin because it is “a theoretically open concept that, like the cultural practices it describes, stays vague and in motion and thereby corresponds to the strategy of ‘not-wanting-to-be-located’ of its protagonists” (ibid.: 262). This openness of the term is also supported by Bastian Lange in sociological urban studies, when he says that the term has lately been increasingly used to describe relatively diffuse and hardly describable social phenomena of community building (cf. Lange 2007: 102).

Apart from the fact that the word ‘scene’ will be further used primarily because it is pre-given in its practical use, it can also be argued that it is an adequate term to describe the array of musicians, groups (bands), venues and activities related to the notion of Echtzeitmusik in Berlin. The openness of the term, as well as its political and ideological neutrality (as opposed to e.g. the term ‘subculture’), corresponds to the general situation and the atmosphere within the Echtzeitmusik scene. In combination with the designation ‘Echtzeitmusik’, it offers to the musicians a sense of belonging, at the same time giving them enough space not to feel “fenced in” (Cooper 2008), since it is not supposed to assume clearly defined aesthetic profile. Yet, the Echtzeitmusik scene has still a somewhat higher degree of coherence, interaction and collaboration than some of the scene definitions would allow. Especially in some of its earlier phases it resembled more a smaller community. Even though it is not an equalized structure but an invisibly hierarchized network of subgroups and individuals, whereby each musician can be a part of several, often intertwined groups, the degree of mutual involvement and interaction is considerable. The connecting factor among the musicians seems to be situated primarily in the domain of social relations, and only secondarily in particular common aesthetics, attitudes or a shared social position. This is also a point of difference between the narrower circle of the scene, those who are just occasionally associated with it, and those who by definition do almost the same things in Berlin but do not have contacts in the scene at all. Because terms like collective or

¹² „...wenn man implizieren möchte, dass ein Ereignis, ein Objekt, ein Thema oder eine Musikrichtung eine soziale Struktur hat und durch soziales Handeln kontextualisiert ist.“

community are not particularly fitting, the scene as understood by Wicke and Ziegenrücker, Cohen, Kruse or Schwanhäußner, applied to the formation around Echtzeitmusik, is best for describing the Echtzeitmusik scene.

Later in the text, the scene's structure and ways of functioning will be described with the help of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory. The scene will therefore be represented with Bourdieu's concept of a field, with a slight variation. While Bourdieu's field mostly presupposes clear positions and actions of position-taking (*prises de position*) (cf. Bourdieu 1993c: 30), like for example in the academic world, institutionalized culture or in the market, the positions in the scene are not yet clearly defined. Positions and relations within the scene are gradually being formed and defined inside the scene, among the protagonists themselves, and are not imposed from the outside. The scene is also to be understood and defined discursively, since a big part of the scene's identification and representation happens on a discursive level. In that sense, the notion of a particular scene points to the object or area of knowledge that is discursively produced there, the principle of the construction of terminology, as well as the power of authorization of discourse and strategic goals pursued in it (Diaz-Bone et al. 2007: [5]). Luckily, defining the borders of the scene is not that important. Pierre Bourdieu points out that "[t]here is no other criterion of membership of a field than the objective fact of producing effects within it" (Bourdieu 1993c: 42). This research will therefore not attempt to unequivocally sort out practices or names as belonging to the scene or not, but concentrate on the scene as a particular social phenomenon and the mechanisms of its formation, organization, functioning and representation.

1.2.2 Framework

The Echtzeitmusik scene has existed already for some time and successfully functions according to its internal principles, both in regards to scene life and musical practice. I will seek to reveal this internal "knowledge" that is partially discursivized, but in any case already contained in practices, according to de Certeau: "Here, knowledge is already written in practices, but not yet enlightened. Science will be the mirror that makes it readable, the discourse 'reflecting' an immediate and precise operativity lacking language and consciousness, an

operativity already knowledgeable but unrefined.” (de Certeau 1984:68.) Rather than adjusting the research according to a specific theoretical position or seeing the object of study according to particular, previously determined discursive frames, the intention was to approach the scene on a basis of empirical observation and to interpret it “according to its own standards” (Cook - Clarke 2004: 9). During the observation of the scene as a whole, a need for a specific interdisciplinary approach emerged, that would cover essential aspects of the scene and enhance its better understanding.

Since I have a musicological background and am educated primarily in so-called historical musicology, the confrontation with Echtzeitmusik and its scene in their complexity represented quite a challenge. However, the broader view of musicology according to *New Grove Dictionary* does not see the respective discipline just as “a field of knowledge having as its object the investigation of the art of music as a physical, psychological, aesthetic, and cultural phenomenon”¹³, but is “based on the belief that the advanced study of music should be centred not just on music but also on musicians acting within a social and cultural environment. This shift from music as a product (which tends to imply fixity) to music as a process involving composer, performer and consumer (i.e. listeners) has involved new methods, some of them borrowed from the social sciences, particularly anthropology, ethnology, linguistics, sociology and more recently politics, gender studies and cultural theory. This type of inquiry is also associated with ethnomusicology. Harrison (1963)^[14] and other ethnomusicologists have suggested that ‘It is the function of all musicology to be in fact ethnomusicology; that is, to take its range of research to include material that is termed ‘sociological’” (Duckles et al.). I have adopted this view in my approach to the Echtzeitmusik scene.

Not only the Echtzeitmusik scene as a whole represents a rather untypical subject for musicology; also the musical process as generally understood in the scene does not necessarily presuppose a division of composer, performer and listener, as does the music that is usually a subject of musicological research. The Echtzeitmusik

¹³ Definition of *American Musicological Society* cited in Duckles et al.

¹⁴ Referring to F.Ll. Harrison, M. Hood and C.V. Palisca: *Musicology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1963) [incl. F. Harrison: ‘American Musicology and the European Tradition’, 3–85; M. Hood: ‘Music, the Unknown’, 217–326; C.V. Palisca: ‘The Scope of American Musicology’, 89–213]

scene is above all a specific socio-cultural phenomenon that still exists and constantly undergoes changes and developments. Seen as a music-historical phenomenon and a paradigm of contemporary (trans)local music networks of related practice, socio-musical relations, production of discourses and new aesthetic developments, it could indeed be embedded in different research disciplines and interests, including musicology, ethnomusicology, cultural studies, social and cultural anthropology, and (music) sociology. By taking the whole scene as an object of research, the focus of interest falls on questions of the scene's structure, regulation of practice in the scene, commonality, community building and discourse production related to a particular socio-political and discursive context; concerning musical practice, the approach presupposes a group-specific commonality in spite of alleged diversity. Thereby there is an intention to see the musical practice through discourses, through the way musicians (and rarely external writers) verbalize the music and the practice, rather than by analysing the musical output itself, which is per se very often ephemeral and one-time-only.

Exactly because they are often ephemeral, virtual, constantly changing and offering quite new modes of perception, contemporary artistic practices need an adequate independent support from science and criticism that would make them understandable, visible and present. Just by themselves they would likely stay marginal and unperceivable, unlike for example pop music which does not really need criticism, or which remains popular in spite of unfavourable criticism. The kind of music produced in the Echtzeitmusik scene actually needs to be explained, put into a certain context, and made credible; it could well use some verbalization or criticism if it wants to reach beyond its exclusive self. Science builds up discourses about new artistic phenomena, whereby the discourse itself is depending on the point of view and interests of the researcher. Yet, defining the theoretical bases of contemporary musical practice, developing analytical tools or providing a terminology and criteria of evaluation seems to be futile regarding the unstable character of the practices. This thesis has itself been more extensively grounded on empirical observation than the observation was regulated by discourse (Cook – Clarke 2004: 3). However, “what we generally think of as empirically-based knowledge – as science – depends not only on observation but also on the incorporation of observation within patterns of investigation involving

generalization and explanation. (That is what turns data into facts).” (Cook – Clarke 2004: 3f.) So too are my data subsequently observed through certain theoretical frameworks, whereby I tried both to describe the general principles of structuring, organization, hierarchization, behaviour, community-building etc., and the specific situation of the Echtzeitmusik scene.

An initial impulse for a more theoretical view on the scene has been Michel Foucault’s discourse theory. However, the nature of the scene and its discourse, its way of functioning and its practice(s) have pointed to more aspects that could not have been covered with Foucault only. The works *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977 [1972]), *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) and *The Rules of Art* (1996 [1992]) by Pierre Bourdieu have in that sense provided a useful tool to grasp some of the structural and practical aspects of the scene. *Outline* was interesting because Bourdieu in it describes how a community of largely illiterate peasants in Algeria organises itself and regulates its practices based on customs, rites and the sense of honour, in absence of any kind of written rules, whereby he draws on the concepts of habitus and symbolic capital. The other two books are mostly concerned with the organization and functioning of the field of cultural production, especially in regard to the French literary field of the 19th century. Bourdieu describes, among other things, the emergence of avant-gardes which bring changes in established fields, the concept of artistic autonomy as well as the reversed laws of economy in the cultural and artistic fields. In many of Bourdieu’s discussions I have recognized elements that could be well applied to the Echtzeitmusik scene.

Further basic literature provided a study *Kulturwelt, Diskurs und Lebensstil. Eine diskurstheoretische Erweiterung der Bourdieuschen Distinktionstheorie* by sociologist Rainer Diaz-Bone (2010²), in which he combined Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of distinction¹⁵ (including field and habitus) with discourse theories by Foucault, Claude Lévi-Strauss und Michel Pêcheux. After he introduces and extensively discusses their main theoretical positions and concepts, he provides an analysis of discourses in two main magazines dedicated to Heavy Metal and Techno respectively, focussing among other things on the question of how discourses can

¹⁵ Elaborated in his famous book *Distinction* (cf. Bourdieu 1984).

influence lifestyle and articulation of distinction, identity and value. In addition to the so-called social space and the space of lifestyle identified by Bourdieu, Diaz-Bone proposes a third, the so-called interdiscursive space that complements the other two spaces. Diaz-Bone's three spaces and his discussion of the role of discourse upon social structure and its manifestation in lifestyles have helped to make clear similar relations on the example of the Echtzeitmusik scene as well.

Drawing on Bourdieu and Foucault in the research of non-institutionalized music communities (scenes) is not new. Some studies that I have consulted were not that extensively theoretical as Diaz-Bone's, but used certain theoretical concepts in order to provide a theoretical insight on their research subjects that I have used as well. Holly Kruse (2003) has written about "indie pop/rock music's received history, its relations of production and distribution, its social and spatial relations, issues of participant identity" (Kruse 2003: 2). In the last chapter about theorizing independent music formations (ibid.: 145ff), Kruse discusses "frameworks traditionally used to examine cultural products and social formations" (ibid.: 3). With the support of Bourdieu she criticizes popular music studies' concentration on texts and states the importance of contextualization of local popular music practices as complex networks placed rather outside of conventional market relations.¹⁶ In order to understand the complex socio-economic networks of independent music scenes Kruse draws on Bourdieu's theories of field and habitus.

A book by Anja Schwanhäußner and an article by Geoff Stahl have provided an aspect of the connection of a musical scene with its urban environment. Schwanhäußner has in the ethnography *Kosmonauten des Underground. Ethnografie einer Berliner Szene* written about the techno scene in Berlin that emerged more or less in the same situation as the Echtzeitmusik scene (Schwanhäußner 2010). Yet, the techno scene as a space of entertainment culture had different spatial aspirations as well as much better chances to eventually develop a business model of functioning. Schwanhäußner focuses on the notion of the scene as fluid city culture, related rather to the heterogeneity and fluidity of cities, than bourgeois society (ibid.: 305)

¹⁶ The older studies like Sara Cohen's *Rock Culture in Liverpool* (1991) and Ruth Finnegan's *Hidden Musicians* about the musical world in the town of Milton Keynes (2007 [1989]) also place their interest on the local popular music practices and communities that are not (yet) part of the mainstream. These studies however take an ethnographic approach.

– in that sense the term ‘scene’ is also much better suited than the term ‘subculture’. Schwanhäußler also presents the Berlin techno scene as a self-emergent structure in which hierarchies are built according to the principle of symbolic capital. On the other hand, Geoff Stahl (2001) describes an Anglophone music scene in Montréal, a city that with its cheap rents fosters an “active social and cultural life”, and represents “the ideal site for an Anglo-bohemia to flourish” (ibid.: 100) – just like Berlin represents the ideal site for its own bohemia to flourish. He also draws on Bourdieu to describe the nature and economic logic of bohemias (cf. ibid.: 103) which provide a context for music-making in Montréal.

Another type of study is Georgina Born’s *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant Garde* (1995), yet it also informed my study of the Echtzeitmusik scene. Born’s study is an ethnography of one important contemporary music institution – IRCAM¹⁷. She discusses, among other things, “the sociology of high culture and of artistic and cultural institutions”, where she draws on Bourdieu (cf. Born 1995: 13), and “bringing contemporary cultural analysis together with history” where she draws on Foucault (cf. ibid.: 14). She touches upon several interesting issues, for example the social and aesthetic crisis that western art music (especially the notion of musical modernism represented by Boulez) was facing towards the end of the 20th century, and which provided a background for Boulez’s endeavours with IRCAM based in the “modernist concepts of progress, scientificity, and universality” (ibid.: 6). Born’s study is above all interesting because she is not so interested in examining works that were produced at IRCAM, but rather investigates the context in which IRCAM emerged and which made it possible, and reveals the “internal dynamics of the organization” (ibid.). Born also argues in favour of ethnography as a research method because of its “unique capacities (...) to uncover the gaps between external claims and internal realities, public rhetoric and private thought, ideology and practice” (ibid.: 7). This is similar to the case in the Echtzeitmusik scene, even though on a smaller scale simply because the “official” discourse of the scene is not that known as IRCAM’s might be. However, particular aspects of discourse production within the scene indeed have a character of “external claims”, “public rhetoric”, even a sort of “ideology” connected with a

¹⁷ Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique, www.ircam.fr.

notion of self.

While there are still no serious studies about the Echtzeitmusik scene, its musicians and practice, there already exists a relatively small number of studies about comparable music phenomena elsewhere. Lorraine Plourde (2008) provided an ethnographic study of the so-called Onkyō¹⁸ and its central venue *Off Site* in Tokyo.¹⁹ She focuses on the details of the performance practice at *Off Site*, including spatial properties and established conventions, whereby she pays special attention to the practice of listening and listening experience. David Novak (2010) has written about the same subject, however, from a rather cultural perspective. He shows how the ideologies of cultural difference established the uniqueness and “Japaneseness” of Onkyō as a new musical genre in an international discourse. One of the most important factors thereby was the “untranslatedness” of the genre name: in spite of its very general meaning (simply – sound), it was internationally “reinterpreted as a signifier for cultural particularity” (ibid.: 43). Michael T. Bullock (2010) in his doctoral dissertation presents the improvised music scene and practice in Boston. He on the other hand focuses more on the practice of (improvisational) music-making of particular musicians, whereby he uses the term ‘self-idiomatic music’ to describe the highly individualized improvised music practice characteristic of contemporary improvised music scenes and improvisers. Being an improvising musician himself, and taking active part in the Boston scene, his perspective on the scene is rather specific, and focuses rather on aesthetics of the so-called self-idiomatic improvised music²⁰, a term which he prefers to the term ‘Free Improvisation’, even though both terms designate the same music. The reason is that the latter “obscured the tension between the individual-as-idiom and the consensus-based nature of improvising ensembles, which may play with no written or spoken score but nonetheless develop many musical expectations within their own performance practice“ (Bullock 2010: 13).

¹⁸ Onkyō is a name that was used to designate a group of musicians in Tokyo in the late 1990s, whose music was characterized by quiet electronic noise and silence. The main venue *Off Site* operated from 2000 to 2005. (Cf. editors’ note in Labor Diskurs 2011: 145.)

¹⁹ Beside this article she also had a doctoral dissertation on the same subject.

²⁰ Self-idiomatic improvisation can be understood as improvising in an individual, self-created, recognizable language (idiom), as opposed to idiomatic improvisation in e.g. Jazz or Baroque. Free Improvisation is often equalled to the notion of non-idiomatic improvisation (also avoids idioms, but does not accentuate a self-idiom) and self-idiomatic improvisation (cf. Bullock 2010: 12ff).

1.2.3 Material and method

One of the issues that the researcher of the history of the Echtzeitmusik scene faces is a general lack of written sources – the above mentioned book about the scene also emerged out of a similar argument. Another important characteristic of the material on the scene, if it is written, is that it rarely comes from independent observers from the media and science (even though they are also biased), but almost exclusively from particular musicians or closely related writers, whereby these writings often have a certain aim and encompass only a selection of the scene's activities. Thus, during most of the scene's history, the scene's discourses stayed largely internal and oral, and as such rather unavailable to the broader public. Therefore, present memories of musicians are a dominant source of information about the history of the scene and past phases and practices. Even if the time distance is not big, the musicians still look on their own activities from a different perspective or even social position. In that sense, such a way of gaining information certainly resembles oral history, “the interviewing of eye-witness participants in the events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction” (quote by Ronald G. Grele in Perks – Thomson 2006: ix), even if the interviewer is not always explicitly present. One of the problems that thereby might occur is e.g. that an informant is not able to make a difference between present and past self, i.e. that s/he reconstructs her/his own past attitudes out of present subjective consciousness (Portelli 2006: 38). Oral sources can also often be artificial, variable, and partial (ibid.), “distorted by physical deterioration and nostalgia in old age, by the personal bias of both interviewer and interviewee, and by the influence of collective and retrospective versions of the past” (Thomson 2011: 79). They are on the other hand still a valuable, and sometimes the only, source of information about past events as well as an informant's positions and intentions.

Bourdieu was sceptical about the self-verbalization of practice by the practitioners as well. He makes a distinction between “discourse of familiarity” and “outsider-oriented discourse” depending on the familiarity of the informant with the interviewer (cf. Bourdieu 1977: 18). Thereby in the discourse of familiarity the informant tends to leave much unsaid because s/he takes it for granted and in the outsider-oriented discourse s/he “tends to exclude all direct reference to particular

cases” (ibid.) because a “questioner strikes him as unfamiliar with the universe of reference implied by his discourse” (ibid.). Bourdieu also warns that many aspects of practice are not conscious for the practitioners: “The explanation agents may provide of their own practice, conceals, even from their own eyes, the true nature of their practical mastery, i.e. that it is *learned ignorance* (*docta ignorantia*), a mode of practical knowledge not comprising knowledge of its own principles” (ibid.: 19). Even though this thought primarily refers to reflection of one’s everyday practices, which are rather habitualized and not necessarily articulated in discourse (cf. De Certeau 1984: 45), the importance of this remark of Bourdieu is to remind that practice and verbalizations of practice in general do not have to be fully correspondent, especially if there is a time distance between the practice and the verbalization. Also, it always happens that certain individual points of view in a group get more presence and attention than the other ones and can sometimes be falsely taken as representative of the whole group. On the other hand, many aspects, individuals and phenomena stay forgotten because they never came to be thematized in discourse.

Since oral discourse predominated in the scene at least until the appearance of the *Echtzeitmusik* book, the best way towards writing down the scene’s (oral) history was through ethnography. The oral sources were the main source of information on the actual practice. Therefore a considerable amount of information on the scene has been collected “on the field”, where I soon started to feel myself a participant, even though only an observing participant. Apart from observing and partially participating in scene life, visiting concerts and officially and unofficially interviewing musicians and other scene protagonists, my most valuable information on the scene came from the discussion series called *Labor Diskurs*²¹ and a meeting of the “oldest” scene members organised in order to reconstruct the scene’s history, the so-called *History-Treffen*²². Since my research coincided with the self-initiative of the musicians of the scene to discuss their own position and identity, and to present

²¹ I primarily used the recordings of the first two meetings where I was however not present myself.

²² A meeting initiated by the editors of the mentioned book about the *Echtzeitmusik* scene in order to reconstruct its history. It was held at the venue *ausland* on 17 June 2009 and featured Burkhard Beins, Nicholas Bussmann, Kai Fagaschinski, Gregor Hotz, Christian Kesten, Andrea Neumann, Conrad Noack, Michael Renkel, and Ignaz Schick. I was present at the meeting, but I did not initiate it or influence its course – it was even not originally planned that I write the history of the scene in the book (Blažanović 2011).

themselves towards the outside (the result of which were *Labor Diskurs* and the *History-Treffen*), I was able to access a big amount of material whose emergence I did not influence myself. This was important since the themes that occurred and the way they were discussed represented the internal discourses of the scene more genuinely. I only made a few interviews²³ which provided me with more valuable information about the scene and the work of each interviewed musician. However, the material provided in *Labor Diskurs* and *History-Treffen*, as well as the texts related to the scene mentioned in the following paragraph, combined with participant observation, proved already sufficient for my particular focus in this thesis. Additionally, I was able to attend the meetings of the editor's team of the *Echtzeitmusik* book.

The contemporary documents that are directly or indirectly connected to the scene are rare – some flyers of the early clubs, recordings and relatively sparse, but informative articles. Awareness of the scene was most present in the music magazine *Positionen. Texte zur aktuellen Musik*, where texts by the musicians or related to the musicians and activities in Berlin later identified as the *Echtzeitmusik* scene have occasionally occurred since 2000 (see Beins – Renkel et al. 2000; Nauck 2003; Eichmann 2005; Beins 2006; Kesten 2006). In 2005 even the whole issue of *Positionen* was dedicated to *Echtzeitmusik*, yet represented a bigger scene of improvised music in Germany and not relating the term exclusively to the Berlin scene. Further text material includes sporadic texts, interviews, record reviews published in specialized paper or online music magazines (e.g. *The Wire*, *Bad Alchemy* etc.), internet portals or blogs²⁴, as well as on the personal websites of the artists. In his book about reductionist strategies in music, Peter Niklas Wilson has written about the Berlin group *Phosphor*, one of the main exponents of the so-called Berlin Reductionism (Wilson 2003: 125-127). In the same book, Burkhard Beins and Andrea Neumann, two members of *Phosphor* who are still active musicians in the scene, had a chance to make statements about their aesthetic ideas at the time (Wilson 2003: 36f and 128-130). Lastly, the recent book about the *Echtzeitmusik* scene titled *Echtzeitmusik. Selbstbestimmung einer Szene/ Self-defining a scene* (Beins – Kesten –

²³ Gregor Hotz, Kai Fagaschinski, Andrea Neumann, Diego Chamy, Robin Hayward.

²⁴ For example, a Questionnaire consisting of eight questions answered by numerous prominent improvisers available under addlimb.wordpress.com.

Nauck – Neumann 2011) provides a valuable textual source on the history and practices in the scene.

As already said, the majority of this research was done in the field, more or less at the same time the mentioned book was prepared. The strategy of participant observation (cf. Lamnek 2005⁴: 547ff) that I used certainly helped me to reach important insights for understanding the scene, which would probably stay unavailable if one was to deal only with the textual resources or induced verbal statements of the musicians. However, such an approach can bring the danger of losing the objectivity and independent perspective of the researcher, which was also a problem in one phase of my research. The intense involvement in the scene and its internal dynamics has for a while made me see primarily the internal, specific details and prevented me to achieve a more objective, external perspective, which was luckily soon overcome by subsequent examination of the subject exclusively through the chosen theoretical frames. Nevertheless, the chosen strategy of participant observation was valuable in outlining the norms, values, conventions and atmosphere within the scene that are not always clear or verbally defined, as well as in seeing the gap between that which counts as an official discourse of the scene and what the reality and the practice really are.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis has three main parts, apart from the introduction and conclusion. The second chapter provides an insight into the contexts of the Echtzeitmusik scene. On the one hand there are related discourses – of Free Improvisation, the (extended) American experimental tradition around John Cage, and related discourses of similar parallel scenes. On the other hand there is the unique context in which the Echtzeitmusik scene emerged and still exists – the specific socio-economic situation of post-wall Berlin, off-culture and squatter culture, the changes the city went through in the last decades, as well as the diverse “free scene” of the city the Echtzeitmusik scene is embedded in. The third chapter describes a history of the scene and its music, and reconstructs the discursive contexts of important events for the scene’s existence and identity on the basis of different, contemporary or not, written or recorded discursive material as evidence of practice. The fourth chapter

brings a more thorough analysis of the scene's (invisibly hierarchical) structure, discusses the role of discourse in the scene, the processes of distinction and community-making, the positioning of the scene, its economic aspects, autonomy and regulation of practice within it.

2 Contexts and backgrounds

In order to understand the emergence of the Echtzeitmusik scene and its specific notion of music and musical practice in its particular historical moment, it is necessary to take a look at both the (media-, music-) historical and social contexts that made it possible. The 1990s were in many ways extraordinary, especially in a city like Berlin. Besides the big political, social and economic changes that made conditions for living and artistic work in Berlin quite unique, the 1990s were a time of essential paradigmatic change in artistic production: the rapid development of electronic and digital technologies essentially changed the conditions and possibilities of artistic production, as well as many other aspects related to lifestyle, and perception and awareness of reality. That had an immense influence on appearance and areas of interest of the newest critical artistic production, which has often turned to reflection of processes of information transmission, to noises from the everyday (technological) environment that are largely taken for granted and thus unperceivable, as well as to the idea of ultimate availability and accessibility of information and knowledge. This essential change also opened quite new fields of artistic production beyond existing categories, traditions and institutions, since the development of technology and software offered possibilities of legitimate creative/artistic work without conventional (and hard and expensive) education or particular social predispositions. Those different forms of new practices, which are very often based on new media, will slowly come to require the restructuring of the current cultural-political fields. The emergence of the Echtzeitmusik scene, its practices, its musical output and its social model represent in this context a specific, but also a “typical” product of its time.

2.1 Related discourses

The Echtzeitmusik scene, although not explicitly lining up to any traditions, certainly can be seen in light of its relations to the practices before and parallel to it. For example, it can be seen in the context of contemporary experimental music practices at the end of the 20th and into the 21st centuries with which it shares several characteristics on either an aesthetic or a social level, or both. On the other hand, it seems to have much in common with some particular lines of musical

development that can at least partially be traced back to almost the mid-20th century, when some strains of musical thought emerged, which started to deconstruct conventional musical thought and question the notion of music in the first place. I thereby above all mean John Cage and his philosophy on the one hand, and the tradition of Free Improvisation on the other. Echoes of the Cagean philosophy, which was occasionally even explicitly referred to by the musicians, were perhaps most present in the so-called Berlin Reductionism phase – a specific approach to improvisation and sound that characterized the scene towards the end of the 1990s. However, Cage and the American experimental tradition (cf. Nyman 1999) have been a steady reference point lately as well, especially with the musicians that see themselves clearly related to so-called New Music. On the other hand, the music in the Echtzeitmusik scene, given the fact that it is essentially improvised, cannot really escape its direct connection to the tradition of Free Improvisation. Thereby it was even forced to identify itself and formulate its own specific attitude and point of view by commenting on, criticizing and finally opposing Free Improvisation.

Regarding its place in the cultural life of Berlin, the Echtzeitmusik scene is most closely related to the so-called New Music scene. Even though the term ‘New Music’ is usually all-encompassing, beginning with Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School and including all the new tendencies and composing styles of “serious” music, including the American experimental tradition and minimalism, the notion of New Music is still often seen in the context of the classical musical tradition and is thereby rather connected to the conventional notion of music as well as institutionalized structures and conventions of music life. Whereas the scene rejects very little of, for example, Cage’s theory, it regularly rejects the structures and conventionalities of the music establishment Cage himself provoked as well. Regarding the “image” of the scene as well as the spaces it uses, the connection to the New music concert tradition would probably never even be assumed. This connection was first implied by the Echtzeitmusik scene itself, in its own attempt of self-definition. By designating themselves as “the underground New Music scene”²⁵, the musicians acknowledged the similar character of their music which also

²⁵ On the early version of the website www.echtzeitmusik.de, which is not available anymore.

requires similar conditions of listening. However, on the other hand they accentuated aesthetic and socio-economic differences – they were/are the “underground”.²⁶

2.1.1 John Cage and experimental music

Compared to the post-war European avant-garde composers, who were in the mid-20th century occupied with total serialism²⁷, American composers around John Cage represented just the opposite endeavours regarding music, composition and related aesthetic and social questions (cf. Nyman 1999). Jim Samson relates Cage in his *New Grove Dictionary* contribution on avant-garde to one particular of the avant-garde varieties. Avant-garde has namely since its emergence in the 19th century displayed “aesthetically and stylistically contrasted elements”, argues Samson. Unlike the avant-garde line rooted in the so-called New German School (Liszt, Wagner) and later Arnold Schoenberg, that saw music as autonomous, exclusive and true, and which found its further development in serialism, Cage is ideologically linked rather to the line of “the subversive, anti-bourgeois protest associated with Dadaism and surrealism, given musical expression by Satie”, which rejected the “institution of art” in general (cf. Samson). It is also not to be forgotten that Cage, even if he was taught by Schoenberg (cf. Kostelanetz 2003: 5ff), continued a rather independent American music tradition which did not necessarily have much contact with the European classical music tradition and thereby had a completely different basis than the European avant-garde (cf. Gann 1997).

Kyle Gann names Cage and his “nature- and accident-accepting philosophy” (Gann 2006: xiii) as one of the most important influences on the so-called New York

²⁶ New Music is also, in spite of its place within the institutionalized cultural life, still rather marginalized, presented only on special festivals, concert series and projects, and having a rather small audience. New Music also has its “free scene”, which is in Berlin largely funded project-wise, and actually shares the same source of funding as the Echtzeitmusik scene.

²⁷ „**Serialism**. A method of composition in which a fixed permutation, or series, of elements is referential (i.e. the handling of those elements in the composition is governed, to some extent and in some manner, by the series). Most commonly the elements arranged in the series are the 12 notes of the equal tempered scale. (...) The method spread more widely and rapidly in the decade after World War II, when Babbitt, Boulez, Nono and Stockhausen produced their first acknowledged works. These composers and their colleagues sometimes extended serialism to elements other than pitch, notably duration, dynamics and timbre.” (Griffiths 1980: 162.) “...the term ‘total serialism’ was coined for these endeavours.” (Ibid.: 168.)

Downtown scene of the 1960s, especially in its phase of “conceptualism”. Downtown musicians at the time, many of whom are usually ascribed to fluxus, sought “to reintegrate their music into the normal flow of daily life. In the most obvious respect this meant rejecting the formality of classical orchestra concerts, the tuxedos and the distant proscenium stage, and equally rejecting the internal framing devices of classical music itself.” (Gann 2003: 3.) They organised concerts in their own private flats, wore worn-out t-shirts (cf. *ibid.*: 5) and wrote music that was inspired by the new ideas that Cage set in motion at least a decade before. One of the basic postulates with which Cage essentially shattered the conventional notion of music and the compositional act was his concept of silence and therewith more or less connected concepts of emancipation of (not-)sounds, non-intentionality of a composer, indeterminacy of a musical process and a musical work, as well as special requirements towards the listener. The Cagean concept of silence was actually based on the idea that there is no such thing as a complete silence, even in an anechoic chamber (cf. Cage 1961: 8). Within composed music, silence would refer to the parts where there are no composed, intentional sounds; nevertheless, the unintentional sounds from the environment, that are worth paying attention to, are always present. Yet, they tend to be overheard, not perceived, and not only during musical performance, but also in everyday life. To make those sounds audible was one of Cage’s early composing tasks. His famous piece 4’33” was supposed to remind the listener that s/he can have a satisfying musical experience only by using his/her own ears and listening to the sounds and noises of the environment.

Thus, in experimental music “sounds no longer have a pre-emptive priority over not-sounds” (Nyman 1999: 22). Further, the designation ‘experimental’ itself refers to “an act the outcome of which is unknown” (Cage 1961: 13). This unpredictability of the outcomes of musical acts is implied both on a compositional and on a performative/interpretative level. On the one hand, the compositional process itself is often a result of chance operations, working according to a system chosen by the composer in order to decide on the articulation of the musical material. This results in a composition which is not a result of the composer’s intention, but is finally determined in notation (cf. Nyman 1999: 5). The unpredictability is on the other hand a result of a relatively high degree of indeterminacy contained in the notation of musical ideas, leaving the performance more or less open. Correspondingly,

“[e]xperimental composers are by and large not concerned with prescribing a defined *time-object* whose materials, structuring and relationships are calculated and arranged in advance, but are more excited by the prospect of outlining a *situation* in which sounds may occur, a process of generating action (sounding or otherwise), a field delineated by certain compositional ‘rules’” (Nyman 1999: 4, emphasis in the original).

Many practices in the Echtzeitmusik scene, as well as the general understanding of music and sound, indeed stand in the tradition of experimental music as outlined in Cage’s compositional theory. The connections have been clear since the phase of Berlin Reductionism – some of the musicians who were among the most influential in defining that new musical aesthetics have explicitly stated Cage’s influence, and not only on the level of sound, attitude and behaviour in a musical performance (improvisation), but also on the level of lifestyle. On the other hand, music that was exploring the limits of instrumental sound, which was penetrating the areas of noise, and which was at the same time so quiet that the integration of the environmental sounds was inevitable, would remind many listeners of Cage per se. As Joanna Demers (2010) points out, critical and scientific writers on the newest musical phenomena occupied with “microsound” often tend to make immediate connections to Cage for many reasons. She states: “Comparisons to Cage obscure a fundamental and distinctive trait of microsound: its use of what practitioners and listeners consider to be non referential, precultural sounds. One obvious divergence from Cage’s music is that in microsound, there is a difference between noises interior to the music, such as glitch sounds, and noises exterior to the music that may interfere with hearing performances or recordings.” (Demers 2010: 76f.)

Indeed, whereas Cage was quite open to all sounds, declaring them equal no matter if they were accidental or intentionally produced for a musical purpose, working on an individual sound, shaping a personal musical language, has been one of the main endeavours among the musicians of the Echtzeitmusik scene. Especially in the phase of concentration on extremely quiet sounds, the exclusion of environmental sounds that could disturb the performance was even directed (cf. Kammerer 2011: 94). Still, the produced sounds were nothing like conventional musical sounds, but rather similar to environmental noises, even though in musical performance they

were actually rather detached from that what they might remind one of. In the experimental spirit the Echtzeitmusik scene also continues the understanding of a musical work that is never fixed or finished, as well as of musical situations which are never quite predictable. By the fact that the role of notation is quite irrelevant in the work of most of the musicians, their focus is by itself set on processes, on the performance itself, rather than works as objects. Yet, the designation ‘experimental’ would probably still not be fitting to unequivocally designate the Echtzeitmusik practices, since it is in the meantime often (mis)used to describe any kind of music which by any of its parameters does not fit to the established categories on the one hand, and is on the other hand too specific as formulated in Cage’s compositional theory.

2.1.2 (Free) Improvisation

Considering the tradition of Western art music, improvisation largely disappeared from the musical practice by the 19th century and the period of romanticism. It reappears however in the mid-20th century in the course of the reaction to total serialism – full determination of all musical parameters. The post-serial developments of compositional techniques displayed an increasing interest in the unpremeditated, intuitive and spontaneous, as well as in all kinds of experiments with musical parameters. Both indeterminacy and aleatory²⁸ produced in some sense unfixed musical works and thereby changed the traditional role of interpreter, who now had much more responsibility for the work’s final realization – often having to improvise. In order to prevent big discrepancies between notated composers’ ideas and their realization, but also to make the composing process more spontaneous, there emerged at the time composers who were at simultaneously performers of their own music, who formed collectives in order to

²⁸ Indeterminacy is usually related to Cage and aleatory to Pierre Boulez. In *Grove* there is however only one unit for both – aleatory. The author Paul Griffiths identifies three different procedures as aleatory: “the use of random procedures in the generation of fixed compositions (...) the allowance of choice to the performer(s) among formal options stipulated by the composer (...) methods of notation which reduce the composer’s control over the sounds in a composition (...) The liberty offered by these various means can extend from a choice between two dynamic markings to almost unguided improvisation.”

research and perform their own works²⁹ or who founded their own ensembles to perform their music³⁰. Sometimes the reasons for that practice were particularly of an economic nature – one reduced the hindering intermediate steps (e.g. find and pay an ensemble, rehearse etc.) to get their music performed as much as possible, which would certainly be hard in a conventional way (cf. Straebel – Osterwold 2012: 7). Yet although the relationship between the composer and the performer was quite altered compared to before, the identity of the composer was still relatively strong. On the other hand, in the 1960s groups dedicated to free improvising also started to appear. In these groups, free improvisers mostly did not use scores and were neither composers nor interpreters, but keener on free and spontaneous music making.

Free Improvisation emerged both in the United States and in Europe in the 1960s and distinguished itself from roughly contemporaneous Free Jazz by its preference for expression in no particular idiom, such as e.g. Jazz, or Flamenco or Baroque (Bailey 1987: 11). The term ‘non-idiomatic improvisation’ originates from Derek Bailey, a musician who is considered a main figure of Free Improvisation (cf. Watson 2004: 3ff). Free Improvisation generally avoids the “fullness” and “abundance” in the improvisational style of Free Jazz and wishes to somehow discipline improvised music-making (cf. Wilson 1999: 86). The music of British musicians like Bailey, John Stevens, Evan Parker and Tony Oxley seemed in comparison to Free Jazz rather restrained, fragile, transparent, fragmented and less directly emotional, both in gesture and appearance (ibid.: 37). Sound wise, it seemed to be more closely related to the sound worlds of New Music than those of Jazz. British improvisers for example often name one of the forefathers of serialism, Anton Webern, as an influence which led them away from linear musical thought and made them concentrate on refinement and individualizing of sound colour and restriction of musical language (cf. Wilson 1999: 37f). Roger T. Dean identifies the “radical developments in Europe which had little or no counterpart in the USA” in the sector of Free Improvisation (cf. Dean 1992: 135): European improvisers were on the one

²⁹ E.g. *Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza* (Franco Evangelisti, Ennio Morricone etc.), *Sonic Arts Union* (Robert Ashley, David Behrman, Alvin Lucier and Gordon Mumma), *Musica Elettronica Viva* (Alvin Curran, Frederic Rzewski, Richard Teitelbaum etc.).

³⁰ E.g. Michael Nyman Band, Philip Glass Ensemble, Steve Reich and Musicians.

hand involved in explorations of instrumental timbre and texture, and development of microtonal multitimbral and multiphonic sounds (like *New Phonic Art* and Vinko Globokar, Evan Parker, Derek Bailey); on the other hand they were also developing electronic instruments and working with the transformation of ordinary instrumental sound (like AMM, Tony Oxley, Bailey, *Musica Elettronica Viva* (MEV), *Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza*) (ibid.). Exceptional were German improvisers who played powerfully, energetically and loudly and seemed thereby more jazz-related (cf. Noglik 1981: 298; Heffley 2005). The German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann even named the reductive English approach “die englische Krankheit”³¹ (cf. Wilson 1999: 37).

Musical improvisation is most often defined as both conceiving and performing music at the same time, in real-time (in German ‘Echtzeit’). Even though improvisation for various reasons often carries a rather unfavourable reputation in comparison with composed music, Peter Niklas Wilson points out that it is in essence an expression of an attitude towards sound, instrument and making music that grew throughout years and decades (Wilson 1999: 11) and that it is “a lifestyle, a language with individual vocabularies”³² (ibid.). Among improvisers, improvisation is understood as a means of self-expression (whereas clichés are admittedly being avoided), but also introspection (cf. ibid.: 11f). It is in any case an independent means to reach certain aesthetic goals and should not be compared to composition, as is implied with formulations like “instant composition” (ibid.: 12). The “problem” of clichés, idioms and innovation potential in playing improvised music has always occupied improvisers, lately perhaps even more intensely. The issue is described by Derek Bailey in the following way: “the longer you play in the same situation or group – and this certainly applies to playing solo – the less appropriate it becomes to describe the music as ‘free’ anything. It becomes, usually, very personalised, very closely identified with the player or group of players.” (Bailey 1990: 135.) That is not necessarily bad – most musicians and groups do indeed have their recognizable sounds and strive to form their own, recognizable musical language. The notion of improvisation is actually rather falsely imposed

³¹ English illness.

³² „Improvisation ist eine Lebenshaltung, eine Sprache mit individuellen Vokabularen.“

from the outside with the demand for constant innovation and progress (cf. Wilson 1999: 11). Nevertheless, the newer improvised music strives towards more control and consciousness about the real-time musical processes and often uses additional means (including compositional ones) to break the personal constriction of one's own limits.

Some witnesses say that the young Berlin improvisers in the club *Anorak* in the mid-1990s were influenced by the New York Downtown sound of the 1980s³³. The later developments however, that led to the so-called Berlin Reductionism, stand more in relation to the above-mentioned British tradition of improvised music or the earlier, conceptualist phase of Downtown and its rejection of the formalities of official culture. The distinction of the young musicians back then arose primarily in relation to the actual situation they confronted: the situation in the (perceived) free improvised music at the time and the presence and position of already established Free Improvisation and Free Jazz circles in Berlin. That distinction was most clearly articulated in the specific reductive approaches to improvisation towards the end of the 1990s, which emerged not only in Berlin, but in Free Improvisation scenes worldwide as a result of consciously challenging the conventionalities of the practice at the time, among other things. Seen historically as well as internationally, those musicians make a younger generation of free ("Plinkplonk", cf. Dittmann 2005: 3) improvisers who had much in common: they all experimented with extremely reduced ways of expression as a sign of discontent with improvised music at the time, which was too talkative, without time to sit still, listen and reflect. The resulting music was quiet and restrained, using a lot of silence and quiet noises.

The conscious act of opposition towards the conventionalities of improvised music practice essentially determined the scene. The legacy of the reductive aesthetics stayed inscribed in the improvised music practice in Berlin even after it was consciously collectively dropped. Improvised music in Berlin thus often shows a certain restraint in impulsivity and emotion, characteristic for improvised music expression: it is not just "babbling", but reflective and to a relatively high degree

³³ According to Kyle Gann, New York Downtown was in the 1980s dominated by John Zorn and Jazz-based musicians (cf. Gann 2006: 12).

controlled music-making in real-time. Some of the musicians explicitly focus on understanding the emerging new (and perhaps composition-like) features of improvisation when it is practiced over a long period of time among the same group of musicians. Improvisation is however not only present in collective improvising. It is actually seen as one of the most important working methods for the musicians in the scene, both in their solo work, when they explore the sound possibilities of their own instruments, and as a means for realizing more or less open compositional concepts, in the meantime more and more present in the scene.

2.1.3 Contemporary related scenes

The Echtzeitmusik scene is on the one hand a unique socio-aesthetic phenomenon; on the other hand, there are similar scenes worldwide. There are concrete connections and exchanges with improvised music scenes in London, Vienna and Tokyo as well as with musicians in the United States and Australia, especially those who have also gone through a sort of reductionist phase. Tendencies towards a certain reduction were however not specific only for improvised music at the time. They could certainly also be traced in electronic music³⁴, and even in pop³⁵. The Berlin Echtzeitmusik scene is thus not the only scene of that kind, even though it is quite special in its scope and variety of practices and musicians' personalities. Still, in spite of this variety and scope, it comprises a relatively small circle of musicians and audience in global terms. Exactly because of this reason, and enhanced by the development of communication technology, related scenes and musicians sharing similar interests connect to each other and collaborate.

The scene thus established its most intense relations to scenes and musicians who articulated similar aesthetics to Berlin Reductionism at about the same time. The London-based harpist Rhodri Davies (2011) has written about the connection of Berlin and London musicians working with similar aesthetic issues at the time (see

³⁴ In the so-called genre of Microsound, both in the "academic" sector and in minimal, glitch and clicks&cuts electronica (cf. Demers 2010: 69ff).

³⁵ For example in the so-called New Acoustic Movement in the 1990s and 2000s, sometimes called "Quiet is the new loud" after a record by *Kings of Convenience*, whose music is based on the sound of two acoustic guitars and quiet, soft vocals.

Cf. http://www.indiepedia.de/index.php?title=New_Acoustic_Movement,
http://www.indiepedia.de/index.php?title=Quiet_Is_The_New_Loud, accessed April 10, 2012.

also Bell 2005; Wastell 2006), and there is also an account of connections to the Onkyō scene in Tokyo (cf. Bell 2003; Wastell 2006; Nakamura 2011), Viennese improvisers (cf. Wilson 2003: 121-124) and an array of American musicians sharing the same interests (e.g. Bhub Rainey, Greg Kelley). As Mark Wastell (2006) states, the “trend” of “reduced” improvising seemed almost like a revolution, happening in parallel in different places; yet it always had a somewhat different form depending on the respective socio-historical contexts and exact means of making music. The musicians nevertheless mutually influenced each other continually, which resulted in many collaborations and a worldwide network. Towards the end of the 1990s, the presence of this new aesthetics could be observed, and labels like New London Silence, (New) Berlin Reductionism, Onkyō or other variants like lowercase, micro-improv or minimal improv (cf. Warburton 2005) started to appear in discourse.

Berlin Reductionism and New London Silence were actually the Berlin and London manifestation of more or less the same ideas. One of the first connecting points between the two cities was the same-named venue – the 2:13. The London 2:13, named after a stopped clock in the venue, was actually founded first by John Bisset in 1992 (cf. Davies 2011: 68); then, after the German percussionist Burkhard Beins lived in London in the mid-1990s for a year, he founded a Berlin branch of 2:13 together with Michael Renkel upon their relocation to Berlin in 1996. Although the Berlin 2:13 Club soon ceased to exist, towards the end of the 1990s the London and Berlin musicians continued visiting each other and collaborating, also forming groups: for example the *Sowari Quartet* (Burkhard Beins, Michael Renkel, Rhodri Davies, Phil Durrant) and *The Sealed Knot* (Burkhard Beins, Rhodri Davies, Mark Wastell) (cf. Beins 2010). At the time they were indeed working on similar aesthetic issues, even though Beins remarks that one could hear the influence of British improv, i.e. post-Webernesque aesthetics, much clearer in the sound of the London than Berlin musicians (ibid.). The connections with the London-based musicians made then have lasted through today in groups like *The Sealed Knot* (Beins, Davies, Wastell), *SLW* (Beins, Capece, Davies, Nakamura), and *Trio Sowari* (Beins, Denzler, Durrant).

The so-called Onkyō in Tokyo was a Japanese manifestation of the musically ascetic “trend” in the late 1990s, which was perhaps even more specific and more radical.

Also, Onkyō reached the highest degree of “popularity” in specialized circles, which might lie in the uniqueness and specificity of the label itself. Novak (2010) argues that the label, because of its “untranslatedness”, produced a notion of a difference, specificity and a “Japaneseness” of Onkyō among the non-Japanese specialized audience, who even drew comparisons of Onkyō with Zen (cf. *ibid.*: 52), or saw it in a light of “a Japanese tradition of stillness stretching back to the medieval Noh theatre” (quote by Clive Bell in Plourde 2008: 273). That, however, was strongly rejected by the musicians themselves. Onkyō was indeed quite differently rooted than the related Western manifestation of reduced improvisation and in that sense was certainly unique. As such, it established itself as an internationally well-acknowledged new improvised music genre, which was locally specific, and actually explicitly tied to a small group of musicians and the venue *Off Site* in Tokyo. Representatives of Onkyō, such as Toshimaru Nakamura, Sachiko M, Yoshihide Ōtomo, Tetuzi Akiyama or Taku Sugimoto, largely used electronics – e.g. no-input mixing board (Nakamura), empty sampler or sampler with sine waves (Sachiko M), turntable (Ōtomo) – but also electric, amplified or acoustic instruments, in a music predominated with “silence”. Connections between Tokyo-based and Berlin-based improvisers started already in the 1990s and also continue until today.

Connections with the Viennese scene and musicians like Radu Malfatti, Werner Dafeldecker, Burkhard Stangl, Franz Hautzinger, Christof Kurzmann and Martin Brandlmayr, among many more, have also been intense since the 1990s. Some of the Viennese musicians in the meantime moved to Berlin and became a part of the *Echtzeitmusik* scene. Vienna in the 1990s also saw a tendency among certain musicians to radically reduce volume, density and means in improvisation. Radu Malfatti is considered to be a big influence on the Berlin-based musicians Robin Hayward and Axel Dörner, who were among the key figures of Berlin Reductionism. The ensemble *Polwechsel*, which was also a paradigm for reduced sound, was founded already in 1993/1994 and initially consisted of Werner Dafeldecker, Burkhard Stangl, Michael Moser and Radu Malfatti (cf. Dafeldecker in Dafeldecker – Dörner 2011: 363). Axel Dörner says that he heard *Polwechsel* at the LMC³⁶ festival in 1996 and liked it immediately because it was the direction he wanted to go in

³⁶ The London Musicians' Collective.

himself (Dörner in Dafeldecker – Dörner 2011: 363f).

Just as Dörner heard *Polwechsel* at a festival in London, where he also met Burkhard Beins for the first time (ibid.), many other musical acquaintances were made at festivals where musicians were able to hear other musicians having the same musical interests. That's how Andrea Neumann also described her first contacts with American musicians. Contacts with the scene in the United States were perhaps a little less intense simply because of the greater distance. However, Michael T. Bullock's account of the scene in Boston points to similar developments in the 1990s there as well. *The Undr Quartet* in Boston was founded in 1997 and consisted of Liz Tonne, Vic Rawlings, Greg Kelley and James Coleman. As Bullock states: "This group was one of the earliest manifestations of what later became known exogenously as 'the Boston sound' or 'lowercase sound': improvised, electroacoustic music that favors subtle sounds and periods of silence, while eschewing overt musical drama" (Bullock 2010: 28). Another lowercase ensemble that Bullock mentions is *The BSC*, founded in 2000 by Bhob Rainey.

The aforementioned scenes had thus connected already in the 1990s, when they were all involved in working out a similar approach to improvisation. The contact and exchange was enhanced by the emergence of advanced communications technology in the course of the 1990s that was not available before, as Axel Dörner remembers: "...telephoning the United States was unbelievably expensive back then. (...) It was at the beginning of the nineties. Furthermore, I couldn't speak English very well. We communicated via fax from continent to continent. And then in 1998 I had email for the first time..." (Dörner in Dafeldecker – Dörner 2011: 364). Indeed much changed for the musicians, their music and their local scenes in the course of those changes. For all the above mentioned scenes and artists the reductive phase was just a phase, but it still heavily influenced the music they continue to make today, even though their music has opened in many different directions since. Among all other world centers for new and experimental arts, Berlin has in the meantime gained a reputation as an extraordinarily creative city with cheap living costs, and also due to its central geographical position has attracted within a short time numerous artists from around the world. The Berlin scene could thus develop the most "wildly", and today the city represents a unique phenomenon by its scope,

internationality, diversity and creative potential.

2.2 Post-wall Berlin

The amazing history of Berlin makes it one of the genuinely unique cities: its long-term division into two cities by a wall, its reunification in 1990 after decades of building completely different histories, its central geographical position on the border of Eastern and Western Europe as well as becoming the capital of one of the most influential, liberal and rich countries in the world. The cultural sector – theatre, music, dance and fine arts – is especially strong both in the directions of so-called high-culture and the off-culture. The unique cultural offering of Berlin resides namely, apart from its three opera houses, two big concert halls, numerous theatres and movie theatres, galleries and museums, also in a big array of spaces for various new and still un-established artistic practices happening in its “underground”.

In his study *Kulturmetropole Berlin*, Boris Grésillon describes big cultural-geographical changes and mobility within the city caused by its reunification in 1990 (cf. Grésillon 2004: 115ff). In this process, many places devoted to culture and artistic practices on both sides vanished while others emerged, double structures merged or got cancelled, the institutions and administrations had to unify, and the city was in need for the development of new cultural politics which would correspond to the new situation (cf. *ibid.*: 125ff). Whilst this structural reorganization happened mostly according to western models, the real cultural focus of the city shifted to the central eastern districts – first of all Mitte, soon also Prenzlauer Berg and Friedrichshain – especially when the off-culture is concerned (cf. *ibid.*: 170ff). In the course of this process, those districts started to develop and gentrify rapidly. Still, the transition phase lasted long enough to make the spreading and development of alternative culture possible. That was the time in which many private and public spaces stood empty and free to use, at least temporarily, yet sometimes for years until the ownership was cleared.³⁷

³⁷ For more about this subject see Grésillon 2004: 178.

The spatial and social status of Berlin at the time attracted artists and activists from all over the world and renewed Berlin's status as one of the so-called creative cities, "large 'incubators', (...) cities of the future, with diasporic and often transient populations, with substantial numbers of young people, and with a focus towards the arts, culture and media on the basis of quite different but marked historical reasons" (McRobbie 2004: [2]). Studios, galleries, rehearsal rooms, cinemas, bars, and clubs arose and vanished as a result of changes in the socio-political and spatial picture of the city.³⁸ One of the city scenes that formed in the mid 1990s in the squats of Berlin's central eastern districts, such as Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte, was the Echtzeitmusik scene. It is unquestionable that such a context of its emergence has played an essential role in the scene's image, reputation and chances until today, representing a new environment of possibilities which served as a new starting point for artists with different backgrounds.

The notion of the Echtzeitmusik scene and its reputation worldwide, even though mostly in related circles, is connected to the "myth of Berlin" and its reputation of being "poor but sexy"³⁹. This reputation is based on an idea of the city as an agglomeration of artists, full of an inspiring atmosphere of boiling creation, as well as cheap spaces to live and work, which all together enhances the production of supposedly new, subversive and unique art. Artists and activists with alternative forms of living and working were coming to West Berlin long before the fall of the wall. Even today, the influx of artists and an interested audience is continuously rising, creating a very inspiring environment for creation and innovation.

2.2.1 Off-culture

The reputation of Berlin as a city of culture relates not only to its outstanding high-cultural offerings but also to its rich independent culture, or what Grésillon calls "the off-culture" (cf. Grésillon 2004: 122). Although every cultural metropolis has both high-culture and off-culture represented in its cultural offerings, the contrast

³⁸ About alternative culture and scenes in post-wall Berlin see Färber 2005, 2010; Schwanhäußer 2010; Vogt 2005.

³⁹ In German "arm aber sexy". That is how the mayor of Berlin Klaus Wowereit once described the character of the city.

between them is especially distinctive in Berlin, and “it even belongs to the cultural tradition of the city”⁴⁰ (ibid.). As opposed to the high-culture, the off-culture⁴¹ is much harder to define, since it is mostly mobile in space and hard to quantify. As for the financial part, it “cannot count on any ‘definitive’ subsidies from state authorities, even if some places or projects get regular or selective support”⁴² (ibid.: 122). The scope and versatility of the Berlin off-culture is hardly comparable to any other German or European city, claims Grésillon.

Both parts of Berlin were also before the fall of the wall a fertile soil for arts and activism. The tradition of the off-culture started in West Berlin in the 70s and 80s in the course of student protests and the commune movement, when the unique geopolitical situation attracted different activists that introduced new alternative forms of living (cf. Grésillon 2004: 102, 106, 122). West Berlin was a place of house squatting (especially Kreuzberg), the punk movement and immigrant cultures. On the other hand, East Berlin (especially Prenzlauer Berg) saw the emergence of oppositional cultural niches, rock and avant-gardes (cf. ibid: 106ff; Dörfler 2010: 123ff; Wicke 1995). The political changes in the course of the turnaround (“die Wende”) resulted in new favourable conditions for expansion: low urban density and no capacity of the authorities to deal with a big amount of free spaces in the old, decayed districts of central East Berlin (cf. ibid. 122f). In this situation, a big part of alternative culture cultivated in West Berlin transferred to the former east side of the city, joined by many newcomers, first from West Germany, Switzerland and other European countries, but soon also from around the world.

The Berlin off-culture is for the most part connected to the squatter-culture, which started already in West Berlin in the 70s and massively continued after the opening of East Berlin. As already said above, since many of the buildings in central East Berlin were simply abandoned, already in the early 1990s the streams of young people started to squat them, bringing with them their various activities. This was

⁴⁰ „...er gehört sogar zur Kulturtradition der Stadt“.

⁴¹ Grésillon (2004: 122) also names alternatives for this designation: sub-culture (Subkultur), counter-culture (Gegenkultur), underground-culture (*underground*-Kultur) and alternative culture (Alternativkultur).

⁴² „Die Off-Orte sind die Kulturorte, die auf keine ‚definitiven‘ Subventionen von staatlichen Stellen zählen können, selbst wenn manche Orte oder Projekte regelmäßige oder punktuelle Unterstützung erhalten.“

above all possible with properties that were appropriated by the state during the socialist regime and had to be returned to their original owners afterwards (cf. Grésillon 2004: 178). Since these processes sometimes lasted for a long time and sometimes could not even be solved, artists and students used this transition period and entered the spaces illegally, whereby in some cases they could later legalize their living and working spaces in several ways. For example, the community of the house inhabitants (squatters) could buy the house using a loan from the city, which was to be paid off in a certain amount of time, after which the house would belong to the community; or, the community of the house inhabitants would rent the house under relatively favourable conditions for a limited amount of time, whereby the future would always be uncertain. In any case, those abandoned and re-used spaces were a basis for the emergence of different scenes in the city and represented an important part of their identity. As the spaces were constantly in transition and change, so were the scenes too.

If we look back to the developments in the “underground” music sector in Berlin since the 1990s, there is on the one hand a famous club culture with clubs that count among the most prominent in the world and whose reputation still builds on the legends of the clubs *Tresor* and *WMF* in the early 1990s, that were situated in the overly abandoned area just next to the wall (cf. Schwanhäüßer 2010; Vogt 2005). Berlin’s “party culture” has also profited much from free spaces, whereby in this sector a lot of old factory and warehouse buildings were used. As opposed to the low-scale music and art activities that were also spreading around the squats of the central Berlin districts, the “party culture” as a pleasure offer was generally consumer oriented and in the meantime became an extremely commercially and financially successful sector in Berlin. On the other hand, experimental arts which had no market potential depended entirely on the spatial conditions, which were soon changing. The first renovation actions in 1997 and 1998 made many places for alternative culture vanish and started to change the spatial and cultural picture of Berlin.

2.2.2 The squatter origins

One of the East Berlin squatted houses – more concretely a club called *Anorak* situated in it – was the place of emergence of the Echtzeitmusik scene. Until it closed due to the above mentioned renovation actions in December 1997, *Anorak*⁴³ was one of the culturally rich squatter venues contributing to the versatile Berlin cultural scenery of the 1990s, alongside *KuLe*⁴⁴, *Lychi 60*⁴⁵, *ACUD*⁴⁶, *Eimer*⁴⁷, *Schokoladen*⁴⁸, *Supamolli*⁴⁹, *Club Forschung*⁵⁰ and many more. It was situated in the ground-floor of the second inner yard of a squatted block of houses on Dunckerstrasse 14, Prenzlauer Berg and regularly hosted musicians who shared similar musical interests with the curators of the venue. Although they mostly improvised, they did not by all means try to join the existing Free Jazz and improvised music scene in Berlin, not only because of the relative closedness of that scene or the clash of generations, but also because the new musicians had other predispositions, interests and options for making music. First of all, their backgrounds and profiles were diverse and at first glance they would not seem like a homogeneous group. Apart from that, they were mostly very young and inexperienced, living through their first freedoms in a context freed of conventions, hierarchies, clear value scales, or authorities. For them, Berlin represented “a lighthouse”, “an oasis” (Ermke 2011: 61), an “East Berlin bubble” (Bussmann 2011: 46) they could live in for a while.

Young artists that have been coming to Berlin since the early 1990s would probably never be able to eventually build up such a strong cultural alternative to Berlin high-culture if there were not the heavy socio-political changes and unique living

⁴³ Often written as ‘AnOrAK’.

⁴⁴ Auguststr. 10, Mitte. Kunsthaus KuLe (short for “Kultur und Leben”, meaning “Culture and life”) was squatted in 1990 by art students and became a living and art project which still exists today. At evenings like *Hard Glubbery* and *Zell Am See* in the 1990s it sometimes hosted musicians of the early Echtzeitmusik scene. Since 2000 it has been hosting the *Labor Sonor* concert series. www.kuletheater.de.

⁴⁵ Today’s *ausland*, Lychenerstr. 60, Prenzlauer Berg.

⁴⁶ Veteranenstr. 21, Mitte. www.acud.de.

⁴⁷ Rosenthalerstr. 68, Mitte, vanished. [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eimer_\(Berlin\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eimer_(Berlin)).

⁴⁸ Ackerstr. 169-170, Mitte. www.schokoladen-mitte.de.

⁴⁹ Jessnerstr. 41, Friedrichshain. www.supamolli.de.

⁵⁰ Rosenthaler Strasse, Mitte. “A legendary basement club that was only accessible by climbing down a steep metal ladder. Also known as ‘Junkkeller’, ‘Club for Chunk’, and similar names. Eventually closed, another victim of redevelopment in Berlin-Mitte” (Beins – Kesten – Nauck – Neumann 2011: 35)

and working conditions in Berlin. Those conditions made it possible to create something new without having to enter the existing structures or obeying existing rules of production that, even if it was wanted, would be rather difficult to accomplish. Bourdieu (1993c: 57) wrote: “When the newcomers are not disposed to enter the cycle of simple reproduction, based on recognition of the ‘old’ by the ‘young’ (...) and recognition of the ‘young’ by the ‘old’ (...), but bring with them dispositions and position-takings which clash with the prevailing norms of production and the expectations of the field, they cannot succeed without the help of external changes”, such as revolutions which change the power relations within the field, or changes in the profile of consumers (cf. *ibid.*: 57-58). Just like industrialization and the emergence of the bourgeoisie in 19th century France initiated many structural changes that enhanced the development of more experimental forms of writing (cf. *ibid.*: 54f), the changes that Berlin went through influenced the development of experimental forms of art in Berlin.

Anorak was the place where the notion of Echtzeitmusik was continuously used and where one can trace the first attempts of the new generation of improvisers “to map out a different social, cultural and discursive space for themselves within the city” (Stahl 2001: 102). And although the scene might partially have taken somewhat different ways afterwards, *Anorak*’s embeddedness in the Berlin squatter and subcultural scenes, its leftist profile and easy-going and underfunded image, is remembered continually and in this sense remains an important part of the scene’s identity. Even if *Anorak* unfortunately did not manage to “survive” the first renovation actions in 1997 and 1998, more venues, some of which have become the institutions of the scene, were/are part of formerly squatted houses – *Raumschiff Zitrone* in K77, *Labor Sonor* in *KuLe* and *ausland* in the house at Lychener Straße 60 (cf. Beins et al. 2011: 35f). The Echtzeitmusik scene still has not managed to permeate the institutionalized venues of the so-called high-culture, perhaps exactly because of its roots. One can rather observe how, in the course of gentrification, new venues pop up in the newly hip but still cheap districts, as is recently the case with Neukölln.

2.2.3 Gentrification and change

The mentioned renovations of the central Berlin districts in the 1990s signalled the beginning of big changes for the Berlin squatter scene and alternative culture, which depended on the free and cheap spaces around the city centre. The conditions for living and working slowly started to change, which, in the next ten years, resulted in the almost complete replacement of alternative by commercial culture in those central districts. The city itself has been a big construction area and is undergoing big spatial changes as well. On the one hand, development and progress are positive, on the other, capitalism and blind ambition for profit often show little understanding for the “underground” cultural scenery of Berlin that is basically surviving on an initiative of some enthusiasts and artists themselves. Even when expelled from the places that they themselves made attractive for entrepreneurs and yuppies, artists and activists search for new accessible and affordable places and continue reviving more and more Berlin districts, that all then become gentrified: in the beginning there were Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg, then Friedrichshain, then Kreuzberg (again) and lately Neukölln, whereby Wedding and Schöneberg are supposedly about to come⁵¹.

For several years the Echtzeitmusik scene also went through big spatial changes. The scene, which before resided almost exclusively in Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg, is now largely relocated to Neukölln. The northern part of Neukölln – the part within the city’s “ring” – was by its closeness to the already popularized Kreuzberg attractive to students and artists again and has meanwhile become one of the most popular districts in Berlin. Many of the artists and audience members of the Echtzeitmusik scene live there as well. So the venues in Neukölln, even though not holding such importance and reputation in the scene’s history and tradition, can compete in popularity with the already well-established venues in Mitte or Prenzlauer Berg. At the same time a new generation of musicians and their audience is coming, which does not relate at all to the history of the scene and is creating spaces and history of their own. The position and importance of Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte for alternative culture is visibly falling and the scene seems to have

⁵¹ <http://www.tip-berlin.de/kultur-und-freizeit/das-neue-schoneberg>, accessed December 10, 2011.

entered a new phase – a new generation of musicians, new sounds and new localities – in which power positions and existing (even though invisible) hierarchies, relations and aesthetic focuses change again. It will take time to see in which direction the Echtzeitmusik scene will develop further.

2.3 Cultural policy: The “freie Szene” in Berlin today

Besides the big city institutions of art, music and culture, the Berlin Kultursenat⁵² takes care of a large amount of independent and small-scale cultural activities that are very often referred to as the “freie Szene” (literally “free scene”, or “independent arts scene” in the official English version of the text⁵³). As a definition of a free scene I will borrow one formulated within the 14. *Pfingstsymposion*, held in 2003 in Munich with the theme “Die freie Musik Szene”: “The term and the diverging connotations and artistic manifestations connected with it have developed since the 1960s. It was an expression of a growing progressive artistic alternative to bourgeois music culture. The “free scene” followed and is following, **without being questioned**, its own aesthetic concepts, which have often had a political character or manifested themselves within social protests. Performance represented one further essential artistic innovation adopted by the musicians in order to broaden the notion of music beyond composition that was usual until then. ‘Free scenes’ exist in all artistic sectors and have often established a system of diverse sub-classifications and cooperations. In music we can name for example: New Music, experimental, electronic music, Media Art with focuses on Fine Arts or music, Sound Art, sound installations. (...) The appearance of shows, presentations and performances of the free music scene differs essentially from the appearance of a performance with a classical orchestra. It is marked by respective artistic intention. Also, the conventional place for music, the concert hall, was replaced by individual places for presentation of work. The free scene successfully conquered empty factory buildings. The free music scene has its own specific audience, which

⁵² “Berlin’s cultural affairs department (Senate Chancellery – Cultural Affairs) is responsible for museums, libraries, archives, memorials, theaters, orchestras, and choirs, as well as for funding for artists living in Berlin.” <http://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/index.en.php>, accessed April 5, 2012.

⁵³ <http://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/foerderung/index.en.html>, under “Funding areas”, accessed April 5, 2012.

appreciates openness and confrontation and identifies itself with the broadened idea of culture. Significant for all free scenes is their existence outside of common (administrated, city or state) structures. Individuals are thus not involved in orchestras, ensembles or artistic groups, which enjoy a continuous financial security or support (e.g. in the form of a permanent position or commissioning). One of the main existential problems of the free scene thereby declares itself: the reliable acquisition of necessary financial and infrastructural means for artistic practice.”⁵⁴

The Berlin free scene is very international and is constantly growing. “Estimates suggest that around 5,000 artists, 1,200 writers, 1,500 bands (pop, rock, and world music), 500 Jazz musicians, 103 professional orchestras and music ensembles, 1,500 choirs, 300 theater groups, and 1,000 dancers and/or choreographers of contemporary dance live and work in Berlin. This high-energy scene is constantly in flux and benefits not only from Berlin’s low cost of living and its space and freedom, but from public funding for the arts.”⁵⁵ The independent “sub-scene” of music is

⁵⁴ „Der Begriff und die damit verbundenen divergierenden Konnotationen und künstlerischen Ausprägungen einer „Freien Szene“ hat sich seit den 60er Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts entwickelt. Er war Ausdruck einer gewachsenen progressiven künstlerischen Alternative zur bürgerlichen Musikkultur. Die „freie Szene“ verfolgte und verfolgt **ungefragt** eigene ästhetische Konzepte, die in ihrer Anfangsphase oft politischen Charakter hatten oder sich im Umkreis gesellschaftlichen Protestes manifestierten. Eine weitere wesentliche künstlerische Erneuerung stellte die Performance dar, die die Musikschaaffenden aufgriffen und somit den Musikbegriff erweiterten, über die bis dahin gewohnte Vorstellung von Musik als Komposition hinaus. „Freie Szenen“ existieren in allen künstlerisch arbeitenden Sparten und haben oft ein System verschiedenster Untergruppierungen und Kooperationen entstehen lassen. In der Musik wären beispielhaft zu nennen: Neue Musik, experimentelle, elektronische Musik, Medienkunst mit den Schwerpunkten Bildende Kunst oder Musik, Klangkunst, Klanginstallationen. (...) Das Erscheinungsbild der Aufführungen, Präsentationen und Performances der freien Musikszene unterscheidet sich wesentlich von dem einer Aufführung mit einem klassischen Orchester. Es ist von der jeweiligen künstlerischen Intention geprägt. Auch der herkömmliche Musikort, der Konzertsaal, wurde von individuellen Orten für die Präsentation des Werks abgelöst. Die freie Szene eroberte sich erfolgreich leerstehende Fabrikhallen. Die freie Musikszene hat ihr eigenes spezifisches Publikum, das Offenheit und Konfrontation schätzt und sich mit dem erweiterten Kulturbegriff identifiziert. Kennzeichnend für alle freien Szenen ist ihre Existenz außerhalb herkömmlicher (verwalteter, städtischer und staatlicher) Strukturen. Also keine Einbindung des Einzelnen in Orchester, Ensembles oder Künstlergruppen, die eine regelmäßige finanzielle Absicherung oder Förderung (z.B. in Form von Festanstellung oder Auftragsvergabe) genießen. Damit erklärt sich auch eines der Haupt-Existenzprobleme der Freien Szene: die zuverlässige Beschaffung der nötigen finanziellen und infrastrukturellen Mittel zur Ausübung der künstlerischen Tätigkeit.“

http://www.pfingstsymposion.de/bilder/Freie%20Musik%20Szene_300603.pdf, accessed June 20, 2011; emphasis in the original.

⁵⁵ <http://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/foerderung/index.en.html>, accessed April 5, 2012.

(surprisingly) still divided into the categories of *E-Musik* and *U-Musik*⁵⁶. *E-Musik* includes contemporary music and sound art, whereas the biggest chances of funding are for “professionally working independent groups and soloists, as well as non-commercial promoters from Berlin”⁵⁷. Within so-called *U-Musik*, the city of Berlin “supports music groups and musicians in the area of Jazz, World Music and popular music. The term popular music is thereby very broadly defined and includes Rock, Pop, Chanson, Folk, Blues, Country, Avant-garde, Beat, Soul, Hip Hop, Punk, Heavy Metal and many more”.⁵⁸ Those musicians are expected to have reached a quasi-professional artistic level, but should not have signed a major label contract yet.

The Echtzeitmusik scene is one of the phenomena that on first sight do not fit into any of the mentioned categories. However, for more than one decade the scene has declared itself as related to New Music, and since the late 1990s has been financially supported through *INM – Initiative Neue Musik Berlin e.V.*⁵⁹, depending on the applied and accepted projects. The Echtzeitmusik scene has thus not been perceived as a separate entity with fundings of its own, but individual musicians from the scene apply for realization of their singular projects. Lately the number of applied projects from the Echtzeitmusik musicians is growing and correspondingly more

⁵⁶ Categories characteristic in the German-speaking area. *E-Musik*, or *ernste Musik*, means “serious music” and refers to the composed music of Western classical tradition that is mostly to be seen in the institutionalized context. *U-Musik*, or *unterhaltende Musik*, literary translates as “entertaining music”. It refers to popular music genres and styles. Recent developments in music bring about many situations in which those categories cannot be applied anymore.

⁵⁷ „professionell arbeitende freie Gruppen und Solisten sowie nichtkommerzielle Veranstalter aus Berlin bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung von Konzerten, Veranstaltungsreihen, Klanginstallationen und interdisziplinären Projekte mit dem Schwerpunkt Musik“
<http://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/foerderung/musik/e-musik/emusik.html>, accessed April 5, 2012.

⁵⁸ „Das Land Berlin fördert Musikgruppen sowie Musikerinnen und Musiker auf dem Gebiet des Jazz, der Weltmusik und der Populären Musik. Der Begriff Populäre Musik wird dabei sehr weit gefasst und schließt Rock, Pop, Chanson, Folk, Blues, Country, Avantgarde, Beat, Soul, Hip Hop, Punk, Heavy Metal u.v.a. mit ein.“
<http://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/foerderung/musik/rock-pop-welt/index.html>, accessed April 5, 2012.

⁵⁹ *INM – Initiative neue Musik* was founded in 1991 with support from the Berlin Senate in order to represent and protect the interests of the Berlin free music scene. It claims to be aesthetically and structurally open. *INM* is directly funded by the cultural affairs department of the Berlin Senate and further distributes funding to the chosen applied projects. The distribution of funding is decided by the jury selected from the members of *INM* every two years. *INM* also publishes a concert calendar for contemporary music in Berlin. <http://www.inm-berlin.de>.

projects get funded.⁶⁰ However, sometimes *INM*'s preference for conventionally working ensembles with a need for a conductor, rehearsals, score copies etc. is observed. Yet, the question is less about the distribution of fundings within *INM*, but more about the insufficient amount of means given by the city for this sector, which makes any kind of serious permanent ensemble or venue funding hard or impossible, or inadequate division of those means which results in the smaller amount going directly to the artists. Those issues have been subjects of many debates in the past years, mostly because the free music scene is seen as a sort of a burden because of its lack of commercial potential.⁶¹ The satisfying relationship "between cultural producers and the dominant class" (Bourdieu 1996: 49), which in this case finds its equivalent in the relationship between the independent musicians and sources of funding (in this case the city or the state), thus still does not exist.

Apart from New Music, with which *Echtzeitmusik* shares certain aesthetic features, funding and a similar marginal position in the field of culture, there are also occasional connections with the Jazz and experimental Electronic Music scenes⁶². These scenes have however not been that concrete until recently, with the founding of a new interest group of the free music scene in Berlin called *Dach/Musik*⁶³. *Dach/Musik* is a sort of a response to the initiating of the so-called *Musicboard* by the senate, which would represent the interests of the Berlin clubs and other music entrepreneurs, already gathered in the so-called *Berlin Music Commission*.⁶⁴ Since *Musicboard* will apparently be primarily oriented to the support and protection of the Berlin commercial club scene, which is also an important source of income for the city, there was a concern for the destiny of the rather non-profitable and

⁶⁰ Besides *INM* there is also *Hauptstadtkulturfonds* that has state means, as well as several other smaller and singular funding possibilities.

⁶¹ See for example the debate about marketing at <http://inm-berlin.de/page.php?pgid=34>, accessed April 5, 2012.

⁶² Often through musicians that are active in several scenes.

⁶³ <http://dach-musik.de/>. It was initiated in March 2012 by *INM* and *IG Jazz Berlin* (<http://www.ig-jazz-berlin.de/>) to represent interests of the free music scene, including Jazz, New Music, Sound Art, *Echtzeitmusik*, experimental club scene / advanced Pop Music and Early Music (http://www.dach-musik-berlin.de/?page_id=5, accessed May 1, 2012.). Other members include representatives of the *Echtzeitmusik* scene, MaerzMusik/Matthias Osterwold (<http://www.maerzmusik.de>), Dock e. V./Singuhr e. V. (<http://www.dock-berlin.de>, <http://www.singuhr.de/>), CTM Festival/Jan Rohlf (<http://www.ctm-festival.de>), amSTART/Ran Huber (<http://www.amstart.tv>) and ausland/Gregor Hotz (<http://www.ausland-berlin.de>).

⁶⁴ See <http://www.musik2020berlin.de/>, accessed May 1, 2012.

“artistically” oriented cultural forms and practices. *Dach/Musik* has its aim in improving working conditions of musicians, producers, ensembles, composers and other agents of the free scene that are threatened to be rather neglected in the planning of *Musicboard*, which has already received one million euro funding for 2012/2013⁶⁵ (cf. Gottstein – Schick 2012). However, the planning and distribution of means by *Musicboard* and a possible restructuring of the funding system for music in Berlin is not yet known, and the funding of the Echtzeitmusik scene through *INM* seems to be staying as it is for now.

⁶⁵ <http://www.morgenpost.de/berlin-aktuell/article1886956/Eine-Million-Euro-fuer-das-Berliner-Musicboard.html>, accessed May 1, 2012.

3 History, aesthetics and discursive contexts of Echtzeitmusik

In the last two decades in Berlin there emerged both a new, distinguished community of musicians, and a certain notion of music they are practicing. On the one hand there is thus a new social entity – one of many new scenes and communities that emerged in the unique socio-political conditions after the unification of Berlin. On the other hand, together with this new group emerged a specific notion of music and musical practice, which no longer unequivocally fit within existing categories. Both are largely known under the designation *Echtzeitmusik*. Seen retrospectively, the present existence of the scene and the notion of it are directly related to particular discursive events from the scene's past, which had their triggers and echoes and were results of social and aesthetic, as well as economic and legal circumstances. Each of those events has also, in its own way, determined the path of a formation of the *Echtzeitmusik* scene by eliciting a mode of thinking, and therewith a field of possibilities that have helped in forming the identity and positions of the musicians. The origin, nature and content of the “common knowledge” of the scene thus have to be sought in the effect of those discursive events, even though the actual construction of the scene and its supposed identity happened much afterwards and in retrospect. This will be done in an attempt of a reconstruction of the discursive contexts in which the specificity of the scene and the practice was formed, including the phases of distinction, profiling and self-identification, as well as attempts of labelling and self-defining of the scene.

There are several important events that determined the line of development of the *Echtzeitmusik* scene. First was the introduction of the label *Echtzeitmusik* in the act of distinction from the existing Free Jazz and Free Improvisation scene in Berlin. In that early phase there was otherwise little music-related reflection and the mechanisms of identification and distinction were differently focused than later. Then an attempt of formulation of distinguished aesthetics took place, that was labelled ‘Berlin Reductionism’, whereby the *Echtzeitmusik* label was somewhat neglected. In the phase towards the end of the 1990s a smaller group of musicians

started to intensely reflect and discuss the aesthetic aspects of practice, and finally develop a specific approach to improvisation which later became characteristic of the scene. It followed the self-acknowledgment as an “underground New Music scene”, where the label *Echtzeitmusik* was re-introduced as a name for the website containing an important concert calendar. After a longer “post-reductionist” period without a clear common identity, the scene dispersed and its profile relativized again. With the festival *Echtzeitmusiktage* in 2010 the definition of *Echtzeitmusik* was redefined and broadened to include more practices and a broader range of musicians than was previously usual. Finally, the *Echtzeitmusik* book set somewhat clearer borders again, providing a history of particular venues, names and concert series as representative of *Echtzeitmusik*, designating all the other activities, names and venues as “related” to the scene⁶⁶, and making the scene discourse both public and official.

In the following I will present the scene’s history from its beginnings until today, at the same time describing the characteristics of the music created in the scene and reconstructing the discursive contexts of the events that have determined the scene’s formation and identity. I will attempt to reveal how this specific notion of music and practice emerged and how was it defined, considering the conditions of its emergence and its existence, as well as its relation to other discourses. I will also try to show how this music and the scene emerged as discursive categories through the labels like Berlin Reductionism and *Echtzeitmusik*, and how the notion of *Echtzeitmusik* offered a new possibility of identification for the new, particular profile of musicians in Berlin, who did not see themselves as belonging to the existing categories any more.

3.1 Backgrounds: the Berlin squatter culture

Since the earliest phase of the scene's formation is rather poorly documented, the exact discursive constellation of its emergence is relatively vague. However, as the *Echtzeitmusik* scene emerged in the free spaces of early post-wall Berlin in the course of the new squatting wave, its initial social and discursive contexts, that even

⁶⁶ Cf. <http://www.echtzeitmusik.de/index.php>, accessed March 20, 2012.

today appear important for its identity and the identities of the musicians, largely overlapped with those of the squatter culture.⁶⁷ Famously alternative, anarchist and left oriented, squatter culture partially overlaps with the so-called “left scene”⁶⁸ (cf. Golova 2011). However, the young people who occupied the empty spaces of central East Berlin in the 1990s, even though they were most often rebellious anarchists interested in alternative lifestyles, were also largely interested in alternative culture and experimental arts. Next to techno and punk-rock, that allegedly dominated the music scene back then⁶⁹, a lot of “space” opened for more “seriously” oriented musical and artistic ideas⁷⁰ as well.

In the early scene, community, equality, and freedom were correspondingly much more intensely understood and practiced in a political and ideological sense. Thereby, any practices that moved away from determined structures and categories, predictable outcomes, and relation to bourgeois culture were favoured. This attitude can be seen in Nicholas Bussmann’s description of the music he played back then: “This musical potpourri consisted of fragments of my classical musical knowledge, elements borrowed from hardcore, punk, a bit of badly played jazz, and then increasingly more noise. It was ‘my’ music because I thought it defied classification. I could play out my whole educated, middle-class canon of feelings without having to adhere to the rules of bourgeois society. Anything but the *conservatory*. Anything but ‘you are standing on the shoulders of giants’.” (Bussmann 2011: 64, emphasis in the original.) The practice of improvised music was especially suitable as it, in its philosophy, mirrored an ideal society. Besides giving the opportunity to everyone to play music and to be equally involved in a musical group or performance, it also gave one the freedom to play whatever and however s/he wanted, independent from external approval. That gave a creative impulse to musicians who wanted to escape norms and limits, be it from their upbringing or

⁶⁷ Confer for example texts by Rosenstein, Malcolm, Ermke, Bussmann, Kammerer in Beins – Kesten – Nauck – Neumann 2011. Another evidence is the fact that the two eldest venues of the scene that are still active – Labor Sonor and ausland – are situated in the formerly squatted houses.

⁶⁸ Linke Szene.

⁶⁹ Even though techno might seem quite incompatible with leftist ideology (cf. Büsser 2000), as it is primarily oriented in making commercial use of free spaces. See Schwanhäüßer 2010 and Vogt 2005 for the Berlin techno scene.

⁷⁰ Gregor Hotz talks about freedom/latitude or open/free space for experimental art in the post-wall Berlin (“Freiräume für experimentelle Kunst”, in Nauck 2003: 16).

from their conventional musical education. In the club *Anorak*, improvisation was particularly favoured also because it was “weird”, and therefore different than other music played in that context.

Improvised music as practiced by the new, younger musicians was thus at first not primarily aesthetically based, but rather ideologically compatible, as it promised freedom, equality, access, and independence without any pressure of high quality, skill, or success. Generally unprepared and performed in real-time, it also gave an impression of an authentic, real, original, and unbounded musical practice with a unique musical result – these were allegedly ideals that stood behind the choice of the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ in the first place. Yet, apart from their general interest in improvisation, which initially served as a group-forming force, the musicians that gathered in *Anorak* did not necessarily have much in common. Their “capitals” were various: some of them had a conventional music education, some came from Rock or Jazz backgrounds, and some were autodidacts with original approaches to their instruments. Therefore, apart from the general common interest in improvisation and shared living and working conditions, there was no common basic knowledge and no common aesthetic reference. Seen from the present perspective, the newly reconstructed line of the scene’s development was nothing like straightforward and continuous. Looking back now, the first two clubs, *Anorak* and *2:13 Club*, seem rather different in aims and musical profile. Only some later developments (as well as some common musicians) subdued these partially disparate phenomena into one and the same story.

3.2 Beginnings: *Anorak*

Gaining entrance into the already established Berlin Free Jazz and improvised music scene, concentrated around the West Berlin *FMP* label and the *Total Music Meeting* festival, was difficult. Even though many of the musicians were highly influenced by Free Jazz and some of them were also actively involved in the existing scene, for example when the ensemble *Butch Morris Berlin Skyscraper* at the *Total Music Meeting*

in 1995 featured a number of musicians associated with the club *Anorak*,⁷¹ they largely failed to receive acceptance and acknowledgement in the existing scene, but at the same time recognized the possibility of not having to depend on that scene.⁷² The independent position was certainly possible, so they clearly stated their distinction by providing their activity with a new name – ‘Echtzeitmusik’. The first appearance of the term is on the flyer for *Echtzeitmusiknaechte* (the nights of Echtzeitmusik) in a place called *Mutzek* in July 1994 (cf. poster reproduction in Beins – Kesten – Nauck – Neumann 2011: 30)⁷³. The band playing there was called *Plexus* and featured Guy Bettini – trumpet, Olaf Rupp – electric guitar, Davide de Bernardi – bass, and Hanno Leichtmann – percussion. Soon after that, the newly opened club *Anorak* started to occasionally use the term on its flyers⁷⁴. It was then further popularized through two festivals⁷⁵ and eventually the concert series with improvised music that carried the same name and took place every Sunday until *Anorak* closed in December 1997. Introducing that new designation of a personalized music and music-making – Echtzeitmusik – was an important part of the distinction act of the musicians around *Anorak*. It gave a certain group and a particular musical practice related to them an extra visibility, even if only for a relatively small local circle and at first for a rather short period of time.

⁷¹ The ensemble was formed on the occasion of the Total Music Meeting in 1995 and featured Axel Dörner, Gregor Hotz, Nicholas Bussmann, Aleks Kolkowski, Davide de Bernardi, Olaf Rupp, and Stephan Mathieu, among others.

(See <http://www.fmp-label.de/freemusicproduction/projekteindex.html>, under 1995 / TMM, accessed January 23, 2012.).

⁷² There are also some exceptions, e.g. Sven-Åke Johansson has since the early times been involved in the Echtzeitmusik scene (cf. Milroth 2007) and he is considered to be a sort of a cult-figure of the scene; there were also good contacts with Johannes, Conny and Matthias Bauer. However, intergenerational bands were rather an exception in the early years.

⁷³ That is to say, the first appearance of the German version of the term – Echtzeitmusik – in the Berlin context. The same idea was also used by trumpet player Birgit Uhler, who started the annual international festival of contemporary improvised music in Hamburg in 1993 under the name *Real Time Music Meeting*. The idea is described as follows: “Ten musicians of the international Free-Music-Scene play in various combinations over two days from duo to tutti. The background of the players can be very different – from Jazz and Pop to classical music as well as the visual arts – as different as the ideas and concepts of the musicians. In no other musical style is the personality of the musician and the musical material such an inseparable unity as in improvised music. It is not only a question of virtuosity, but also of developing one's own language.” The last festival, according to the festival's website, took place in 2001. See <http://www.real-time-music.de>.

⁷⁴ E.g. in announcements like “Ein Abend mit Echtzeitmusik spezieller Art” (an evening with Echtzeitmusik of a special kind) or “Eine Neuigkeit aus dem Echtzeitmusiklager” (a novelty from the Echtzeitmusik camp).

⁷⁵ Held in *Anorak* in 1995 and 1996. Thereby a certain number of musicians was invited and they would then form different groups on spot, as it says on one of the festival posters: “in Anorak spielen in wechselnden Besetzungen” (cf. Beins – Kesten – Nauck – Neumann 2011: 28). This practice is usual for improvised music.

Anorak itself emerged as an act of distinction from the prevailing profile of Berlin squatter culture, represented by some of the residents of the house at Dunckerstraße 14, where *Anorak* was situated. According to Greg Malcolm, a musician from New Zealand that lived in the house and was active in *Anorak* at the time, there were even “the anti-*Anorak* members” of “the Dunckerland squat” (Malcolm 2011: 59). The political and aesthetic profile of the venue was already formulated from the start, as can be read in its first, manually written programme booklet for February 1995: “Here it is finally, our programme book for friends of good music and other nice things. We will move between punk and Arabic fairy tales with the focus on strange art. At least one Sunday per month (mostly the second) will be an evening of free improvised music (against cultural barbarianism) and at least once in a month there will be pure culture, meaning traditional music from faraway countries. Apart from that, profane sounds will as usual relentlessly collide with bizarre forms.”⁷⁶ Free improvised music was thereby considered a politically correct artistic form with which *Anorak* programmatically opposed capitalism and cultural barbarianism.

Although there were other venues before and parallel to *Anorak* that were also possible venues for the Berlin improvisers – in addition to the squatter venues mentioned in the second chapter were also the Jazz/Free-Jazz clubs *Kulturhaus Peter Edel*⁷⁷ and *Jazzkeller Treptow*⁷⁸, then *Café Zapata*⁷⁹, *Die Küche*⁸⁰, or the *Free Arts Sessions* in the bar *Zosch*⁸¹ – *Anorak* distinguished itself as the first steady meeting and reference point for young improvising and experimenting musicians of the newer generation. Moreover, it soon became known as a special venue dedicated to experimental and improvised music and as such attracted many international musicians sharing the same interests. It was also important as the root venue for

⁷⁶ „Hier ist es endlich, unser Programmheft für Freunde und Freundinnen guter Musik und anderer schöner Dinge. Wir werden uns bewegen zwischen Punk und arabischen Märchen, mit dem Schwerpunkt seltsamer Kunst. Mindestens ein Sonntag im Monat (meistens der Zweite) wird ein Abend frei improvisierter Musik sein (wider die Kulturbarbarei), und mindestens einmal im Monat wird es Kultur pur geben, sprich Volxmusik aus fernen Landen. Ansonsten werden wie üblich profane Klänge und bizarre Gestalten unerbittlich aufeinanderprallen.“

⁷⁷ Berliner Allee 125, Weißensee.

⁷⁸ Puschkinallee 5, Treptow.

⁷⁹ Within *Kunsthau Tacheles*, Oranienburgerstr. 54, Mitte.

⁸⁰ Reichenbergerstrasse 104, Kreuzberg. Run by a maker of documentary films Konstanze Binder, it was one of the first private places for experimental music. It existed from 1987 to 2000.

⁸¹ Tucholskystr. 30, Mitte.

groups *Blei war sein Lohn*, *Stol*, *Cut*, *Emak Bakia*, *No Doctor*, *Ich schwitze nie*, *Rho*, *Die Enttäuschung*, *Paloma*, *Cell*, *HuHu*, *Margaretas Zimmer*, *Gelée Royal*, *Bannkreis*, *Hailing Taxis*, *Die Eigenschaften*, *The Exiles* and *Kletka Red*⁸², many of whom unfortunately vanished more or less together with *Anorak*. On the other hand, some musicians claim that it was not all that easy to get to play in *Anorak*, since it was still relatively closed and its programming mainly oriented towards the extended circle of friends and particular tastes of the bookers.

The music played there under the designation ‘Echtzeitmusik’ resembled mixtures of improvised music with alternative Rock, Electronica or Free Jazz (cf. Beins – Renkel et al. 2000: 26) similar to the sound of Downtown New York in the 1980s, allegedly through the personal taste of the main *Anorak* booker Volker Schneemann. Yet especially towards its end, in the months parallel to the existence of the more “serious” *2:13 Club*, *Anorak* also presented some more “serious” programmes, for example, an excerpt from Alvin Lucier’s *Silver Streetcar for the Orchestra*, played on triangle by Rainer Römer⁸³ (*Anorak* CD, track 22). Axel Dörner also played at least one of his first “quiet” concerts there (cf. Malcolm 2011: 59). In any case, an average listener could easily describe this music as music of “people who couldn’t play” (ibid.); at least that was how the rest of the house saw *Anorak* and its “Echtzeit enthusiasts” (ibid.). Nevertheless, *Anorak* managed to build a certain reputation, as this quote from the contemporary squatter programme booklet *Kartell*, dated January 1996, shows: “Will it be a murmuring bear, or a reed swaying in the wind?

⁸² *Blei war sein Lohn* (Nicholas Bussmann - vc, Gregor Hotz - cl, sax, Hanno Leichtmann - dr), *Stol* (Stephan Mathieu - perc, Olaf Rupp - gtr, and guests), *Cut* (Gregor Hotz - cl, sax, Jason Kahn - dr, Birger Löhl - gtr), *Emak Bakia* (Hanno Leichtmann - dr, Olaf Rupp - gtr), *No Doctor* (Nicholas Bussmann - vc, Hanno Leichtmann - perc, Alex Nowitz - voc), *Ich schwitze nie* (Nicholas Bussmann - vc, electr, Hanno Leichtmann - dr, electr, Lars Rudolph - voc, tr, g), *Rho* (Sabine Ercklentz - tr, Annette Krebs - gtr, Andrea Neumann - prep. piano, Margrit Rieben - dr), *Die Enttäuschung* (Joachim Dette - db, Axel Dörner - tr, Uli Jennessen - perc, Rudi Mahal - bcl), *Paloma* (Hanno Leichtmann - dr, Hannes Strobl - eb), *Cell* (Tony Buck - dr, Leonid Soybelman - gtr, Joe Williamson - db), *HuHu* (Davide de Bernardi - db, Sakari Luoma - gtr, Stephan Mathieu - dr), *Margaretas Zimmer* (Davide de Bernardi - db, Guy Bettini - tr, Margarete Huber - voc), *Gelée Royal* (Davide de Bernardi - db, Guy Bettini - tr, Mirko Gargioni - perc, Honesty - synth, Jörg Maria Zeger - gtr), *Bannkreis* (Ignaz Schick - altsax, electr, Wu Wei - erhu, sheng, Steven Garling - perc), *Hailing Taxis* (Leo Bachmann - tub, Jason Kahn - dr, Greg Malcolm - gtr, Jenny Ward - voc), *Die Eigenschaften* (Olaf Rupp - gtr, Michael Groß - tr, Nicholas Bussmann - vc), *The Exiles* (Jon Rose - vn, electr, Joe Williamson - db, Tony Buck - dr, electr), *Kletka Red* (Tony Buck - dr, electr, Davide de Bernardi - db, Leonid Soybelman - gtr, voc).

⁸³ German percussionist and author of audio plays, member of the *Ensemble Modern*.

Or do we hear a creaky tram at the Eberswalder tube station? Anorak has again the ear for the pulse of the times.”⁸⁴

Anorak as a new venue was indeed noticed by the older generation of improvising musicians in Berlin. In a relatively recent text (2008), Maxi Sickert briefly describes the establishment of a separate group of young musicians on the Berlin Free Jazz scene in the 1990s (cf. Sickert 2008: 3). Similar to the distinguishing act from 1968, when Jost Gebers, Peter Brötzmann, and Peter Kowald started the *Total Music Meeting* in opposition to the *Berliner Jazztage* festival (cf. *ibid.*: 1), “Echtzeit, a group of Jazz-related improvisers” who “deal both with the ways of playing Free Jazz and with those of New Music, Noise and Punk” distinguished themselves from that older generation (cf. *ibid.* 3)⁸⁵. Helma Schleif and Alexander von Schlippenbach had allegedly characterized ‘Echtzeit’ as not having anything more to do with Jazz and being rather a “noisy fraction”, “an unemotional group” (*ibid.*). The young musicians might have been considered a threat by the older ones; if they namely organised and represented themselves strongly in the field of culture, they could have taken part of the funding and available spaces and thereby changed the positions in the field. As Bourdieu explains: “every new position, in asserting itself as such, determines a displacement of the whole structure and (...) by the logic of action and reaction, it leads to all sorts of changes in the position-takings of the occupants of the other positions” (Bourdieu 1993c: 58).

A generational conflict that happened at the turn of the century shows that a certain active relation with the Free Jazz scene nonetheless continued. In 1996, Wolfgang Fuchs, a Berlin improviser of the older generation, founded “a workshop ensemble with young Berlin-based musicians”⁸⁶ called *Berlin Factory* (cf. Eichmann

⁸⁴ „Wird es ein raunender Bär, oder sich im Wind wiegendes Schilf sein? Oder hören wir die knarrende Straßenbahn am U-Bhf. Eberswalder? Wieder einmal hat der *Anorak* das Ohr am Zeitgeschehen.“ (Kartell Januar 1996)

⁸⁵ The whole quote: „Etwa Mitte der neunziger Jahre ist noch ein drittes Lager hinzugekommen: Echtzeit, eine Gruppe dem Jazz zugehöriger Improvisatoren. Die jungen Musiker setzen sich mit den Spielweisen des Free Jazz ebenso auseinander, wie mit denen der Neuen Musik, des Noise und des Punk. Hier wiederholt sich die Entwicklung von damals, als die Berliner Jazztage sich dem Free Jazz verschlossen: Helma Schleif und Alexander von Schlippenbach sind sich ausnahmsweise einig und sagen, dass Echtzeit nichts mehr mit Jazz zu tun hat. ‚Rauscherfraktion‘ nennt Schleif die Gruppierung, Schlippenbach findet sie ‚emotionslos‘. Nur wenige Musiker sind offenbar in allen Lagern gern gesehen.“

⁸⁶ See <http://efi.group.shef.ac.uk/musician/mfuchs.html>. The ensemble featured, among others, Burkhard Beins, Guy Bettini, Axel Dörner, Robin Hayward, Gregor Hotz, Margarete Huber, Aleks

2005: 20). It was a sort of continuation of the above-mentioned festival ensemble *Butch Morris Berlin Skyscraper*, in which Fuchs was also involved. Yet, there were problems: “the concerts were rare because this ensemble of about ten members didn’t find suitable performance locations. Besides, the ensemble leader and its members got too often involved in discussions out of contrasting musical views.” (Ibid.) The eventual failure in cooperation with Fuchs confirmed that the generational gap was indeed too big and the aesthetics and musical goals by that time already too different. The ensemble fell apart in 2000 and the space in the house *KuLe*, that was meant to be used as its rehearsal room, instead became *Labor Sonor*, one of the scene’s main still-existing venues. *Berlin Factory* had its last performance at the *Total Music Meeting compact 2000* (cf. Eichmann 2005: 20). Yet the parallel developments in the other early scene venue, *2:13 Club*, as well as its aftermath in the reductionist aesthetic and the complete further development of the scene, have already shown that many involved would rather relate to the New Music or high-cultural sector than to the Jazz sector, when speaking about cultural space, funding, and similar issues.

The first renovation actions of central East Berlin around 1997, that also caused *Anorak* to close in December of the same year, were the beginning of a gentrification process that put an end to an “East Berlin bubble” (Bussmann 2011: 64) and continued to rapidly change the image of the city. People had to move out of their houses or start paying (higher) rents, and the introduction of the Internet enhanced connections, exchange, and knowledge and helped more and more artists from all over the world learn about Berlin and decide to move there. All of these factors caused an increased pressure that raised both professional and existential questions for many musicians, who suddenly had to decide how they would make their livings from then on. Some of them decided to become “serious”, some tried to commercialize their music-making, some gave up making music, some made it a hobby, and some stayed activist and idealist and continued fighting for venues and conditions for the experimental arts in Berlin. The scene, which at the time consisted of the intertwined circles of musicians around *Anorak* and the *2:13 Club*,

Kolkowski, Annette Krebs, Stephan Mathieu, Andrea Neumann, Natalia Pschenitschnikova, Olaf Rupp, Ignaz Schick, and Joe Williamson, often for short periods of time.

became dispersed and divided. A number of musicians active in *Anorak* were not that inclined towards reflective music-making and collaborations with the high-cultural New Music scene⁸⁷, and were instead pursuing pop or electronic music projects⁸⁸. Some have been still primarily interested in Free Jazz aesthetics and some increasingly included new technologies in their work, sometimes even completely replacing their previous instruments⁸⁹. Although after the closure of both *Anorak* and *2:13 Club* Echtzeitmusik lost its steady, dedicated locations in Berlin for another two years, the social contacts between the musicians did not completely fade away and the scene could be re-established a few years later.

3.3 Profiling: 2:13 Club

The autonomy of the early scene was on a relatively high level when there was abundance in living and working spaces and when there were still no clearly formulated ambitions among the musicians. As this autonomy was suddenly compromised by the unrecoverable loss of free spaces and (slowly but surely) rising costs of living, the need for profiling and legitimising the practice began to grow. Even if Berlin would still offer unique conditions for the development of experimental arts in the following years, it soon became clear that “whatever its degree of independence” is, the scene would certainly not be able to avoid being “affected by the laws of the field which encompasses it” (Bourdieu 1993c: 39), including those of political and economic profit (ibid.). In the *2:13 Club* the first attempt was made to profile and establish a distinct music practice and find a suitable designation for it. By that, and through some common musicians, the *2:13 Club* took over the line of the scene development. Through its discursive activity, made relatively public by the “popularization” of the so-called Berlin Reductionism at the turn of the century, the group of “reductionists” became a core group of the scene and their practice in that sense overshadowed all the other scene practices at the time.

⁸⁷ As was characteristic for the *2:13 Club* - see next chapter.

⁸⁸ E.g. diverse projects by Hanno Leichtmann and Nicholas Bussmann.

⁸⁹ E.g. Ignaz Schick replaced his saxophone with turntables and electronics, Nicholas Bussmann cello with electronics, Stephan Mathieu drums with electronics (Sound Art) etc.

Because of the relative closedness of *Anorak* and the fact that it was a very easy-going, fully underfunded venue with an audience that was still not quite profiled or sensitized to very unusual kinds of music, the new arrivals in the city, Burkhard Beins and Michael Renkel, started the *2:13 Club* in September 1996 – a concert series held several times per month in *Vollrads Tonsaal*, a space in Schönhauser Allee 177 in Prenzlauer Berg. They wanted to create space for more reflective or conceptual approaches to music-making. The initial aim of the *2:13 Club* was to facilitate “the connection of composed and improvised chamber music, presentation of a distinct, younger generation of musicians and sounding out new musical means of expression and technologies”⁹⁰ (Beins – Renkel et al. 2000: 26). Beins and Renkel were additionally interested in getting their music profiled and established and to possibly provide it with a name, in spite of the general rejecting attitude of the musicians towards labels and predefined categories. Even though in the *2:13 Club* the label ‘Echtzeitmusik’ was not explicitly used any more, it was in this sense kept in mind as a possible alternative designation for a specific kind of improvised music developed there, which would at one point be labelled Berlin Reductionism.

The appearance of the *2:13 Club* certainly made a change for the early scene, where musicians already had their defined positions in relation to the main venue *Anorak* and its curators. The fact that some of the musicians never got to play in *Anorak* for different reasons (like Beins and Renkel) shows that the scene already in its earliest days had a certain structure and relations of power. In that sense, the appearance of the *2:13 Club* series can be understood as displacing this established structure and introducing another position. On the other hand, Beins and Renkel state that they had almost exclusively played with Jazz musicians upon their arrival in Berlin, since they were not given the space in *Anorak*. And exactly Jazz musicians were explicitly excluded with the programming of the *2:13 Club*, in which one of the main focuses was exploration of compositional aspects of improvisation in long-term groups⁹¹ as well as a rather different approach to sound and music-making. Antagonisms

⁹⁰ „...die Verbindung von komponierter und improvisierter Kammermusik, die Präsentation der eigenen, jüngeren Musikergeneration und das Ausloten neuerer musikalischer Ausdrucksmittel und Technologien.“

⁹¹ As opposed to *ad hoc* groupings, which are characteristic for Free Jazz and Free Improvisation practices. It is e.g. very usual that individual musicians are invited for a concert evening, whereby they form duos, trios, quartets etc. on the spot. Such a gig often ends in a way that all the invited musicians play together.

emerged, and the musicians around the *2:13 Club* started to be called “the quiet people” (die leisen Leute). Yet, with its clearly defined profile, the *2:13 Club* concert series distinguished itself as a unique platform for a specific kind of music that many of the musicians in *Anorak* were also interested in, and that would essentially determine the further development of the Echtzeitmusik scene.

3.3.1 Reaction towards improvisation

Already in the last phase of *Anorak* and parallel with the *2:13 Club*, the supposed socio-political dimension of the practice of Free Improvisation became less relevant and the discourse became more clearly aesthetically oriented. It started to focus on the formulation of a distinct way of music-making through opposition to the practice of Free Improvisation, which was not artistically satisfying any more. In this distinction, the new generation of Berlin improvisers repeated history, acting similarly to the free improvisers thirty years earlier. The critical dimension of Free Improvisation back then was also not primarily contained in a political discourse expressed by the musicians, but rather in the feeling of dissatisfaction with the musical practices of the time, as Matthieu Saladin writes: “What emerges most often from commentaries by early improvisers about their adoption of such a practice is the necessity of developing a personal music in reaction to existing musical standards considered sterile and oppressive” (Saladin 2009: 136).

Andrea Neumann described in a very similar way the situation in which musicians that gathered around *2:13 Club* started to define “their own language”: “The music one encountered through musicians of older generations in the venues of the 1990s was primarily a form of Free Jazz with European characteristics. It was already a sharply distinctive language that established an extremely high degree of energy, expressivity, and dynamics through its own vocabulary and ‘rules for playing’. Searching for a unique and (supposedly) indescribable musical field, it offered friction, and thereby inspiration, for new enquiries that resulted in the opposition of the quality of ‘little/emptiness’ to that of ‘fullness/density’...” (Neumann 2011:

209.)⁹² The primary impulse behind the formulation of a distinguished identity of the young Berlin improvisers was thus the reaction to the usual way of playing improvised music at the time which, “even when very distanced from Free Jazz, appeared to be too talkative and sometimes almost like driven by *horror vacui*”⁹³ (Beins 2003: 36). Also, the similar features of the contemporary everyday environment - being loud, overloaded, fast-paced and overwhelming - at a certain point brought the musicians to a need for reduction and clarification.

Aside from that, since one of the main endeavours of the musicians around *2:13 Club* was an attempt to prove the artistic value of their work, provide it with a name and hopefully earn institutional recognition and thereby financial support, defining one's own musical activity as only ‘improvisation’ would be rather risky. Improvised music namely has a reputation as a music that does not necessarily require skill and knowledge and that is typically unable to achieve aesthetically convincing results in the long run (cf. Schipper 2005: 6). Already Derek Bailey pointed to the same issue: “There is a noticeable reluctance to use the word ‘improvisation’ and some improvisors express a positive dislike for it. I think this is due to its widely accepted connotations which imply that improvisation is something without preparation and without consideration, a completely ad hoc activity, frivolous and inconsequential, lacking in design and method. And they object to that implication because they know from their own experience that it is untrue. They know that there is no musical activity which requires greater skill and devotion, preparation, training and commitment. And so they reject the word, and show a reluctance to be identified by what in some quarters has become almost a term of abuse. They recognise that, as it is generally understood, it completely misrepresents the depth and complexity of their work.” (Bailey 1992: xii.)

Nevertheless, the musicians around *2:13 Club* not only questioned the adequacy of the designation ‘improvisation’ because of a relatively bad reputation of the word and the related practice, but their own practice as well reached outside of the scope of improvisation. Since they were not that interested in *ad hoc* improvising, but

⁹² See also Robin Hayward's comparison of the music he played before and after coming to Germany in Appendix 4.

⁹³ „auch da, wo sie sich weit vom Free Jazz entfernt hatte, oft als zu geschwätzig und bisweilen gerade zu wie vom *horror vacui* getrieben“

rather worked in steady constellations, they formulated their interest as focussed on compositional aspects of improvising in long-term groups. The compositional aspects in this sense arise e.g. by the group setup itself⁹⁴, as well as in the “common territories” that the group explores together over time and that can be described as the group’s distinguished, recognizable sound⁹⁵. Furthermore, working in a group presupposes a great deal of individual work in preparing a personalized sound material, as well as individual and collective re-thinking and conceptualization of forms. A word that is most often “used to suggest incompleteness, lack of preparation, perhaps shoddiness, carrying the ‘implication that the degree of preparation is insufficient’” (McKay 2005: 194)⁹⁶, seemed therefore not adequate to describe such practice. However, improvisation still remained one of the most important means and working methods in making music. Its quality is thereby not only in the ability to find a way in a situation in which one is completely unprepared (cf. Dörner in Nauck 2005: 8), but in the fact that even if “not progressive in itself, (...) it invites constant experimentation” (Mattin 2009: 20).

In spite of rejecting a conventional way of improvising, improvisation itself is thus still highly appreciated as one of the best means to unfold the creativity and uniqueness of a collective musical performance. Yet a clichéd vision of improvisation seems to still have a considerable importance for some of the musicians, which was manifested in an internal argument about the *Interaktion Festival* held in February 2009 (cf. Chamy 2011). The idea of the festival was to award the best improvisation with a money prize. This was on the one hand supported by many improvisers in the scene as well as the INM, but on the other it was found very controversial and rather unacceptable by a group of musicians who moderate the www.echtzeitmusik.de website. Chamy describes how in this argument the hidden power relations of the scene came to surface through the decision of those

⁹⁴ The choice of a musician to play with is in itself a compositional decision. A musician is being chosen because of her/his specific sound and way of playing, which would then bring a wished colour and dimension in a group sound.

⁹⁵ Arthur Rother for example talks about “musical or performative *intention* of groups and pieces”, which reveals itself in the work of each particular group in the process of “excluding certain musical attributes and intensifying or focusing on others” (Rother 2011: 183, emphasis in the original). This reduction to specific musical attributes and a specific way a group handles them result in “something one might call a ‘band sound’” (ibid.).

⁹⁶ The quote within McKay’s quote is by Alan Durant (cf. Durant 1989: 257).

musicians to not publish the event on the website, which is regarded as the ultimate information and promotion website for the scene and its relevant artists, venues and events (cf. *ibid.*: 307ff). Since the website, especially in recent years, has become more inclusive and arbitrary concerning published content, the veto on listing information on the *Interaktion Festival*, when most of the scene insiders were well aware of its taking place anyway, was a very clear statement. Yet the reasons for this act were simply explained with the belief in improvised music as a “collaborative practice” based on the principles of “fellowship” and not a competition, where “one cannot state a right or a wrong way of improvising” (*ibid.*: 299).

3.3.2 Composer-performer

Another aim of the *2:13 Club* was to provide a possibility of meeting and exchange with the New Music scene, which was concretely realized in collaborations with musicians and composers related to the *Ensemble Mosaik*. Those collaborations were meant to broaden the field of possibilities, as they encouraged more improvisers to compositional thought and at the same time awakened composers’ interests in the newly explored sound worlds and playing techniques of the improvisers. It was a fruitful exchange without giving too much importance to the distinction between improvisation and composition. On stage, however, there was actually no exchange and overlap of the roles of improviser and interpreter at all: during two festivals organised together with *Ensemble Mosaik*, for example, long-term improvising groups only took turns with the *Ensemble* interpreting compositions. For improvisers it was especially hard to take on the role of interpreters, since they were at the time intensely developing an idea of themselves as composer-performers.⁹⁷ Yet, New Music has provided an influence on another level. Wilson identifies “an intensive renewed reception of the sound worlds of new composed music”⁹⁸ (Wilson 2003: 125) in the improvised music of 1990s (concretely, while

⁹⁷ Nevertheless, at least for a while, one ensemble from the *2:13* milieu was open to interpreting the scores of others. The *2:13 Ensemble Berlin*, consisting of mainly improvisers Burkhard Beins (percussion), Margarete Huber (voice), Bettina Junge (flute), Michael Renkel (guitar) and Markus Wettstein (metal objects and melodica), was focused on “improvisation, interpreting graphic scores and performing its own compositions” (Beins-Renkel et al. 2000: 21).

⁹⁸ „eine intensive erneute Rezeption der Klangwelt der neuen komponierten Musik“

writing about improvising ensembles *Polwechsel* and *Phosphor*), “especially of the reductive approaches of Morton Feldman and Giacinto Scelsi, but also of the rich world of noises from Helmut Lachenmann’s scores”⁹⁹ (ibid.). Some musicians also mention the concert series in the Zionskirche at the time¹⁰⁰ as influential and inspiring in the process of cultivating a distinguished idea of sound and form in their musical thought.

Through working with composers and interpreters there emerged an opposition against the typical hierarchical labour division “composer vs. interpreter”. Since the musicians were always in a sense “composing” their own sound material, which they would also themselves perform either solo or improvising with other musicians, they were thus not only composers, or interpreters, singers, guitar or trumpet players, but composer-performers of an individualized sound material on personally developed instrument(s). Talking about the individual musical languages of the great names of Free Improvisation, Peter Niklas Wilson stated that “such techniques and sound generators are so tightly connected with the name and the music of their creators that an adaption seems almost like a sacrilege”¹⁰¹ (Wilson 1999: 17). This idea has also been continued in the Echtzeitmusik scene. Most of the musicians could hardly imagine playing someone else’s works, or writing their music down for someone else to play it, which is understandable considering their highly personalized instruments and playing techniques.¹⁰² However, notation was welcomed as a tool, primarily to help memorizing structures or specific sounds, even for writing concepts for improvisations with others. Also, the compositional and conceptual approach as formulated by Cage has been occasionally used as a working method.

⁹⁹ „insbesondere der reduktiven Ansätze eines Morton Feldman und Giacinto Scelsi, aber auch der reichen Geräuschkulisse von Helmut Lachenmanns Partituren“

¹⁰⁰ *3 Jahre – 156 musikalische Ereignisse – eine Skulptur* (3 Years – 156 Musical Events – One Sculpture). Between 1 January 1997 and 31 December 1999, at 7:30 pm every Tuesday in the gallery of the Zionskirche church in Berlin-Mitte, organised by composer Carlo Inderhees (cf. Rodriguez 2011: 273). “Each concert featured the premiere of a new 10-minute solo piece (plus the rotation of one of the pieces of Nicolaus’ sculpture – which consisted of stone posts of various lengths laid on the old wood floor of the balcony). Although some friends outside the group wrote works (including amongst others, Peter Ablinger and Wolfgang von Schweinitz), the overwhelming majority of the new pieces came from Wandelweiser composers.” (Pisaro 2009)

¹⁰¹ „Solche Techniken und Klangerzeuger sind so eng mit dem Namen und der Musik ihrer Schöpfer verbunden, daß eine Adaption fast ein Sakrileg scheint.“

¹⁰² See discussions „To Notate or Not to Notate“ (Labor Diskurs 2011: 130ff) and „Improvisation vs. Composition“ (ibid.: 137ff).

3.4 Radical aesthetics: The Berlin Reductionism

The core group of innovative musicians around the *2:13 Club*, that would later be regularly connected with the so-called Berlin Reductionism, included Burkhard Beins on percussion combined with various objects; Michael Renkel and Annette Krebs on guitars, objects and electronic devices (cf. Krebs 2002); Andrea Neumann, then still working with a piano frame and by the year 2000 switching to her own specific instrument – inside-piano (cf. Neumann, Appendix 7); Ignaz Schick, who around that time switched from saxophone to turntables and electronics; and Axel Dörner, who was at the time working on experimental playing techniques and noises on trumpet. Shortly before the *2:13 Club* closed in May 1998 due to “continuing grants refusal and an aggressive, anti-social redevelopment politics” (Beins - Renkel et al. 2000: 26), they were joined by the British tubist Robin Hayward. Hayward had in the years previous to his definite relocation to Berlin developed a new technique of valve rotation on tuba¹⁰³, the application of which produced a relatively quiet white noise. The technique was soon adopted by Axel Dörner, with whom Hayward was already collaborating with and who was Hayward’s connection to *2:13 Club*, and the sound came to be very characteristic both for the two players and for the notion of the “Berlin sound” in general.

When the *2:13 Club* closed, both concerts and intense reflection of one's own music practice had to move into private spaces due to the lack of another adequate venue. The aforementioned dissatisfaction with usual free group improvising, characterized by musical thinking in flow, predictable energy and dynamic curves, expressiveness and the communicational principle (cf. Neumann 2003: 128; also see Hayward, Appendix 2) soon began to take shape in an extremely opposite approach. The idea was rather “to define space to explore, rather than [having] the dilemma of repeating clichés or always trying to do something different” (Hayward, Appendix 2). Musically, this idea manifested itself in a new concept for improvisation, proposing a rather strict material selection, concentration on only some acoustic elements by eliminating other ones, slowing down, reducing density of musical

¹⁰³ Hayward describes the technique like this: “Instead of using the valves on the tuba to change pitch, which is what they’re designed to do, I twist the valves, reducing the aperture through which the air flows, which creates the sound of rushing air within the instrument. Different degrees of twisting create different sized apertures and therefore different qualities of noise” (Hayward 2004: 36).

events, avoiding immediate reactions while improvising in a group, re-evaluating the relation between sound and silence, reducing dynamics range, all in order to be able to achieve more control and more focus on a chosen element (cf. Wilson 2003: 40; Hayward 2011; Neumann 2003: 128-129). As a result, the music started to appear “reduced”, at least in comparison to that which was usual before and around it, and it was “characterized by long silences, reduced dynamics and restrained use of noise”¹⁰⁴.

Through discussions and working in different constellations¹⁰⁵, a group of young Berlin improvisers were working on this aesthetic for a few years, and therewith, consciously or not, continued several lines of musical thought initiated throughout the course of the 20th century. One was that of Free Improvisation in England in the 1960s, which was already completely emancipated from the African American Jazz tradition (see McKay 2005: 193ff) and in comparison to it seemed rather restrained and reduced. Yet, turning to “reductionism” in an even more extreme form in the 1990s allegedly had not only musical reasons and it was not solely specific to Berlin. There were parallel similar developments in e.g. the improvised music scenes in London, Tokyo or Vienna, whereby intense collaborations and exchange between the respective musicians were established (cf. Bell 2005; Davies 2011). Mark Wastell, a musician active on the London scene said: “It felt like a development had taken place in London and in Berlin; then going to Japan, it felt very connected. (...). It felt like a movement and I felt very strongly about it.” (Quote in Bell 2005.)

Where exactly the reductionist aesthetics began or who was first to introduce the idea is not clear; the impression is rather that the tendency occurred parallel and found a fertile ground internationally. Most of the involved musicians indeed say that they were dissatisfied with both music and the overload of information and sounds in everyday life; yet each musician, as well as each scene for itself, claims a somewhat personalized story of its development. An important figure seems to be

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.robinhayward.de/biography.html>, accessed February 23, 2012.

¹⁰⁵ E.g. *rar* (Robin Hayward, Axel Dörner, Radu Malfatti), *Roananax* (Robin Hayward, Andrea Neumann, Annette Krebs, Axel Dörner), *Das Kreisen* (Burkhard Beins, Annette Krebs, Robin Hayward), Robin Hayward & Axel Dörner Duo, Andrea Neumann & Ignaz Schick Duo, Andrea Neumann & Annette Krebs Duo, *Phosphor* (Burkhard Beins, Alessandro Bosetti - briefly, Axel Dörner, Robin Hayward, Annette Krebs, Andrea Neumann, Michael Renkel, Ignaz Schick) among others.

the Austrian trombone player and composer Radu Malfatti, known as a musical ascetic and radical “reductionist”, member of the international composer-performer’s collective *Wandelweiser* (cf. Pisaro 2009; Warburton 2006) and curiously called by Dan Warburton “a leading figure in the ultra-minimal ‘Berlin school’ (Warburton n.d.)¹⁰⁶, or “Godfather of the Berlin School of Improvisation” (Warburton in Malfatti 2001). Malfatti has however strongly rejected both the notion of “Berlin School” and his involvement with it (Malfatti 2001). In the first place he worked with Robin Hayward and Axel Dörner in a trio called *rar* in the mid-1990s for a while, whereby he “opened the space” (Hayward Interview, Appendix 5) for the ideas that slowly started to take shape at the time. Another Viennese connection was a group called *Polwechsel*, one of the first ensembles working with improvisation and composition in a “reductionist” way, founded in 1993 in Vienna¹⁰⁷ (cf. Wilson 2003: 125).

The musicians in London might have been influenced by the Berlin musicians, if we would believe this statement by Mark Wastell: “I saw Axel Dörner’s solo at a small club in south London and was very taken with his style. In 1997 Phil Durrant formed his Sowari quartet with Burkhard Beins [*percussion*], Michael Renkel [*guitar*] and Rhodri, and toured Germany and the UK. This was a fabulous group, to this day I say it was one of the best ever. They never made a record. The big impact was seeing the different musicianship of Burkhard and Michael. You’d see Burkhard do anything but strike a drum. It was all about texture, tactile movements, rubbing – it was a fascinating music to witness. Burkhard and Michael have a long-standing duo called Activity Centre, and their music was very much about space: sounds placed in silence. The first time I went to Berlin was in 1998 with Phil Durrant, John Bisset and Rhodri. On that visit we played with Annette [*Krebs*], Andrea [*Neumann*], Burkhard and Michael. It was a fantastic broadening of my growing interest in something that was different. I couldn’t put my finger on it – I was just following my line really.” (In Bell 2005.) The connections to the Japanese Onkyō musicians were

¹⁰⁶ The text is a review of Malfatti’s solo record released in 1997.

¹⁰⁷ Radu Malfatti was one of the members in the first grouping, together with the double-bass player Werner Däfeldecker, guitar player Burkhard Stangl and cello player Michael Moser; Malfatti was later replaced by the London saxophone player John Butcher, whereby the present group involves only Däfeldecker and Moser from the first grouping, joined by percussionists Martin Brandlmayr and Burkhard Beins, which makes *Polwechsel* at least a half Berlin-based ensemble (Beins, Däfeldecker).

also present, although the emergence of a reduced and quiet playing in Tokyo is supposed to have had simply practical reasons (cf. Plourde 2008). By mutually recognizing each other as like-minded, the musicians got involved in numerous international collaborations exploring different aspects of a “reductionist” approach to improvisation, combined with an interest in inner qualities of sounds and noises of an ever increasing spectrum. That common basic need for clarity and focus was nonetheless not only characteristic for them, but happened in the course of the 1990s in many critical arts and genres, allegedly due to overwhelming changes in the everyday environment.

3.4.1 Origin and problem of the label

The label ‘Berlin Reductionism’ itself first appeared only in 2000, on the cover of the first record of the group *The Sealed Knot*, consisting of two London (Mark Wastell – cello, double-bass; Rhodri Davies – harp) and one Berlin musician (Burkhard Beins – percussion) involved in the improvised music scenes of London and Berlin respectively. There it was written: “Critics have dubbed Wastell and Davies’ music ‘the new silence’ and Beins’ German counterpart ‘new Berlin reductionism’.” Categories aside, this is improvised music concerned with space, texture and time, emphasised by the gently ticking clock at the back of ‘All Angels’ as sounds fade into silence”¹⁰⁸. Even though the quote states that “critics” are responsible for the “categories”, in one interview Mark Wastell says: “We did a UK tour that we billed as ‘New London Silence meets Berlin Reductionism’ and said nothing else, no explanation or anything (*laughs*). That was the first time those terms were used. It was a tag that was wonderful to use and it did create interest, but once something gets a name (and we gave it the name, I have to admit that)... I mean, here we are in 2006 and people are still talking about ‘New London Silence’ as though it's still current, which of course it isn't. It hasn't been for the last three or four years. Neither has ‘Berlin Reductionism’.” (Wastell 2006.)

¹⁰⁸ The Sealed Knot, Confront CD 06, 2000, http://www.burkhardbeins.de/releases95-03.html#sealed_knot, accessed February 14, 2012.

The last sentences of Wastell's quote mirror the problem at least some of the musicians had with the label. The term 'reductionism' is one example of how in the ever-changing practice of improvised and experimental music very specific labelling can have a negative effect in the long run, even if it at the time proved helpful as a promotion tool, or a more adequate title for a new section in a specialized record shop¹⁰⁹. The musicians, who at the time of their first records and first bigger tours spread the term themselves for practical reasons, now mostly complain when categorized as reductionists. In the meantime they namely all moved away from strict reduced aesthetics. In fact, even when reductionist aesthetics was dominant, many involved musicians were at the same time playing e.g. Noise, Free Jazz or composed New Music within their other projects (cf. Beins, Appendix 1). Also, the term itself by being an "-ism" conceals the real aim of the practice because it "tends to imply reduction to be an end in itself, rather than a strategy, a means to an end" (Hayward 2011: 222); it implies, as any other label, "an unallowable simplification of a far more complex phenomenon"¹¹⁰ (Beins, Appendix 1). And exactly that was one of the reasons why this aesthetic was dropped after a while – because of the fact "that this way of playing was already becoming a style" (Hayward in Davies 2011: 72); because one "couldn't stand playing because I was doing noises and sounds the way I thought everybody else was" (Farah 2011: 317).

3.4.2 The work with sound, playing strategies and the connection to Cage

As mentioned above, the musicians had in this phase started to personalize their "instrumentariums"¹¹¹ (Neumann 2011: 205) and develop their own sound identities. Newly produced sounds had the special attention – their structures and timbres, origins and combinations, with each other and with sounds from the everyday life. In a musical situation, every object could be a sound originator. If the musicians worked with musical instruments, they preferred to search for sounds not typical for these instruments by extending them using different preparations or developing

¹⁰⁹ Allegedly it was meant to be used in the record shop in London called *Sound 323*, which was run by Wastell at the time.

¹¹⁰ „eine unzulässige Vereinfachung eines weitaus komplexeren Geschehens“

¹¹¹ Neumann defines 'instrumentarium' as "different elements of the instrumental equipment" (Neumann 2011: 205).

alternative approaches and techniques. They even built completely new instruments and often experimented with seemingly endless possibilities of electronics. The goal was to find material which would be rather non-expressive, non-organic, non-‘human’, more like machines, objective and noise-like, that would remind one of everyday sounds like those of washing machines, toilets flushing, heating, ventilation or construction work (cf. Neumann 2003: 129). The tendency to keep it low-volume opened “a microscopic dynamic spectrum with a large potential for differentiation”¹¹². In playing, silence was used as a background upon which sounds were placed, and it was precisely the extensive use of silence gave the opportunity to hear the finest qualities of sounds, either those produced in a concert situation, or environmental sounds one usually would not pay attention to, either because they are too common or barely audible.

The presence of silence in the music and performances of the Berlin “reductionists” was manifested both in the carefully organised quietness of concert situations, and in the low volume of the music itself, which was often on the threshold of audibility. In order to be able to listen to the finest qualities and changes within the produced sounds, all present household appliances or similar items would allegedly be turned off before the performance would start (cf. Kammerer 2011: 94). The unintended environmental sounds were nevertheless impossible to completely avoid; they would then have to, together with the audience, become a constituent part of a performance, as Kammerer describes: “I had the feeling this ‘music of quiet noises’ created a complicity between the musicians and the audience, because the music was created in that moment and the audience was part of the process, both as listeners and as ‘noisecreat[o]rs’ (coughing, chair noises, etc)” (ibid.). And exactly that organised concert situation would make the audience aware of and attentive to the environmental sounds as well, similar to the idea of Cage’s 4’33”. An interesting effect was achieved by the recordings, too. As the sounds for the most part resemble ordinary, everyday sounds, it is sometimes impossible to make out a difference between a hiss from a heating pipe and e.g. Robin Hayward’s tuba sound. Andrea Neumann observed: “When I was listening to more and more recordings of improvised music in the early to mid 1990s, it occurred to me how nicely the sounds

¹¹² <http://www.burkhardbeins.de/groups/phosphor.html>, accessed March 20, 2012.

of the environment often mix with the music on the recording. At some point it became a qualitative feature of the music: if it mixed well, I mostly found the music succeeded”¹¹³ (Neumann, Appendix 6). The only difference between environmental and produced sounds seems indeed to be that the latter are carefully produced and also fixed on a record, which implies that they also should be listened to accordingly. In any case, the merger of recorded sounds with the always different acoustic environment in a listening situation would theoretically always provide a different listening experience, if one would listen in the “right” way.

This merger of intended and non-intended (environmental, sounds heard during “silence”) sounds thus mirrored the ideas of John Cage. Cage believed that there is no silence, “no such thing as an empty space or an empty time” and that “[t]here is always something to see, something to hear” (Cage 1961: 8). Music itself consists of continuous sounds, “those that are notated and those that are not” (ibid.: 7), whereby “[t]hose that are not notated appear in the written music as silences, opening the doors of the music to the sounds that happen to be in the environment” (ibid.: 7-8). Cage even suggested that nothing is accomplished by writing, hearing or playing a piece of music (cf. ibid.: xii), and that it is enough to simply listen to and enjoy the sounds of everyday life. Robin Hayward was at the time occupied with an attempt to reconcile Cage’s proclamation of all sounds as excellent and his personal wish to play music, when he asked: “Why spend so much time developing a beautiful tone, if all sounds are excellent anyway? Why make music at all, if all I have to do is listen?” (Hayward, Appendix 3.) Hayward’s attempt to respond to Cage was to draw back as much as possible as a musician in a musical situation, as he describes: “I tried to resolve the contradiction by both playing and not playing – playing as little as possible, and often so quite [sic!] as to be inaudible. I even tried to hide myself behind the tuba, so I could be there and not there, (...) and highlighted extra-musical actions, such as changing my hand position and lifting the mute, as being as much a part of the performance as the sounds.” (Ibid.) Yet, it was an unsatisfying strategy, as he remarked: “Where do I go from this position?

¹¹³ Als ich Anfang/Mitte der 90er Jahre mehr und mehr Aufnahmen mit improvisierter Musik gehört habe, fiel mir auf, wie gut sich häufig Geräusche der Umwelt mit der Musik der CD mischten. Irgendwann wurde es ein Qualitätsmerkmal der Musik. Mischte es sich gut, fand ich die Musik meistens gelungen.

Repeatedly do performances in which I try as hard as possible not to play, in order to show that what is there when I don't play is more interesting than when I actually play?" (Ibid.)

As musicians followed the idea of not necessarily having to play, the music was characterized with "the quality of staying in one place" (Hayward 2011: 223), non-intentionality, playing only when necessary, or waiting; this on the other hand had an effect that "when events occurred [they] became very important, at least more noticeable than it normally is in music" (Hayward, Appendix 3). Thus, as immediate group interaction was reduced, the musicians could focus on delayed reaction and deliberate non-reaction, and above all, by reducing self-expression to a minimum they were able to focus on the qualities inherent within the sounds themselves (Hayward 2011: 223). Differently than Hayward, Burkhard Beins rather rejected Cage's idea of equality of all sounds, even though he acknowledges Cage's influence in general (cf. Beins, Appendix 1). He states that the Berlin "reductionists" were not equally tolerant to all sounds and also did not equally treat all sounds, but worked with "conscious decisions and creation of sounds – especially regarding beginning, end, and duration of sounds and their relation to silence, or the totality of sounds and silence within a piece"¹¹⁴ (ibid.). The sounds were thus consciously placed in silence and "therefore not predominantly developed or just found in a continuous, and for the most part nervous flow of play"¹¹⁵ (ibid.), which was usually characteristic for improvised music. Yet, the awareness of Cage's philosophy certainly sensitized the musicians to the diversity of the "ordinary", everyday sounds, and as well inspired their search for sounds on their own instruments (ibid.).

Making music static and avoiding immediate reaction was a rather radical concept in the context of musical improvisation, which was generally based on some sort of communication. This idea also responded to Cage's critique of improvisation, as

¹¹⁴ „bewusste Entscheidungen und die Gestaltung der Klänge, - insbesondere hinsichtlich Beginn, Ende und Dauer der Klänge und deren Verhältnis zu stille bzw. Der Gesamtheit von Klängen und Stille innerhalb eines ‚Stücks‘“

¹¹⁵ „Die Stille wurde als Ausgangspunkt genommen und das musikalische Material sollte nun bewusst in die Stille gesetzt, und somit nicht mehr vorwiegend in einem ununterbrochenen, meist nervösen Spielfluss entwickelt oder überhaupt erst gefunden werden.“

Robin Hayward states: "...he [Cage] says quite clearly what he thought of improvisation, where he says improvisation is like a conversation where each musician is supposed to listen to as close as it's possible to the other one in order to respond to the other one. He worked with some jazz musicians in America and he suggested that each plays as he was the only person in the world and don't listen to the other one. He said it worked in the rehearsal, but in the gig they started the conversational thing. And he particularly criticized that, when one musician got louder, everyone seemed to get louder, too. I certainly didn't get along with the thing that you shouldn't listen to each other...but the idea that it could be modeled according to something other than a conversation, immediately commenting, chatting conversation... I tried to avoid things that seemed to have become automatic." (Hayward Interview, Appendix 5; cf. Cage 1984: 215f).

An attempt "to avoid things that seemed to have become automatic" was one of the most important endeavours at the time, and is still one of the biggest issues that occupy improvisers who all "have a horror of becoming predictable" (Hayward, Appendix 3). One of the strategies was, for example, to use stopwatches in order to upset the musical flow of improvisation by introducing longer periods of silence (cf. Beins, Appendix 1). Thereby one could gain time to reflect, listen, and then decide more consciously on the next move regarding the situation and the sound material. Andrea Neumann summarized the consensus on avoiding automatisms as follows: "a) there is no imperative to play ('any resultant silence is not to be feared', Cage in his instructions for *Songbooks*), not playing becoming a quality; b) no triggering of climaxes; c) not having to distinguish oneself as a soloist, 'group voicing'; d) no expressivity; e) instead of reacting to each other interactively, to play 'parallel'" (Neumann, Appendix 6). She however states at the end: "I must say that in the meantime, I have gladly let all those (partially tabooed) elements flow in my music again"¹¹⁶ (cf. Neumann, Appendix 6).

¹¹⁶ „a) es gibt kein „Muss“ zu spielen („any resultant silence is not to be feared“ - Cage in seinen Instructions zu *Songbooks*) nicht spielen wurde zu einer Qualität; b) keine Klimaxe ansteuern; c) sich solistisch nicht hervorheben müssen; „group voicing“; d) keine Expressivität; e) statt ein interaktives auf einander Reagieren, ein „paralleles“ Spielen. Ich muss aber dazu sagen, dass ich alle diese (teilweise tabuisierten) Elemente mittlerweile auch gerne wieder in meine Musik einfließen lasse.“

These strategies also resulted in quite a reduced density of musical events, which enhanced listening abilities both among players and the audience, as described by Neumann: “In a reduced music it is possible for me to concentrate on the sound of one of my fellow players and to add a sound that would enrich the first sound (in its frequency spectrum or in whichever other form). The moment in which one of two sounds changes or stops also has a strong effect. This effect that arises in the course of focusing on details (what happens when I add this sound to that sound, what happens when I suddenly terminate it or slowly fade it out etc.) is for me a motivation while playing. No objective ‘necessities’ happen then. It is not measured out that after 2/3 of one sound the abandonment of another one sounds especially effective. However, I think that the concentration of players on details while listening can also be transferred to the listeners and that it can represent a quality for them, and make it possible to follow what is happening with excitement.”¹¹⁷ (Ibid.) Similar to the contemporary Japanese counterpart of Berlin Reductionism – Onkyō – which “has been explained by musicians and music critics in Japan as a style in which the primary emphasis has shifted from producing or performing sound, to that of concentrated and attentive listening” (Plourde 2008: 273), in the initial period of Berlin Reductionism the primary intention was to reduce density of musical events and introduce more “space” in order to be able to attentively listen to the features of sounds, their combinations, and transformations.

3.4.3 Reduction and questions of Free Improvisation and form

After about a year and a half of focusing mostly on sound, rather neglecting formal thought and avoiding narrative, by the end of the 1990s the musicians started to reintroduce narrative elements (i.e. connections between sounds and noises) (cf. Hayward 2011: 223ff) and developed an increasing interest in the question of

¹¹⁷ „In einer reduzierten Musik, ist es mir möglich, mich auf einen Klang eines Mitspielers zu konzentrieren und einen Klang hinzuzufügen, der den ersten (von seinem Frequenzspektrum oder in welcher Form auch immer) bereichert. Der Moment, wo einer der beiden Klänge sich verändert oder abbricht, bekommt ebenfalls eine starke Wirkung. Für mich ist diese Wirkung, die bei der Fokussierung auf Details entsteht (was passiert, wenn ich diesen Klang zu dem addiere, was passiert, wenn ich ihn plötzlich abbreche, bzw. langsam ausfade, etc.) eine Motivation beim Spielen. Es geschehen dabei keine objektiven „Notwendigkeiten“. Es wurde nicht ausgemessen, dass nach 2/3 eines Klanges, der Abbruch eines anderen besonders wirkungsvoll ist. Ich glaube aber, dass die Konzentration der Spielenden beim Hören auf Details sich auf die Hörer übertragen kann, und dass dies eine Qualität für die Hörer darstellen kann; so dass sich mit Spannung verfolgen lässt, was geschieht.“

consciously building forms while improvising (cf. Neumann 2003: 129f). Hayward saw this turn as an end of a real reductionist approach and described the music played afterwards as “abstract-narrative”, consciously working with elements like expectation or surprise.¹¹⁸ The Berlin musicians were then also reflecting on a possibility of solving problems of formal development in improvised music performance through certain reductive strategies. The form in improvisation is always open since it depends on the intuitive decisions musicians make in the course of performance, in real-time. Through questioning that intuitiveness, those “instinctive” feelings that govern formal progressions (cf. Neumann 2003: 129), a need emerged to carefully examine “when and why one plays something when improvising with the aim to gain more clarity, transparency, ‘necessities’ in processes and formal progressions. That is easier to achieve when one chooses certain things and eliminates others (i.e. reductive strategy). It concerns the choice of the material (...), the treatment of the material (...), what regarding e.g. time means: When does a sound begin, when does it end, where will it be placed?”¹¹⁹ (Ibid.)

However, the musicians felt that the reductionist approach has not managed to solve these questions in a satisfactory manner, as Andrea Neumann explained: “It is certain that through the conscious choice of material and the more conscious employment of the time-factor a special sound approach was formed. But the question about the ‘necessary’ progressions or satisfactory forms in this kind of improvisation has not been solved – and it is possibly not solvable within improvisation. The quality of improvisation – openness for the moment, spontaneous, lively creation in the present – perhaps rules out the qualities of composition – finding coherent form for musical thoughts and work it out with time”¹²⁰ (Neumann 2003: 129f). Neumann concluded rather pessimistically at the

¹¹⁸ Cf. www.jazzatelier.at/va/kal06.htm#04, accessed February 24, 2012.

¹¹⁹ „...wann, warum man was beim Improvisieren spielte, mit dem Ziel, mehr Klarheit, Transparenz, ‚Notwendigkeiten‘ bei den Abläufen und Formverläufen zu Erlangen. Dies last sich einfacher erreichen, wenn bestimmte Dinge ausgewählt, andere ausgesondert werden (reduktive Strategie). Es betrifft die Auswahl des Materials (...), die Behandlung des Materials (...), was bezüglich der Zeit z. B. bedeutet: Wann beginnt ein Klang, wann endet er, an welche Stelle wird er platziert?“

¹²⁰ „Sicher ist durch die bewusste Auswahl von Material und der bewussteren Anwendung des Faktors Zeit ein eigener klanglicher Ansatz entstanden. Aber die Frage nach ‚notwendigen‘ Abläufen oder befriedigenderen Formen in dieser Art der Improvisation ist nicht gelöst – last sich womöglich innerhalb

time: “The attempt to structure improvised music more clearly through a certain form of reduction maybe meant removing its distinctive qualities, which for example proves the accusation that it (this reduced form) is too mental, not instinctive enough, a product of the head, but still not a composition”¹²¹ (ibid). However, the experience the musicians went through in the reductionist phase was essential for their recognizable “style” in improvisation, which many would consider as typical of Echtzeitmusik. One often has the impression that the music is very controlled and coherent, so it is very hard to believe that it is actually improvised.¹²² This is of course a result of a certain reductive procedure, unavoidable for every kind of successful group improvisation, but also of the experience of regularly working together for a longer period of time: “It matters whether and to what extent common experiences have already been made, if a mutual frame of reference has even been established, or if it is rather an entirely unprepared, ad hoc meeting”, says Beins (2011: 169).

Beins describes this experience as a gradual establishment of common musical territories, a process which necessarily implies self-restriction, and is unfortunately also affected with risks like inflexibility and development of group-specific clichés (Beins 2011: 173). Nevertheless, “within groups that work together over an extended period of time and by doing so inevitably and collectively revisit similar musical territory again and again, self-organisational processes occur in the course of their specific history of collective learning. Next to other things, this can clearly raise the probability of achieving a coherent music that always generates new forms, but at the same time is always characterized by being necessary to the specific situation.” (Beins 2011: 171.) This principle also seems to explain well the functioning of the big improvisational groups, such as the *Splitter Orchester*¹²³, an orchestra consisting of 24

der Improvisation nicht lösen. Eventuell schließt die Qualität des Improvisierens – das Offensein für den Moment, das spontane, lebendige Gestalten im ‚Jetzt‘ – Qualitäten der Komposition, für musikalische Gedanken eine schlüssige Form zu finden und mit Zeit auszuarbeiten, aus.“

¹²¹ „Eventuell bedeutet der Versuch, durch eine bestimmte Art von Reduktion improvisierte Musik klarer zu gestalten, auch ein Ihr-Wegnehmen eigener Qualitäten, was z. B. der Vorwurf besagt, sie (diese reduzierte Form) sei zu mental, zu wenig ‚aus dem Bauch‘, eine Kopfgeburt, aber trotzdem keine Komposition.“

¹²² See for example the texts by Burkhard Beins *Scheme and Event* (Beins 2011) and *Formgestaltung in kollektiver Improvisation* (Beins 2012) in which group improvisation is described as a process of conscious decision-making within certain spaces of possibility in real-time.

¹²³ Check www.berlinsplitter.org for info about the orchestra.

Berlin musicians in its full setting. Through steady monthly rehearsals in which “collective spaces of possibility” (ibid.) are being explored and defined¹²⁴ as well as with trained capabilities of listening, the orchestra often succeeds to accomplish a good balance between individuality and collective sound, self-control and self-expression.

3.4.4 Reasons, meaning at the time and echoes

As Reductionism is undoubtedly the most clearly articulated collective aesthetic produced in the scene to this day, one often has it in mind when referring to the Echtzeitmusik scene in general, and vice versa. Improvised music that was played at the turn of the millennium in Berlin indeed received a better awareness and reception exactly because it was at one point provided with a name. It became a named category one could use in comments, criticisms, comparisons, or classifications of one's own listening experience, even though something like a manifesto with clearly defined characteristics was never written.¹²⁵ For the involved musicians themselves, and many others who could identify with the formulated philosophy and attitude, the phase of “clarification” was important on several levels: as a means to define sound material and a way of handling it, to self-educate in listening, and to more successfully manage a complex process of group improvisation. Indeed, after reduction stopped being a dominant way of playing and thereby inevitably rather uniform and limiting – after it stopped appearing like “an end in itself” (Hayward 2011: 222) – the reductive strategies could be truly acknowledged as “means to an end” (ibid.), through which the gained musical potential they brought was sought to be extended and evolved in new directions (cf. Beins, Appendix 1; Thomas, Appendix 9).

Interestingly enough, when asked about their reasons for radical reduction, the involved musicians rarely point out any other reasons besides aesthetic ones. Reduction and improvisation are primarily understood as means that should strive

¹²⁴ The notion of a possible spectrum of sound and action on the basis of the particularly chosen constellation of instrumentariums and personalities.

¹²⁵ Robin Hayward however said: “I remember maybe to be suggesting something like a manifesto to Burkhard, but he thought it was too early and he was right.” (Hayward Interview, Appendix 5.)

towards aesthetic goals. Nevertheless, this approach can certainly be interpreted as subversive and critical, especially in relation to the environment overrun by information-overload, entertainment, commodification and consumption the musicians are living and working in, i.e. to their existence as artists in such a world. Producing sparse quiet noisy sounds seemed like an act of resistance and refusal in such a world (cf. Gottstein 2011). Slowing down, not necessarily always having to say something, taking time to sit in silence and listen actively, reflect and concentrate, also seemed highly opposed to the experience of the everyday environment functioning after a “faster-louder-more complicated” principle. Being actively involved in this kind of music must also presuppose readiness to accept a very insecure existence, whereby one makes a clear statement as well. One's attitude towards music is thereby very connected with their attitude towards life. Axel Dörner formulated it like this: “My music that I play, communicates also something like my philosophy of life, attitude towards life, what I experience, how I behave in certain situations, my ethics-- all that is transported through my music”¹²⁶ (Dörner in Nauck 2005: 11).

Robin Hayward talked about a very close relationship between the way he played music at the time and the way he attempted to live, leaning on Cage: “One of the things we talked about was expressiveness, how to make music that wasn't expressive, whatever that may mean. This idea was influenced by reading Cage from my part. I took what I was reading from Cage very seriously at that point, in terms of seeing music as an exercise of how you live. This non-division between art and life he talks about. I took the idea of distancing yourself from your emotions, I took that very seriously, and music has been a practice for that. In a sense, it was a practice for a way that you could live.” (Hayward Interview, Appendix 5.) Yet, this practice did not really work, states Hayward. As he was not able to remain completely unintentional and accept everything that life brings: “The idea that this aesthetic is somehow going to change the way in which I behave in the world and make me content simply with whatever the world is offering me and accept what I don't intend, that idea I seriously began to question by 1999” (ibid.). Alongside many

¹²⁶ „Meine Musik, die ich spiele, transportiert aber auch so etwas wie meine Weltanschauung, meine Lebenseinstellung, was ich erlebe, wie ich mich verhalte in bestimmten Situationen, meine Ethik, alles das transportiert sich durch meine Musik.“

other idealists, he discovered that within the world of improvised music, which was supposed to be the most equal of all, the same capitalistic rules are at work, and that some will always seem “better” than others only because they are more “geschickt” or “geschäftstüchtig”¹²⁷ (ibid.).

It is in any case hard to claim that any practices and aesthetic developments in the scene, even such a well conceptualized one as Berlin Reductionism, responded to or negated any recognizable phenomena in music or life completely consciously: the reflections about what really happened came mostly later, since “[e]xplanations, like labels, have a tendency to happen retrospectively” (Hayward 2011: 227). The way to the quiet and concentrated playing and listening, although inspired by certain ideas and followed by reflection at the time, seems to have been found rather intuitively, as a reaction out of need for something different. Quite expectedly, the power of Reductionism seems to have primarily been felt on the experiential level: the atmosphere of the concerts, feeling awkward in confrontation with silence, not knowing what to expect and “if it is really supposed to be like that.” These were situations that were always able to irritate or intrigue a part of the audience, but on the other hand also easily produced an impression of already being heard and seen for the more constant and insider listeners. However, the feeling that something new was happening was strong, and the impact was relevant, as Dietrich Eichmann commented: “It is a bit strange that Berlin Reductionism in the international perception of a still much more diverse Berlin free scene gained a decidedly dominant position. A number of musicians that come to Berlin from other cities and countries in order to play in *Labor sonor* or in *Raumschiff Zitrone*, seem to simply conform to Reductionism.”¹²⁸ (Eichmann 2005: 21.) At that point, unfortunately, many started to imitate the respective sound and the way of expression without really knowing why, what led to a rejection of strict reductionist aesthetics and search for new ways of expression.

¹²⁷ Geschickt means skilled, slick, smart, clever. Geschäftstüchtig means business-minded, enterprising.

¹²⁸ „Es ist ein wenig befremdlich, daß *Berlin Reductionism* [sic!] in der internationalen Wahrnehmung der doch weit vielfältigeren Berliner freien Szene eine ausgesprochene Vormachtstellung eingenommen hat. Etliche Musiker, die aus anderen Städten und Ländern nach Berlin kommen, um im *Labor Sonor* oder im *Raumschiff Zitrone* zu spielen, scheinen sich dem Reduktionismus schlicht anzupassen.“

The broader social relevance of Berlin Reductionism and related approaches, together with other ways of music-making which pay great attention to sounds, could be found in the way their musical output provoked one's listening habits in order to introduce new modes of listening. Cage had a corresponding idea: "I saw art not as something that consisted of a communication from the artists to an audience but rather as an activity of sounds in which the artists found a way to let the sounds be themselves. And in their being themselves to open the minds of the people who made them or listened to them to other possibilities than they had previously considered. To widen their experience, particularly to undermine the making of value judgements." (Cage in Kostelanetz 2003: 44.) Reductionism attempted to make one listen and enjoy the usually inaudible (unimportant, quiet, ordinary, external) by creating special listening situations where sounds and their relations would be explored in their finest details and which invited audiences to attentive and active listening. This kind of training could also be useful in learning how to listen to much of contemporary New Music, sound art and other sound-related genres.

The influence of Berlin Reductionism and the "capital" it brought to the musicians that took active part in it made those musicians the core of the scene and gave them an authority and thereby potential to be the most influential "speakers of the scene" – a so-called discursive elite (cf. Schwab-Trapp 2006: 274). Although none of them prefers to be labelled as "reductionist" nowadays, each one of them surely acknowledges the importance of this phase that was focused on working with sound and reflective searching for answers on important questions of improvised music practice for her/his own musical development. Through discourse and practice, Reductionism also had a great influence on the whole scene: "Reductionist phase gave people something to react against; it became associated to the city, the sound of the Berlin scene. People could join in with it or react against it. I never thought at the time it will have the influence it had." (Hayward Interview, Appendix 5) Yet, the impact was felt primarily in the world-wide improvised music scene, since Reductionism within improvisation was never fully recognized by high-culture, even though it was aesthetically a highly distinguished practice – perhaps because it was still classified under the not quite renowned practice of Free Improvisation. On the other hand it was also highly criticized for being too ambitious, even kind of

artificial (cf. Neumann 2003: 130) and too homogenized in terms of sound (cf. Ansorge 2011: 91). The “reductionist phase”, broadly defined, lasted approximately to 2003, when the approach of the musicians involved opened up again in different directions. The scene itself was also in the meantime enriched with new musicians that shared attitudes, but were less dogmatic in approach. The following years would thus bring the much claimed plurality of styles and means, but eventually also a wish to define a scene that was threatened with the loss of the memory and knowledge of itself in the course of its constant change.

3.5 Reestablishment of the scene and stylistic ramifications

In the time when the intense work on reduced aesthetics was at its peak, there were no steady, dedicated venues. There were still some public places to play in, which however had other (main) focuses, e.g. *Hochzeitsraum*, early *Raumschiff Zitrone*, *Galerie Le Manège*, *Intern-Export-Import*, *Kulturhaus Mitte*, *Die Küche*, and *NY*¹²⁹. Therefore many concerts during that time were actually happening in the musicians’ own flats.¹³⁰ Another important gathering place were the *FAM* festivals (*Festival für aktuelle Musik*), which were organised by Ignaz Schick.¹³¹ After a few months at the beginning of 2000, when all venues that were somehow open to *Echtzeitmusik* closed down, two new central venues eventually opened in June: *Raumschiff Zitrone* in *K77*¹³², which after a break reopened on the initiative of Kai Fagaschinski, and *Labor Sonor* in *KuLe*.

¹²⁹ For details on the mentioned venues see Beins – Kesten – Nauck – Neumann 2011: 35f.

¹³⁰ E.g. in the flats of Andrea Neumann, Boris Baltschun (cf. Nauck 2003: 16), Thomas Charbonell, Margareth Kammerer, Fine Kwiatkowski, Annette Krebs, etc. The tradition of house concerts was later continued by, among others, Magda Mayas, Sabine Vogel, Axel Dörner, and Marc Sabat (Blazanovic 2011: 51, footnote 24).

¹³¹ There were four *FAMs* in the period between 1998 and 2001: the first took place from 30 January to 1 February 1998 at *NY*, the second from 15 –17 January 1999 at *NY* and *Meinblau* (an art gallery and workspace at *Pfefferberg*, Christinenstr. 18/19, Mitte), the third from 28-30 September 2000 at the *Staatsbank Berlin* (Französische Straße 35, Mitte) and the fourth from 25-27 November 2001 at the *Forum Elisabeth Berlin* (Invalidenstraße 3, Mitte). The second, third, and fourth *FAMs* were funded through *INM* (*Initiative Neue Musik*, <http://www.inm-berlin.de/>), which has supported the Berlin free New Music scene (which also partially includes the *Echtzeitmusik* scene) since 1991 on behalf of the Berlin senate. Since then, the *INM* has continued to financially support individual *Echtzeitmusik* projects. <http://zangimusic.de/index.php?s=06-events>

¹³² *K77* is situated in Kastanienallee 77, Prenzlauer Berg. It was squatted and legalized during the 1990s. www.k77.org

With *Labor Sonor* and *Raumschiff Zitrone*, joined by *ausland* two and a half years later, the Echtzeitmusik scene got back into its original squatter context: all three venues were situated in former squats, which in the meantime somehow managed to legalize their existence.¹³³ Although consisting only of a guest concert series at *KuLe* once or twice a month, the atmosphere of *Labor Sonor* reminded many of the *Anorak* times, and it certainly took over the role as a central meeting point, as Nicholas Bussmann describes: “When the *Anorak* closed, one of many sacrifices to renovations, the wild years of Berlin were truly over. People went back to work during the week and went out on the weekend. In March 2000,^[134] a club appeared, always on Mondays: *Labor Sonor*, once or twice a month. The site is the arthouse *KuLe* at Auguststrasse 10, with its theatre and club. A typical evening consists of two or three different music-, performance-, or short film/video projects. Although the focus remains on improvised and electronic music, the charm of *Labor* is its openness to diverse forms and the most exciting evenings have the greatest range in styles. The programming, finances, and bar have been maintained, from the beginning, by Gregor Hotz and Andrea Neumann; joined later by Steffi Weismann, Antonia Baehr, and myself. All of the production responsibilities are unpaid, so that the performers and musicians can take the ticket proceeds. The audience is, in my opinion, the best in the city, serious about listening and drinking.” (Bussmann 2003.)

Labor Sonor opened the scene after its complete closure during the time of no dedicated venues and gathered once again musicians and artists that had already split into camps in the time of the parallel existence of *Anorak* and *2:13 Club*. Besides socially, *Labor* opened the scene programmatically as well. Especially in the beginning, it was “a platform and meeting point for various artists and audiences from different scenes” (Weismann 2003). The program supported primarily music, performance and video art. The team behind it described *Labor* as “a lively meeting point for the Berlin underground music scene” and “a platform for new

¹³³ There were several modes of legalizing the squats, e.g., the community of the house inhabitants buys the house using a loan from the city, which is to be paid off in a certain amount of time, after which the house belongs to the community (as with the house where *ausland* is located), or they rent the house under relatively favourable conditions for a limited amount of time, whereby the future is always uncertain (as with *KuLe*).

¹³⁴ The first concert actually took place at the end of June 2000.

developments in improvised and electronic music, with some references to new music, conceptual music, pop music and performance art”.¹³⁵ Another venue that (re)opened at around the same time, *Raumschiff Zitrone*, was dedicated exclusively to music with a focus “on acoustic and electro-acoustic ensembles and sol[o]ists exploring new aesthetic developments.”¹³⁶ The venue was run by Kai Fagaschinski, who was joined in 2002 by Christof Kurzmann. *Raumschiff Zitrone* was a venue more in the tradition of the *2:13 Club*, and it was not as inclusive of other arts as *Labor Sonor*. The third central venue of the scene, *ausland*, which opened in December 2002, has on the other hand many similarities to the former *Anorak*. It is a place that presents different types of programs and different styles of music, whereby it also reaches different audiences.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, it has earned the status as one of the central venues for the scene, quite possibly because it is run by scene veterans Gregor Hotz and Conrad Noack, who were both active since *Anorak* times. Hotz was also one of the founders of *Labor Sonor*, and in *ausland* he started a concert series *biegungen im ausland* primarily dedicated to the scene and its musicians. On an organizational basis there was not much new—the work in those venues was still not paid for and artists in generally played (and continue to play) for door money, with the exception of a certain project being funded.

The concert calendar www.echtzeitmusik.de was launched in 2001 by Gregor Hotz and Kai Fagaschinski, a year after the emergence of the two new central venues of the scene. With this, the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ officially came back into circulation. In its beginnings, the website primarily announced concerts held in *Labor Sonor* and *Raumschiff Zitrone*. The old description on the index page of the website stated: “This website offers you a summary of improvised and experimental music concerts happening in Berlin's underground New Music scene. The focus is mainly on two

¹³⁵ <http://www.fernwaerme-berlin.net/labspace.html>, accessed February 25, 2012.

¹³⁶ <http://www.Echtzeitmusik.de/index.php?page=html:venues>, accessed February 25, 2012.

¹³⁷ *ausland* is a “territory for experimental music, performance and art”. The regular program has mostly been organised in different series covering different music genres or arts. In the beginning there were four people responsible for music: Tim Tetzner did the series *übungen + drogen* (electronic music), Elisabeth Enke *eiskalt* (avant-garde and experimental rock), Felix Bübl booked concerts of experimental and electroacoustic music in general and Gregor Hotz did *biegungen + dehnungen*. *biegungen* (meaning “bends” in English) have been dedicated to improvised music and the Berlin Echtzeitmusik scene and are still taking place today, while *dehnungen* (meaning “stretchings” in English) were conceived as a relaxed side of *biegungen* with musicians experimenting with different forms of pop music, like for example Chico Mello, Fernanda Farah or Margareth Kammerer. For more on *ausland* see www.ausland-berlin.de and Blažanović 2011: 44ff.

venues with a regular program of acoustic, electro-acoustic and electronic music: The Raumschiff Zitrone (in Prenzlauer Berg) and the KuLe (in Mitte) – these venues present concerts about twice a month”¹³⁸. The music played in those two venues, in spite of the variety of programmatic descriptions above, was at the time aesthetically dominated by the offshoots of Berlin Reductionism. It could therefore be argued that the time and context of the term’s reestablishment coined the most common perception of Echtzeitmusik until today – as a reduced, relatively withdrawn, much reflected upon, more conceptual, and not that intuitive, but still essentially improvised music.

Through *Labor Sonor* and *Raumschiff Zitrone*, and later also *ausland*, the scene got a new infrastructural basis, and through the website it became connected to the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’. *Labor Sonor* and *ausland* still represent important reference and meeting points, places “with ‘identity’ and ‘history’ that give the scene monads collective identity (...). The protagonists gather here again and again, meet each other and swap ideas, make sure of their views and update their shared history. (...) Here as also in other places of this kind the scene gains its social foundation (...). The relationships strengthen here, (...) the scene’s knowledge about itself deepens.”¹³⁹ (Schwannhäußer 2010: 29.) These venues were rather small and the atmospheres intimate, as Margareth Kammerer has described: “It didn’t matter to me if X or Y were playing. I went there just because there was a concert. I was more interested – and I think the others also – in new musical processes than in seeing ‘stars’ perform. The nights were a chance to share musical ideas, and it was an ongoing musical dialogue that shaped the social lives of the musicians involved. The audience was mixed between artists, musicians, and friends, and someone that played yesterday or today was in the audience, or vice versa, or he was the organiser or worked at the bar. Not just a ‘Labor Sonor’ but a ‘Labor Sozial’.” (Kammerer 2011: 94.)

¹³⁸ Page not available anymore.

¹³⁹ „...mit ‚Identität‘ und ‚Geschichte‘, die den Szene-Monaden eine kollektive Identität geben (...). Hier finden sich die Akteure immer wieder ein, begegnen einander und tauschen sich aus, versichern sich ihrer Ansichten und schreiben ihre geteilte Geschichte fort. (...) Hier wie auch an anderen Orten dieser Art erhält die Szene ihr soziales Fundament (...). Hier verfestigen sich Beziehungen, (...) und hier vertieft sich das Wissen der Szene über sich selbst (...).“

Around 2001 the active scene was probably the most compact, concentrated on two venues, rather comprehensible and musically relatively homogenous. However, the quiet and reduced way of improvising gradually began to be consciously rejected, musicians opened up their approaches again and at the same time new, differently oriented venues started to emerge in the scene's context¹⁴⁰. That "post-reductionist phase" was characterized by strong diffusion, differentiation as well as fragmentation both of the scene and the aesthetical positions and working methods within it. New musicians continued to come to Berlin and search for their place within the scene. One view of the musical situation in the scene around 2002 could be seen in this comment by Gisela Nauck: "In spite of all stylistic differences, especially at the point of intersection between instrumental and electronic music as well as in the usage of electroacoustic amplification techniques as an instrument, improvisation has obviously become a musical field of research again. The artistic aspirations of the musicians have thereby essentially changed, they have become innovative in new ways in comparison to the times when structural or communicative processes still stood as the focus of improvisation. Today work is done on gesture, on the sound in new ways and thereby especially on the interfaces between an instrument and a mixer, amplifier and objects."¹⁴¹ (Nauck 2003: 22).

Nauck's description actually does not compare the current situation in the scene with the situation before, but rather sees it in the general context of free improvised music. In this article, for example, she does not mention Reductionism at all. This might imply that the reference to Reductionism was by that time already consciously avoided by the informants, even though statements by e.g. Serge Baghdassarians and Andrea Neumann about their work in the same text still mirror its influence (cf. *ibid.*: 22). It could also be that the term had not at all been (broadly) perceived in German-speaking areas at the time, since it was first introduced in England and used in their specialized media in the context of the German

¹⁴⁰ See Beins – Kesten – Nauck – Neumann 2011: 36 for the venues opened since 2000.

¹⁴¹ „Bei allen stilistischen Unterschieden ist Improvisation, besonders an der Schnittstelle zwischen Instrumental- und elektronischer Musik sowie unter Nutzung elektroakustischer Verstärkertechnik als Instrument offenbar erneut zur musikalischen Feldforschung geworden. Die künstlerischen Ansprüche der Musiker haben sich dabei deutlich verändert, sind auf neue Weise innovativ geworden gegenüber Zeiten, als im Mittelpunkt von Improvisation noch strukturelle oder kommunikative Prozesse standen. Gearbeitet wird heute am Gestus, auf neue Weise am Klang und dabei besonders an den Nahtstellen zwischen Instrument und Mischpult, Verstärker und Objekten.“

counterpart to London's New London Silence or Tokyo's Onkyō. Nevertheless, in a book called *Reduktion. Zur Aktualität einer musikalischen Strategie*, published in 2003, the author Peter Niklas Wilson describes reductive strategies in both composed and improvised music from Erik Satie to the Berlin group *Phosphor*. The book brings forth statements from involved composers, improvisers and composer-performers based around two main questions: "(1) How do you estimate the meaning of reductive strategies on your own thinking and your own musical practice? (2) How do you see the relevance of reductive aesthetics for the music of today?"¹⁴² (Wilson 2003: 6.) Yet Wilson clearly did not try to define an "-ism" but to identify a strategy that has, broadly conceived, always been present in music and art, and that has in particular cases taken a more radical appearance, like in Berlin at the end of the 1990s.

In the last decade the scene has undergone constant change. This can be most clearly seen in the constant appearance of new venues for improvised music which did not define themselves "according to narrow stylistic music directions and certain guidelines for socialization" (Eichmann in Bariletti 2011: 96f), and which had promoters who "also invite people whom I don't know personally or whose music isn't well known to me yet" (Bariletti 2011: 97). The Berlin musicians continued to mostly work in long-term improvising groups, and to consider the choice of whom to play with a compositional element (cf. Davies 2011: 75). Their approach to improvisation stayed more conceptual and reflective, as it largely continued the specific way of musical communication and playing together that was formulated in the phase of Berlin Reductionism, and that rather differed from the concept of Free Improvisation as spontaneous, expressive and unbounded music. The scene has also seen the arrival of a new generation of musicians, residing mostly in Neukölln, where they also have their venues¹⁴³, and who are primarily interested in electronics, self-made electronic devices and feedback systems, field recordings, as well as unstable analog or digital processes and software.¹⁴⁴ They usually do not

¹⁴² „(1) Wie schätzen Sie die Bedeutung reduktiver Strategien für Ihre eigenes Musikdenken und Ihre eigene Musikpraxis ein? (2) Wie sehen Sie die Relevanz reduktiver Ästhetik für die Musik der Gegenwart?“

¹⁴³ E.g., NK, Raum 18, Raum 20, able, Altes Finanzamt etc.

¹⁴⁴ Musicians like Olaf Hochherz, Seiji Morimoto, Marta Zapparoli, Martin Kuentz, Felicity Mangan, Mario de Vega, Rubén Patiño (Pato) etc.

have any background in Jazz or conventional Free Improvisation, as many of the older generation of the Echtzeit musicians do; their performing style is therefore also rather specific, often having an “installative” character. They are explicitly focused on their sounds, so their group performances hardly display a concern for forms or playing “with” each other (instead of next to each other, which is more usual). Those musicians are nevertheless viewed as a part of the scene and most of them are actively involved in the scene’s network. On the other hand, they also have the basis to be seen as independent and to develop in such a way.

As the image of the city continued to rapidly change, and former central districts of alternative culture – Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg – became completely gentrified, expensive and unfriendly towards non-commercial cultural facilities, the scene started to establish itself as a visible and active community within the city. It has become more often related to the New Music scene in a broader context, although musicians consciously continued to work “in non-commercial, (still) not institutionalized spaces”¹⁴⁵ (Nauck 2005: 8). By choosing to create their own space with its own criteria, or through withdrawal in private spaces (cf. Nauck 2003: 16), the musicians are trying to protect the autonomy of their practice, making its undisturbed development secure. Such “self-management of a new kind of art” (Williams 1989: 51) is typical for the not-yet-recognized avant-garde practices. Thereby it is quite usual that musicians cover several roles at once: apart from being composers and performers of their music at the same time, they are often also organisers, curators, label-owners and promoters, and thereby idealists, essentially opposing the musicians functioning within the machinery of the music establishment or industry and its dominant system of production. For Serge Baghdassarians the critical point lies exactly in this: “We produce our music on our own, we compose it, we perform it and take care of infrastructure at the same time, in order to provide a forum for that which we do. We take it seriously.”¹⁴⁶ (Baghdassarians in Nauck 2005: 11.)

Staying “private” and “protected” was unfortunately not always possible. The

¹⁴⁵ „daß sie sehr bewußt in nicht-kommerziellen, (noch) nicht institutionalisierten Räumen Arbeiten.“

¹⁴⁶ „Wir produzieren unsere Musik selbst, wir komponieren sie, wir führen sie auf und kümmern uns zugleich auch noch im due Infrastruktur, also darum, daß das, was wir da machen auch ein Forum bekommt. Wir meinen es ernst.“

“danger” from *GEMA*¹⁴⁷ was always present – that was for example one of the reasons for the launching of the insider website www.echtzeitmusik.de. The main goal of the website was namely announcing concerts which both did not have any funding to do real promotion and did not want to more publicly promote concerts in fear of *GEMA* (Fagaschinski Interview 13.01.2009). In public spaces it was in any case not possible to hide the activities anymore, and exactly *GEMA* has been the reason why many venues had problems to persevere¹⁴⁸: “The lack of funds to finance performances of European and American artists as well as threats from *GEMA* to protect composers who didn’t want to be protected at all, myself included, hindered the curatorial work” (Ansorge 2011: 91). Improvised music in itself is problematic to be defined by and make use of *GEMA*, as Bariletti explains: “It isn’t recognized as a division of the arts and, thus, hasn’t the slightest thing to do with copyright law. Truly serious, freely improvised music as it happens in the moment, intangible music – it’s a one-time-only listening experience. After that it’s over. There are no recordings, nothing. That’s my philosophy. For the authorities, that’s elusive, meaning it’s non-existent to *GEMA*. But you have to pay them! The musicians get nothing. I can in no way comprehend this standpoint.” (Bariletti 2011: 99.) In the meantime many of the musicians of the scene are registered with *GEMA* as composer-performers and receive money from concerts, if they state in the *GEMA* report that they played some of their registered “pieces”.¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, many musicians still explicitly refuse to become *GEMA* members.

By the time of the *Labor Diskurs* discussions (in autumn 2007), the scene had reached a point where it wished to have more defined infrastructure, and a clearer definition of itself, its practice(s), the connecting factor of the musicians, as well as the position of the scene and the musicians in the Berlin field of culture. Initializing *Labor Diskurs* and a wish to self-define a scene under the designation ‘Echtzeitmusik’ could be interpreted as one step closer towards the scene’s “institutionalization”.

¹⁴⁷ *Die Gesellschaft für musikalische Aufführungs- und mechanische Vervielfältigungsrechte* - Society for musical performing and mechanical reproduction rights. <https://www.gema.de/en/home.html>

¹⁴⁸ A description of problems with *GEMA* has been recounted in an interview with Jürg Bariletti, organiser of the venue *Stralau 68*, see Bariletti 2011.

¹⁴⁹ Even if they mainly improvise, many Echtzeitmusik musicians register by *GEMA* as *E-Musik* composers (since there are still no alternative categories to *E-* and *U-Musik*). Thereby they register several “scores” as their compositions, which they then always use in concert reports to the *GEMA*.

The wish for recognition from the official structures, which would perhaps lead towards better and more secure conditions for the scene and the living and working of the musicians, also stood behind the endeavours of Gregor Hotz, founder and curator in *ausland*, to make *ausland* part of the project *ohrenstrand.net*¹⁵⁰. That was one of the steps to make *ausland* be taken seriously as a venue: “I actually want to achieve that *ausland* really gets substantial funding from the Berlin Senate without becoming a crusted institutional thing, like some of the other houses. I don’t want *ausland* to work in a way (...) that it is quite clear that no technician does anything without being paid for it (...) We don’t work like this here and I want to keep it like that, because that also makes out the quality (...) Not all of us find it good. Not all of us want to be a subsidized venue. Five years ago I would have said the same thing”.¹⁵¹ (Gregor Hotz Interview, Appendix 8.) Yet, it soon became clear for many artists and curators of the independent scene that the only possibility to continue is to try to have a share in public funding for culture. *ausland*’s membership in *ohrenstrand.net* has in that sense served to achieve more attention and visibility for the scene, since it enabled continuous placing of the names like *ausland*, *biegungen* and *Echtzeitmusik* in the broader context through *ohrenstrand*’s marketing means. And indeed, the scene did receive much broader attention through this membership, which also stood at the basis of several important projects of the scene recently, like the festival *Echtzeitmusiktage 2010* and *Das Splitter Orchester*¹⁵².

3.6 Reception

Until 2010 with the festival *Echtzeitmusiktage* and the publication of the book in the 2011, the *Echtzeitmusik* scene as a whole did not enjoy much publicity. Its own

¹⁵⁰ *ohrenstrand.net*, “Berlin’s network for curious listening”, was a Berlin-based state project for supporting and promoting New Music, which was funded through *Netzwerk Neue Musik* by state funding (*Kulturstiftung des Bundes*) over four years, ending in December 2011. The partners in the network were *Akademie der Künste*, *Konzerthaus Berlin*, *TU Berlin*, *rbb kulturradio*, *ausland*, *Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin*, *singuhr – hoergalerie* and *Zeitgenössische Oper Berlin*.

¹⁵¹ „Ich möchte eigentlich erreichen, dass *ausland* wirklich substanziell gefördert wird vom Berliner Senat, ohne dass es passiert, dass es so ein verkrustetes institutionelles Ding wird, wie andere Häuser zum Teil. Ich möchte nicht, dass *ausland* so arbeitet (...) wo es ganz klar ist, keiner Techniker macht irgendwas, ohne dafür bezahlt zu werden (...). So arbeiten wir nicht hier und das möchte ich behalten, weil das auch die Qualität ausmacht (...) Nicht alle von uns finden das gut. Nicht alle wollen ein subventionierter Ort sein. Vor 5 Jahren hätte ich das genau so gesagt.“

¹⁵² The funding from *Kulturstiftung des Bundes* that came through the membership in the *ohrenstrand.net* network served as a basis to get funding from the *Hauptstadt Kulturfonds* for those two projects.

discursive production was focused on internal self-definition and establishing a position in Berlin. The most written-about was the phase of Reductionism, which was occasionally thematised in specialized music magazines like *The Wire* and in books and articles by Peter Niklas Wilson (Wilson 1999, 2003). As already mentioned above, Berlin Reductionism is most often brought up in a context of similar tendencies worldwide – the “quiet” subgenres of improvisation that had their creative peak at the end of the 1990s, among whom Japanese Onkyō became most well-known and distinguished. In his article about Onkyō, David Novak is among others mentioning “‘Berlin minimalists’ such as Axel Dorner” (Novak 2010: 48), while Lorraine Plourde, also writing on Onkyō, only states “that onkyō performed in Japan was embedded within a larger, global network of musicians in the United States and Europe in the late 1990s with shared aesthetics” (Plourde 2008: 273). Michael T. Bullock in his study on the Boston scene mentions only Onkyō and “The New Nothing” in London, not referring to the Berlin Reductionism at all (Bullock 2010: 76f).

The phenomenon of Berlin Reductionism was most interestingly perceived by English-speaking writers Clive Bell (*The Wire*) and Dan Warburton (*Paris Transatlantic*¹⁵³). In his article titled “New London Silence” published in *The Wire* in 2005, Clive Bell writes about the collaborations between London and Berlin musicians at the time. He characterizes “German-speaking musicians” as “much given to discussing sonic concepts” with a touch of critique for the Germans and praise for the Brits: “Apparently it takes Berliners visiting London a while to get used to the fact that each concert is not followed by hours of verbal analysis. What continental musicians had approached via conceptualisation felt like a natural process to British musicians; an important new way of playing, but not a school or an ‘ism’.” (Bell 2005.) In his review of the *Echtzeitmusik* book in 2011, Bell readily uses the term *Echtzeitmusik* for that what he had previously described as Reductionism: “Tokyo had onkyo, the UK had New London Silence, while in Berlin the musicians themselves called it *Echtzeitmusik* (realtime music)”, stating that

¹⁵³ “Paris Transatlantic is a digital magazine dedicated to the promotion of contemporary and improvised music worldwide, reaching beyond traditional academic coverage through a lively format and (we hope) exciting controversial writing.” <http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/main/faq.html>, accessed March 10, 2012.

“[t]he Reductionist label so often applied to Berlin Improv is scorned by pretty much everyone as misleading” (Bell 2011). Also, whereas Dan Warburton back then talked about the ultra-minimal Berlin school of improvisation apparently referring to Reductionism (cf. Malfatti 2001; Warburton), since the *Echtzeitmusik* book has been published he acknowledges the term *Echtzeitmusik* as well: “‘Echtzeitmusik’, which translates as ‘real-time music’, is the Berlin-based musicians’ preferred term (nobody seems to like ‘reductionism’ any more, ‘lowercase’ never caught on, and ‘minimal’ means something else altogether) to describe the music they’ve been making since the mid 1990s...”¹⁵⁴.

Within Germany the scene received most attention from the musicologist Gisela Nauck, editor of the magazine *Positionen. Texte zur aktuellen Musik*. In the short introduction to the musicians’ statements about different aspects of work of the *2:13 Ensemble Berlin* and *2:13 Club* (Beins – Renkel et al. 2000: 21), Nauck¹⁵⁵ states the existence of a “very active and diverse improvisation club scene back then”¹⁵⁶, referring to the time of the *2:13* ensemble and club in 1998. In 2003 Nauck published a text “about a scene of private living-room and club concerts of New Music in Berlin”¹⁵⁷, in which she describes the emergence of a subcultural phenomenon in the Berlin scene of New Music at the end of the 1990s. Stylistically, this subcultural phenomenon included compositions, sound installations, speech performances, new improvisations and experimental forms of New Music, “for which there is still no genre-like designation”¹⁵⁸ (ibid.). Socially, this “nonconformist, unconventional scene” resided “below the surface of an institutionalized, official art world” and cherished a “non-commercial approach to music and art”¹⁵⁹ (ibid.). In her texts, Nauck describes the scene without much regard for scene-specific and clear labels, what probably corresponds to the discursive practice of her informants at the time. She places the scene clearly in relation to the New Music scene, corresponding to

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/monthly2011/12dec.text.html#2>, accessed April 24, 2012.

¹⁵⁵ That short introduction is not signed but it is supposed that the author is the editor of the magazine, Gisela Nauck.

¹⁵⁶ „...zu der damals sehr regen und vielfältigen Improvisations-Clubszene“

¹⁵⁷ „Zur Szene privater Wohnzimmer- und Clubkonzerte neuer Musik in Berlin“

¹⁵⁸ „für die es noch keine genremäßige Bezeichnung gibt“

¹⁵⁹ „Unter der Oberfläche eines institutionalisierten, offiziellen Kunstbetriebs hat sich eine unangepaßte, eigenwillige Szene etabliert, deren nichtkommerzieller Umgang mit Musik und Kunst eine bemerkenswerte Offenheit für den Kunstprozeß hergestellt hat“

the scene's self-definition as an "underground New Music scene"; a view which has generally not changed until now.

A different point of view on the scene appears in one comment by Felix Klopotek (2002), who in his book about a musical "no man's land" presents two important musicians on the scene, who were however not the part of the "reductionist group" – Olaf Rupp and Gregor Hotz¹⁶⁰. Both of them were more affiliated with *Anorak* than with the *2:13 Club* in the 1990s, and held a contact with the Berlin Free Jazz scene, even though Hotz was one of the founding members of *Labor Sonor* in 2000 and later *ausland*. Klopotek's comment accordingly connects the Echtzeitmusik scene (a term which he, unlike Nauck, already uses as such), with the Berlin Free Jazz scene around *FMP*, and sets its period of blossom between 1994 and 1997, whereby he does not mention *2:13 Club* at all, nor Reductionism: "So, the Berlin scene. It had the booming period between 1994 and 1997. The music calls itself Echtzeitmusik in conscious differentiation from Free Music Production. Through the youthfulness of the musicians and the complexity of the post-wall Berlin years, the music has a certain urgency/immediacy, also a pomposity, that one usually knows from punk (...) The distinction from FMP, legitimised by a fresher, actualized music, stays a hollow affirmation, because a scene does/can not build more sustainable structures. *Anorak* will be closed (because of house renovation) without finding a fast replacement, a professionally working label is not being founded, the scene behaves too idiosyncratically to fit to FMP or to reach noteworthy funding. That Olaf Rupp since 1998 plays increasingly solo, for a while even exclusively, is exactly a result of that. 'Success' has come recently not to the scene, but to individuals who go their 'own way.'"¹⁶¹ (Klopotek 2002: 103.) This observation shows that the scene at the

¹⁶⁰ By that time Gregor Hotz had almost completely quit playing and turned to running venues, first *Labor Sonor* and later *ausland*, both of which he was a founding member.

¹⁶¹ „Also die Berliner Szene. Die Blütezeit hat sie zwischen 1994 und 1997. Die Musik nennt sich *Echtzeitmusik*, in bewusster Abgrenzung zur Free Music Production. Durch die Jugendlichkeit der Musiker und die Unübersichtlichkeit der Berliner Nachwendejahre hat die Musik eine Dringlichkeit, auch eine Großspurigkeit, wie man sie sonst von Punk kennt. Die Musik wird in (ehemals) besetzten Häusern gesiedelt, der legendäre Club heißt *Anorak* (bis 1997 in der Dunckerstraße). Die Stärke der Szene, Jugendlichkeit und die Lust, sich im Gewirr der Noch-Nicht-Neuen-Mitte durchzuschlagen, ist auch ihre Schwäche. Die Abgrenzung zur *FMP*, legitimiert durch die frischere, aktuellere Musik, bleibt ein hohles Bekenntnis, weil die Szene keine tragfähigen Strukturen aufbaut/aufbauen kann. Der *Anorak* wird geschlossen (wegen Renovierung des Hauskomplexes), ohne dass sich schnell adäquater Ersatz finde, ein professionell arbeitendes Label gründet sich nicht, die Szene gibt sich zu idiosynkratisch, als dass sie bei der *FMP* unterkäme oder an nennenswerte Fördergelder drankäme. Dass Olaf Rupp ab 1998 verstärkt

time did not give an impression to be well organised or compact, moreover, *Anorak* and *2:13 Club* were rather not seen as a part of the same story.

In Februar 2005, the 62nd edition of the music magazine *Positionen* was titled 'Echtzeitmusik'. In her introductory note the editor Gisela Nauck describes considerable changes in the German "scene of Free Improvisation, music that emerges without notation in real-time"¹⁶² compared to the situation at the end of the 1990s (Nauck 2005a). Apart from spreading throughout the numerous German cities, "it has rejuvenated and is sound-wise more distinctly positioned within New Music"¹⁶³ (ibid.); however, as it is hardly perceived by the media at all, it still has a subversive and subcultural status as well as attitude (cf. ibid.). Nauck further explains that the term 'Echtzeitmusik', descending from the Berlin scene, is used deliberately since the notion of improvisation has not described the essence of this music for a long time. Echtzeitmusik on the other hand stands for "a music of conceptual, compositional, improvisational, performative and communicative elements that emerges – unrepeatable – in real-time"¹⁶⁴ (ibid.) and is as such applied according to its literal meaning and not as a Berlin- and scene-specific term. The issue brings an overview of different activities and venues across Germany¹⁶⁵, as well as texts on influential individuals like Peter Niklas Wilson (by Burkhard Stangl) and Keith Rowe (by Björn Gottstein). The Berlin scene is represented above all through a collective interview with Annette Krebs, Andrea Neumann, Serge Baghdassarians, Burkhard Beins, and Axel Dörner (Nauck 2005) and a compact presentation of the scene by Dietrich Eichmann (2005).

In the same issue, Elke Schipper identifies three generations of (free) improvising musicians in the forty years of the genre's existence (cf. Schipper 2005: 6). In the

Solo spielte, eine zeitlang sogar ausschließlich, hat genau damit zu tun. "Erfolg" hat aber in den letzten Jahren nicht die Szene, sondern Einzelne, die "ihren Weg" gehen. 2000 veröffentlichte Olaf Rupp auf *FMP* sein Debut als Solist: *Life Science*."

¹⁶² „die Szene freier Improvisation, Musik, die ohne Notation in Echtzeit entsteht“

¹⁶³ „hat sich verjüngt und ist klanglich eindeutiger in der neuen Musik verankert“

¹⁶⁴ „eine Musik aus konzeptuellen, kompositorischen, improvisatorischen, performativen und kommunikativen Elementen, die – unwiederholbar – in Echtzeit entsteht. Durch ihre auf musizierende Kommunikation setzende Kreativität, ihren life-Charakter, die Internationalität und ein Instrumentarium an der Schnittstelle von akustischen Instrumenten und electronics hat sie neue Räume für Innovation geschaffen mit der Klangforschung erneut im Zentrum“

¹⁶⁵ About the activities, projects and scenes in Dresden (sound project *Ru-In*, project *SARDH*), Stuttgart (series *momentmusik*), venue *Exploratorium* in Berlin, society *klangforum Brandenburg e.V.*

youngest, third generation one can clearly “state a strong proximity of the sound worlds and style characteristics of Free Improvisation to those of composed New Music” (ibid.), whereby the “musical self-conception is as equally drawn from conceptual and compositional work as from free improvising”¹⁶⁶ (ibid.). As examples of this third generation she names Boris Baltschun (live electronics), Andrea Neumann (inside piano), Axel Dörner (trumpet), Alessandro Bossetti (saxophone), Serge Baghdassarians (live electronics) and Chris Heenan (saxophone) (ibid.). In the above mentioned collective interview the selected musicians of the “Berlin scene” were asked about their relation to the term ‘improvisation’, the notions of structure and form, content and working with sound. That was one of the earliest occasions when they explicitly formulated their aesthetic and socio-political positions. Those positions would then be more or less repeated and broadened in the *Echtzeitmusik* book in 2011, yet they are said to already have been reflected upon, discussed and formed since the times of the *2:13 Club*.

3.7 Self-defining a scene

In the book entitled *Echtzeitmusik. Self-Defining a Scene* the musicians of the scene have again attempted to draw attention to their work by presenting and defining it themselves. The idea was “to lend exposure to the predominantly unwritten, largely ‘intramural’, and unsystematically occurring discussions within the scene” (Nauck 2011: 9). The whole action could perhaps be understood, among other aims and reasons, as an endeavour to stop the inadequate categorizations and classifications of their own work; yet, the book does not intentionally provide for unequivocal definitions of the music and the practice but testifies to the history of a diverse local music community. Nevertheless, with this discursive act the musicians indeed do “classify themselves” and concurrently “expose themselves to classification, by choosing, in conformity with their taste, different attributes (...) that go well together and that go well with them or, more exactly, suit their position” (Bourdieu 1989: 19). The appearance of the book, the story of its production as well as the diversity of musicians and venues presented in it, testify to strategies of

¹⁶⁶ „...ist eine starke Nähe der Klangwelten und Gestaltungsmerkmale von freier Improvisation zu komponierter neuer Musik feststellbar (...) Das musikalische Selbstverständnis wird zumeist gleichermaßen aus konzeptueller und kompositorische Arbeit, sowie dem freien Improvisieren gezogen“

“negotiation of their own identity” (ibid.: 21). This degree of publicity of discourse, which the scene until that moment did not have in such an explicit form, could only increase the feeling of community, especially as the possibility for identification with a certain publicly transmitted and acclaimed picture is therewith clearly present. All the musicians who agreed to “speak” under the name ‘Echtzeitmusik’ declared themselves as a part of this story and history, and are providing a model within which many other musicians can recognize themselves both socially and aesthetically (cf. ibid.: 24).

As the changing social, economic, and cultural conditions turned “this initially clearly laid out scene (...) into a heterogeneous meshwork of aesthetic positions” (Beins – Kesten – Neumann 2011: 13), the acts of self-reflection and self-definition can also be understood as protective of the scene’s distinctive identity and history, which could have otherwise easily vanished in the rapidly changing pool of musicians, venues, events and practices. The initiative resulted in the series of discussions under the name *Labor Diskurs*, which then led to the idea of publishing the book: “In November 2007, the organisers of Labor Sonor invited interested parties to a round of discussion at KuLe in Berlin-Mitte. Just under twenty musicians, composers, performers, and theorists took up this invitation, which was followed by five further meetings through spring 2008” (Labor Diskurs 2011: 123). The first two of six meetings altogether, held on November 11th and December 2nd in 2007, were transcribed in detail, a shortened version of which was published in the book. The impulse for the start of the discussion were 27 questions written down by Trio Sowari (2011: 115) as well as a proposition of Burkhard Beins to define “‘collective-interactive working processes’ as a methodology characteristic of the Echtzeitmusik scene and hence as a ‘possible common denominator’ that could be opposed to the ‘hierarchical-linear division of labour’ that is largely predominant in other fields of music” (Labor Diskurs 2011: 123). The discussion, which touched upon themes like the problem of categories, socioeconomic position and attitude of the musicians, the question of notation, relation of improvisation and composition as well as form and sound, showed how difficult it was to find attributes and definitions that could be largely accepted, especially on the aesthetic level.

A general doubt about the project was related to the opinion that with any attempt

at definitions, the identity and proposed discourse of the scene would become official, and therefore the scene would lose the openness and elusiveness characteristic of it before. The process of writing the book would represent a process of “officialization” of the scene, “inscribing in objectivity its representation of what it is and thus binding itself by this public declaration” (Bourdieu 1977: 21f). Foucault was also critical about the definiteness of the unities like book or *œuvre*: “There is the material individualization of the book, which occupies a determined space, which has an economic value, and which itself indicates, by a number of signs, the limits of its beginning and its end” (Foucault 2002: 25.). Yet, at the same time he declared the importance of a book opening itself to interdiscursivity: “The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences; it is a node within a network. (...) The book is not simply the object that one holds in one’s hands; and it cannot remain within the little parallelepiped that contains it: its unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse.” (Ibid.: 25f.)

Even though it can certainly be expected that the scene will reach another level of presence and visibility through the book, it is still too early to assess what effect (and if at all) the book will really have for the scene’s self- and outsider perception in the long run. Yet, it is certain that “when [discourses] are once there, they represent an efficacious, autonomous system of knowledge for a relative historical period, which affects other (non-discursive) forms of practice”¹⁶⁷ (Diaz-Bone 2005: 541). On the other hand, such an act of (self-)definition raises questions about those who are in a position to define not only themselves but a supposed scene, about how they chose to define it, and out of what interests and what position they therefore take (cf. Diaz-Bone 2007). The book, even if it tried to include as many different perspectives and views, names and venues as possible, still represents a certain selection, and it would probably look different if it would have been edited and

¹⁶⁷ „Sind [Diskurse] aber erst einmal vorhanden, stellen sie für eine relative historische Dauer ein wirkmächtiges eigengesetzliches Wissenssystem dar, das auf andere (nicht-diskursive) Praxisformen einwirkt.“

written by someone else. However, the group behind the book did indeed acquire the needed “capital” and thereby authority and power to claim the legitimacy of the book’s content as official discourse of the scene.

In its self-definition nevertheless, the Echtzeitmusik scene only rarely puts itself explicitly in relation to other discourses (Cage, Free Improvisation), even though the musicians by now must be conscious of those relations. Similarity of ideas can indeed be recognized, but one can still doubt the full awareness of those relations in the moment of the ideas’ emergence. The self-representation of the scene in the book is thus rather focussed on the presentation of its own story and uniqueness, of its own preferences, attitudes and working methods, even supposed originality, without much contextualization; as such it sometimes gives more of an impression of a self-documentation than a tool for communication towards the outside (cf. Williams 2012). Yet, it can certainly serve as an orientation and reference point for the related musicians who, considering their social status and profitability of their music, can only have benefits from being a part of a recognizable community. As soon as they are represented in the public sphere by a known reference, the reputation of each one of the musicians grows as it takes a share of the reputation of the scene as a whole. Nevertheless, a certain contradiction between the wish for presence, distinguished identity and acknowledgement on the one hand, and the wish to not be easily put in some clear-cut categories on the other is indeed present. The scene might have in the book presented a clearer picture of itself, but it still did not dare to offer very precise definitions and terminology, in which case it protected the flexibility of its identity.

The introduction to the *Labor Diskurs* transcriptions in the book begins with a statement in that spirit: “The Echtzeitmusik scene is informed by diversity. It (re)generates and sustains itself continually by means of its praxis and cannot be subsumed under one overarching term.” (Labor Diskurs 2011: 123.) Even if at first it might seem that the book is providing a notion of a collective identity of the scene, this is not the case. It instead collects many individual views and memories, as well as historical facts. Through the book, which was made completely without budget by the musicians themselves and was published only after a minimum of 200 subscriptions was collected, the scene represents itself as having initiative,

creativity and executive force. It also represents itself as a community with high discursive potential and relevance in the contemporary music discourse, even though it does not try to formulate a single, common point of view, like a school or artists' collective. Still, the musicians do share similar attitudes on many aesthetic and social aspects of their practice and lifestyle.

The first issue among those “that could be of some significance to a definition of Echtzeitmusik” (Labor Diskurs 2011: 123ff) is exactly the question of definitions and categories, which are quite necessary, even if generally undesirable. The need came from practical situations: “my observation is that our music is shut out everywhere since there’s no definition for it and since it therefore cannot be presented” (Beins in *ibid.*: 126), or, “if you don’t have your own definition, then someone slaps a label onto you, such as ‘Now Jazz’ in Donaueschingen or ‘Sonic Arts Lounge’ at Maerzmusik in Berlin” (Fagaschinski in *ibid.*: 126f). The search for an adequate definition of the practice proceeded through search for commonalities. Beins argued for “collective-interactive working processes” (Beins in *ibid.*: 123) as the most extensive characteristic of the practice, and musicologist and music journalist Björn Gottstein proposed to look for an adequate term in relation to “a certain acoustic pattern, certain types of sound” that are fixed in this music, as well as “certain attitude among the musicians (...) towards the sound material, towards the musical result, towards one’s musical counterpart” (Gottstein in *ibid.*: 124f). Thomas Ankersmit agreed with a statement that “the resulting sounds are really quite similar” adding that “I believe that we relate to each other more on the level of taste than in terms of sharing deeper ideas about an approach” (Ankersmit in *ibid.*: 125). The hesitation of many participants to become involved in the discussion was shown in a rather capitulating statement by Michael Renkel that it is “*constitutive* of this music that you can’t define it” (Renkel in *ibid.*: 126, emphasis in the original).

A common socioeconomic milieu (*ibid.*: 127ff) turned out to be a characteristic shared by most of the musicians. Not being “embedded in this academic framework” (Fagaschinski in *ibid.*: 127), and being outside of defined categories as e.g. “street urchins of New Musik” (*ibid.*) or “intellectuals of pop music” (Beins in *ibid.*: 128), seems to be an important identity feature. An interesting thought was formulated by Ekkehard Ehlers, who is in fact rather a peripheral figure in the

Echtzeitmusik scene: “I think what applies to this whole realm is that it is post-economic music, namely because the exploitability of the music, the single-mindedness with regard to success, to financing our lives, etc., gets replaced by the likes of ‘the new sound’ or the wish to be new at all costs, not to repeat oneself. So, for me, weird folk would fit into that too. It’s music for music’s sake.” (Ehlers in *ibid.*: 128.) Yet, the problem is not really in the fact that “the exploitability is seen as a problem” (*ibid.*), which leads to the attitude of refusal (cf. Gottstein 2011: 151ff) both of the market and subsidized culture – as Beins observes: “I believe that a lot of people would immediately sign a deal with a major label if they had the chance” (Labor Diskurs 2011: 128f). The fact is that the music is “simply too cumbersome and therefore economically unexploitable” (Beins in *ibid.*: 129) on the one hand, and on the other that musicians indeed put a great deal of importance on their artistic autonomy and that they thereby share a similar existential and social position in the Berlin field of culture.

The two further issues – notation and composition vs. improvisation – seem quite intertwined and show a variety of working methods applied by the musicians in the scene. The general attitude towards notation is that it is more likely used “as a point of reference for myself, but not so that others can play it” (Fagaschinski in *ibid.*: 130). Even though the two main functions of notation – to design certain structures that could not be designed while doing something in the moment on the one hand and reproducibility on the other (Streich in *ibid.*: 131) – are both present in the scene, the latter is rather an exception. Composing in a classical way by using notation and following steps to realization is indeed unusual, one of the reasons certainly being the fact that the instrumentariums and sounds of the musicians are so individualized and complex. However, the prevailing practice of improvisation in the scene in the form of improvisational groups who work together over a longer period of time implies a degree of preparation and shared experience which is comparable to notation and composition. The musicians mostly improvise with material that is already prepared in advance, collectively or not, whereby this material most likely emerged in an improvising exploration of the sound of one's own instrument or combination of instruments in a group. On the other hand, the same material can be used to fulfil a previously conceived form. The “composers” are at the same time “performers”, and the apparently clear border between

composition and improvisation/performance becomes blurred. Moreover, the musicians in the scene prefer to work with sound and space directly, without intermediate steps.

Following from such an approach is the fact that music is always understood as a process, and not a product in the sense of an artwork. That is certainly a result of the main working method – improvisation – yet also of the general attitude of curiosity and eagerness to experiment in the spirit of the experimental tradition as summed up by Brian Eno: “...the stuff that we were interested in was so explicitly anti-academic that it often even claimed to have been written for *non-musicians*. It made a point of being more concerned with how things were made – what processes had been employed to compose or perform them – than with what they finally sounded like. It was a music, we used to say, of process rather than product.” (Eno in Nyman 1999: xi.) The focus on the process rather than on the product reflects a lot about musicians and the type of their knowledge, where there is generally no notion about the established ways, known techniques and disposable means for creating an artwork. Each musician can involve themselves in an experiment and explore his/her own way of doing things and producing sounds.

The last important issue is the one concerning form and sound, i.e. the question: “Could it be – and this might be a bit provocative – that the attention to these astutely played sounds is larger, in improvised music, than the attention to the form” (Neumann in *ibid.*: 142)? As distinguished from the “older” form of improvisation, the improvisational practice in the *Echtzeitmusik* scene is not focused on “the momentary gesture” but rather proceeds in “anticipatory handling of the material in reference to a certain structure” (Baltschun in *ibid.*: 142f). Also, it does not “develop in all possible directions” but “a kind of feeling for form quite often predominates” (Beins in *ibid.*: 143). However, when it comes to defining a kind of common sound identity, a common “sound space” (Streich in *ibid.*: 144) or at least affinity towards similar sounds, there are different points of view. Beins claims that “it’s hard to capture this via a specific sound aesthetic because there is indeed a large spectrum there. Instead, I see a pluralism of styles, a pluralism that encompasses a lot of potential as well as a complexity that simply can’t be reduced to something basic.” (Beins in *ibid.*) Andrea Neumann on the other hand

acknowledges the difference of the point of view of an insider – who sees all the details and perceives a diversity, and an outsider – to whom all sounds appear very similar (cf. Neumann in *ibid.*). Björn Gottstein summed it up well: “To be honest, I have to say that I don’t see the stylistic diversity: there’s never any funk bass here, there’s never any baroque harpsichord here. (...) There is sound indeed, a certain kind of sonic dramaturgy, as much in terms of syntax as in terms of morphology. One could also describe this, in a catalogue-esque way, if one so pleases, and would manage to mark out a relatively homogenous area, which is what I would claim as an outsider” (Gottstein in *ibid.*).

4 The scene and the practice

The Echtzeitmusik scene is in many aspects a socially and aesthetically undefined and undifferentiated phenomenon. It represents a seemingly heterogeneous¹⁶⁸, local socio-cultural network encompassing various practices related to a specific type of music-making, which is still relatively untouched by institutions or capital. Different to practices that are determined and classified by being part of an institutionalized cultural sector or respective market, there are no obvious instances or processes organizing, regulating, classifying or connecting the practices within the Echtzeitmusik scene and no unequivocal mode for defining their position or predicting their musical profile or sound. Similar to Pierre Bourdieu, who in his work allegedly took off from the question of how action can be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules (quote Bourdieu in Swartz 1997: 95, note 1), my initial question was also how the diversity of musical personalities and practices in the Echtzeitmusik scene is coordinated to function without any explicit consensuses in a form of a musical scene which, in spite of extreme regard for artistic individuality of the musicians, displays quite a degree of coherence and even unity. Further, I was interested in how such communities are structured, organised and how they function in the first place regarding their position in the broader context and their economic potential. Additionally, given the fact that the Echtzeitmusik scene itself is in the meanwhile an aesthetically heterogenous, flexible and open community, I wanted to understand the basis and principle of the musicians' commonality and community.

The awareness of spatial, socio-political and discursive environments is necessary in order to understand the practices and mechanisms of their production and reproduction. The respective environment is essentially determining agents' thoughts, actions and behaviour, both in production and in reception. Uncovering that environment is here informed by theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, who were both in their work concerned with the complex relationship between context, discourse and practice. In different ways they both stress the fact

¹⁶⁸ See for example the programme of the festival *Echtzeitmusiktage*, <http://festival2010.Echtzeitmusik.de/> and festival description on <http://zangimusic.de/index.php?s=12-echtzeit>, accessed February 18, 2012.

that practices, objects and agents do not exist independently of a bigger framework that makes them possible, influences their appearance, legitimises them and determines their effect. With the concepts of field, capital and habitus, Bourdieu grasps the structure of the social environment of artistic practices and its manifestation in those practices. Foucault's discourse theory helps to track and evaluate the level of discourse, which can be understood as a related body of knowledge in the background of practices. Reconstruction of discourses complements Bourdieu's social theory of action and power by helping to understand the form and role of (collective) knowledge in determining the (collective) practice (cf. Diaz-Bone 2005: 544), among other things. Following the proposed analytical tools and points of view by Bourdieu and Foucault, I will attempt to describe the principles of organization of the Echtzeitmusik scene on the levels of structure and practice – the type of field of practice the scene itself makes, its specific relation to economy and related ways of functioning, as well as to position the scene within the larger field of culture in Berlin.

4.1 Structures

In order to understand the structures the Echtzeitmusik scene is embedded in, as well as the structure and structuring principle of the scene itself, I have borrowed Bourdieu's theoretical approach. Bourdieu sees social structure as two-layered. The basis makes the so-called social space, constructed on the basis of distribution of capitals. Very simplified, according to Bourdieu the agents¹⁶⁹ are distributed in social space according to volume and value of their material possessions or income (so-called economic capital) and their education (so-called cultural capital), respectively (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 29; Bourdieu 1982: 212). According to those social

¹⁶⁹ The term 'agent' refers to the one who acts. In sociology, the term 'agency' "is often juxtaposed to *structure and is often no more than a synonym for action, emphasizing implicitly the undermined nature of human action, as opposed to the alleged determinism of structural theories. If it has a wider meaning, it is to draw attention to the psychological and social psychological make-up of the actor, and to imply the capacity for willed (voluntary) action. Sociological theories are often characterized according to the relative emphasis they place on agency or structure – and in terms, therefore, of an agency versus structure debate. Some recent theorists have intervened in the debate in a conscious attempt to transcend this *dualism. The French sociologist Pierre *Bourdieu is a good example. His insistence that the objective and subjective aspects of social life are inescapably bound together leads him to challenge the dualism of macro versus micro and structure versus agency (*Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 1977)." (Scott – Marshall 2009: 11.)

properties (or dispositions), agents occupy corresponding social positions. These properties and positions are in quite a predictable way (shown statistically by Bourdieu) manifested on another level, called the space of lifestyles, where the features of social space get their symbolic expression. On this level, agents and social groups are distinguished from others by, for example, consumption, cultural choices, manners, clothing and so on. Conversely, those features are supposed to directly point to the position an agent or a group occupies in social space (i.e. her/his education and wealth), as well as to the other probable related features, as lively exemplified by Bourdieu: “just as feathered animals are more likely to have wings than furry animals, so the possessors of a sophisticated mastery of language are more likely to be found in a museum than those who do not have this mastery” (Bourdieu 1989: 20). According to Bourdieu’s theory of distinction, social space can thus be directly perceived through the symbolic space of lifestyles.

The so-called ‘fields’, according to Bourdieu, represent independent structural areas in social space. They subdivide social space in subspaces that have social autonomy, like e.g. education, science, fashion, sports, culture or art (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 49). Whereas social space displays different capitals, social positions and corresponding lifestyles¹⁷⁰, fields offer corresponding positions for the agents endowed with particular field-related capitals and at the same time serve as a structuring principle for thought, perception and action of agents (Diaz-Bone 2010: 49). The field of music, even only one of its genres or scenes, can also represent such an autonomous sector with various positions of its own, like those of musicians, audiences, curators and critics with their respective venues, festivals, magazines and so on (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 51), but also with its own meanings and values. Different cultural and artistic fields determine the form of cultural works produced in them and represent a specific context in which those works get their value and meaning. In order to reach autonomy within the dominant field (i.e. the field of power, of which artistic and cultural fields are only a part), the fields should establish their own “specific principles of evaluation of practices and works”

¹⁷⁰ E.g. see the diagram showing the superimposed spaces of social positions and lifestyles in Bourdieu 1987: 212f.

(Bourdieu 1993c: 163) and their own “laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy” (ibid.: 162).

The Echtzeitmusik scene as a community is certainly the result of a different kind of grouping than the “art producers”, “university teachers” or “industrial entrepreneurs” Bourdieu typifies in his *Distinction*; yet its members could indeed be described as freelance musicians with low income and specific cultural capital. The agents in the Echtzeitmusik scene thus, like all individuals, possess certain capitals which determine their social statuses and position(s) in social space. Yet, what gathers them in this specific scene (understood as a (sub)field) is to be sought in the profile and preferences of the scene itself, which should correspond to the dispositions of the agents. Within the scene, the capitals of the musicians get a special, scene-immanent symbolic value, and according to that value the musicians occupy certain positions within the (hierarchical) structure of the scene. The structure of the scene thus emerges as a result of a distribution of capitals and the corresponding positions of musicians, curators, venues etc. The scene-immanent mechanisms of position-takings, as well as the related “space of possibles” (Bourdieu 1993c: 30), are established in the course of the scene’s existence. To think of a scene in terms of a field can offer a better understanding of (different types of) positions and their relations, while a field at the same time represents a frame for observation of the genesis, reproduction and change of the scene’s structure and a pool for the operation of discourses.

Agents come to their positions in the acts of position-taking, which are “defined in relation to the *space of possibles*” (Bourdieu 1993c: 30, emphasis in the original). Bourdieu explains: “Fields of cultural production propose to those who are involved in them a *space of possibles* that tends to orient their research, even without their knowing it, by defining the universe of problems, references, intellectual benchmarks (...), in short, all that one must have in the back of one’s mind in order to be in the game” (Bourdieu 1993c: 176). In that sense, a space of possibles refers to the totality of knowledge related to and contained in a particular field, according to which an agent acts in the field. This knowledge “transcends individual agents” and “functions as a kind of system of common reference” (ibid.), which has a lot in common with Foucault’s notion of discourse. Some of the agents or groups are

socially and culturally predisposed to reach better social positions in the field because they are already in advance familiar with its space of possibles. On the other hand, newcomers or those who do not directly relate to an established profile of the field must fight for their position, in which case they must have the knowledge of how a respective field functions.

4.2 Capital

According to Bourdieu, capital is the main structuring principle of social space and the main resource to act in a field. Bourdieu names four main types of capital: economic capital (money, property), cultural capital (incorporated knowledge, education, cultural goods, educational titles), social capital (social connections, acquaintances, networks) and symbolic capital (legitimation, recognition) (cf. Bourdieu 1983). All types of capital can be interconvertible, but interconvertibility is not equally feasible in all directions (cf. *ibid.*: 195ff). Nevertheless, most of the capitals are under certain conditions convertible in the economic capital or money (cf. *ibid.*: 185), especially if they have already gained a symbolic value in the corresponding field. That also means that other forms of capital, if their value is recognized, can under certain circumstances compensate for economic capital in situations where it is completely lacking or is only marginally present. In any case, in cultural and artistic fields capital operates on a reversed logic to that of the economic field, as Bourdieu (1993c: 29) is suggesting in the title *The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed*. In fields of cultural production other types of capital (cultural, social) are namely more valued than economic capital and can have a stronger effect.

The concept of economic capital is comparable to the common notion of capital and refers to the possession of material goods. As such, yet although important, it is not much appreciated in the cultural sector as it generally implies the commercialization and trivialization of culture in order to make profit. Although it certainly represents a kind of power, economic capital is therefore often not fully sufficient as a basis for achieving recognition in fields of cultural production. Correspondingly, fields of cultural production have a rather dominated position within the field of power because of their “possession of a high degree of symbolic

forms of capital” (Johnson 1993: 15) and relatively low degree of in the field of power typically deemed economic capital (cf. *ibid.*). In fields of culture, much more important than economic profit is namely “the profit one has on seeing oneself (or being seen) as one who is not searching for profit” (*ibid.*: 15).

Cultural capital can exist in three different forms, as defined by Bourdieu (1983: 185). In its incorporated state, it refers to “durable dispositions of the body”¹⁷¹ (*ibid.*) that were formed over time in the process of internalizing knowledge acquired through upbringing and education (cf. *ibid.*: 186). In this form, cultural capital is a personal possession that becomes an individual’s fixed part, determining her/his habitus (cf. *ibid.*: 187). Cultural capital exists also in the objectivised form of its material carriers – books, paintings, instruments or any other kind of cultural goods (cf. *ibid.*: 188). In this material form it can also be transferred, but it requires cultural skills or competences for an adequate understanding, enjoyment, handling or usage (cf. *ibid.*). And finally, cultural capital can also have an institutionalized form of educational titles (cf. *ibid.* 185). As such, it is “a certificate of cultural competence that transfers to its owner a durable and legally guaranteed conventional value”¹⁷² (*ibid.*: 190), but it is in fact independent of the actual cultural competences one owns at the time (cf. *ibid.*).

Social capital refers to “the aggregate of actual and potential resources which are connected to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized *relations* of mutual acquaintance and recognition; or, in other words, it is a matter of resources that are based on the *belonging to a group*”¹⁷³ (Bourdieu 1989: 190; emphasis in the original). That network of relations, argues Bourdieu, “is a product of individual or collective investment strategies that are consciously or unconsciously aimed at creating and maintaining social relations that promise a direct benefit

¹⁷¹ „in verinnerlichtem, *inkorporiertem Zustand*, in Form von dauerhaften Dispositionen des Organismus“

¹⁷² „ein Zeugnis für kulturelle Kompetenz, das seinem Inhaber einen dauerhaften und rechtlich garantierten konventionellen Wert überträgt.“

¹⁷³ „die Gesamtheit der aktuellen und potentiellen Ressourcen, die mit dem Besitz eines dauerhaften Netzes von mehr oder weniger institutionalisierten *Beziehungen* gegenseitigen Kennens und Anerkennens verbunden sind; oder, anders ausgedrückt, es handelt sich dabei um Ressourcen, die auf der *Zugehörigkeit zu einer Gruppe* beruhen.“

sooner or later”¹⁷⁴ (ibid.). Most of the individuals have bigger chances of gaining visibility as a part of a group, which is reproduced through interaction and recognition of the belonging to a group, and continuously confirmed in the acts of exchange and sharing (cf. ibid.). Belonging to a group and being identified with it can also be an important resource in a struggle for recognition, since a group’s members can get a part of the recognition that the group as a whole possesses. Social capital thus certainly represents something to “invest” in, in order to gain a better position in the field. The concept of social capital is also very similar to the concept of symbolic capital because it is intangible and presupposes mutual acquaintance and recognition.

Agents are thus distributed in the overall social space according to type, structure (e.g. ratio of economic to cultural) and volume of their capital(s) (cf. Bourdieu 1989: 17). With those resources they also enter a certain field, and they can continue increasing capital and its properties through engagement in the field. However, it is typical for artistic and cultural fields that basic capitals stay in the background because reputation is what primarily counts. As Diaz-Bone points out: “For authors, musicians, critics, art dealers, publishers and other cultural entrepreneurs, the only feasible strategy of accumulation of capital is to make themselves a name, to become known and recognized...”¹⁷⁵ (Diaz-Bone 2010: 52.) If an agent has been successful in promoting their own capital, that capital becomes “perceived and recognized as legitimate” (Bourdieu 1989: 17) by other agents within the field, according to certain rules of play in that field. In its legitimised form, a capital is called “symbolic capital”. Symbolic capital is as such more a matter of perception than a fact, even though it is based on “real” forms of capital (cf. Kajetzke 2008: 60); through symbolic capital, the original capitals get “translated” from social space into the space of lifestyles (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 32).

¹⁷⁴ „...das Beziehungsnetz ist das Produkt individueller oder kollektiver Investitionsstrategien, die bewußt oder unbewußt auf die Schaffung und Erhaltung von Sozialbeziehungen gerichtet sind, die früher oder später einen unmittelbaren Nutzen versprechen.“

¹⁷⁵ „Für Autoren, Musiker, Kritiker, Kunsthändler, Verleger und andere Kulturunternehmer besteht die einzig zulässige Strategie der Akkumulation von Kapital darin, sich einen Namen zu machen, bekannt zu werden und wahrgenommen zu werden...“

4.2.1 Capitals in the Echtzeitmusik scene¹⁷⁶

The Echtzeitmusik scene could be classified as occupying a marginal position, both in the field of power and in the related field of culture. The musicians actually often come from higher classes, have a considerable cultural capital even if often not in the form of educational credentials, and are choosing a particular field (low-income, “underground”) in order to pursue personal aesthetic ideals. Bourdieu wrote: “The literary and artistic fields attract a particularly strong proportion of individuals who possess all the properties of the dominant class *minus one*: money” (Bourdieu 1993c: 165). Seen generally, the average income of the musicians must be relatively low and unstable. That has been concluded from the fact that most of the musicians are not permanently employed and that an artistic practice, which in most cases brings very little or no income, is their principal (even if often not principal money-making) activity. In Berlin there are many possibilities to play, but there are also many musicians and practically no venues that can offer fixed fees. However, even if economic capital is typically low in the scene, it is indirectly present in the (still) quite favourable conditions for living and working of the musicians. In one of its conventional forms, as money and property, it can be manifested in certain financial means to realize projects or having a venue to organise concerts at one's disposal, what can also increase one's symbolic capital.

On the other hand, we can assume that cultural capital in the scene is quite specific and distinguished, if it is not possible to simply classify it as “high”. It can for example be manifested in skill (with one's own instrument), originality of practice (seen in the current aesthetical interests and projects), experience (references of collaborations), even in the distinguished taste for sounds, but it also does not have to be related to music. Thereby none of the skills and knowledge that make the cultural capital has to be conventionally acquired. Since in the scene there are a lot of professionals that do not have classical musical education, and even if they do, it is not that important for them,¹⁷⁷ having such an education or any kind of official

¹⁷⁶ The descriptions in the following text are informed and inspired by Bourdieu's distinction theory and personal observation and research in the scene. However, in the concrete case of the Echtzeitmusik scene no quantitative research was made and there is accordingly no statistical data on the subject.

¹⁷⁷ See the answers on the first question “Have you got any formal musical training, and what do you draw from it now?” from the *addlimb* e-mail questionnaire about improvised music (sent out in 2007 to

education is correspondingly irrelevant as a criterion for evaluation of the musicians within the scene. The relative economic independence of the scene makes the establishment of internal criteria of evaluation possible, in which something like educational titles is almost dispensable. The same applies to the broader array of new artistic activities which are largely not related to conventional educational curricula, but rather other, in the meantime just as legitimate ways of acquiring cultural capital. Since the institutionalized form of cultural capital is relatively rare, cultural capital can primarily be recognized through the actual musical practice, which is in this case all but conventional and easily assessable and understandable. That is one of the reasons why cultural capital of the musicians in the Echtzeitmusik scene is not easily recognized by the external instances, at least before it turns into symbolic capital through recognition of the insiders. When an artist gains recognition on the inside, and the value of her/his capital displays on a symbolic level in the form of reputation, it can be easier to gain external recognition in spite of a lack of conventional education, an uncompromising attitude or experimental approach.

Low economic capital and unconventional cultural capital often point to artistic avant-gardes (and vice versa). In the case of the Echtzeitmusik scene, the musicians are on the one hand not “consecrated” by the dominant structures (i.e. cultural institutions), because they are not per se part of those structures, and on the other hand largely not capable of converting their cultural capital into the economic one because of the general lack of potential for that. The lifestyle is correspondingly bohemian and nomadic, as a result of an economically highly risky practice – living low-cost and going after gigs, which, even if not bringing material gain, can

many prominent improvisers worldwide, <http://addlimb.wordpress.com/category/questionnaire/>, accessed April 01, 2012); Alessandro Bosetti – “I had a pretty informal training as a jazz musician (...) I never came to feel really much ‘trained’ though”; Bertrand Denzler – “Yes, I have. But I always felt like an autodidact, so that it doesn’t make any difference to me”; Burkhard Beins – “No, I’ve never studied composition, nor am I a trained musician of any sorts”; Christof Kurzmann – “I never studied or even learned any of the instruments I’m playing”; Ignaz Schick – “As a child I took saxophone classes (...) and I also took music theory classes (...) Everything else I learned by doing it hands on”; Kai Fagaschinski – “First I hadn’t, but when I developed a little of an idea of what I wanted to do with my instrument after some years, I thought some lessons wouldn’t harm”; Robin Hayward – “Yes I studied classical music, which it’s well known can be a hindrance to improvising. When I first started improvising I think it was a hindrance”; Thomas Ankersmit – “No I haven’t (with the exception of guitar lessons for a few weeks as a teenager)”; Valerio Tricoli – “No, I haven’t, except a couple of guitar lessons when I was 14 or something”; Lucio Capece – “Yes (...) Beyond this basic elements I do not use at all what I learned. The approach that I’ve had to the instruments since several years now, is self-taught I would say.”

enhance reputation and prove beneficial in the long run. The lifestyle displays most clearly the difference compared to musicians in the institutionalized context, who often consider their musicianship a job, are most probably leading more organised and secured lives and do not accept playing a concert only for door money without a guarantee.

For a contemporary type of social structure, one should not forget the importance of the social capital. Social capital in the scene is manifested in friendships and acquaintances between the artists which often result in new musical collaborations, and which form the basic connecting force of the scene. Also, the way into the scene and the ability to acquire a position in it depends primarily on social capital: important social relations and acquaintances can lead to important contacts and collaborations and result in opportunities to play in important venues. The scene is an active network based on interaction and collaboration, which again enhances the establishment and stabilisation of social relations. Through continuous musical collaborations, as well as establishing, exchanging and sharing knowledge, aesthetics, attitudes and common history, the mutual recognition between the agents in the scene is constantly reproduced and their symbolic capital increased – they eventually establish and secure their positions within the scene and their connections to the others. There are many benefits of belonging to a recognizable community, both for personal development and for one's reputation (and success) in a larger context. This could explain the motivation of musicians to declare themselves as a part of the scene with a certain name and identity, although they usually reject any kind of categorization.

It could be argued that the principle of social capital is related to the almost non-existent critical attitude among the musicians in the scene. Due to the specific (and rather unfavourable) economic situation, one particularly works on social relations and does not necessarily want to publicly express a negative opinion on the music of another musician, especially if that musician is more prominent within the scene. For the success of a musician in the scene, it is essential to build good relations to the prominent members of the scene in order to be able to collaborate with them, get to play in their venues, or through prominent collaborators get to play in a prominent venue – all of those factors enhance one's symbolic capital. On the other

hand, an unevenness of social relations within the scene results in the scene splitting in several different subgroups that collaborate more often amongst themselves, while the contacts between those subgroups are relatively rare and loose.¹⁷⁸ It is also certainly possible to discover very similar musicians in Berlin who also have and have had “a daring relationship with materials that produce sound” or “the desire for experimentation and an urge to search for new sounds and ways of expression” (Möbius – Schick 2010: 3), supposed characteristics of the musicians of the Echtzeitmusik scene, but who have not been creatively involved in the scene whatsoever. Thus, as far as the belonging to or shaping of a scene are concerned, social aspects play as important a role as similarities in aesthetics or approaches.

4.2.2 Symbolic capital, legitimation and symbolic power

Although the Echtzeitmusik scene is not *per se* a hierarchical structure and hierarchical relations are rather taboo, it is quite obvious that some musicians, groups and venues are more renowned and recognized than others. A certain hierarchy thus exists, even though it is not predetermined, desired nor consciously planned, and it contradicts the underlying notion of equal relations within the scene, which are also implied by the practice of improvisation. All types of capital after Bourdieu – economic, cultural, social and symbolic – are conceived as resources for one to act in a field, and have a capacity to constitute hierarchies (cf. Swartz 1997: 115). The musicians who have gained recognition and authority (i.e. are considered legitimate and authentic – symbolic capital) have the power to “concentrate the attention of the scene on certain times, places and events” (Schwannhäußer 2010: 30) they are involved in. They also have the power to define “symbolical, spatial and social structures” (ibid.: 30) characteristic to the scene, as

¹⁷⁸ In my observation of the scene I have noticed several subgroups. For example, the musicians related to venues *Labor Sonor*, *Raumschiff Zitrone* (non-existent since 2006) and *ausland* appear as a core group of the scene; most of them have been in the scene for a long time, they are dominant discourse-producers and “power-holders” in the scene (cf. Chamy 2011: 307f). Another subgroup would be the group around the label *Schraum* (e.g. Torsten Papenheim, Merle Ehlers, Axel Haller, <http://www.schraum.de/>) – Dietrich Eichmann (2005: 62) for example states that they are “independent of ausland”. Another subgroup made the musicians around a half-gastronomic venue called *Die Remise*, which in the meantime disappeared. An international musicians’ collective around the label *Umlaut* is lately gaining more importance and prestige in the scene, and consists mainly of a younger generation of musicians, both composers and improvisers. There are also many musicians that play Free Jazz and conventional free improvised music, that are in the last years more intensely present as a constitutive part of the Echtzeitmusik scene (at least in the concert calendar, and supported by some venues).

well as a “kind of specialized knowledge, access, and association” (Blum 2003: 166) that a scene presupposes for the orientation within it. That is why events with certain musicians, curated by certain curators, or happening in certain venues appear more attractive to the knowing audience than some other, newer, or anonymous ones. Symbolic capital can also compensate for the general lack of money in the scene. Some venues or series can therefore function with very little money, since it is for the artists much more important than payment to play in a particular venue that by its reputation guarantees an adequate audience and the possibility of new invitations or collaboration offers.

According to Bourdieu, the most important level of legitimation in artistic fields is internal, i.e. gaining recognition from other producers in the same field, which are at the same time fellows in “the autonomous self-sufficient world of ‘art for art’s sake’” (Bourdieu 1993c: 51). In the economically independent fields, recognition and acceptance happen in the course of time and according to field-immanent mechanisms that often do not have anything to do with objective (external) criteria. Together with living the common history of the scene, the common experiences, profile and “codes” of the scene are being established. The agents that regularly take part in this process at the same time scale up their symbolic capital. A musician's reputation can sometimes even stem only from the amount of time they have spent in the scene, especially if they have been involved in events which are considered important for the history and profile of the scene. Further, the type and the strength of connections with the important people in the scene as well as the degree of both artistic and communicational skill count as important. Once the symbolic capital is present and legitimised, it can soon be taken for granted. Therefore the once-established power relations are often not easy to change (cf. Swartz 1997: 89). It is therefore often the case that musicians who already have a good reputation can be much freer in experimentation without threat to their status in the scene. On the contrary, the new ones have to struggle hard to be admitted in if they do not already have good contacts in the scene, are not known or not obviously aesthetically related.

Apart from the internal mutual recognition that is important for the existence and functioning of the scene, recognition and legitimation from so-called “high-culture”

has also been hoped for by the musicians. Such recognition for the Echtzeitmusik scene and its musicians can until now be found in more marginal (and elitist) sectors dedicated to contemporary music, but also at contemporary music festivals, such as *Maerzmusik*, *Donaueschinger Musiktage* and *Darmstädter Ferienkurse* in Germany¹⁷⁹. In order to be able to compete with “real”, “composed” music in that context, the Echtzeitmusik musicians regularly present themselves within conceptualized projects (lately often related to Cage), and rarely just with their regular improvising groups. This kind of recognition is actually similar to internal recognition; only the relations of power are different due to the slightly different socio-cultural profiles of the musicians and their positions in relation to dominant structures. Bourdieu also mentions two further levels of recognition, which will however always be hard to achieve for the Echtzeitmusik scene. One is “the consecration” granted “by the dominant fractions of the dominant class” (Bourdieu 1993c: 51), which might presuppose correspondence “to ‘bourgeois’ taste” (ibid.). On the other hand, recognition from popular culture is quite unlikely to happen in the scene as well, as its music is very unlikely to become “the choice of ordinary consumers, the ‘mass audience’” (ibid.).

As argued above, the distribution of symbolic capital can result in hierarchical relations even within seemingly non-hierarchical structures such as the Echtzeitmusik scene. However, since the symbolic value of capital is something that needs time to be established, so is a hierarchy in the scene not something predisposed and present already in the beginning, when still no essential common experiences were made, but gradually developed in the course of the scene’s existence. In addition to that, symbolic capital – or “the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition” (Bourdieu 1989: 23) – is also the basis of the so-called “symbolic power”. Symbolic power is according to Bourdieu best displayed in language, in which our perception and appreciation are inscribed, and is manifested in one’s power to impose the legitimate vision of the world (cf. ibid.: 20). Bourdieu talks about the words and the names “that construct social reality as much as they express it” (cf. ibid.: 20f) and

¹⁷⁹ Musicians of the Echtzeitmusik scene are also often invited to play at the contemporary music festivals internationally. They often say that playing one such festival brings them more money than playing “normal” concerts in Berlin venues in the whole year.

the “struggle for the production and imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world” (ibid.: 22). However, Bourdieu warns from pure constructions by pointing out that “symbolic efficacy depends on the degree to which the vision proposed is founded in reality” (ibid.: 23), and that the description makes things “only if it is true, that is, adequate to things” (ibid.). So, above all, “*symbolic power is power of consecration or revelation*, the power to consecrate or to reveal things that are already there” (ibid., emphasis in the original).

4.3 Positioning of the scene

The way that capitals work within the scene is tightly connected to the position of the scene in its context, i.e. the degree of its autonomy and independence. As previously described, the Echtzeitmusik scene is a part of the so-called free music scene in Berlin, which is rather marginal concerning general audience interest or commercial potential. Concretely, the core group of musicians that later identified themselves as the Echtzeitmusik scene almost from the beginning defined the place of their activity as “Berlin’s underground New Music scene”¹⁸⁰. The composer Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (1998: 11f) described the extremely marginalized position of contemporary New Music itself, which is the closest “high-cultural” counterpart to Echtzeitmusik: “Contemporary music – no matter if avant-gardist, ‘new’, moderate, conservative or reactionary – is a special sphere of culture. Sociological system-theorists talk about a *subsystem*. Conceived in that way, ‘new’ music is a subsystem in a subsystem of art music – today nonsensically called ‘classical music’ – that is situated within the subsystem music – where the autonomous quantitatively represents a minority – that falls into the subsystem of ‘all kinds of art’ within the subsystem ‘culture’ as one of the fundamental social subsystems. The calculation is somewhat more favourable if one goes from culture directly to ‘autonomous art’, because pop music is thereby spared, yet with such an elaborate description it stays blatantly obvious how marginal radical art music is today. It is a cultural quantité négligeable, an expert culture that one knows through prominent labels such as Darmstadt or Donaueschingen, it is an insider circle that one meets with a mixture

¹⁸⁰ That was stated on the old index page of the website www.echtzeitmusik.de, which is unfortunately not available online anymore.

of great regard, distant respect and complete alienation, because those who are active there seem to belong to the most intelligent and talented in their subject, even if a lively aesthetic experience, listening, is hardly connected with such qualities”.¹⁸¹ Relating to this kind of New Music – concretely, being its “underground” – the Echtzeitmusik scene is placed on the margin of the margin. And while contemporary New Music is still largely institutionally embedded and supported, the Echtzeitmusik scene creates its own system of support and reproduction, which can only be feasible in a case of high economic independence and autonomy.

Both the official New Music scene and the Echtzeitmusik scene are what Bourdieu calls (sub)fields of restricted production (Bourdieu 1993c: 39). In such fields the production is not aimed for mass audiences, as opposed to the so-called field of large-scale production, where the production is aimed for the market and consumption. In the field of restricted production the producers primarily produce for other producers within the field, thereby reaching relatively high artistic autonomy and independence from external factors and instances, as well as from commercial laws. The field of restricted production is usually the field of avant-gardist practices where a high degree of experimentation and innovation is allowed (cf. Johnson 1993: 16). Yet, Bourdieu makes a difference “between the consecrated avant-garde and the avant-garde” (Bourdieu 1993c: 53), which basically equals a difference between the official and the un-established avant-gardists, or “the established figures and the newcomers” (ibid.). This opposition can be applied both to the larger sector of contemporary New Music and to the inside of the scene itself. In both cases, the agents who according to field-immanent criteria possess a bigger

¹⁸¹ „Die zeitgenössische Musik – gleich, ob avantgardistisch, ‚neu‘, gemäßigt, konservativ oder reaktionär – ist eine Sondersphäre der Kultur. Soziologische Systemtheoretiker sprechen vom *Subsystem*. So gefaßt, ist die ‚neue‘ Musik ein Subsystem im Subsystem der Kunstmusik – heute unsinnigerweise „Klassik“ genannt – die innerhalb des Subsystems Musik – worin die autonome quantitativ eine Minderheit darstellt – angesiedelt ist, die in das Subsystem „Kunst aller Art“ innerhalb des Subsystems „Kultur“ als eines der fundamentalen gesellschaftlichen Teilsysteme fällt. Die Rechnung fällt etwas günstiger aus, wenn man von Kultur direkt zur „autonomen Kunst“ übergeht, weil damit die Pop-Musik ausgespart wird, doch bleibe bei derlei umständlicher Beschreibung überdeutlich, wie marginal radikale Kunstmusik heute ist. Sie ist eine kulturelle quantité négligeable, eine Expertenkultur, die man durch herausstechende Etiketten wie Darmstadt oder Donaueschingen kennt, sie ist ein Insider-Zirkel, dem man eine Mischung aus großem Respekt, distanzierter Ehrfurcht und völlig Befremden entgegenbringt, da die dort aktiven zu den Intelligentesten und Begabtesten ihres Faches zu gehören scheinen, auch wenn mit derlei Qualitäten kaum eine lebendige ästhetische Erfahrung, also ein Hören, verbunden wird.“

capital can be more quickly acknowledged as legitimate innovators. In the case of institutionalized practices, the agents within institutional frames will in their innovation more likely act in relation to the established frames of practice, whereas the independent agents will, besides the fact that they are not occupying acknowledged positions in the field, tend to produce farther beyond the possibly expected frames. Therefore the non-institutional innovators are in theory on the farthest margin of the margin of any related fields.

In the struggle for recognition in the form of e.g. financial support from the state, always relevant for non-profitable or non-profit-oriented practices, the agents that are fulfilling conventional criteria – by acknowledged education or legitimised professionalism – are always favoured. The “problem” occurs with the increasing number of arts and practices where agents do not fulfil official criteria and are therefore often excluded, this having nothing to do with their professionalism or quality. Especially since the 1990s, when the availability of the new media made artistic production possible even without conventional education and knowledge of the tradition, technicalities or skills, new artistic fields have been emerging whose practices cannot be categorized as “high” or “low”, “E” or “U”, anymore. Influences of technology and pop-culture are often essential and freedom from the constraints of tradition and institutionalized norms of practice sometimes yields creativity, which is for the still highly predetermined academic practices rather unthinkable. The Echtzeitmusik scene also carries those potentials and in order to pursue them, it consciously creates or occupies independent space where they can be freely developed.

Because of various (social, habitual, aesthetic) constraints that happen to obstruct communication between the institutionalized culture and the “underground”, it often happens that the more autonomous sectors (avant-gardes) of different fields or genres connect and collaborate, which has as its effect a stronger opposition between the two poles of the one genre than between the different genres themselves (cf. Bourdieu 1996: 120f). New media also offer many possibilities for multimedia artistic approaches, both in the work of individual artists and in collaborations. In its peak formative years, the Echtzeitmusik scene itself indeed opened up for collaboration and exchange with the performance and video-art

scenes that were based in the same “milieu” (as in the programming of *Labor Sonor*). The “milieu-connection” is considered very important by many musicians in the scene: a particular “socioeconomic milieu” that musicians belong to has recently been thematised often in the context of the scene’s identity and distinction (cf. *Labor Diskurs* 2011: 127ff). This particular milieu (as a space of lifestyles) displays the scene’s differences from the so-called “high-culture” and perhaps brings the scene closer to the “pop underground”; musicians indeed consciously avoid being anyhow “embedded in this academic framework” (Fagaschinski in *ibid.*) and rather identify themselves with places that belong to the so-called “underground”.

4.3.1 Economic aspects of the scene

The Echtzeitmusik scene can be seen both as an autonomous field with its own positions, and as a sub-subfield in the subfield of restricted production of a larger field of culture in Berlin, together with other more or less related practices, institutions, scenes and communities. Although agents in the Echtzeitmusik scene are also agents in some other fields and social contexts, a specific form of music-making and music itself is something that most of the agents in the scene have in common and that gathers them to the scene.¹⁸² Their capital as a resource for acting and position-taking within the scene thus also has to be related to this particular “music” (cf. Bohn 1991: 23). However, different than in e.g. music market (field of large-scale production), in this case the capital mostly does not serve to the exchange for the economic capital, since it lacks both agenda and prospect in that sense. In its symbolic form, it can only provide for its owner a better position in the field, which can in time be connected with some (even economic) privileges.

The collective disavowal of economic profit in artistic and literary fields as well as the “interest in disinterestedness” (Bourdieu 1993c: 40) in the economic sense, important for the artist’s image is connected with a rather romantic idea of a pure, uncompromising art, for which it is impossible to find any kind of material equivalent. The words of Gustave Flaubert cited in Bourdieu’s *Rules of Art* mirror the

¹⁸² There are some exceptions of e.g. musicians who are much informed by popular music in their approach, but who are essential parts of it due to firm social relations and long-term collaborations, e.g. Margareth Kammerer, Nicholas Bussmann, Fernanda Farah, Hanno Leichtmann.

misfortune of “serious” writers, whose works are devalued as opposed to commercial works of “journalism, serials or the theatre”: “...I don’t see what relation there is between a five-franc coin and an idea. You have to love Art for Art’s sake; otherwise, the humblest job is worth more.” (In Bourdieu 1996: 45.) Unlike the situation in the Classical Music and even Jazz sectors, where music professionalism often means having a well-paid job, in the Echtzeitmusik scene professionalism rather refers to the readiness to take the riskiest social and existential positions for the sake of music and individual aesthetic ideals.¹⁸³ However, reality often threatens to destroy the idealistic picture of artists living and working only for their art and not caring about surviving or receiving something material in return for their work. Thus, “[i]n spite of its autonomy, the realm of culture remains subordinate to the economy“ (Swartz 1997: 79), whether in indirect (e.g. given conditions for living and working of the artists) or direct ways (concrete financial means for realization of projects, fees).

Bourdieu argues that “[t]he propensity to move towards the economically most risky positions, and above all the capacity to persist in them (a condition for all avant-garde undertakings which precede the demands of the market), even when they secure no short-term economic profit, seem to depend to a large extent on possession of substantial economic and social capital” (Bourdieu 1993c: 67). For the Berlin musicians, this manifests itself in the living and working conditions that allow them to pursue their unconventional and unprofitable music making, and make possible staying in the risky positions long enough to receive the symbolic profit they can bring (ibid.: 68). A considerable part of the musicians in the Echtzeitmusik scene indeed cannot make a living from their own music-making. Their chosen musical “profession” is unfortunately still “one of the least professionalized there is”, as they are often “able to exercise what they regard as

¹⁸³ As it says in one explanation by *INM*, the musicians in the free New Music scene make this kind of music “because they are convinced of a trendsetting importance, quality and necessity of their work, which goes beyond the directly marketable. They are therefore ready to put up with considerably lower fees than otherwise usual and play before a smaller audience. This proves a strong idealism and by no means a lack of professionalism” („...weil sie von der zukunftsweisenden Bedeutung, der Qualität und der Notwendigkeit ihrer Arbeit überzeugt sind, die über das unmittelbar Vermarktbar weit hinausgeht. Dafür sind sie bereit, mit erheblich niedrigeren Gagen Vorlieb zu nehmen, als sie dies andernorts gewohnt sind und auch, vor einem kleineren Publikum aufzutreten. Das zeugt von großem Idealismus und keineswegs von mangelnder Professionalität.“). <http://inm-berlin.de/page.php?pgid=34>, accessed May 15, 2012.

their main occupation only on condition that they have a secondary occupation which provides their main income”¹⁸⁴ (ibid.: 43). Yet, in comparison to other big artistic centres, Berlin still offers a possibility of doing those “bread-and-butter activities” (ibid.) as mainly side activities, which consume a minimum of time and energy and enable keeping the artistic occupation in the centre – which could be understood as a form of a necessary basic economic capital. On the other hand, the same conditions often presuppose a lack of differentiated infrastructure and external support, which forces a musician to take over many roles at the same time and take care of all the aspects of her/his music-making on her/his own. Exactly the DIY-principle¹⁸⁵ is present in all the aspects of the scene life, be it keeping venues, organizing concert series, or writing, self-marketing and publishing a book. As for the scene, the DIY-principle is essential for any kind of independent musical practice (cf. Kruse 2003: 10f).

The spaces that the Echtzeitmusik scene created and used in the course of its existence have regularly offered conditions regarding fees, audience and other conventionalities around the performance procedures, which would be unthinkable in the high-cultural sector. Also, artworks are rarely produced; it is rather a matter of a pure practice¹⁸⁶. Yet, even though a generally negative attitude towards commodification, consumption and “institutionalized cultural authority” (Bourdieu 1993c: 39) is popular in the left-oriented scene, it is rather a consequence than an aim. Music is namely so experimental that it cannot expect any commercial success, so it correspondingly has no unrealistic aspirations of the kind. The musicians actually do not reject economic profit *per se*; however, they primarily point out the importance of holding on to one's own aesthetic ideals and attitudes (cf. Labor Diskurs 2011: 128ff). On the other hand, since the criteria of artistic value in the scene are very specific and scene-internal (and also not clearly defined), they are

¹⁸⁴ It is not rare that musicians have to do side jobs to earn extra money, e.g. as bartenders, taxi drivers, security personal, programmers, graphic designers, proof readers, music teachers, members of publicly funded music ensembles etc.

¹⁸⁵ Short for Do-It-Yourself, which refers to the principle of doing things yourself, without help from professionals or experts. It is often referred to as DIY-Culture or the DIY-movement in the context of punk, squatter culture, different forms of activism, alternative culture, party culture etc. (cf. McKay 1998).

¹⁸⁶ What Derek Bailey, for example, discusses in his book about improvisation (Bailey 1987), brought to the point in the title of the German translation by Hermann J. Metzler and Alexander von Schlippenbach, as *Kunst ohne Werk* – art without an artwork.

hardly compatible with the criteria presupposed by any external instances, and thus rather unlikely to be recognized by cultural authorities.

Also, a question arises if the actual practice of the Echtzeitmusik scene is directly a result of certain (economic) conditions in it. Wolfgang Seidel (2011: 113) assumed that the tendency towards smaller ensembles or solos in the scene is the consequence of the habit to share the (usually rather small amount of) door money among the performing artists after the concert, this being their only “fee”. He also assumed that the more complex compositions for bigger ensembles which would require rehearsals are also not feasible under the given circumstances and that “[t]he compositional aspect must out of necessity limit itself to instructions, that are to be filled with improvisation”¹⁸⁷ (ibid.). If one is lucky, states Seidel further, one can try to snatch “a commission that allows a bigger musical form, for instance from a festival funded with public means or by sponsors”¹⁸⁸ (ibid.). It is indeed true that the bigger projects like *Das Splitter Orchester* would not be possible without funding and that it is always welcome and inspiring to have financial means to realize a project, a tour or a collaboration. Nevertheless, it is rather presumptuous to assume that the reason for such an appearance of the music and the practice might simply be a lack of finances. As one musician remarked, Echtzeitmusik is rather a “post-economic music”, where “the exploitability of the music (...) gets replaced by the likes of ‘the new sound’ or the wish to be new at all costs, not to repeat oneself” (Ehlers in Labor Diskurs 2011: 128).

It is indeed interesting to reflect on how the practice would look if there would be a steady financial support to the scene and the musicians, yet it does not seem very likely that they would in that case start writing compositions for bigger ensembles or similar. On the other hand, the appearance of music within the scene is certainly a mirror of the conditions of its existence. Maybe the most important thing is that the absence of money, which – if available – inevitably brings certain responsibilities or demands of meeting certain expectations, enhances the establishment of an independent economy in which values like autonomy, freedom

¹⁸⁷ „Das Kompositorische muss sich notgedrungen auf Spielanleitungen beschränken, die durch Improvisation aufzufüllen sind.“

¹⁸⁸ „Wer Glück hat, ergattert einen Auftrag, der eine größere musikalische Form zulässt, etwa von einem mit öffentlichem Gelder oder durch SponsorInnen finanzierten Festival.“

of expression and the possibility of experimentation are held in the highest regard. Such an environment enhances a variety of artists and practices as well as the diversity of cultural production, and thereby actually makes the professionalism of the “underground” art possible. Even though musicians themselves once asked if their musical scene is “merely a resort for failed existences and dysfunctional people” (Trio Sowari 2011: 115), the impression is rather that musicians chose that scene and that lifestyle for certain reasons, which are not of economic nature, as no one who explicitly aims for a big career and financial gain “ends up” in the Echtzeitmusik scene. The contradiction that perhaps emerges in the wish of the musicians of the scene and other similarly profiled and positioned artists to find shelter in the subsidized culture is justified by the fact that it might be, under certain conditions, the only solution for further existence and development (cf. Hotz, Appendix 8).

4.3.2 The scene’s autonomy

The scene is “a specific realm of activity” (Johnson 1993: 15), whose degree of autonomy “is defined by its ability to reject external determinants and obey only the specific logic of the field, governed by specific forms of symbolic capital” (ibid.). And indeed, the Echtzeitmusik scene has already managed to function for years “without any [continuous] public or private subsidies, being supported only by the idealism of the artists. The cover is kept low and artists play for the door money. What the artists get is no more than symbolic...Zum Leben zuwenig, zum Sterben zuviel”.¹⁸⁹ The kind of autonomy and retreat into self-run independent spaces with self-defined criteria of evaluation actually enables the scene to protect its self-determined music practice from external constraints (cf. Nauck 2003: 16) which threaten to limit or even discard it, and gains time for legitimation of the scene, its practice and its agents. The following quote of Bourdieu implies the same idea: “The existence of the writer, as fact and as value, is inseparable from the existence of the literary field as an autonomous universe endowed with specific principles of evaluation of practices and works. (...) In fact, the invention of the writer, in the

¹⁸⁹ “Too little to live, too much to die.” The quote is from an earlier text from the www.echtzeitmusik.de website, which is no longer available.

modern sense of the term, is inseparable from the progressive invention of a particular social game, which I term the *literary field* and which is constituted as it establishes its autonomy, that is to say, its specific laws of functioning, within the field of power.” (Bourdieu 1993c: 163, emphasis in the original.) In order to establish a new profile of a musician the scene first ought to establish its own autonomy, its own laws of functioning in order to make such kind of musicianship possible, but also to subsequently engage in a struggle over imposing its own definition of a musician and music-making on a higher level.¹⁹⁰

Autonomy is a feature characteristic of the fields of restricted production. The scene is autonomous since it is able to function and reproduce itself following mechanisms that are not directly related to material gain. The scene thus represents what Bourdieu calls an “upside-down economic world” (Bourdieu 1993c: 40), where the economy of practice is based on the inversion of the basic principles of economy: “that of business (it excludes the pursuit of profit and does not guarantee any sort of correspondence between investments and monetary gains), that of power (it condemns honours and temporal greatness), and even that of institutionalized cultural authority (the absence of any academic training or consecration may be considered a virtue)” (ibid.: 39). In an ideal situation of complete economic independence and autonomy, recognition and respect for the producers comes exclusively from other producers, i.e. from “those who recognize no other criterion of legitimacy than recognition by those whom they recognize” (ibid.: 38).

In the case of the scene, a relatively high autonomy of practice was most clearly present in the beginning, when the scene was quite small and closed, and when only the members of the community at the time defined and recognized the criteria according to which they had been mutually evaluated (even if they had nothing to

¹⁹⁰ Many ways of music-making within the scene are still not taken seriously by the “official” sector because they do not fit some established criteria of how a “serious” musician and the practice are defined. If those criteria stay unprovoked, the dominant sector only firms its status of the one who sets up the criteria and also makes sure the existing order is not disturbed. Even if it never reaches the status equal to the “dominant”, the Echtzeitmusik scene can, for example by “enlargement of the set of people who have a legitimate voice” in the matters concerned (Bourdieu 1993c: 42), try to legitimise its broadened definition of the music and the musician.

do with aesthetic criteria). In recent years however, this level of autonomy has been loosened up by the scene's intention to really establish and define itself, and also get more external recognition and public visibility, especially given the fact that it is very dependent on public funding. In this process, the scene still does not explicitly conform to the criteria of instances it seeks recognition from, but tries to formulate its values and rules and legitimise its own practices. At the same time, the internal functioning of the scene has lately also slightly altered in the course of the changes in the scene's infrastructure and the generational shift, which to some degree relativized the invisible hierarchy between the musicians, venues and other agents in the scene. Notwithstanding, the production in the scene is still primarily based on a permanent interaction and networking between the artists, which always produce new possibilities of "survival" and thereby still keep the practices of the Echtzeitmusik scene highly autonomous and relatively independent from economy and external factors.

High autonomy of practice also presupposes an almost complete lack of (external) audience, or at least the fact that artistic production does not existentially depend on it. It is not surprising, since most people do not have cultural competences to be able to develop an interest in improvised and experimental music (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 38). And indeed, in the Echtzeitmusik scene the audience has always for the most part consisted of fellow musicians and other scene insiders – a pity, considering its artistic aspirations and socially critical dimension (cf. Trio Sowari 2011: 117f). Nevertheless, this music indeed needs a special kind of a listener, characterized by readiness for "open listening and a willingness to question familiar musical approaches and concepts" (ibid.). Only recently has the audience in the Echtzeitmusik scene been constituted as a separate entity. This is largely a result of the projects and events in which the scene partially reaches out of its typical spaces and thereby gains a broader visibility. Berlin is in this regard also a type of a city that is able to attract and host a high amount of people who are interested in experimental arts.

Although some of the Echtzeitmusik events in the meanwhile do not lack in external interest, this audience still seems not to overlap much with the e.g. New Music audience, even though a common interest could be assumed. The reasons for

a relatively hard access for the potentially interested audience of the New Music scene might be some possible failures in the scene's marketing as well as what seems to be a basic ideological and social clash. Up until the publication of the *Echtzeitmusik* book the scope and profile of the *Echtzeitmusik* practices had been largely unclear. The website only confused matters more as it did not have any fixed criteria of publication of events. The music itself is not transparent and easily accessible and to an uninformed listener it can appear as an undifferentiated and unpleasant sound amalgam, lacking in variety (both in a single concert or seen through longer periods of time), even more because of the daily abundance of concerts (no exclusivity). Further, there is also no guarantee of aesthetic value whatsoever, and part of the audience certainly cannot identify with the character and the context of the *Echtzeitmusik* venues. The *Echtzeitmusik* scene in that sense perhaps cannot offer the same type of "elitism" as does New Music or any other arts and practices belonging to the high-cultural sector. The aspired recognition and legitimation of the scene might have a potential to change the structure of the field and modify the access of the New Music audience to *Echtzeitmusik*. Actually, the *Echtzeitmusik* musicians are present on the New Music events like *Donaueschingen Musiktage* or *Maerzmusik* for more than a decade, yet often under inadequate labels which can misrepresent music and negatively influence its perception. On the other hand, when label is completely missing the musicians find it hard to communicate their music in the first place (cf. Labor Diskurs 2011: 125ff).

4.3.3 Newcomers and the structural change

As already stated above, the structure of the field is determined by "the capital of specific properties which governs success in the field and the winning of the external or specific profits (...) which are at stake in the field" (Bourdieu 1993c: 30). The agents in the field, in this case e.g. venues, musicians or groups of musicians, are thus defined "by possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital (recognition) and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of the distribution of this specific capital" (ibid.). The differing distribution of capital results in a hierarchical structure of the scene, which is always subject to change. Each of the established positions, their power and the determinations they impose on their occupants, are always related to and

depending on the other positions and agents in the field (cf. *ibid.*). Changes are mostly noticeable in the process of the establishment of newcomers as well as in infrastructural changes in the scene, which are often dependent of each other. In the Echtzeitmusik scene, for example, the process of gentrification have made many venues close and many musicians move to other parts of the city. The new venues opened in those parts of the city can through favourable location (proximity to most of the artists and possible audience) and slightly different accessibility (relatively short history, and thereby no clear profile or specific reputation yet) attract more audience (even if not always a distinguished one) and thereby also artists (even the established ones) in spite of their shorter “social age” (Bourdieu 1996: 122).

In general, when newly arising artistic practices which fall outside of existing categories increasingly start to gain recognition, they start to represent a competition to the established practices in the field of cultural production (cf. Bourdieu 1993c: 32). While institutional avant-gardes simply replace the previous avant-garde at its position in the field, as part of an established process of progress in “traditional” thought, the emergence of an independent avant-garde has a potential to change the established positions, the so-called “space of possibles”, and thereby displace the existing structure of the field. Similar type of change or opposition is also the one “between *artistic generations*, often only a few years apart, between the ‘young’ and the ‘old’, the ‘neo’ and the ‘paleo’, the ‘new’ and the ‘outmoded’” (Bourdieu 1993c: 53). In any case, “the initiative of change falls almost by definition on the newcomers” (Bourdieu 1993c: 58). And even though they are in the beginning “those least endowed with specific capital” (*ibid.*), when the conditions allow that they have adequate resources to progress, the structure of the field can be changed. The scene for example saw one such essential change in the arrival of the *2:13 Club* in the scene dominated by *Anorak*, which completely changed the further development of the scene.

The integration of the new (generation of) musicians in the scene largely depends on the above mentioned symbolic capital. As already hinted above, this capital is based on the one hand on the cultural capital of the musicians – e.g. level of skill combined with originality and distinction of aesthetic approach or simply

accordance with the aesthetic orientation of the group – and on the other on the quality of their contacts to important insiders. Jürg Bariletti, when talking about the attitude of his former venue *Stralau 68*, described how difficult it sometimes was for new and unknown musicians to enter the scene: “This openness is important; it’s important that one doesn’t have to first fulfil all sorts of conditions in order to even be able to set foot in the place and perform, conditions like being connected here and there and knowing this and that person. The one single critical point is the music...” (Bariletti 2011: 98.) Since the integration and recognition of newcomers changes the positions and through that also the invisible power relations within the scene, this process sometimes takes time. Bourdieu saw it in terms of a struggle, where the agents are constantly either defending or improving their positions within the field (cf. Bourdieu 1993c: 30). The newcomers sometimes indeed succeed in quickly becoming well integrated into the scene and collaborate often with older, more established musicians. However, many of them establish a relatively independent status in relation to the existing scene structures, which is largely conditioned by the above mentioned changes within the city that essentially affect the scene as well. This could, for example, be said for the younger musicians working primarily with electronics, which appeared on the scene a few years ago and reside almost exclusively in Neukölln.

4.4 Discourse

Bourdieu’s idea of constructing the vision of the world by means of language (cf. Bourdieu 1989: 20) relates to some degree of the concept of a discourse. In each field of practice, next to the objective givens and relations which practices and objects are embedded in (non-discursive level), there are also corresponding discourses. They are in language- or text-like form and represent shared knowledge about social, scientific, artistic or any other phenomena of relevance in the field. Bourdieu rarely uses the word ‘discourse’ and typically not with quite the same meaning as the most significant discourse theorist Michel Foucault. For example, in the work *Outline of a Theory of Practice* Bourdieu mentions “discourse about practice” (cf. Bourdieu 1977: 16) referring to the agent’s “reflexive and quasi-theoretical return on to his own practice” (ibid.: 18) that is “[i]nvited by the anthropologist’s questioning” (ibid.). Discourse is thus here a mere verbal description of practices.

However, in some of Bourdieu's other writings and concepts it is possible to recognize characteristics, roles and functions that are usually ascribed to discourses by Foucault. For example, when Bourdieu states that "[s]ociology must include a sociology of the perception of the social world, a sociology of the construction of visions of the world which themselves contribute to the construction of this world" (Bourdieu 1989: 18), he seems to have discourses in mind. By saying this, Bourdieu points out the need to "break with objectivism" (structuralism) and to include in social analysis that which "had to be excluded in order to construct objective reality" (ibid.). Therewith he meant that a sociologist must have in mind the agents' personal views of the world as well, at the same time not forgetting that the construction of the agents' vision of the world "is carried out under structural constraints" (ibid.).

In contrast to Bourdieu, who was an anthropologist and sociologist and often worked in the field with his research subjects, Foucault's subjects have rather been found in history. Foucault thus mostly dealt with written, archived knowledge that remained and outlived the practices (cf. Foucault 2002: 6f). His analyses were for example concerned with the constitution of scientific disciplines (cf. Foucault 2007), or concepts like madness, discipline and knowledge in institutional and historical contexts, among other things. In his *Archeology of Knowledge* (first published in 1969) Foucault described a methodology used in his previous works, in which objects or practices are exclusively seen as verbally formulated discourse categories. There he defines discourses as consisting of discursive formations of objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies (cf. Foucault 2002: 34ff). Michael Schwab-Trapp summarized this as follows: "Discursive formations produce the objects they deal with; they determine the use and the semantic field of concepts that are used for descriptions of those objects; they determine the modalities in which a statement can legitimately happen; and finally they determine the possible ways the participants can in their talk take part in the discourse"¹⁹¹ (Schwab-Trapp 2006: 264). Discourses are essential for constitution and perception of reality even though

¹⁹¹ „Diskursive Formationen erzeugen die Gegenstände, die sie behandeln; sie bestimmen den Gebrauch und das semantische Feld der Begriffe, die zu Beschreibung dieser Gegenstände verwandt werden; sie legen die Modalitäten fest, in denen eine Äußerung legitimerweise erfolgen kann; schließlich entscheiden sie über die möglichen Wege, die die Diskursteilnehmer in ihrer Rede beschreiten können.“

discursive practice, unlike habitual practice, is not necessarily body-bound and agent-related. Although it is reasonable to assume that objects and practices are, as a “material”, already present before the discourse in which they occur as discourse facts, their only way to enter the social reality is through discourse, in which they are thematized, provided with adequate terms, meanings and values (cf. *ibid.*).

Discourses are thus “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 2002: 54). And although they are “composed of signs”, “what they do is more than use these signs to designate things” (*ibid.*). Hannelore Bublitz expands this definition, describing discourses as “rule-governed practices that not only describe objects, like language or other symbolic forms of expression, but really produce that which they are talking about. In that consists, next to their constructive character, their constitutive character, too: they are powerful and constitutive of reality.”¹⁹² (Bublitz 2006: 258.) Discourses use signs or symbols, mostly language, to describe, reflect and evaluate reality, at the same time representing and transmitting knowledge about it; they function as “ordering patterns of social reality”¹⁹³ (Bublitz 2003: 46). Meanings, categorizations and evaluations of reality contained in discourses do not appear external or constructed, but rather integrated and “natural” in relation to reality (cf. Diaz-Bone et al. 2007: [7]). The idea of discursive space thus, similar to Bourdieu’s idea of the “space of possibles” (Bourdieu 1993c: 30), represents a “field of perception”, a “realm of meaning” which serves as a space of thought and discourse for those who act within it (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 61).

A discursive practice is for Foucault a supra-individual reality, a kind of practice that belongs to collectives rather than individuals and is located in social areas or fields (Diaz-Bone et al. 2007: 2). It represents a principle of organization and a common socio-cognitive schema of a particular field (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 81). Discourses thereby form another level of perception, next to Bourdieu’s social space and space of lifestyles, called by Diaz-Bone “interdiscursive space” (*ibid.*: 119ff). The

¹⁹² „...regelgeleitete Praktiken, die Gegenstände nicht nur bezeichnen, wie die Sprache oder andere symbolische Ausdrucksformen, sondern das, worüber sie sprechen, real hervorbringen. Darin besteht, neben ihren konstruktiven, ihr konstitutiver Charakter: sie sind wirkmächtig und wirklichkeitskonstitutiv.“

¹⁹³ „Ordnungsmuster sozialer Wirklichkeit“

concept of interdiscursive space presupposes interaction and exchange among discourses. By containing symbolic representation of and a particular point of view on respective object or practice, discourses can in interdiscursive space fully constitute the objects or practices they stand for. If objects and practices are not thematised in discourse and are therefore also not part of the interdiscursive space, they are practically non-existent in the public awareness.

Interdiscursive space is a space of negotiating meaning, a place of formulating distinction towards the outside and commonality towards the inside. Whereas Bourdieu's principle of distinction actually "excludes the deliberate search for distinction" (Bourdieu 1989: 20), and is understandable to socialized agents who are able to relate signs of distinction (practices, tastes etc.) to positions in social space (cf. *ibid.*: 19f), interdiscursive space "contains and produces meanings that relate to the values of objects and lifestyles and that can become a reference point in the processes of distinction"¹⁹⁴ (Diaz-Bone 2010: 120). Discourses thus contain interpretations of "reality" that can provide orientation for a collective lifestyle (cf. *ibid.*: 121), as well as for any kind of collective belief or practice. On the other hand, discourses can also, because of their symbolic form, be completely decoupled from the "reality" and contain categories of knowledge that are conceivable even if fully abstract and without correlating to the objective world. Discursive practice has in any case less to do with relations between discourse (verbalizing things) and the things themselves; it is rather concentrated on the relations between different elements within discourse – chosen terms, their meanings, function and so on (cf. *ibid.*: 90).

4.5 Discourse in the Echtzeitmusik scene

The scene's discourse consists of the reflections by the musicians themselves on their existence and their practice within larger discursive contexts. In that process they search for adequate terms to designate their practices and aspects of personal lifestyle. The formulation of the aesthetics of Reductionism is one example:

¹⁹⁴ „Der Interdiskursraum enthält und produziert solche Semantiken, die die Wertigkeit der Objekte und die Wertigkeit der Lebensführung betreffen, die in Distinktionsprozessen Bezugspunkt werden können.“

resulting from a general dissatisfaction with the state of improvised music at the time, the musicians proposed (at least for a certain time) their own solutions and attitudes regarding sound, form and practice in general. This has been done by either aligning with or opposing the models of the selected related discourses and their respective communities in Berlin. One of the first distinctions was the one opposing the bourgeois culture and cultural establishment, which has been closely connected to the scene's spatial and ideological context since its earliest years. Regarding this basic distinction there is a kind of contradictory tendency: on the one hand there is a rejection of norms and conventions of the official musical life, and on the other there is an indirect search for recognition exactly in this sector, yet of course, preferably under self-defined conditions and keeping almost full autonomy. The wish is not to subsume itself to the existing structures but to establish a new, self-defined, flexible category that could perhaps even have the same function as the categories of Classical Music or Jazz and their respective positions.

4.5.1 The nature of the scene's discourse

“Every subculture – every social group, large or small, which can be considered in some way subcultural – carries a set of narratives about itself, some of which are generated internally while others, usually more visible and pervasive, are developed and deployed in and by the society around it. (...) Every narrative by or about a subculture is a matter of position-taking – both within that subculture and outside it...” (Gelder 2007: 2.) In the Echtzeitmusik scene concretely, the inner discourse (self-reflection) is clearly prevalent. That discourse, which has emerged by reflecting both one's own practice and position in the Berlin field of culture, was a tool for identification and self-structuring, as well as a statement of distinction. Knowledge about the practice and the scene, as it was formulated in the course of the scene's existence, has for a long time not been explicitly verbally formulated and written down; for the public remain only certain events, practices and aesthetics which have had the biggest impact and were therefore most present in discourse (or, which have had the biggest impact because they were early “discursivized”). Yet the internal knowledge of the scene has always been reproduced and transmitted in corresponding practices which, in spite of their fine

differences, show a considerable degree of commonality. That commonality seems to be manifested in the taste for sounds (choice of musical material), understanding of musical process and performance, as well as socio-political attitude.

Since an inner discourse does not primarily have an intention to serve as a representation towards the outside, that discourse also has a specific form in which considerably more weight is put on particular themes, while others might not be included in reflection because they are simply taken for granted. When such a largely oral, non-systematized and thereby almost completely unavailable inner discourse production of the scene (apart from some rare exceptions) is intended to be fixed in the form of a book, the characteristics of the inner discourse change. Agents' reflections of their own practice, especially if they are aimed at providing an official or public account of that practice, are then very probably subjected to a certain degree of deliberate construction. In the "self-discursivizing" process, the practices that were initially in best case informed by already existing discourses, are then provided with self-determined terminology and descriptions. Such process of discursivization certainly represents only a selection in which the inner discourse takes a form that might be compelling to the outside, yet at the same time can serve for a self-documentation and a clearer self-perception.

The notion of the scene and its selected members presented in the *Echtzeitmusik* book resembles genre histories or fan narrations described by Diaz-Bone (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 222f). Those narrations usually try to advocate for the recognition and appreciation of one's own subculture or a scene by, for example, stating its social commitment, unique aesthetic profile and identity that were formed in opposition to the forerunners or competitors, in which case the most well-known names and most successful artists and their biographies are used to support the story; they also bring chronological views on genres, lists of the artists' names, and other important data for the identity of the respective genre, as well as discursive construction and structure of the knowledge of the genre (cf. *ibid.*). The big names occupy special positions and stand as representatives for all the others that have not (yet) made a name for themselves. This kind of genre narration is usually written by critics or fans based on first-hand information – Diaz-Bone thus categorizes it as an inside view as well (cf. *ibid.*: 222). However, the narration about the *Echtzeitmusik* scene in

the book almost resembles an autobiography, being arranged and largely written by the musicians themselves – self-proclaimed or authorized speakers – who turn to acts of self-definition largely because of the lack of external initiative and/or interest. As such, this narration is determined by a particular group of writers and in that sense also not as anonymous and supra-individual as it is conceived in Foucault's discourse theory (cf. Diaz-Bone 2005: 541). The scientific view should on the other hand strive for representations of both the main and unimportant positions, as well as thematization of both the unimportant and the special in the field, if the aim is to reconstruct the realistic structure of the field (cf. *ibid.*: 223).

In spite of its activity, diversity and scope, the Echtzeitmusik scene has not yet been that present in the public awareness. That is indeed partially due to its specific social and economic status, but certainly also to the fact that its discourse was at first not directed towards the outside and thereby not fulfilling its mediating function. Since the scene as such did therefore not exist as a category of knowledge in the public awareness for a long time, the outsider attempts to understand it and describe it are largely missing. That is why a clear wish and a need to provide a self-definition of the scene increasingly emerged, in order to avoid possible misleading and limiting external classifications. In its discourse directed towards the outside, the scene has an account of itself that draws primarily on the distinction on an aesthetic and social level. The discourse is organised around different subjects (thought to be) important for the distinguished identity of the scene, but that also regularly appear in contemporary music, Free Improvisation, new “underground” art and other related discourses. The important aspects of practice in the Echtzeitmusik scene are in a discursive form finally able to represent a contribution to the contemporary musical thought and take part in dialogue, exchange or confrontation with other relevant discourses within the discursive formation. Even more important, the scene can finally be perceived both as a social and aesthetic phenomenon.

4.5.2 The role of discourse for the scene

The term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ has been used within the scene since its beginning. However, it has not really been used by the scene's relative outsiders to describe

and to locate the musicians almost until the publication of the *Echtzeitmusik* book. The musicians have rather been perceived as individuals or part of their particular active projects, and mostly contextualized in the European or worldwide free improv scene. Yet, through the publishing of the *Echtzeitmusik* book and promoting of the designation ‘*Echtzeitmusik*’, the scene has indeed reached somewhat broader visibility and recognition. The process of (self-)discursivization can prove to be essential especially in the case of new social and artistic phenomena that are not (yet) institutionalised, not that interesting for the media, not yet noticed by academia and are generally based on orally transmitted knowledge (i.e. mostly operating without written texts). Just as avant-garde music throughout the 20th century has largely needed theory (often composer’s theory) to explain itself and prove its “musicality” to an often non-appreciative audience, the *Echtzeitmusik* scene also needs a mediator which would give an “access code” to the outsider and testify to its relevance and uniqueness. A publicly oriented discourse offers a possibility of access from the outside, but on the other hand also takes the function of a common reference and thereby gathering principle for the involved parties. The idea of making internal discourses visible also stood behind the *Echtzeitmusik* book project, as one of the editors Gisela Nauck¹⁹⁵ explains: “Behind these plans lay the realisation that only through written publication would the controversial strategies, approaches, and theories that course through the scene become a part of public discourse and find recognition therein. Only on the basis of texts – only when theorization takes place – would the scene’s inner discourse about the music heard in this wide array of clubs and alternative music venues become accessible to non-insiders. Words, conceptual fields, abstractions, and classifications would make it possible to communicate this discourse publicly and thereby gain a wider response.” (Nauck 2011: 9.)

The process of discursivation is important for music because music is in itself ephemeral, even when articulated according to a known system (like e.g. tonal Classical Music or Jazz) or fixed on a recording. Even if music can be directly bodily and emotionally experienced, and even if it calls for enjoying the pure sounds as they are, music still seems to be more understandable if it is additionally described

¹⁹⁵ Not a musician, but a musicologist involved in the scene for many years and thereby also an insider.

and classified in words. Echtzeitmusik could as well make use of words to communicate the “true” notion of itself. It is a pervading process, as music does not simply get discursively doubled in discourse, but also put in relation to a network of terms and concepts which are used in knowledge to represent “real”/“sounding” music (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 231). In knowledge music emerges in a thinkable, tangible and audible space (ibid.), yet it is therewith not perceived as something that has been “contaminated” by verbalization, but rather directly experienced (ibid.: 231f). The verbalization of music is thus not to be understood only as a representation of some previous reality, but as a “discursive production of a representation with a claim to reality”¹⁹⁶ (ibid.: 232). Only if music is provided with adequate concepts, which can provide a connection between the immediate experience and understanding, can it be adequately perceived and understood, argues Diaz-Bone.

Objects, terms, speakers and themes become through discursive practice a part of common knowledge (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 119). The knowledge that might already be immanent in practice thereby gets ordered, its elements get identified and named and its relations to the existing discursive environment determined. As such, discourses make both a tool for identification and a reference point for the musicians; also, they make the notion of the practice (or any other subject of discourse) present as a category of knowledge in the bigger discursive formation. For example, discourses can serve as an orientation for the musicians looking for an adequate field of practice, or as a public notion of aesthetics and artistic attitude an artist can decide to align with in order to be publicly perceived and categorized in a certain way. In the scene’s beginning, the musicians did not share such common basic knowledge and had no common reference point; they rather had a variety of educational backgrounds, attitudes and capitals. However, in the course of common experiences and interaction they have built a common history and knowledge, both relating to their own position within the Berlin cultural space and to the features of their own practice(s). This knowledge includes both a sort of theory of musical practice and the practical knowledge applicable in the concrete situations of the scene life. However, the public discursive contributions of the scene as a whole that

¹⁹⁶ „im Sinne der diskursiven Erzeugung einer Darstellung mit Wirklichkeitsanspruch“

have largely shaped the public notion of the scene have been rather sparse and a product of only a particular “discursive elite” (Schwab-Trapp 2006: 274). That is why the still dominant discourse of *Echtzeitmusik* sometimes does not seem to fully correspond to the lively musical life of the scene. A characteristic of the practice in the scene is anyway that it is always in flux, experimenting with new forms before the previous ones could even become points of reflection. It is also very important that in such non-discursive, intuitive and bodily practice as music-making, other guiding principles of practice apart from discourse might be just as important and influential such as intuition, imitation, or personal taste.

The phase in which the scene seemed the most aesthetically homogenous from the present perspective – the time of the concert series *2:13 Club* and the subsequent phase of the so-called Berlin Reductionism – has been perceived as such because the respective activity was extensively and contemporaneously reflected, even in written media. Also, the discourse production back then had a relatively clear counterpart in “reality” and did not feel the responsibility to cover many diverse musical practices and personalities. However, the self-view on the history of the scene from the present perspective implies that the scene was of a bigger scope than what stayed documented as its official line of development. While the discourse of Berlin Reductionism continued to have the role of the dominant discourse related to the practice of independent improvised music in Berlin, the scene welcomed numerous new musicians, broadening and diversifying. And even if the diversification was not always that blatant, but often on a level of detail barely perceivable to the average listener, in contrast to the unifying label of Reductionism one starts instead to talk about the plurality of styles or simply avoid any kind of specific labels, whereby the chosen term ‘*Echtzeitmusik*’ finally does not have any strictly music-related meaning. The question to what amount does the inner discursive practice in the scene really have a scene-wide effect is hard to answer. The inner sense of community in any case seems to be related to personal aesthetic affinities, *habitus* and social capital.

4.5.3 (Self-)labelling

Discourses and terms have the power of producing a particular notion of something even before it was experienced in the “real” world. They are also able to influence a perception of the phenomena by fixing it in language. Labelling has thus first of all an influence on perception of the social world, cultural phenomena and so on. For the producers, the primary function of labels – if they are self-assigned – is to achieve distinction, visibility, presence and adequate understanding. If they are assigned from the outside however, they often threaten to impose ill-fitting categories of evaluation and a too-limiting scope of meaning. The need for an alternative designation is in the first place considered when there is a new phenomenon which is rather hard to be sorted out in already established categories. Yet in the case of the Echtzeitmusik scene, the musicians themselves have been active in contexts where a rejection of lining up to a particular tradition is accepted as a legitimate artistic attitude and they as such did not want to align themselves with only one particular musical practice and expression. For exactly the same reason the wish for a new, determining label could seem rather strange. They thus avoided labelling their music, but instead chose a label that would be appropriate and flexible enough to adequately describe the scene and its practices, especially considering the fact that the scene in its early days gathered musicians with different musical backgrounds, even artists from different artistic fields.

Bourdieu points to the importance of labels as means of distinction, and the fact that they are “intended to *produce* the differences they claim to express” (cf. Bourdieu 1993c: 58, emphasis in the original). The majority of music that is played under the designation ‘Echtzeitmusik’ is perhaps not essentially different or musically unique in comparison with other similar variants of improvised and experimental music, yet the usage of the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ can mislead to a thought that it is a new musical genre. The term certainly takes a constitutive role and thereby produces a new existence (Bourdieu 1993c: 60), but only to a certain degree, since its meaning is not completely clear. Still, a first step towards institutionalization for the scene is thereby already provided (ibid.: 63) and the term takes the representative role for certain practice(s) and the related community in Berlin, be it in the market, institutions or public space in general. As

Bourdieu argues, “the performative power of designation, of naming, brings into existence in an instituted, constituted form (...), what existed up until then only as a *collectio personarum plurium*, a collection of varied persons, a purely additive series of merely juxtaposed individuals” (Bourdieu 1989: 23). In that sense, the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ indeed takes an important role of subsuming an array of individual musicians that only seem to be sharing certain similarities, practices and spaces under a common denominator, which is practically an imperative for the presence in public discourse.

The term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ indeed has a history of displacements and transformations (Foucault 2002: 5) concerning its usage and role for the scene: it went through both the phases of “progressive refinement” and “continuously increasing rationality”, and through “various fields of constitution and validity” and slightly different “contexts in which it developed and matured” (ibid.). At first, for the young Berlin improvisers it was meant to express their authenticity, originality and spontaneity in comparison with the other, more established and at the same time dependent and schematized practices. By that it revealed itself as a convincing alternative to the overly generalized and unspecified concept of (free) improvisation. It then reappeared in the scene at the time of the dominance of the reductionist aesthetics, and was therefore often related to those specific aesthetics. Finally, through the website of the same name it started to stand for a distinguished network of specific and to a certain degree recognizable improvisational and experimental music practices, venues and musicians located in Berlin, but it would never obtain the same role and function like e.g. the labels ‘Rock’, ‘Free Jazz’ or ‘New Music’.

Together with the distinction from other scenes, identification with certain spaces, and use of the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’, the young musicians also opened a new discursive space, with a possibility of independence from other music discourses, taking over a new position and gaining recognition: “To ‘make one’s name’ [*faire date*] means making one’s *mark*, achieving recognition (in both senses) of one’s *difference* from other producers, especially the most consecrated of them; at the same time, it means *creating a new position* beyond the positions presently occupied, ahead of them, in the *avant-garde*” (Bourdieu 1993c: 106, emphasis in the original). In the meantime the denotative uncertainty of ‘Echtzeitmusik’ has been rather

convenient to back up a musical practice that was in constant change. If it would be designating the music in the scene (in a sense of a genre), the discursive power of the term would indeed lie exactly in this fact: as opposed to the terms ‘improvisation’, which is not really fitting, ‘experimental music’, which can be both too general and on the other hand too determined by Cage’s compositional theory, or ‘Berlin Reductionism’, which is too specific and thereby limiting, the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ is both vague enough in content, and specific for the context and particular “story” of the Berlin scene.

Even if vague and flexible, the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ was in the meanwhile indeed loaded with a certain meaning related to the perception of the dominant aesthetics within the scene. Moreover, a considerable number of musicians in the scene also work in a recognizable “idiom”¹⁹⁷ and do not radically change their general approach, but rather develop it and explore within its frames. Echtzeitmusik could thus be interpreted as representing a certain notion of music as practiced in the scene, which is much more broadly conceived than a standard notion of music, since it poses different standards of music-making and musicianship in general, as well as different criteria, be it concerning sound, structure, value or norms. Understood like this, it could be comparable to style and genre designations or categories and also used in a marketing sense. Genre designations are anyway vague *per se*, and they very often imply a spectrum of subgenres (including designations) and do not have clear genre borders (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 216). With ‘Echtzeitmusik’ as a possible genre designation there is however one “hitch”: it is in German and has already profiled itself as a Berlin-specific term.¹⁹⁸ It is fairly rare that one would say that a musician “plays Echtzeitmusik”, even if evoking the term gives a relatively clear picture of what is to be expected. Perhaps it could be defined as a Berlin-specific genre, similar as Onkyō is Japan-specific. Yet, exactly the genre-character of the term seemed to be consciously avoided. One therefore often uses more universally established terms to describe the sounds and appearance of the

¹⁹⁷ For example, what Björn Gottstein described as “a certain kind of sonic dramaturgy, as much in terms of syntax as in terms of morphology” (Gottstein in Labor Diskurs 2011: 144), having in mind certain common characteristics of the music produced in the scene, e.g. the preference for noises and not for clearly defined sounds, for open processes and not previously determined forms, for a rather alternative and experimental and not conventional approach to one’s own instrument etc.

¹⁹⁸ Although it was in the meantime in the magazine *Positionen* even more broadly conceived, referring to activities in the whole of Germany, see *Positionen* issue 62.

music within the scene. On the other hand, an establishment of the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ had in any case as its consequence a better visibility of the scene in the Berlin field of culture. Many musicians in the meantime indeed use the term to present themselves. Nevertheless, a fear of “the normative force of terminology”¹⁹⁹ (Wicke 2004: 165f) is still present, and there are still musicians who are critical towards the label and the scene²⁰⁰, notably since the whole process of self-definition and making-public of the scene has begun.

Because of the aforementioned normative force of labels, no one in the sector of very innovative and experimental approaches to music likes to see their music put in clearly defined categories. If a label would be too specific and thereby too limiting, everyone would eventually want to get rid of it, as was the case with the “reductionist” label (cf. Hayward 2011). It is often complicated to assign the right terms since practices are constantly changing and do not like to be standardized (cf. Wicke 2004: 163). The practice itself takes care for this flexibility and variability: it is always in flow and it is only rarely fixed down on a recording. The lack of clear categories and designations of the music in the Echtzeitmusik scene is therefore good, because the music is in any moment free to develop in any wished direction. The phase of Berlin Reductionism, which was also reflected in the meaning of Echtzeitmusik, showed how clearly delineated and named practices persist longer in the mind and produce echoes they perhaps were never meant to produce. The long-term avoidance of clearly defined terminology is also a consequence of the scene’s supposed general rejection of consumption and usability, which depends on labelled and saleable products. However, the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ is now inevitably established, and the scene is thereby finally adequately presentable to the public.

4.6 Discursive fields, communities and elites

In order to think of a scene as a field of operation of discourses, I will borrow the

¹⁹⁹ „normative Kraft der Begrifflichkeit“

²⁰⁰ As for example Serge Baghdassarians, although the quote dates from 2005: „Es gibt keine Berliner oder wie auch immer zu benennende Szene, nicht noch so ein soziales Ornament der Gesellschaft; statt dessen gibt es eine Schar von Leuten, die eigensinnige Strategien verfolgen, und das nicht nur in Berlin.“ (Baghdassarians 2005: 39.)

concepts of “discursive formation”, “discursive field”, “discursive community” and “discursive elite” by Michael Schwab-Trapp (2006), with which he attempts to connect Bourdieu’s field theory and discourse theory. A scene can be understood both as a smaller and relatively closed discursive field, and as a part of a bigger discursive field, whereby discourses are performed by agents and groups in related and homologous fields of practice. Different positions that groups and agents occupy in the fields and social space in general determine their (different) discursive positions as well.²⁰¹ Discourses have always been present and have in different ways influenced the scene, its sense of identity, coherence and community as well as its practices. It can also be argued that the scene-specific discourse, produced in the scene in order to define the distinguished profile of the practice, is a representative contribution to the contemporary music discourse from the part of one local, yet quite well-known scene. However, only some parts of that discourse have been made public. That is why the versatile and rich scene is correspondingly present in the broader awareness often only through the phenomena of its history and existence that have been thematised in discourse.

Discourses in the scene make another dimension of reality that is imposed on its already existing material and symbolic levels. With the designation “discursive field” Schwab-Trapp presupposes that a production of discourse happens in certain public fields, in which the participants act and where discourses have effect (cf. Schwab-Trapp 2006: 273). Discourses thematise changing relations between the agents in the field, whereby fields determine access and most favourable form, value and use of discursive contributions in order to have success in the field; that is why the order of discourse is field-specific (ibid.). In a field there are always individuals or groups who have the affinity as well as the authority to speak; they are either chosen by the community or internally distinguish themselves as speakers, and are as such perceived from the outside. Their contributions thus have a chance to achieve outsider attention. Schwab-Trapp calls those groups or individuals “discursive elites” (Schwab-Trapp 2006: 274). Discursive elites always

²⁰¹ Also, discourses can in relation to objects or practices be external or internal. They are external when they are not produced by the same agents who produce objects or practices that are thematised in discourse. Objects and practices are then valued and classified through discursive frames that are often external to them. The internal discourses are specific as they are often products of the same habitus that produced practices or objects as well.

possess symbolic capital, gained through their activity or position in the field, which gives them both the right to speak and assures weight and importance of their views. Their contributions serve as reference points for other members of a discursive community in their actions and discursive contributions. At the same time the symbolic capital of discursive elites can also be transferred to those who use and further develop the discursive contributions of discursive elites (cf. *ibid.*: 275). The core group of musicians, who stand behind most of the discursive contributions of the scene, be it in the function of author or editor, thus represent the discursive elite of the scene. Its discursive contributions are sometimes regarded as representative of the scene as a unique discursive community, which might not always be the case. Seen in a broader context, the discursive elite of the scene is also using and further developing discursive contributions of other discursive elites.

Discursive elites, that through their authority occupy speaker's position in the field, are thus representatives of particular "discursive communities" (cf. *ibid.*: 272). If a scene as a whole represents a particular, competing point of view on music and musical practice in a broader "discursive formation"²⁰² (cf. *ibid.*: 272), it could be called a discursive community. Discursive communities can for example be organised collectives with clear inner structures and rules of membership (e.g. political parties, church organizations etc.) or on the other hand consist of a cultural-political milieu that is merely discursively connected, but otherwise has no organised structure, regulated membership or clear borders (cf. *ibid.*). By publishing a book, the scene has now presented itself within the related discursive formation. In this process, distinction plays an important role, as Schwab-Trapp argues: "Discursive communities acquire their identity as *discursive* communities through discursive processes of distinction and integration. They constitute themselves towards the outside in distinction from other discursive communities that develop competing interpretations of the same thematic area, and on the

²⁰² Discursive formations refer to dominant perspectives on contexts of social or political events and practices, that emerge as a result of discursive confrontations and connections of many more or less related, neighbouring and sometimes even heterogeneous discourses that are thematically connected and a part of a certain socio-historical context (Schwab-Trapp 2006: 269). Displaying confrontations and conflicts by which different points of view and interpretations of reality alternately win over legitimacy and dominance, discursive formations are always in change.

inside through more or less identical use of related arguments.”²⁰³ (ibid.: 272f, emphasis in the original.) The question of how participants in discourse can impose their interpretations finds an answer in the concept of discursive strategies. The usual procedure is to seek a connection to discourses that are already established and acknowledged, and adapt them to their own cause (cf. ibid.: 275). This can be done by using the authority of existing discourses to upvalue one’s own contributions, but also by distinction or by any other way of relating to those discourses. Similar strategies are also observable in the Echtzeitmusik scene.

Even before the scene could be recognized as an autonomous discursive community, its practice was related to several other discourses and lines of tradition (embodied by the actual musicians, ensembles and related music circles in the context of the scene’s emergence) which have eventually served as a basis for formulating the scene’s distinction and identity. As already shown in the second chapter, the scene-specific discourse is best situated in the context of the contemporary music discourses which have its roots back in the mid-20th century. Intentionally or not, it relates to the musical avant-garde of the American descent, represented by the New York circle around John Cage and a related circle of British musicians, Fluxus, and the tradition of Free Improvisation. By linking to those discourses, the Echtzeitmusik scene continues the custom of an alternative to the classical music tradition: it works mainly with noise(s), there are no hierarchies and division of work, the main working principle is interactive, open and experimental and there are rarely concrete musical works – the concentration is more on processes. Even though musicians in the Echtzeitmusik scene meanwhile more or less consciously follow those lines in their work, the Echtzeitmusik scene as a discursive community has until recently only sparsely participated in this discourse. Also, seen from the cultural-political perspective in Berlin, the majority of the musicians in the scene are still seen differently than the majority of their colleagues from the New Music scene. The reasons are primarily of a social nature, relating to the socio-musical background (cultural capital) of the Echtzeit musicians and their spaces in spite of

²⁰³ „Diskursive Gemeinschaften gewinnen ihre Identität als *diskursive* Gemeinschaften durch discursive Prozesse der Abgrenzung und Integration. Sie konstituieren sich nach außen in Abgrenzung zu anderen Diskursgemeinschaften, die konkurrierende Lesarten zum gleichen Themengebiet entwickeln, und nach innen durch den mehr oder weniger identischen gebrauch verwandter Argumente.“

the fact that they share one whole sector of common artistic interests (e.g. conceptual composition, sound installation, electronics etc.).

4.7 Distinction and difference

In his theory of distinction (cf. Bourdieu 1982; 1984), which he demonstrated by a detailed analysis of lifestyles (manifested in cultural practices and tastes) as directly related to social classes (determined by income and education), Bourdieu pointed to the fact that “art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences” (Bourdieu 1984: 7). Even though the theory of distinction was based on Bourdieu’s study of French society as a whole, it can also be applied on a smaller scale, for example, explaining the differences between and within artistic groups. Having studied the French literary field of the 19th century as well, Bourdieu for instance identifies the opposition between the literary groups of the established Parnassians and the so-called Decadents “according to differences of style and literary project which correspond to differences in social origin and lifestyle” (Bourdieu 1996: 121). Similarly, the musicians of the Echtzeitmusik scene can also be seen as distinguished in artistic style, lifestyle and social position from musicians in e.g. classical or pop music sectors. In order to understand and describe this distinction using the theory of Pierre Bourdieu, it is necessary to look into his theory more closely.

For Bourdieu, the structure of social reality is based on a logic of distinction. He states that “a group, a class, a gender, a region, or a nation begins to exist as such, for those who belong to it as well as for the others, only when it is distinguished according to one principle or another, from other groups, that is, through knowledge and recognition (*connaissance et reconnaissance*)” (Bourdieu 1989: 23). Yet, the distinction displayed in different lifestyles of different social groups is not the same as a conscious discursive act of distinction, in which differences are clearly perceived and defined, mostly with a certain aim. According to Bourdieu, if a new music community would want to gain a distinct position in a social and cultural world, they would have to “assert their difference, get it known and recognized, get themselves known and recognized (‘make a name for themselves’), by endeavouring

to impose new modes of thought and expression, out of key with the prevailing modes of thought and with the doxa^[204]” (Bourdieu 1993c: 58). The distinction of the new generation of improvising musicians in Berlin, which might at first have been manifested in lifestyle and musical practice, could thus really be perceived and become a part of common knowledge only through its discursive form. The introduction of the designation ‘Echtzeitmusik’ was in this sense a first step, which opened the space for further development of the notion of difference and separate identity.

In the scene's discourse one often finds formulations expressing an attempt at defining identity by stating differences from the already known and existing, both on the social and aesthetic levels. Musicians define what they are by making clear what they are not, since it is much easier to define something in relation to an already existing related “other” than to formulate a definition out of nothing. In the case of the Echtzeitmusik scene, there are different directions of distinction and different thematic points used in distinction. Musicians of the Echtzeitmusik scene often claim their difference from their colleagues in the New Music scene in terms of differences in what they use to call “milieu” (cf. Labor Diskurs 2011: 127ff). That includes differences in lifestyles, types of education, musical and sometimes social backgrounds as well as artistic habituses. On the musical side, the difference does not have to be that obvious in the area of sound and form, but rather in attitude, expectations, approach and working methods. Using Bourdieu’s vocabulary, the New Music scene could be declared a “consecrated avant-garde” in relation to the Echtzeitmusik scene, since its producers are according to certain conventions already in advance legitimate producers (for example because they have been through the classical education system). The music-related distinction is on the other hand directed instead towards those who are socially or historically the closest, for example Free Jazz and Free Improvisation, which the scene was initially the most related to.

²⁰⁴ In Bourdieu’s theory the term ‘doxa’ refers to the experience of the “quasi perfect fit between the objective structures and the internalized structures which results from the logic of simple reproduction, [when] the established cosmological and political order is perceived not as arbitrary, i.e. as one possible order among others, but as a self-evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned...” (Bourdieu 1977: 166). Doxa represents a “universe of the undiscussed (undisputed)”, as opposed to a “field of opinion” or “universe of discourse (or argument)”, containing both poles of heterodoxy and orthodoxy (ibid.: 168).

The aimed-for recognition “of one’s difference from other producers, especially the most consecrated of them”, not to mention the “creating [of] a new position, ahead of the positions already occupied, in the vanguard” (Bourdieu 1993c: 60), did not happen that quickly for the scene. That might be connected with the scene’s lack of discursive presence and clarity. However, the difference from “the others” might also lie in different dispositions (backgrounds, capitals), which make “the basis of aesthetic and political position-takings” (Bourdieu 1993: 66f). Different perceptions of skills and values determined by contexts, capitals and dispositions certainly make mutual recognition difficult. Moreover, conventionalities of the established practices are so fixed that deviances are immediately perceived as different and correspondingly categorized, sometimes even degraded. For example, Wilson suggests that merely the presence of a prepared table top guitar in a musical setting already points unmistakably to the fact that it cannot be “serious” New Music (Wilson 2003: 123). The external categorization of the musicians of the Echtzeitmusik scene is similarly often related only to their perceived socio-musical background (cf. Wilson 2003: 121), and does not necessarily have anything to do with their degree of professionalism or the real nature of the music they are playing.

4.8 Community of practice

Whereas smaller, more or less separated groups of musicians in the course of the scene’s history attempted different acts of distinction, differently directed and focussed, the definitive act of connecting those endeavours as a part of the same general intention and line of “development” came afterwards from the scene itself, with the wish to define and legitimise a separate music community in Berlin and its distinctiveness. For a long time, discourses were mostly “hidden” within smaller circles of musicians and almost exclusively orally transmitted. Correspondingly, awareness of the practices and aesthetic developments within the scene has been reserved only for the involved international circle of musicians and specialized audience. From the beginning the scene itself has not insisted on any kind of aesthetic homogeneity and has never functioned as an artistic school or movement; it was rather just the opposite. Besides avoiding unification and conformity, the musicians have always expressed dissatisfaction with the terms used to describe

their music, but at the same time failing to propose an adequate terminology themselves. All the oppositions, negations and differences finally revealed themselves as connecting principles, which caused a considerable group of musicians to find themselves sharing the same place in the overall music life in Berlin and beyond. However, it was not only the shared position that served as a connecting factor. It was above all the active interaction between the musicians, who are involved with each other through numerous musical collaborations, friendships and acquaintances.

Even though it can be assumed that the musicians in the Echtzeitmusik scene are brought together primarily through their personal relations and on-going musical collaborations, or even that they group themselves above all for the benefits of belonging to a group, it can also be said that most of them share a certain common attitude towards music, sound material and practice. This attitude characterizes their music-making in general, even though the approach of each musician is highly individualized. While Bourdieu explains the reasons for similarity and commonality of practices by referring to the shared dispositions of agents as expressed in *habitus*²⁰⁵, Etienne Wenger's concept of a "community of practice" explicitly seeks to "associate practice with the formation of communities" (Wenger 1998: 72). The community in this sense would even go beyond the Echtzeitmusik scene itself, and include an international community of musicians that are involved in similar musical practices. In his argument, Wenger describes "three dimensions of the relation by which practice is the source of coherence of a community" (ibid.): mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire (ibid.: 73). Even though he took quite a different subject as his object of research – he studied the community of claims processors in an insurance company – his concept of communities of practice is useful for reflection on the Echtzeitmusik scene as well.

According to Wenger, the community and its membership are primarily defined by mutual engagement, and not (only) by social category, personal relations or geographical proximity (cf. ibid.: 73f). That means that agents can be heterogeneous and diverse, yet still brought together by mutual engagement in the same practice.

²⁰⁵ For discussion of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* see sub-chapter 4.9.1.

Both similarities and differences in how things are done can thereby emerge, as well as both conflict and harmony between the agents. This can explain the differences in the musicians' backgrounds, nationalities, education and experience, which do not prevent them from being involved in the same scene; also, it explains the occasionally clear differences in performance styles and sounds. With the concept of joint enterprise Wenger refers to the quality of collectively negotiating beliefs, meanings and a common definition of the enterprise on the basis of a so-called shared repertoire (cf. *ibid.*: 79). Shared repertoire reflects a history of mutual engagement and includes "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice (...) It includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members." (*Ibid.*)

The subject of discourse in the Echtzeitmusik scene is however not primarily identity or membership in the scene, but a basic question of definition of the practice itself, especially in the last decade, when the musical activities in the scene could certainly no longer be simply reduced to the notion of quiet and restrained improvisation. The phenomena that are now considered a part of the scene are diverse, and their commonality is finally being negotiated by the musicians in the process of the internal negotiation of meaning (*ibid.*: 86). That is however a temporal process, so "one must therefore understand practice in its temporal dimension" (*ibid.*); also, it is an open process "with the constant potential for including new elements" (*ibid.*) as well as a recovery process "with the constant potential for continuing, rediscovering, or reproducing the old in the new" (*ibid.*). The notion of common practice is thus not always the same, but it changes in the course of time as new elements (and agents) are included, and more connections or associations to the past or external phenomena discovered. Wenger argues that practice is actually an emergent structure (*ibid.*: 96) which manifests a history of collective learning, i.e. developing forms and possibilities of mutual engagement, tuning to the essence and goal of the common enterprise as well as developing and refining the shared repertoire and discourse (cf. *ibid.* 95). The scene and its notion of music and practice also emerged in the course of time, in which common

experiences were gradually made, capitals mutually recognized, structures and hidden hierarchies established, and the elements and meanings of the practices negotiated and formulated in discourse.

4.9 Regulation of practice

Seen from the outside, but also felt from within, the musical practices of the scene “members” do display a distinct commonality. Regarding the scene life as well, the agents seem to share a consensus about how to successfully act and behave in the scene. In spite of that, it is still clear that each agent acts in his/her own particular way. This points to one of the central issues in sociology – the relationship between individual subjects/agents and social/ideological/economic structures (Wolff 1993: 2). Relating to that issue, Bourdieu characterized his work both as “constructivist structuralism” and “structuralist constructivism” (Bourdieu 1989: 14). By that he first of all argues for the fact “that there exist, within the social world itself and not only within symbolic systems (language, myths, etc.), objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their representations” (ibid.). Upon those objective structures, states Bourdieu, “there is a twofold social genesis, on the one hand of the schemes of perception, thought, and action which are constitutive of what I call habitus, and on the other hand of social structures, and particularly of what I call fields and of groups, notably those we ordinarily call social classes” (ibid.).

Habitus is a concept that should explain the agents’ interaction with their environment; it shows how material, social and discursive structures contained in the environment are manifested in the regularities of human behaviour (Olick 2010: 101). And whereas it might be easy to understand how the concept of habitus could explain the apparent regularities of e.g. a scene life, at first sight it seems to be hard to apply to the notion of human creativity as displayed in musical practice. However, as Janet Wolff (1993: 21f) argues, artistic expression, as any other human action, is determined in many ways and to different degrees, but that does not mean that it is not free. The concept of habitus implies freedom in action, but within frames of one's own personal dispositions, formed by education, upbringing, capital,

social position, and environment consisting of material conditions, discourses and so on. It also implies that agents sharing similar dispositions of habitus tend to produce similar practices (similar in relation to the shared disposition). Since education, upbringing and capitals are rather individual properties (even though they indeed can be similar between agents, and make them group themselves in the first place), the shared dispositions determining habituses of the musicians in the Echtzeitmusik scene should primarily be a result of acting in the same context.

4.9.1 Habitus

Habitus determines the way that one does things in one's own environment, scene or milieu, which is not explicitly described and set as a rule, but still consequently implemented and shared by all agents of the same "group". Shortly formulated, habitus refers to the social (pre)disposition of agents (cf. Bohn 1991: 26) that make them live, think, act and behave in a certain way. Next to field, it serves as another structuring principle for thought, perception and action of individuals (Diaz-Bone 2010: 49). Bourdieu himself defines habitus as "systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor" (Bourdieu 1977: 72, emphasis in the original). Habitus is thus a dual system, "both a system of schemes of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices" (Bourdieu 1989: 19), which functions rather unconsciously. An agent is through his habitus inscribed and implicated in the field in which s/he is acting (cf. Bourdieu 2000: 130); through habitus s/he possesses "the knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the play"²⁰⁶ (Bourdieu 1993b: 108).

²⁰⁶ „Damit ein Feld funktioniert, muß es Interessenobjekte geben und Leute, die zum Mitspielen bereit sind und über den Habitus verfügen, mit dem die Kenntnis und Anerkenntnis der immanenten Gesetze des Spiels, der auf dem Spiel stehenden Interessenobjekte usw. impliziert ist.“

The concept of habitus explains how the objective structures of social space get stored in the action of individuals and collectives (Diaz-Bone 2010: 34). Social space in that sense “structures the (collective) construction acts and equips them with certain characteristics and regularities”²⁰⁷ (Diaz-Bone 2010: 31). The same environment certainly can evoke similar traits of conduct: “There, where conditions of life are similar, where one permanently acts under similar conditions, emerges a coherence that is collectively shared and leads to the state that one not only perceives, judges and acts correspondingly, but also that actions and their products (‘works’) can be correspondingly decoded”²⁰⁸ (ibid.: 35). It could thus be argued that common context builds one constant which gives common habitual traits to all the agents sharing that context²⁰⁹, without them being aware of that. The position of the scene and its practices in the broader field of culture in Berlin, material conditions for living and working of musicians that are partially related to that position, as well as an obvious, even though still quite general aesthetic consensus among the musicians, represent common factors which are in one way or another reflected in the practices of all the musicians in the scene.

Habitus thus implies a “feel for the game”, “practical sense” (*sens pratique*), “second sense”, “second nature” (Johnson 1993: 5) or, most simply, a “know-how” of the field. It is a result of a long process of inculcation, beginning already in early childhood; it is “acquired through the lasting experience of a social position” (Bourdieu 1989: 19). The concept itself has in Bourdieu’s work “broadened in scope over time to stress the bodily as well as cognitive basis of action and to emphasize inventive as well as habituated forms of action” (Swartz 1997: 101). It is thus still flexible enough to partially adapt over an individual lifetime and respond to constantly actualizing dispositions (cf. Bourdieu 2000: 139). Dispositions that habitus consists of determine “a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body)

²⁰⁷ „...der soziale Raum strukturiert die (kollektiven) Konstruktionsakte und stattet sie mit bestimmaren Eigenschaften und Regelmäßigkeiten aus...”

²⁰⁸ „Dort wo die Lebensbedingungen ähnlich sind, wo dauerhaft unter ähnlichen Bedingungen gehandelt wird, entsteht eine Kohärenz, die kollektiv geteilt wird und die dazu führt, dass nicht nur übereinstimmend wahrgenommen, geurteilt und gehandelt wird, sondern auch, dass die Handlungen und deren Produkte (‘Werke’) übereinstimmend dekodiert werden können.“

²⁰⁹ Other commonalities which can be manifested collectively in a common habitus of particular social groups are e.g. gender traits (e.g. dressing or behaving as a man or a woman), class (manifested in taste and thereby specific cultural choices, after Bourdieu’s distinction theory), even profession (expressing features determined by a profession) and so on.

and, in particular, a *predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination*” (Bourdieu 1977: 214, note 1, emphasis in the original) and are manifested e.g. “in language, nonverbal communication, tastes, values, perceptions, and modes of reasoning” (Swartz 1997: 108) of an individual. Thus, the concept of habitus basically represents a connecting principle between the concepts of social space and space of lifestyles.

The principle of generation of practices, or their “genesis” in the words of Michel de Certeau (1984: 57), “implies an interiorization of structures (through learning/acquisition of knowledge) and an exteriorization of achievements (what Bourdieu calls the habitus) in practices” (ibid.). De Certeau assumes that practices (expressing the experience) tend to correspond to situations (manifesting the structure) (ibid.). If the structures confronted by the habitus are always changing, the habitus can adapt over the course of “affective transactions with the environment” (Bourdieu 2000: 141). In that process, specific experiences of confrontation with the environment’s physical and symbolic/discursive levels are being adopted, for example in the form of learning specific skills and acquiring specific knowledge. According to de Certeau (1984: 57), the acquisition of knowledge is Bourdieu’s means to “adjust practices to structures and yet also explain the gaps remaining between them”, since the acquisition of knowledge is an individually determined process. However, since it is incorporated and deeply innate, habitus is generally not inclined to big changes. It rather creates or searches for environments that correspond to its own dispositions and preferences. As Bourdieu explains: “By systematic ‘choice’ made between places, events, persons of *contact*, the habitus protects itself from crises and critical surveys, by creating a *milieu* for itself, to which it is preadapted as much as possible; so, [habitus creates] a relatively constant world of situations that are able to enforce its dispositions in a way that they offer the most receptive market to its products”²¹⁰ (Bourdieu 1987: 14, emphasis in the original).

Aside from Bourdieu’s constant comparisons with the market, the intention of

²¹⁰ „Durch die systematische ‘Auswahl’, die er zwischen Orten, Ereignissen, Personen des *Umgangs* trifft, schützt sich der Habitus vor Krisen und kritischen Befragungen, indem er sich ein *Milieu* schafft, an das er soweit wie möglich vorangepaßt ist, also eine relative konstante Welt von Situationen, die geeignet sind, seine Dispositionen dadurch zu verstärken, daß sie seinen Erzeugnissen den aufnahmebereitesten Markt bieten.“

habitus described in this quote is understandable. A musician is not born into the scene, but will certainly try to search for an environment which fits best to her/his affinities and predispositions, where s/he is able to pursue her/his artistic activities (because they correspond to the structures offered in the scene), and where s/he has the best chances for success. The choice of artistic practice in the first place is also a manifestation of habitus (which presupposes a certain cultural capital, as well as other individual predispositions). At the same time, one searches for a field where the realization of practice is possible, meaning, where it is possible to make and pursue this kind of choice. The process of association of musicians with the scene comes about through adoption of certain features as well as orientation and identification with certain discursive contents formulated in the scene on the one hand, and distinction from the others on the other hand. Also, in spite of their individuality, musicians gradually become committed to belonging to a scene, to the other musicians and the scene network, which is much more open and amorphous, and has a broader scope of positions and connections.

Given the fact that discourses are an essential part of the perception of the social world, as they delineate what is thinkable at all and by that constitute reality, their effect on habitus and corresponding practices is unquestionable. Discourses “can be understood as such orders of knowledge that contain and produce schemes and categories of conduct by means of which collectives can recognize themselves in their social existence”²¹¹ (Diaz-Bone 2010: 95); they are thus certainly important “for the constitution of collective ways of living”²¹² (ibid.: 93). Diaz-Bone argues that discourses represent knowledge that can be collectively internalized, and as such are also able to shape habitus and influence individual action (cf. ibid.: 94). Feeding a more or less coherent system of knowledge back to the actual (collective) practice of living is designated by Diaz-Bone as “discursive habitualizing” (ibid.: 134). In that process, the reflected and negotiated meanings of practices and lifestyles are as durable structures stored into bodily dispositions, and thereby enable collective forms of behaviour (cf. ibid.). While Bourdieu claims that the habitualized

²¹¹ „Diskurse können als solche Wissensordnungen aufgefasst werden, die die Schemata und Kateogrien der Lebensführung beinhalten und hervorbringen, mitteeles derer die Kollektive sich in ihrem sozialen Sein anerkennen können.“

²¹² „für die Konstitution von kollektiven Weisen der Lebensführung“

knowledge is “docta ignorantia”, “a mode of practical knowledge not comprising knowledge of its own principles” (Bourdieu 1977: 19), thereby primarily referring to everyday practices, discursive habitualization could be also thinkable as a conscious process, whereby the reflected and discursively formulated aesthetics and approaches become recognizable in practices as characteristic of an artist or artistic group.

4.9.2 The scene life and the musician’s habitus

Conceived as a practice-generating force that is innate and incorporated, the concept of habitus seems appropriate to explain the regulation of practice “in relatively undifferentiated societies where the principal mode of domination operates through direct interpersonal relations rather than through impersonal institutions” (Swartz 1997: 113). Habitus responds to the properties of the familiar environment, including its material, social and discursive structures, with adequate and expected practices over and over again, which are in a way taken for granted both by the agent and the observers. It is first of all natural to assume that “everyone who acts in a field has certain basic interests in common, namely everything that relates to the existence of that field”²¹³ (Bourdieu 1993b: 109); in this particular case it is a specific kind of music-making. Yet, in the course of its existence and through common experiences, the scene has also established certain “symbolical, spatial and social structures” (Schwanhäußer 2010: 30), like e.g. particular aesthetics, venues, recognizable names and so on, which became characteristic of the scene and have come to represent common points of orientation and a certain common knowledge in the scene. This does not necessarily mean that all agents that are connected to the scene must have a direct relation to those structures. Most of the agents however consider this as a necessary knowledge which one has to have in order to act successfully, improve the status of one's own capital and possibly reach better positions within the scene; it is also useful to have this knowledge if one wants to access the scene in the first place.

²¹³ „Alle, die sich in einem Feld betätigen, haben bestimmte Grundinteressen gemeinsam, nämlich alles, was die Existenz des Felds selbst betrifft.“ (Bourdieu 1993b: 109.)

To the knowledge of the scene also belong the established conventions of the scene life, which can in many cases take a form of rules. For example, the way the musicians write their biographies, listing known musicians they have collaborated with, countries they have toured in and perhaps places they did residencies in, shows a difference from, for example, the biographies of classical musicians, who list the institutions they have been educated in, competitions they took part in, prizes they won or known musicians who have been their teachers. The type of venues where the practices of *Echtzeitmusik* take place share a common line of difference in comparison to the venues for e.g. classical music. Correspondingly, classical musicians share the expectations concerning audience or fees, and audience concerning the starting time, ticket and drinks prices according to the well-known conditions of particular venues. Many practices within the *Echtzeitmusik* scene thus seem to be understood and done in a similar way by most of the agents, which is additionally enhanced through mutual relations and interaction within the scene. Through that, the scene's conventions, codes, rites and relations are always recognized anew, and become inscribed in the habitus of the musicians.

Assuming that each individual possesses a certain habitus implies that all the actions of that individual are shaped by habitus, no matter if those are everyday activities or artistic ones. The production of art and culture, as any other socio-cultural practice, cannot be seen out of its context anyway. In that sense, the question here concerns the effect of certain structures on music-making and appearance of music within the *Echtzeitmusik* scene. First of all, a choice of profession or occupation already shapes habitus and thereby identity as well, since that what has been learned (cultural capital) through repeated practice stays memorized in cognitive and behavioural schemes. Bourdieu, for instance, says that a habitus of a philologist is at the same time his profession, a capital of special techniques and relations, and a complex of beliefs (Bourdieu 1993b: 108). Being a musician also presupposes a form of artistic habitus which is additionally determined by personal background, education and experience, but also by the way the respective field of action is arranged, both socially and discursively.

The structures in the environment represent an orientation for habitus, but at the

same time limit its operations of invention, argues Bourdieu (cf. Bourdieu 1977: 95). Yet, the inventive capacity of habitus and individuality of practice is indeed still present and stems, apart from experience, also from one's own capital (cf. Swartz 1997: 102). This is especially important if one considers the role of habitus in an artistic practice. Habitus represents a sort of a frame for practice, a generative principle that regulates infinite improvisations (cf. Bourdieu 1977: 78) and makes room for strategic action according to conditions for action contained in the social space (cf. Diaz-Bone 2010: 35), as well as on the basis of disposed capital. Habitus gives intentionality a form of expression, which can have as many variants as there are individuals, depending on their individual dispositions and capitals. Bourdieu describes the individuality of style as follows: “‘Personal’ style, the particular stamp marking all the products of the same habitus, whether practices or works, is never more than a *deviation* in relation to the *style* of a period or class so that it relates back to the common style not only by its conformity – like Phidias, who, according to Hegel, had no ‘manner’ – but also by the difference which makes the whole ‘manner’” (Bourdieu 1977: 86, emphasis in the original).

The musicians in the Echtzeitmusik scene all work in the same general conditions, and they share, at least partially, a certain symbolical and discursive level and have similar socio-political attitudes and social positions. Those factors in a way limit the theoretical scope of their possible actions and shape the common traits of their habitus. It therefore happens that even though one indeed never knows what an artist can create, as soon as s/he has created something it becomes obvious that s/he too has limits and can create only from that what is available (cf. Bourdieu 1992: 33). Nevertheless, the “individualization” in relation to the recognizable habitus is essential for the practices of the Echtzeitmusik scene; although it seems like the practices are similar, and they certainly share some common traits, every musician has an individual approach, his/her own “manner”. The question of similar aesthetic preferences, such as apparent common taste in sound, similar affinities for processes, open forms or undefined performing situations etc., is primarily affected by individual cultural capitals and adopted discursive contents, which are reaffirmed by the continuing practice in the scene.

A certain “commonality” is displayed by many musicians in the Echtzeitmusik

scene, particularly those that have experienced the phase of Reductionism. The discursive and physical experience of the reductive aesthetics got fixed in the habitual dispositions of the musicians and continued manifesting itself in a specific approach to improvisation and taste for sound, even though the aesthetics itself was dropped long ago. The similarity can be noticed even among international improvisers that at a certain point went through a similar process of intense “clarification”. Yet, as *habitus* is adopted through regular exposure to *habitus*-shaping forces – on the one hand the objective conditions of one’s environment (e.g. societal objectivities of the Berlin context, including venues, musicians’ networks, the financial situation and possibilities in general), and on the other, their understanding through systems of meaning and value that are largely regulated by discourse, both of those factors form the general *habitus* dispositions of the *Echtzeitmusik* musicians. This *habitus* can then indeed manifest itself in as many variants as there are musicians, bands and practices. On the other hand, musicians involved in similar practices and similar discourses in different contexts are rather slightly different in *habitus*, since the objective conditions of their existence induce different mechanisms of functioning that shape their behaviour and their musicianship correspondingly. A musician that is resident in Berlin thus acts in a specific context offering certain conditions of living, working, performing music, exchange with other musicians, making a living (or not) from music etc., and is thereby different from like-minded musicians in different contexts with different working and living conditions.

5 Conclusion

In this study my aim was to present one relatively young contemporary music scene in Berlin, known as the Echtzeitmusik scene, that has not yet been thematised in a comparable scope in scientific literature. Because of its position “beyond” or “in between” existing categories, relatively independent and removed from all constraints apart from its own, the scene represents a pool for musical experiment, innovation and creativity. Structurally and socially, the Echtzeitmusik scene is an independent, flexible network based on interaction and collaboration between musicians. As such it depends on the DIY philosophy as well as on possibilities for communication, networking, self-promotion and self-documentation brought about by new technologies, which allow sustainment without institutional or market support. Musicians in the scene are largely musically self-taught, run their own venues and promote themselves; even the Echtzeitmusik book was written, edited and translated by the scene members themselves. The city of Berlin in that sense provided a perfect environment, as it proved itself “friendly” towards the artists through its still relatively low rents (in comparison to other big cultural centers) and numerous possibilities to create, perform and exchange.

At the beginning of this research there were still not many written sources about the Echtzeitmusik scene; only a few Labor Diskurs meetings were held up to that point. The first aim of this research was thus a revelation of the scene’s hidden internal discourses, as well as a systematic view of the phenomena and an attempt at their objective description, as an initial step in the process of making them visible. Being confronted with the great amount of individualized musical practices within the scene, the attempt to find a way to talk about the respective musical practices as a single phenomenon proved rather hard, even more because the musicians themselves rejected any attempt of categorizations and generalizations. The chosen approach thus focused on the presentation of the scene’s context, its history, dominant discourses and aesthetics, as well as the principles of organization and functioning of the scene as of one self-emergent structure. The interest was thus less directed to the individuals and their work, but much more on the collectively established features which are in the outcome perceived as characteristic of the scene and the general notion of Echtzeitmusik.

The scene has changed a lot since its beginning in the early to mid-1990s. Its history even contains rather disparate phenomena which have only in retrospect been connected to one and the same story. It has also always, besides in the “reductionist” phase, been musically relatively heterogeneous. However, there emerged a need to talk in some common terms about all those practices in Berlin that are not composed New Music, Free Jazz, conventional Free Improvisation, Electronic Music or Indie Rock, even if the commonality would not be on the aesthetical level. The musicians themselves also recognized the need to be represented under one common denominator in order to be represented better in the public. In that sense, the term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ seemed perfect. It has a history connected to the scene and as it does not claim a specific meaning, it can therefore be flexible enough to follow the continuous changes within the scene. Yet, the times of the dominant aesthetics and comprehensible scope of the scene in which the term was introduced have obviously ended. The term ‘Echtzeitmusik’ can thus also be understood as a term that through the Echtzeitmusik book fixes the history of the scene, leaving all possible further lines of development open.

Even though the scene diversified in the last years and saw a generational shift, numerous musicians in the scene have been there for a long time and have in one way or another experienced the phase of Berlin Reductionism. Besides the fact that this specific approach to improvisation brought about the first notion of the scene in a broader context, the process of “clarification” in that phase also influenced the scene internally on several levels. The sound worlds and sound identities explored at the time characterized the sound of the scene, and the increased awareness of the rich spectrum of the audible world made the musicians especially attentive to the materiality of sound. The effect of Reductionism could also be seen in the specific musical “habitus” of many of the musicians, which can be characterized as rather restrained and less expressive in performance, with a high respect for “silence” and a gesture revealing a considerable amount of attentive listening, reflection, control and coherence, and without individual dominance or superfluous outbursts of uncontrollable energy and emotion while playing. Berlin Reductionism has, perhaps also because of its discursive presence, certainly influenced the Berlin sound and the Berlin way of improvising. However, there is no claim of originality, as this aesthetic was neither the first nor exclusive. It had however a big impact on many

musicians that were in touch with the Berlin scene and indeed had a unique form and impact in the Berlin context.

Some of the attitudes that are characteristic of the scene through the present day were initially formulated already during the existence of the *2:13 Club* in the 1990s. They were formulated by distinction from the conventions of free improvised music as practiced in the Berlin improvised music circles at the time on the one hand, and from the conventions of classical concert music embodied by the Berlin New Music scene, on the other. The musicians, who were mostly improvisers, had already then stated that they were not that interested in ad-hoc improvising, but more keen on exploring the aspects and possibilities that emerge in long-term improvising groups. They also stated that they were not primarily interested in interpreting someone else's scores but rather in developing and performing their own music. The wish to establish an individual sound identity made many musicians build their own, personalized instruments, develop new techniques and extensively use new hardware and software. The artistic attitude marked by curiosity and experiment focused more on the musical process and less on the idea of resulting musical works, even though there was also an interest in achieving coherent (even if ephemeral) forms.

The analysis of the structure and way of functioning of the *Echtzeitmusik* scene can provide a model for an understanding of organization and functioning of self-emerging and self-organizing communities in general. The scene functions according to a different logic than is the case with official, institutionalized culture, or the music industry. On the inside, the distribution of the agent's capitals through their recognition results in structure and latent hierarchy. The structure thus emerges from within the scene, by recognition of the capitals according to scene-immanent logic, and is not previously present, or imposed from the outside. Musicians with their specific interests and personal capitals create the scene, its "rules of play" and value systems which, supported by favourable basic conditions, can enable the desired practice. This kind of structure does not rely much on clear divisions of work, but musicians often take the role of composer, performer, organiser and audience member simultaneously. This kind of self-initiative and self-management is necessary for independent communities since there are no outsiders

forces which would otherwise offer basis and support. The DIY principle and relative closedness are also protective, as the creativity can then be completely free, and not depending on authority or external audience. However, at the same time the scene strives for external acknowledgment and for better working conditions for its musicians, preferably under its own conditions.

The attempt at self-definition is a clear step in that direction. The scene defines itself in its own way and with its own words, and puts itself in relation to the chosen related discourses and by that tries to prevent false categorisations or devalorisations. The *Echtzeitmusik* book is proof of the constitution of a “fully-fledged” scene, which could now serve as “an instrument for accumulating and concentrating symbolic capital” (Bourdieu 1993c: 67), i.e. reputation and legitimacy both for the scene and for particular musicians involved. Thinking about non-institutional avant-gardes, Bourdieu predicted their possible fast end as communities of artists who share the same attitude, but can have diverging aesthetic interests (cf. *ibid.*: 66). Bourdieu argues that the unity of such groups is “essentially oppositional”, and that they “tend to fly apart when they achieve recognition, the symbolic profits of which often go to a small number, or even to only one of them, and when the external cohesive forces weaken” (*ibid.*). Most of the musicians in the *Echtzeitmusik* scene nevertheless share much more than a similar position. Many of them identify with the same history and are related to each other personally. Personal relations often provide the basis for initiating and developing musical collaborations, and in that way the scene has big chances to persevere. It is nonetheless undergoing constant change, spatial, aesthetic and social, so it is not clear in which form it will persevere, regarding the constant inflow of new musicians and new audiences who do not relate to this particular tradition, story and history and do not see (or recognize) its venues, codes and unspoken rules in the same way. At the same time, through the *Echtzeitmusik* book, the “old” *Echtzeitmusik* has already become an “institution” and a recognizable entity in the cultural life of Berlin; it has its specialized venues and concert series, bands, projects and festivals, as well as a rather distinguished identity.

Just as in the beginning of this research, one of the biggest questions that remain is how to talk about the scene’s music. Is it possible, or good, to find unifying

categories, or is it better to stick with the general terminology, enriched with descriptions of sounds and aspects of performance? The term 'Echtzeitmusik' did not prove to be helpful in this sense, and the musicians have also avoided offering clear proposals themselves. The musical practices in the Echtzeitmusik scene offer however numerous possibilities for further reflection and research, as they touch upon many important issues of contemporary musical thought. Those issues can be aesthetic-related, but also concerned with the broader role of music as a mirror of society and a means for criticism. Even though the musicians often say that the idea of being new does not play such a significant role for them, it is the essence of this music and this approach to always want to experiment with new things, new ideas, new combinations of sounds and personalities in a musical performance, albeit these innovations are so small and perceived only by the musicians themselves and the scene insiders. This scene thus has a big potential for survival, since it will always be interesting for itself and curious to accept interesting newcomers and broaden its horizons. Some musicians and groups are already now appreciated beyond the scene's or Echtzeitmusik's frames and are able to secure their existence from music-making. Finally, if the scene succeeds in securing the sufficient material basis for its development, it can surely profit from its position in the "underground" and unrestrainedly continue exploring new modes of working with sound.

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7 Appendix

This dissertation has been based on the field research in the Echtzeitmusik scene. In the following, I will list the materials that I used in addition to my participant observation in the scene, informal conversations, correspondences, chats and recordings of concerts. Directly quoted materials that have not been published yet are attached in Appendix 1 to 9.

Basic research material

- Labor Diskurs. Recordings and transcriptions of the first two (of six) meetings held in *KuLe* on the 11 November and 12 December 2007. A selection of the material from the transcriptions was published in Beins – Kesten – Nauck – Neumann 2011: 123-145.

- History-Treffen. Recording and transcription of the History-Treffen, held at *ausland* on 17 June 2009, featuring Burkhard Beins, Nicholas Bussmann, Kai Fagaschinski, Gregor Hotz, Christian Kesten, Andrea Neumann, Conrad Noack, Michael Renkel, and Ignaz Schick. This material has among other things served as a basis for the text *Social History of the Echtzeitmusik Scene in Berlin* (Blažanović 2011).

- Anorak 1994-1997. A CD with 27 tracks including track descriptions, mostly from Anorak times, some of them live recordings, “geklaut, zusammengestellt & gestaltet für Gregor [Hotz] zum 30. Geburtstag von Conrad [Noack]”

- Interviews:

Gregor Hotz, 1 January 2009

Kai Fagaschinski, 13 January 2009

Andrea Neumann, 19 January 2009

Diego Chamy, 20 January 2009

Christof Kurzmann and Johannes Bauer, 18 November 2009. Published in Bauer – Kurzmann 2011

Robin Hayward, 21 April 2010

Andrea Neumann per email, 3 May 2010

- Websites:

www.burkhardbeins.de (Burkhard Beins)

sites.google.com/site/diegochamy/ (Diego Chamy)

kylie.klingt.org/ (Kai Fagaschinski)

www.hannahartman.de/ (Hanna Hartman)

www.robinhayward.de (Robin Hayward)

www.sven-akejohansson.com (Sven-Åke Johansson)

www.christiankesten.de (Christian Kesten)

www.japanimprov.com/profiles/akrebs/ (Annette Krebs)

www.static-music.com/information.html (Hanno Leichtmann)
www.michaelrenkel.de (Michael Renkel)
zangimusic.de (Ignaz Schick)

www.echtzeitmusik.de
www.fernwaerme-berlin.net/laborsonor.html
www.ausland-berlin.de

Appendix 1. Burkhard Beins: Über Reduktionismus (2010)²¹⁴

Um 1300 formulierte William von Ockham seinen als Occam's Razor bekannt gewordenen reduktionistischen Grundsatz des „as simple as possible, as complex as necessary“. Neben der Handlungsanweisung steckt darin zugleich eine Absage sowohl gegenüber unzulässigen Vereinfachungen als auch gegenüber unnötigen Verkomplizierungen. So verstanden würde ich eine reduktionistische Herangehensweise nicht nur im wissenschaftlichen Bereich für grundsätzlich wünschenswert halten.

Unnötige Verkomplizierungen wurden in unserem kleinen Kreis von Berliner MusikerInnen, die sich um 1996/97 u.a. im 2:13 Club (Vollrad's Tonsaal) zusammen fanden, dann auch als ein sehr verbreitetes Phänomen innerhalb der sog. „Freien Improvisation“ diagnostiziert. Gemeint waren Momente des eher unbewussten Weiterspielens und der Überbrückung innerhalb eines musikalischen Gruppenprozesses, die meist solange gingen, bis wieder etwas Interessantes gefunden wurde. Darüber hinaus wurde mitunter sogar, z.B. von John Stevens in seinen Scores und Workshops, das „musical scribbling“ explizit als eine Möglichkeit zur Demokratisierung und Befreiung innerhalb von Gruppenprozessen favorisiert. Demgegenüber bestand in unserem Kreis während der zweiten Hälfte der 1990er Jahre **ein Bedürfnis nach klareren musikalischen Entscheidungen und Setzungen**. Als ein möglicher Weg dorthin erschien uns **erstmal eine grundlegende Reduzierung der Ereignisdichte**. Die Stille wurde als Ausgangspunkt genommen und das musikalische Material sollte nun bewusst in die Stille gesetzt, und somit nicht mehr vorwiegend in einem ununterbrochenen, meist nervösen Spielfluss entwickelt oder überhaupt erst gefunden werden.

Von 1996 bis zur Jahrtausendwende haben wir in diversen Gruppen ganz bewusst an dieser Thematik gearbeitet und diese auch immer wieder diskutiert. Neben wechselnden Gruppenkonstellationen geschah dies überwiegend in länger bestehende Gruppen, wie z.B. Ananax (Andrea Neumann, Annette Krebs, Axel Dörner), später auch Roananax (+ Robin Hayward), Das Kreisen (Annette Krebs, Robin Hayward, Burkhard Beins), das Duo Dörner/Hayward oder auch Rotophormen (Neumann und Krebs). Auch das bereits seit 1989 bestehende Duo Activity Center

²¹⁴ The text was written as an answer on my three questions: 1. Der Begriff Berlin Reductionism...es gibt dieser Zitat: "In the sense that it overlapped with both IST and Assumed Possibilities, which both ended about 2001, The Sealed Knot can be seen as being the next chapter, because it started around that time. It was also the beginning of the now famous term "New London Silence". We did a UK tour that we billed as "New London Silence meets Berlin Reductionism" and said nothing else, no explanation or anything (*laughs*). That was the first time those terms were used. It was a tag that was wonderful to use and it did create interest, but once something gets a name (and we gave it the name, I have to admit that)." (Mark Wastell). Ist das wahr? Wie hat eigentlich der Begriff aufgetaucht? Und wann genau war diese Tour?; 2. Du sagst in Peter Niklas Wilson's Buch, dass die Engländer zwar auch reduziert spielten, aber "vielleicht mit einer etwas anderen Gewichtung". Wie war eigentlich Berlin Reductionism, wie unterscheidete es sich von London?; 3. War für Dich (auch) Cage ein bewusster Einfluss damals - in dem Sinne, was für Klänge man gesucht hat, wie man mit ihnen umging bzw. wie man improvisieren versuchte. Ich sehe viele Parallelen (egal ob bewusst oder unbewusst) und einige haben erzählt, dass sie direkt beeinflusst waren. Ich versuche aber herauszufinden ob das eher persönlich war, oder wurde es kollektiv darüber reflektiert und versucht in dem Sinne was zu machen.

(Michael Renkel und Burkhard Beins) war zu dieser Zeit mit einer ähnlichen Thematik beschäftigt. Dort wurde z.B. teilweise mit Stoppuhr improvisiert, um den Spielfluss durch innerhalb des musikalischen Prozesses immer wieder getroffenen Entscheidungen, längere Momente der Stille einzuführen und durchzuhalten, zu irritieren. Es ging insgesamt um eine **Klärung der musikalischen Mittel, einen bewussteren Einsatz des Materials, aber auch um eine weniger nervöse und rastlose Ästhetik.**

Innerhalb der Konzertreihe, den beiden Festivals und den beiden Relays, die von Michael Renkel und mir damals unter dem Label 2:13 Club in Berlin veranstaltet wurden, haben wir bewusst immer wieder einen **Brückenschlag zur (komponierten) Neuen Musik gesucht und wiederholt mit dem damals frisch gegründeten Ensemble Mosaik zusammen gearbeitet.** Darüber hinaus haben wir aber auch immer wieder geistesverwandte Londoner Musiker eingeladen: Rhodri Davies, Phil Durrant, Mark Wastell und John Butcher, aber auch John Bisset oder Kaffe Matthews. Einige der jüngeren Londoner Musiker schienen an ganz ähnlichen Punkten zu arbeiten. **Bei ihnen liess sich deutlicher als bei den Berlinern der Einfluss des „British Improv“ heraushören,** bzw. eine darüber fortwirkende **Post-Weberneske Ästhetik,** besonders bei den Saiteninstrumenten in Verbindung mit -oder Ablösung durch - Elemente von Helmut Lachenmanns „musique concrete instrumentale“.

1998/1999 gab es als London-Berliner Gruppe das Sowari Quartet (Phil Durrant, Rhodri Davies, Michael Renkel, Burkhard Beins), das beim 1999 Berliner 2:13 Festival spielte und eine England-Tour absolvierte. Ebenfalls während einer England-Tour im Jahr 2000 wurde die erste CD von The Sealed Knot (Davies, Wastell, Beins) aufgenommen. **Im Covertext war erstmals die Rede von „New London Silence meets Berlin Reductionism“:**

http://www.burkhardbeins.de/releases/sealed_knot.html

Im gleichen Jahr gründete sich auch das Berliner Septett (bzw. anfangs Oktett) Phosphor (Dörner, Krebs, Neumann, Hayward, Beins, Renkel plus Ignaz Schick und Alessandro Bosetti). Bereits in den Jahren zuvor stand immer wieder die Idee einer „großen Gruppe“ im Raum. Als Phosphor dann schliesslich gegründet und zeitgleich der Begriff „Berlin Reductionism“ von Kritikern aufgegriffen und in Umlauf gebracht wurde, war nach meinem Gefühl die wirklich „reduktionistische Phase“ bereits Vergangenheit. **In den ersten 2000er Jahren schien eigentlich keine große Notwendigkeit mehr zu bestehen, einen so deutlichen Focus auf die ausgiebige Verwendung von Stille zu legen.** Es begann die Suche nach Möglichkeiten, an diese Spätneunziger Phase der „Klärung“ anzuschliessen und das gewonnene musikalische Potenzial in neue Richtungen auszuweiten und weiterzuentwickeln.

Der Begriff des Reduktionismus erscheint mir als sehr ambivalent. Einerseits ist es natürlich gut, dass diese Musik nicht zuletzt dadurch, dass sie mit einem Begriff versehen wurde, seine Kreise gezogen hat. Andererseits ist wie jedes Label auch das des Reduktionismus eine unzulässige Vereinfachung eines weitaus komplexeren Geschehens. Nie ging es vordergründig um eine Reduktion, denn es war immer eher **ein Mittel zum Zweck.** Auch gerät durch diese Reduzierung auf einen einzigen Aspekt leicht die Tatsache in Vergessenheit, dass viele Vertreter des sog.

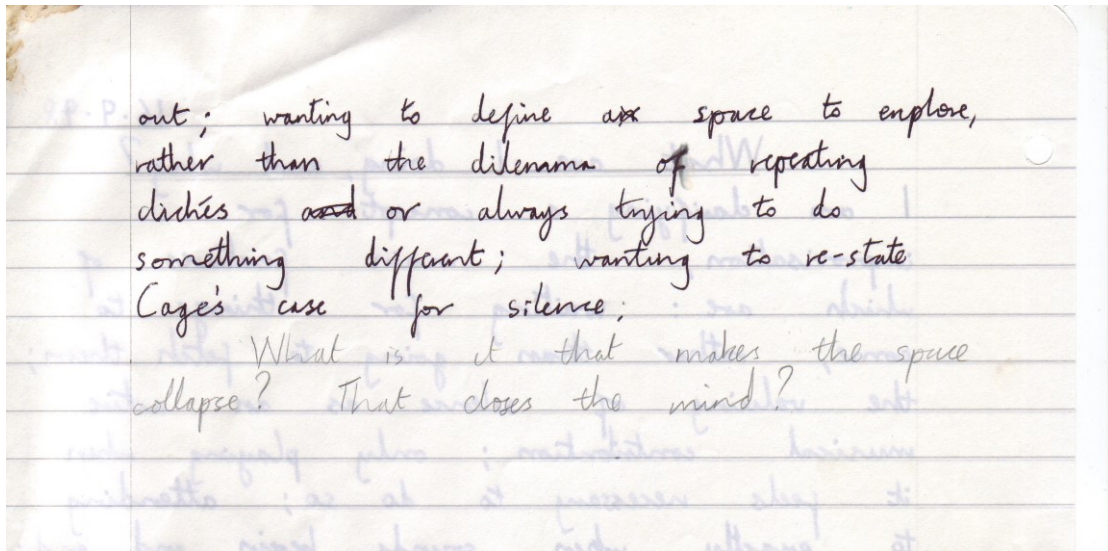
Reduktionismus parallel zu diesen Aktivitäten auch an anderen musikalischen Aspekten interessiert waren und gearbeitet haben. So wurde z.B. 1998 auch das eher noise-orientierte Trio Perlone gegründet (Ignaz Schick, Jörg Maria Zeger, Burkhard Beins). Und manche Protagonisten des Berliner Reduktionismus spielten auch zu dieser Zeit zugleich (Free) Jazz, oder auch Neue Musik.

John Cage war sicher in philosophischer, zum Teil auch in klangästhetischer Hinsicht ein Einfluss. In der Methodik bzw. in der Entwicklung des, bzw. dem Umgang mit dem musikalischen Material ging es uns jedoch eher um das genaue Gegenteil. Cage wollte auf ein Zulassen hinaus, die Klänge Klänge sein lassen. Uns ging es dagegen gerade um bewusste Entscheidungen und die Gestaltung der Klänge, - insbesondere hinsichtlich Beginn, Ende und Dauer der Klänge und deren Verhältnis zur Stille bzw. der Gesamtheit von Klängen und Stille innerhalb eines „Stücks“. Dennoch wurde vielleicht gerade durch diesen deutlichen Unterschied der Ansatz von Cage immer auch als Hintergrund oder Referenzpunkt mitgeführt.

Appendix 2. Robin Hayward, clarifying a new concept for improvisation.

Selected from Robin Hayward's private 'ramblings', 1998 - 1999.

What am I doing, and why?
I am clarifying a concept for which improvisation, the main features of which are: waiting for things to come, rather than going to fetch them; the valuing of silence as an active musical contribution; only playing when it feels necessary to do so; attending to exactly when sounds begin and end; limiting the responsiveness and interaction between the musicians; focusing on the sound, rather than on the feeling.
The factors that have motivated me towards clarifying this concept are: a feeling that, although I was sometimes capable of improvising well, I had no clear aesthetic aim; a feeling, both as a player and a listener to improvised music, that the basic idea was unclear; the feeling that musicians were often playing out of habit, or because they were in the playing situation - filling space for the sake of it; the feeling that responses between the musicians had become rather automatised; the feeling that the paradigms of improvised music have become rather worn



Transcription

16.9.98.

What am I doing and why?

I am clarifying a concept for improvisation, the main features of which are: waiting for things to come, rather than going to fetch them; the valuing of silence as an active musical contribution; only playing when it feels necessary to do so; attending to exactly when sounds begin and end; limiting the responsiveness and interaction between the musicians; focusing on the sound, rather than on the feeling.

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What is it that makes the space collapse? That closes the mind?

Appendix 3. Robin Hayward, on Cage.

Selected from Robin Hayward's private 'ramblings', 1998 - 1999.

(19/9/98)
Last summer, when heavily under
the influence of certain ideas of
John Cage, namely: everyday life, if
only we observe it, is more
interesting than art; all sounds are
excellent; I questioned why I was
making music at all. Why spend
so much time developing a beautiful
tone, if all sounds are excellent anyway?

but had
effect of
drawing attention
to myself.

Why make music at all, if all I
have to do is listen? But I
was offered gigs, and I accepted them —
I still wanted to be a musician. I
tried to resolve the contradiction by
both playing and not playing —
playing as little as possible, and
often so quite as to be inaudible. I even
tried to hide myself behind the tuba,
so I could be there and not there,
(These performances were electric) and
highlighted extra-musical actions, such as
changing my hand position and
lifting the mute, as being as much
a part of the performance as the
sounds. I did this partly by doing
this actions in silence, and partly by
doing them very slowly.

These performances had a lot to
do with waiting. In the first performance,
the audience kept me waiting — in
a sense I thought, they've kept me
waiting, now I'll keep them waiting.
But waiting also threw the time element
into relief — when events occurred became
very important, at least more noticeable than
it normally is in ~~improvisation~~ music. It also
drawn attention to how we respond when waiting —
expectation, impatience, anger, thus may be

an acceptance to live in the present
 moment and accept what is happening.
 Very much influenced by Cage
 'Lecture on Nothing'.
 Two problems arose. The first:
 where do I go from this position?
 Repeatedly do performances in which I
 try as hard as possible not to
 play, in order to ~~highlight~~ show that what
~~is~~ is there when I don't play
 is more interesting ~~as~~ than ~~what I~~
~~am~~ when I actually play? Second:
 what to do when I played with other
 people.
 I have a horror of becoming
 predictable, so I didn't want to keep
 doing the same performance. Also, I
 was moving away from the idea
 that gave these performances their life.

Transcription

19.9.98

Last summer, when heavily under the influence of certain ideas of John Cage, namely: everyday life, if only we observe it, is more interesting than art; all sounds are excellent; I questioned why I was making music at all. Why spend so much time developing a beautiful tone, if all sounds are excellent anyway?

Why make music at all, if all I have to do is listen? But I was offered gigs, and I accepted them – I still wanted to be a musician. I tried to resolve the contradiction by both playing and not playing – playing as little as possible, and often so quite [sic! quiet] as to be inaudible. I even tried to hide myself behind the tuba, so I could be there and not there, but had effect of drawing attention to myself (These performances were electric) and highlighted extra-musical actions, such as changing my hand position and lifting the mute, as being as much a part of the performance as the sounds. I did this partly by doing this [sic! these] actions in silence, and partly by doing them very slowly. These performances had a lot to do with waiting. In the first performance the audience kept me waiting – in a sense I

thought, they've kept me waiting, now I'll keep them waiting. But waiting also threw the time element into relief – when events occurred became very important, at least more noticeable than it normally is in music. It also drew attention to how we respond when waiting – expectation, impatience, anger, then maybe an acceptance to live in the present moment and accept what is happening. Very much influenced by Cage's 'Lecture on Nothing'.

Two problems arose. The first: where do I go from this position? Repeatedly do performances in which I try as hard as possible not to play, in order to show that what is there when I don't play is more interesting than when I actually play? Second: what to do when I played with other people.

I have a horror of becoming predictable, so I didn't want to keep doing the same performance. Also, I was moving away from the ideas that gave these performances their life.

Appendix 4. Robin Hayward, before Germany vs. in Germany.

Selected from Robin Hayward's private 'ramblings', 1998 - 1999.

What is the difference between the type of improvising I did in London before going to Germany & the type I did in Germany?	
Before Germany	In Germany
going to look for things sound as starting point flurries of sounds climaxes expressionist feeling the situation would have been pointless if nothing occurred interaction between musicians short periods of silence, to mark phrases. tendency to follow group dynamic	waiting silence as starting point single sounds, surrounded by silence. quiet sounds no climax non-expressionist participation of environmental sounds feeling it would not matter if nothing occurred. feeling of sounds co-occurring, rather than interaction. exclusion of normally non-musical movements. long periods of silence

Transcription

What is the difference between the type of improvising I did (in London) before going to Germany & the type I did in Germany?

Before Germany	In Germany
Going to look for things	Waiting
Sound as starting point	Silence as starting point
Flurries of sound	Single sounds, surrounded by silence
Climaxes	Quiet sounds
Expressionist	Non-expressionist Participation of environmental sounds
Would have been pointless if nothing occurred	Feeling it would not matter if nothing occurred
Interaction between musicians	Feeling of sounds co-inciding, rather than interaction
Short periods of silence, to mark phrases	Exclusion of normally non-musical movements
Tendency to follow group dynamic	Long periods of silence

Appendix 5. Robin Hayward Interview Transcription

Robin Hayward, edited interview transcription, April 21, 2010. Selection of parts about coming to Berlin, Cage, Berlin Reductionism.

- on the Berlin scene back then

RH: I came to Berlin beginning of March 1998, still not sure if moving there or not. I'd heard from Rhodri Davies and John Bisset, I think I might have told them about the trio with Radu (Malfatti) and Axel (Dörner), and they said you should see Burkhard Beins in Berlin, 'cause he's interested in similar things, Rhodri told me. And also Axel was there, at that point we were playing very well together.

The scene seemed to be very small, very very different from now, from my perspective. Axel organized a gig in Vollrads Tonsaal (Das Kreisen + Markus Wettstein, didn't work out with him later) and recorded it. I was staying with Andrea (Neumann), through her and Axel I got to know a lot of people. I and Burkhard were really interested in defining an aesthetic, find a collective setting through working together in a group. That was the last gig in Tonsaal, there was no place left to play, that's why we all played in each other flats for a while. My first solos were mostly premiered on flat concerts. In 1998 there was a transportable place called the Pleasure Dome just in front of ausland, a transportable hall that they carried around in a lorry and I played my first solo in Berlin on that.

The Berlin scene seemed to be...there were some free jazz people around, like Wolfgang Fuchs, he ran the Berlin Factory, Sven-Åke (Johansson), people like Conny Bauer, who I played with on Exiles Festival. He was really fascinated with quiet playing, we did one more gig, but I didn't feel comfortable. That was quite a shame, I had nothing against Conny Bauer or his music, I just didn't think it fit.

I was really trying to get some clarity, some focus.

- on Reductionism and Cage's influence

MB: So, when you came to Berlin, you met some people who shared the same interests?

RH: Yes, about half a dozen people. Those also formed Phosphor. Ignaz (Schick) I didn't know that well, only after forming Phosphor. When 6 people who are currently Phosphor first met, we met to play the series of pieces that I was writing at that point. We met in Andrea's flat to rehearse a piece which is now called Time Rolls. It must have been 1998, then some of the people had the idea of forming this larger group and that's what became Phosphor and that's when I met Ignaz. Bossetti came later.

Rules? One of the main things I was interested in was avoiding immediate reaction. In London it was more reactive, conversational. And also, this was the second time Cage influenced me, the first was when I was at music college. There is a passage from his book "For the Birds" where he says quite clearly what he thought of improvisation, where he says improvisation is like a conversation where each

musician is supposed to listen to as close as it's possible to the other one in order to respond to the other one. He worked with some jazz musicians in America and he suggested that each plays as he was the only person in the world and don't listen to the other one. He said it worked in the rehearsal, but in the gig they started the conversational thing. And he particularly criticized that, when one musician got louder, everyone seemed to get louder, too. I certainly didn't get along with the thing that you shouldn't listen to each other...but the idea that it could be modeled according to something other than a conversation, immediately commenting, chatting conversation... I tried to avoid things that seemed to have become automatic.

Annette (Krebs) was very enthusiastic about the first gig I played with Axel, she thought that delayed reaction was an important issue. Me sometimes intentionally not reacting to what Axel did, even if it would be the obvious thing to come and join. Of course it was a reaction, but more a distant reaction. One of the things we talked about was expressiveness, how to make music that wasn't expressive, whatever that may mean. This idea was influenced by reading Cage from my part. I took what I was reading from Cage very seriously at that point, in terms of seeing music as an exercise of how you live. This non-division between art and life he talks about. I took the idea of distancing yourself from your emotions, I took that very seriously, and music has been a practice for that. In a sense, it was a practice for a way that you could live. So, aesthetics and ethics get mixed, and I was trying to live in the same way. And it wasn't working very well. I noticed that after a year or so. I hadn't become enlightened. I noticed also, in the London style of improvising, some of the early sounds were very influenced by the ideas of creating different society, ideas from '68 of alternative society...I can't remember who it was, who said, the politicians should listen to improvised musicians. And then you notice that certain people are better...certain people are picked out as stars of the scene, maybe they're more "geschickt", more "geschäftstüchtig". And the same stupid dumb capitalist rules work there, just as much as anywhere else. Ultimately it was the concert organizer who picks out who will play, who picks out the styles.

The way Cage for example taught, it's very idealistic. His music was there to change people's minds, and then when you see how system actually works... I've heard some anecdotes about Cage that made me seriously question the sincerity of certain of his remarks, I think he was a good businessman too. Very good at self-promotion.

MB: People in Vollrads Tonsaal were exploring relations between composition and improvisation, which are usually seen as two completely different things.

RH: I was very much in the improvised music world at that point. But I know they were interested in bridging the gap. I was composing at that time, probably more than the others were. But I wasn't in the contemporary music world. I possibly through Radu and the Wandelweiser people understood that it shouldn't be an issue. It was o.k. to write things, in which it was clear what the person did. I prefer the roles are clear in terms of...if someone is at the moment in the role of being the composer, then I prefer it to be clear, and not trying to pretend that he isn't. Being a composer but at the same time saying, I don't want to impose or don't want to tell you what to do. If you want to compose, you are asking people to do things. That doesn't mean that they don't have the right to protest, that there is no negotiation.

This is the method which I was using. It is quite Cage-influenced, starting out from the length of time rather than from sound. And that's the method that I used to write most of the pieces I was writing at that time. This is the piece I wrote for Axel and me, that was the very first piece I wrote when I came to Berlin, I wrote it in the first week. It was using the rotating valve technique. And it also used that method. The numbers are seconds and that's the result of this process where I divide, very much influenced by Cage, a length of time into small lengths of time and then divide those lengths of time into even smaller lengths of time. And then I had a system which statistically decided where the sounds will be going in that period of time. The original title was "ohne bewegung" – without movement. I was obsessed at that point with music that stayed still and didn't develop, didn't go anywhere. The choice which white noise to use was left over to the performer.

I remember maybe to be suggesting something like a manifesto to Burkhard (Beins), but he thought it was too early and he was right. It was negotiated and discussed. We discussed a lot in the rehearsals, which I really appreciated.

Radu was skeptical when I first suggested the trio with Axel. We did a rehearsal in the late 1999, the second time we rehearsed a piece I just showed you...by that time I started to feel disillusion...I noticed the contradiction between the way I was living and I wanted to be living through the music, and I was feeling frustrated, I had financial problems, and I wasn't immune from human emotion. The idea was just to be free from this baggage and it wasn't happening...

When I first came to Berlin there was a concert series at the Zionskirche, of Carlo Inderhees. I was very impressed by it in the beginning, every Tuesday 10 minutes solo concert over three years. Every time they had a concert they laid a stone on the sculpture. It seemed like a wonderful project. But by the 5th concert I was beginning to get bored by it. It was mostly about how you structure those 10 minutes by using single quiet sounds, usually pitches...it was rather contradictory, you have this rather strict 10 minutes, then you spend 3 hours drinking beer (*addition from 2012: and discussing*) in the Kneipe.

I said to Radu that I didn't think it was enough to have one single note and then silence, it was too holy. He asked what else I was suggesting. I don't think it was an intelligent move on my part to react like that, but as I say, I wasn't immune from...I rejected gigs that would have been paid. There was a contradiction between life I was aiming for and life I was ending up living. 'Cause there were tensions developing in all the groups I was in. You could always say it doesn't matter, and that there can be a divide between the way you're playing... I remember years later I did an interview on this thing by chance, with all the people from Roananax there, and I brought up the point, and Axel said – it doesn't matter, that there is a divide! But the way I looked at it, it did matter to me. I didn't see music as something separate from the way of how you could live. And that was much influenced by reading Cage. I was thinking about what the purpose of music might be in the world in which the things are going on, which is the question I still haven't answered. I think it's a question I just suppressed.

End of 1999 was the first time I was starting to react against it, when I was

rehearsing with Radu and in the next year I started writing more narrative. I didn't see that I was on the path to my own enlightenment by playing pieces that didn't go anywhere or that that would somehow have an impact on making people treat each other better. And in some sort of vague way I think that this Cage idea, that music should be to open your mind to divine influences...I never quite understood how he sees his music doing that, in fetishizing everyday sounds.

The idea that that aesthetic will somehow going to change the way in which I behave in the world and make me content simply with whatever the world is offering me and accept what I don't intend, that idea I seriously began to question by 1999. Now it seems like a very naive idea, the trip I was on I think. Or at least I was looking for a focus and possibly justifying it retrospectively. You still have emotions and things still do go wrong. So it seems rather hypocritical even to be making this pure music where everything is transparent.

My interest in what was called 'reductionist' in a strict sense was gone by the beginning of 2000. And I was looking for something else.

And also there was this irony of Cage, of him talking about the present moment and non-narrative, criticizing narrative, when he was a very good storyteller actually.

I certainly stayed for the first year because I had more in common with people, I was in groups where I could discuss and where music was important enough for people to discuss collectively. It didn't last for so long, maybe a year or so, but that year I found very important.

Reductionist phase gave people something to react against, it became associated to the city, the sound of the Berlin scene. People could join in with it or react against it. I never thought at the time it will have the influence it had.

Appendix 6. Andrea Neumann, e-mail.

Andrea Neumann's e-mail, answering several of my questions (see my e-mail below). May 3, 2010.

Liebe Marta,
(...)

die Texte sind beide im April 2008 geschrieben.

„Über meine Musik am Innenklavier“ ist für das Absinth Label von Michael Renkel entstanden und müsste auf seiner Webseite stehen.

„Development of the inside piano“ habe ich als Information für einen Artikel von Peter Graham (Jaroslav Stastny), der in Ostrava das Neue Musik Festival mitorganisiert, geschrieben.

Seinen Artikel hänge ich hier noch mal als Attachment mit an. (Das Schönste ist fast der Titel, finde ich).

Zu deinen Fragen:

ich kann mich nicht erinnern, dass wir in den Proben über Cage's Ansätze diskutiert haben. Gleichsam denke ich aber, prägte seine Philosophie unterschwellig meinen Ansatz.

Anfang der 90er Jahre habe ich eine Aufführung von den Maulwerkern mit Cage's „Songbooks“ gesehen. Das Zelebrieren einer alltäglichen Verrichtung auf der Bühne, wie Kuchen backen, hat die Wahrnehmung für die Qualität von Klängen, die dabei entsteht, sensibilisiert. Einerseits erfahre ich dadurch die Klänge des normalen Lebens mit größerem Vergnügen, andererseits hat es Auswirkung auf die Klänge, die ich auf meinem Instrument erforsche und suche.

Eine Idee (die ich bisher nur ansatzweise in Paris 07 begonnen habe zu eruieren), nämlich das Verstärken von Kleidern und die unterschiedlichen klanglichen Resultate, je nachdem, wie man sich bewegt und welche Stoffe man aussucht, lässt sich letztendlich auch darauf zurückführen.

Als ich Anfang/Mitte der 90er Jahre mehr und mehr Aufnahmen mit improvisierter Musik gehört habe, fiel mir auf, wie gut sich häufig Geräusche der Umwelt mit der Musik der CD mischten. Irgendwann wurde es ein Qualitätsmerkmal der Musik. Mischte es sich gut, fand ich die Musik meistens gelungen.

(Insofern hast du Recht mit Cage's „fetishism of every days sounds“).

Ich kannte damals Cage's „Lecture on Nothing“ and „For the Birds“.

Seine Kritik an Improvisation hat mich nachdenklich gestimmt.

Ich denke ebenfalls, dass das „im Moment aus sich selbst schöpfen“ zu sich wiederholenden Mustern/Automatismen führen kann. Denke aber auch, dass wir Ende der 90er Jahre sehr bewusst versucht haben, bestimmte Automatismen zu durchbrechen:

- a) es gibt kein „Muss“ zu spielen („any resultant silence is not to be feared“ - Cage in seinen Instructions zu Songbooks)
nicht spielen wurde zu einer Qualität
- b) keine Klimaxe ansteuern
- c) sich solistisch nicht hervorheben müssen; „group voicing“
- d) keine Expressivität
- e) statt ein interaktives auf einander Reagieren, ein „paralleles“ Spielen.

Ich muss aber dazu sagen, dass ich alle diese (teilweise tabuisierten) Elemente mittlerweile auch gerne wieder in meine Musik einfließen lasse.

Zu deiner zweiten Frage nach „Notwendigkeiten“

Transparenz: das Mobilee Prinzip: jede noch so leise Aktion eines Spielers in z.B. einem Septett kann zu einer veränderten Spielweise/Klanggestaltung eines bis aller anderen Spieler führen. Genauso wie die Bewegung eines Elements in einem Mobilee alle anderen Elemente beeinflusst. Dies führt zu kausalen Zusammenhängen innerhalb eines Systems.

In einer reduzierten Musik, ist es mir möglich, mich auf einen Klang eines Mitspielers zu konzentrieren und einen Klang hinzuzufügen, der den ersten (von seinem Frequenzspektrum oder in welcher Form auch immer) bereichert. Der Moment, wo einer der beiden Klänge sich verändert oder abbricht, bekommt ebenfalls eine starke Wirkung.

Für mich ist diese Wirkung, die bei der Fokussierung auf Details entsteht (was passiert, wenn ich diesen Klang zu dem addiere, was passiert, wenn ich ihn plötzlich abbreche, bzw. langsam ausfade, etc.) eine Motivation beim Spielen.

Es geschehen dabei keine objektiven „Notwendigkeiten“. Es wurde nicht ausgemessen, dass nach 2/3 eines Klanges, der Abbruch eines anderen besonders wirkungsvoll ist.

Ich glaube aber, dass die Konzentration der Spielenden beim Hören auf Details sich auf die Hörer übertragen kann, und dass dies eine Qualität für die Hörer darstellen kann; so dass sich mit Spannung verfolgen lässt, was geschieht. Dies ist evtl. eine andere Formulierung für „Notwendigkeiten“.

Soweit erstmal!

Viele Grüße

Andrea

Marta Blazanovic wrote:

Liebe Andrea,

ich melde mich endlich wegen dem Konferenzbeitrag über Berlin Reductionism (für die Konferenz <http://btc.web.auth.gr/>), den ich gerade schreibe. Ich bin jetzt schon ziemlich tief im Thema, ich habe auch letzte Woche Robin Hayward geinterviewed, was sehr interessant war.

Ich wollte dich auch einige Sachen noch fragen, wäre toll wenn du irgendwann bald kurz per E-Mail beantworten könntest, oder vielleicht könnte ich dich irgendwann auch anrufen...ich habe nicht so viel Zeit mehr, um richtige Interviews mit allen zu machen.

Ich habe zwei Texte von dir, die du mir einmal geschickt hast: „Über meine Musik am Innenklavier“ und „Development of the inside piano“. Ich bräuchte die Jahren, wann sie geschrieben wurden und vielleicht auch Info, wo sie veröffentlicht wurden, wenn sie veröffentlicht wurden (mit Jahr, Zeitschrift Jahrgang und Nummer und Seiten, wenn möglich).

Du sagst im Text „Development of the inside piano“ unter „Influences“: “Become

aware of the presence and the quality of the environment's sounds. Be aware of the diffusion of these sounds with the sounds I am producing. This is a way of perceiving that is based on ideas of J. Cage, whom I would also call an influence.“ Die Frage wäre: inwieweit habt ihr über Cage bei euren Proben/Treffen diskutiert, war es ein Einfluss, dass von allen bewusst umgesetzt und praktiziert wurde? Hast du was bestimmtes dann von Cage gelesen, dass direkt deine Arbeit beeinflusst hat? Ich denke jetzt an Cage fetishizing everyday sounds, und seine Kritik an Improvisation (Interaktivität, Konversation, Automatismus). Robin spricht auch über sein Versuch, auch durchs Lesen von Cage inspiriert, seine Lebensweise gar nicht von dem Musikmachen zu trennen (non division of art and life, living in present moment, distancing yourself from your emotions - nonexpressiveness). Gab es bei den anderen auch solche Ideen, oder habt ihr vor allem eher über musikästhetischen Fragen diskutiert?

Im Buch von Peter Niklas Wilson du sprichst über Form in der improvisierten Musik, die sich „aus den permanent getroffenen Entscheidungen der beteiligten Musiker“ erklärt, sie ist offen, instiktive Gefühle entscheiden über sie...aber dass ihr dann genauer erforschen wolltet „wann, warum man was beim Improvisieren spielte, mit dem Ziel, mehr Klarheit, Transparenz, ‚Notwendigkeiten‘ bei den Abläufen und Formverläufen zu erlangen“ und da sollte das Reduzieren helfen können. Du meinst „Aber die Frage nach ‚notwendigen‘ Abläufen oder befriedigenderen Formen in dieser Art der Improvisation ist nicht gelöst - lässt sich womöglich innerhalb der Improvisation nicht lösen“. Mir interessieren diese Notwendigkeiten - was hast du damit genau gemeint? Ich hoffe, ich habe dich nicht sehr erschreckt mit diesen Fragen. Ich brauche nicht Essays, sondern nur so ein kurzes Statement.

Und noch, hast du vielleicht irgendwelche interessante Aufnahmen von den früheren Jahren?

Vielen vielen Dank und liebe Grüße,

Marta

(28 April 2010)

Appendix 7. Andrea Neumann: Development of the inside piano (2008)

Development of the inside piano

The development of my instrument (which is also related to the development of my music) is a continual process.

There was never a superordinate plan for a predetermined final result.

Each decision was made for practical or sound-ideal reasons at a certain moment (for example, leaving behind the traditional way of playing keys, discovering the sound possibilities of the strings, dismantling the frame from the ,exterior').

piano – piano frame – inside piano

I began to improvise on the keys of a piano. By playing with other musicians and with different instruments I realised that playing the piano conventionally, i.e. using the keys, was actually very limited. I was never able to sustain a note, and I wasn't able to manipulate or change the sound after having pressed a key. So I tried to find sounds I could modulate by playing the strings of the piano. I found a variety of sounds through the use of different preparations like bamboo sticks and forks and by using e-bows.

Since a lot of venues don't have a piano – and if they did, they probably wouldn't allow the strings to be prepared and played on directly – I thought it wise to have an instrument of my own. The idea was to gut a piano of everything except its metal frame, the resonating board and the strings. Eventually, I found a piano company which gave me the frame of an old piano they didn't need any more. After carrying a very heavy instrument (70 kg) around for five years, I decided I needed to build something similar to what I had, but in a lighter version. The piano builder and tuner, Bernd Bittmann, built one for me in 2000. In order to reduce weight, the frame is made out of aluminium. It works with harpsichord tuning pegs and it leaves out parts of the 88 strings. It includes specially constructed dampers (two) and a metal plate for the preparations.

Amplification

The use of varying and increasingly specified setups to amplify the instrument shows the mutual influence of technical equipment and artistic progress:

In the beginning the instrument wasn't amplified at all; in large ensembles I could never hear myself.

So the first step was to take a self-made pickup, put it on the wood under the strings, and connect it to a guitar amplifier. The sound was louder, yet quite rough. To clarify the sound I bought Genelec studio monitors and several contact mics for acoustic instruments (AKG's) and put them on different places underneath the instrument. By doing so I could amplify the higher and lower strings differently. I needed a mixing board to preamp the mics (phantom power) on the one hand, and on the other hand I required enough channels for several pickups. This way of amplifying the whole instrument (fixing pickups underneath the resonance board) is less direct compared to, for example, putting a pickup under an oscillating fork. With this amplification method, the signal is much higher and much more direct. It's also easier to manipulate the sound of the fork by, to give one example,

changing the filter in the mixer. So I added several ,movable' pickups (different types of magnetic guitar pickups) to the fixed pickups.

I discovered the possibility of amplifying the same sound with different pickups. Since every pickup sounds different, several ,interpretations' of the same source occur.

I use this ,method' on the last track of the 3-inch solo cd (berlin strings) called "end of a motor noticed by five pickups" (2003).

Adding a mixing board to the instrumental equipment for technical reasons opened a huge field of artistic possibilities:

Firstly, I discovered the possibility of producing feedback in the mixer, generating 'electronic' sounds (sine waves, all kind of electronic noises).

Then I discovered a way to combine the acoustic sounds with the sounds generated internally in the mixer. For example, the vibration of an oscillating string can influence the frequency of a feedback. This creates a sound which combines an electronic and an acoustic aesthetic.

The electronic sound approach also includes the use of the mixer's mute buttons, enabling the extremely sudden appearance and disappearance of sounds—less in an organic fashion and more as if the sound gets cut out of its context.

The use of different pickups connected to several channels makes it possible to compile several layers at the same time, producing a more complex, polyphonic structure.

Influences

I think that much of what one experiences, (all the music one is listening to, conversations one has), a lot of the input one gets from ,the world' is an influence on what one is doing.

To be more specific, during a certain period of time between 1996 and 2000 when I started to develop a way of playing inside piano, the most crucial influence was from the people I worked with and talked to (Annette Krebs, Axel Doerner, Robin Hayward, Burkhard Beins ...).

A variety of languages exist in the area of improvised music. I was able at that time to listen to improvisations based on West and East German free jazz, on the so-called English school, on music developed in the eighties in New York.

This field seemed open to a referencing of one of these languages, a development of something out of it, a building of something in opposition to it, and an attempt to create a language of one's own.

Some characteristics of this language:

Focus on the quality of the sound.

Regard silence as a quality appropriate to sound.

Be aware of when and how a sound starts and stops (fade-in and fade-out, transferring one sound into another sound, abrupt end, stop with the beginning of another sound ...).

Focus the details in a sound, ,supporting' it with the help of filters from the mixer or with volume, velocity and density.

Become aware of the presence and the quality of the environment's sounds. Be aware of the diffusion of these sounds with the sounds I am producing. This is a way of perceiving that is based on ideas of J. Cage, whom I would also call an influence.

Concept of music

Playing inside piano

ears hands ears brain wishes

Compositions

For a couple of years, the wish to expand my artistic activity beyond the physical boundaries of my piano frame led to projects and compositions that refer to topics outside of the autonomous musical sphere.

This work includes, among other things, reflections on the presence of the body in different contexts – by playing music with personal gestures and body language (in terms of gender), by the (de)synchronization between movements and sounds.

Appendix 8. Gregor Hotz Interview Transcription

Gregor Hotz, edited interview transcription, January 1. 2009. Selection of parts on cultural politics, *ohrenstrand.net*, *ausland's* positioning.

GH: Ein Grundproblem im *ausland* ist das Geld. Also, wir kommen jetzt langsam in die Positionen, wir werden langsam so wahrgenommen vom Kultursenat, von verschiedenen Leuten in Berliner Institutionen, die fangen an, unsere Arbeit, die wir schon viele Jahren machen, wahrzunehmen, zu respektieren, und eben auch gut zu finden zum Teil und, mir ist irgendwann klar geworden, dass man die Biegungen nicht ewig so weiter machen kann, also im finanziellen Sinne. Du spielst hier immer auf Tür, das ist nur Türgeld. Und wenn 100 Leute kommen, gehst du mit viel Geld nach Hause, wenn 20 kommen, dann ist es nichts gewesen. *ausland* ist bei *ohrenstrand.net* eigentlich in erster Linie deshalb dabei (...) das geht zurück auf eine Förderung der Bundeskulturstiftung, die ist irgendwann ausgeschrieben worden, in 2007. Da hat die Bundeskulturstiftung beschlossen, dass die Neue Musik besonders gefördert werden sollte in Deutschland. Das ist ein nationales Förderprojekt. Ich habe irgendwann für diese Ausschreibung der Bundeskulturstiftung gehört und mir überlegt, kann man da irgendwas machen? Dann hab ich eigentlich mit Nicholas Bussmann zusammen ein anderes Projekt vorgeschlagen für das Netzwerk Neue Musik. Das ist aber nicht gefördert worden, ich habe es ein bisschen geahnt dass es nicht gefördert wird, und habe mich irgendwann dann noch umgeschaut. Es war klar: in Berlin wird es ein Netzwerk geben, es war eine ganz klare Aufgabenstellung. Die Bundeskulturstiftung hat gesagt, es muss sich ein Netzwerk bilden von verschiedenen Häusern, die müssen was zusammen machen und dafür geben wir Geld. Es war klar, dass in Berlin so ein Netzwerk gefördert werden wird, aber es war auch klar, dass es nur ein Netzwerk geben wird, weil es eben in ganz Deutschland nur 13 gibt. Dann hab ich angefangen mich umzuhören, was hier die Kulturmafia so tut, und Thomas Bruns vom Kammerensemble Neue Musik war eben dabei, dieses *Ohrenstrand*-Netzwerk zu gründen und zu beantragen. Und ich bin einfach auf diesen Zug mitaufgesprungen. Über meine Teilnahme am *Ohrenstrand* ist Geld vom Kulturstadtamt Pankow geflossen für die Biegungen. Und dieses Jahr 2008, das war einfach das erste Mal, dass ich die Biegungen machen konnte mit einer bestimmten Fixgasse, also ich hatte pro Konzert so ungefähr 1000 Euro, und ich konnte den Leuten, die ich eingeladen habe, sagen: ich habe 1000 Euro, das ist das Budget, und jetzt können wir uns was überlegen. Und ich habe es deshalb gemacht. Das ist noch immer am Anfang, es ist noch nicht so viel Geld, aber wenn du Veranstalter bist und nur das Türgeld anbieten kannst, kannst du eigentlich nie jemanden anfragen. Alle Konzerte die ich gemacht habe, das waren immer die Musiker die mich gefragt haben. (...) Aber, für die Zukunft ist es eigentlich...ich möchte es für die Zukunft erreichen, dass *ausland* das Geld hat, dass *ausland* einfach gefördert wird von der Stadt. Also Berlin gibt immer noch ziemlich viel Geld für die Kultur aus (...)

MB: Denkst du, dass diese Musik irgendwann mehr an Wichtigkeit erreichen wird?

GH: Ich denke, sie wird etablierter sein, ich weiss nicht ob sie dadurch wichtiger wird, ich glaube es eigentlich nicht. Aber wenn man dieses Spiel überhaupt mitspielen will, wo es jetzt um „ranking“ geht, etabliert nicht etabliert (...), wenn

man ein gesellschaftliches Renommee haben will (...) natürlich spiele ich dann als Veranstalter mit. Wenn wir so ein Festival wie jetzt im Dezember in den Sophiensälen haben können, das ist mir natürlich nicht so unwichtig. Ich habe kontinuierlich in den letzten Jahren daran gearbeitet, dass ausland irgendwann als ernstzunehmender Veranstaltungsort einfach akzeptiert ist (...) und eben auch von den Leuten in der Kulturverwaltung, die von dieser Musik keine Ahnung haben, by the way. (...) ich möchte eigentlich erreichen, dass ausland wirklich substanziell gefördert wird vom Berliner Senat, ohne dass es passiert, dass es so ein verkrustetes institutionelles Ding wird, wie andere Häuser zum Teil. Ich möchte nicht, dass ausland so arbeitet (...) wo es ganz klar ist, kein Techniker macht irgendwas, ohne dafür bezahlt zu werden (...). So arbeiten wir hier nicht und das möchte ich behalten, weil das auch die Qualität ausmacht. (...) Ich möchte auch gerne bezahlt sein für das, was ich mache. Weil, bis jetzt war es nicht so ein grosses Problem, ich konnte mein Geld woanders verdienen (...) aber es ist natürlich nicht meine Wunschsituation. Ich würde gerne mit meiner kulturellen Arbeit auch Geld verdienen. (...) Wir sind so ein bisschen auf der Kippe, habe ich das Gefühl. Wenn wir noch ein paar Jahre aushalten so lowbudget-mässig, vielleicht, wenn wir das überhaupt wollen, weil wir sind ja fünf Leute im ausland, und wir haben fünf verschiedene Meinungen zu diesem Thema zum Beispiel. Nicht alle von uns finden das gut. Nicht alle wollen ein subventionierter Ort sein. Ich bin inzwischen so – ja ich will subventioniert sein. Vor 5 Jahren hätte ich das auch nicht gesagt. Vor fünf Jahren hätte ich genau das Gegenteil gesagt. Das sind jetzt schwierige Fragen, die kann man nicht so wirklich abschliessend beantworten. (...) Diese Förderung läuft für 4 Jahre. Ich habe bei diesem Spiel mitgemacht, weil ich denke, wenn ich jetzt 4 Jahre mit ausland und biegungen und Echtzeitmusik in diesem Kontext genannt werde, dann hat es bis in 4 Jahren eigentlich jeder verstanden. Dann hab ich einfach eine andere Position. Ich mache es aus diesem Grund, ganz rational und egoistisch im Prinzip.

Appendix 9. Clayton Thomas' definition of music played in *KuLe* and *ausland*

Clayton Thomas per email on May 31, 2010

"This is an attempt to define in simple terms the music most commonly associated with the venues Kule & Ausland

Primary territories: Reductionism

Music that owes its aesthetic framework and sonic identity to the oeuvre most commonly associated with composer John Cage, distinguished by:

- The use of electronic noise, or acoustic sound that references electronic noise: feedback / earth hum / distortion, pure tone, machines.
- Non-melodic pitch materials presented with equal consequence to other organised sound.
- Extended techniques created for the express purpose of alienating a traditional western instrument from the produced sound.

Music that consciously defies the expressionism and individualism associated with jazz, and the group rhythmic consensus emanating from non-westerns cultures.

Music that avoids the emotive and narrative tools issuing from traditional folk or classical musics.

Music that relies primarily on improvising to achieve these ends.

Secondary territories: Off-shoots

Music made by friends, trusted colleagues and associates that attempts to fuse the above musical objectives with pop or rock sensibilities

Music that consciously references the music or musicians who have inspired the core group of players most freely associated with these institutions. Alessandro Bossetti playing Steve Lacy inspired works for voice transcriptions, Christof Kurzmann, playing the Socialist Folk / Social critiques of Robert Wyatt, Burkhard Beins, Derek Shirley and Michael Renkel playing new wave punk, The Magic I.D. using simple folk and classical melodic material and hip-hop grooves within the framework of an electro-acoustic sound world. Clayton Thomas (for example) playing free jazz, but using a post-reductionist sonic language as a means of freeing the narrative implications of the music."