

SUBVERSIVE VISUALITY BETWEEN ART AND ACTIVISM: POST-YUGOSLAV NEGOTIATIONS OF QUEER ART

By

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

In this project, I study the processes of negotiation of meanings of queerness in art works, visibility and space of post-Yugoslav queer festivals. The thesis researches how LGBT/queer art festivals (and in particular the *Queer Zagreb Festival* in Croatia) used queer visibility in the post-Yugoslav region from 2003 till 2012. This research engages with discussions in the fields of feminist visual studies, cultural studies, queer theory, festival studies, and (queer) anthropology to ask about the influence of visual representation on social changes. Methodologically, my dissertation combines the ethnography of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* with interview analysis, and close-reading of written and visual Festival materials. Furthermore, my analysis is informed by the concerns of feminist intersectionality and queer approaches to ethnography.

I show that while the visibility of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* aimed for a radical queering of the Croatian public discourses of art and politics, it was framed through the programming of the Festival as the time-space where high art and avant-garde influences meet popular culture. I argue that the practices of regional negotiation of queerness oscillate between the strategies of queering belonging and visibility (of queering the region, art works and identities), and the strategies of creating queer visual representation (of choosing to produce queer/lesbian/gay region, art works and identities).

Approaching negotiation as both material and discursive, I explore the ways in which, in particular, the Zagreb festival community negotiates regional queerness through travelling, experiencing festival time-space, and understanding art. I suggest that the post-Yugoslav queer festivals (despite significant differences in artistic and

political goals among them) are all engaged in practices of claiming the public space for the display of art works that question sexual and gender normativity. I argue that the opening up of festival chronotopes to non-normative visibility creates temporary free festival spaces of queer sociability. The significance of my project for a broader audience lies in my suggestion that the subversive lesbian and gay and/or queer representations can be read as an index of larger changes in post-socialist sexual and gender hierarchies.

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INTRODUCTION

This project analyzes the processes of negotiation of the meanings of queerness¹ in art and activism. It is based on an ethnographic research into queer visibility and non-normative heterotopias created by and around queer festivals in the post-Yugoslav region, in the past 10 years, with a particular focus on the *Queer Zagreb Festival* in Croatia. My interest in visual representations of regional queer art and politics is motivated by the claim that representation is not innocent but matters greatly. One of the major stakes in the struggle for meaning consists in the ability to imagine ways out of hegemonic representations; in Gloria Anzaldúa's (2002) urgent formulation: "Nothing happens in the 'real' world unless it first happens in the images in our heads" (Ibid.:186).

In general terms, it is possible to argue that the post-socialist societies of the successor countries to the former Yugoslavia are arranged around contemporary normativities of heteropatriarchy and ethnonationalism. The encounters with the discourses of ethnic and sexual self-righteousness, even when half-resisted, often bind one to practices of entering this normativity as if other choices did not exist. The "entrance signs" of belonging to the "normal" majority are so frequent that they hardly merit much critical attention: they are to be found in the post-conflict ethnonational self-congratulatory public politics and historiography and in the "skin of the social"² that offers only heterosexual life-choices and images in public and private lives. Although this research cannot but acknowledge them, I assume they form a

¹ The terms "queer" and "queerness" are used in very many ways in this dissertation – as a theoretical or political commitment to questioning identity; as an umbrella term for identities; as a style - reflecting the multifacetedness of their use in theoretical works, activism and my field. My main research interest is in understanding "queerness" in connection to its regional uses, and in interaction with art. Further on, I will discuss the meanings of "queerness" as a travelling term in the successor countries of former Yugoslavia.

² Sara Ahmed (2006) relates one's sense of (well)being in a body with a sense of belonging or feeling excluded from sociality, i.e. from the "skin of the social" (Ibid.:9). In her articulation of queer phenomenology, orientation in social and geographical space is closely related to the processes of embodied subjectivity where "spaces are not exterior to bodies; instead, spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body" (Ibid.).

grid upon which different kinds of practices may emerge: practices of resistance and subversion.

When researching resistance to normativity, a researcher has to make explicit her awareness of a thin line between what we consider and conceptualize as subversive, and the daily interpellations of normality. This is why I look at occasional instances when festival posters function as “entrance signs” to see how queer visibility in post-Yugoslav countries is at times seduced by the hegemonic invitations to inhabit the spaces of normality, even if for a short while. The occasions when festival visibility functions as “entrance sign” I see as invitations to join what Lisa Duggan (2002) theorized as “homonormativity” or the global imperialism that Jasbir Puar (2007) conceptualized as “homonationalism”. However, this research is above all concerned with the “exit signs” that have exploded in the social space of post-Yugoslav countries, above all in Croatia, in the last ten years, and that offer, albeit problematically, something unprecedented in this particular region: queer visibility of joyous escape.

The analysis that follows explores practices and possibilities of queering visual representations in the space of queer festivals as a way of *escape* and exit from normativity. At the same, as a corollary, it also explores the limits to and closures of their potential as political strategies of intervention. Papandopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos (2008) write a genealogy of escape as a multitude of “escape routes” taken by “escaping subjectivities” out of the regime of control of the day (Ibid.:15). Escape is argued to be invariably followed by control and policing practices, but producing an excess of sociability and joy that exceed “capture”. Escape, according to them, is not “a retreat and disengagement from the world. It rather instigates an intensification of committed constructions and efficacious interventions” (Ibid.:66). Furthermore, they suggest that social transformation in our age is no longer visible as a “grand” act of subversion or revolt. Instead, one should follow actual *escape routes* by

attending to the everyday and the ordinary – performing what they call practices of *imperceptible politics*³ (Ibid.:73). I follow their lead in looking at moments of queerness emerging around queer festivals that I conceptualize as chronotopes in Bakhtin’s (1982) sense of the word in order to approach the question of what makes art queer. Based on the understanding that there is no unequivocal definition of the term *queer* (Loist 2007), and no simple consensus on the role and program of queer festivals, my project explores intersections of sexual non-normativity and art, and the ways those terms come to be articulated together. In practical terms, I will track down the exit signs of queerness in their *materiality* (Edwards and Hart 2004; Rose 2007) as billboards, posters, works of art, official or private photographs; and in their *mobility* (Rose 2007). The latter entails following the trajectories of the movements of the particular visual objects across the borders of post-Yugoslav countries and beyond, and the paths they traverse between their creators, users, critics and viewers.

One puzzle or dilemma is of vital importance for this research. It is the “queer dilemma”, as formulated by Gamson (1995)⁴. It refers to the balancing act between the need for organizing based on identities in order to be able to formulate any kind of political claim, and the wish to deconstruct those very identities. The main questions I ask here are: how do queer festivals in the region navigate the queer dilemma of identity; what modes of exit, escape routes and subversion strategies are made possible through these visual events; and what venues of co-optations and closures are at play at the sites of creation, circulation and reception of these representations?

The key terms in this research constantly seem to keep asking to be clarified as to what the researcher or the interviewees or the theoretical framework implicate them to mean. These

³ To Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos (2008) “imperceptibility” means “the everyday strategy which allows us to move and to act below the overcoding regime of representation” (Ibid., 75). They formulate “imperceptible politics” as an antidote to largely ineffective state-oriented politics; for them, “imperceptible politics” represent “the everyday level of escape” (Ibid., 76).

⁴ I thank Skadi Loist whose work (2007, 2008) first alerted me to Gamson’s text and brought his “dilemma” in connection to researching queer festivals.

terms, namely “queer” in the sense of queerness in the post-Yugoslav context, but also queer in the context of (visual) art, throughout this research will continue to draw attention to their status as contested terms. My willingness as a researcher to allow for the productive openness of these crucial concepts recalls Jackman’s (2010) reference to Walter Bryce Gallie’s theorization of “essentially contested concepts” (Ibid.:114). Jackman sees both queerness and fundamental anthropological terms such as fieldwork, ethnography, and the field itself as concepts that are contested, and insists on the importance of their continuous but reflexive use both for ethnographic research and for queer theory.

In this dissertation, I will ask how the queer art festivals in the countries of former Yugoslavia engage in complex practices of translating “queer” into local and regional context, and how they negotiate what I call “regional queer”. The use of the term “queer” to denote cultural events pertaining to non-normative identities and democratic politics created ambiguous situations in the local post-Yugoslav context. This ambiguity was partly the effect of the fact that, prior to the queer festival wave of the last decade, the term “queer” was absent in the public discourses both in its derogatory and empowering connotations. The choice of naming the cultural events “queer” has had many, often contradictory effects: claiming continuity within the Anglo-American *canon* of queer theory and politics; opting for a more “fashionable” post-modern version of imagining the local LGBT community, or even providing a safer space at the festivals as the term “queer” functions both as an *escape* from normativity and as a linguistic masquerade in a hostile context.

Prior to analyzing the translation of queer into post-Yugoslav regional queer and the associated politics of naming in Section 1.2, I will venture into a brief trajectory of the travelling of the concept and its applications in the region. Although one finds early discussions of the term “queer” in texts of individual authors already by the end of the

1990ies⁵, I argue that *queerness* has arrived in post-Yugoslavia with the wave of queer cultural festivals in the past ten years. Regarding the meaning of queer in its origin of Anglo-American/Western European context, it has come to hold out the promise of decentering the Self, and by way of that move, it has also delivered the hope for a new configuration of politics. Queer has been reclaimed as an umbrella term for non-normative sexualities and genders and developed as a conceptual tool for deconstructing (sexual) *identity*, which presents a dilemma for political movements struggling for public manifestations on their own terms against discourses and practices that invite denigration (Jagose 1996; Sullivan 2003). Since queerness deconstructs all basic premises of individual and collective identities (the existence of stable genders, sexualities or community belonging), it literally “shakes the ground” of lesbian and gay politics (Gamson 1996, 395). The dilemma this challenge to identity produces for identity politics consists in acknowledging the instability and the “made up yet necessary” nature of identities, while at the same time, not insisting on providing a definitive answer to this “difficulty” but engaging with it toward some form of politics (1996, 395–404).

In its genealogy, the use of the term “queer” has been argued to shift from signifying “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically”, to encompassing “the ways that race, ethnicity, post-colonial nationality criss-cross with these [sexual] and other identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses” (Sedgwick 2008, 7). This shift, in my understanding, opens up a potential for queering identity politics, instead of an identity

⁵ Tea Hvala traces the first translation of “queer” into Slovenian to a 1995 text by Suzana Tratnik, one of the organizers of the *Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film* in Ljubljana (2011, 181). However, she locates the “queer trouble in Ljubljana” – disputes about the meaning and usefulness of queer theory and politics in Slovenia – a whole decade after that. In Croatia, according to Dioli (2008), first discussions of queer theory, art and activism have taken place at the *Transgressing Gender Conference* in 2005, although there have been individual lectures, texts and translations before that. Dioli notices similarity with Serbia – where first broader discussions of queer theory and politics she locates in connection with the first *Queer Belgrade Festival* in 2005, and so within a cultural and activist context rather than academic one (Ibid.:78).

politics for queers, based on a coalition of non-normative sexualities and genders without disregarding their intersectionality. Furthermore, this is the shift that interests me in drawing the distinction between queering the region and producing regional queerness.

Regarding the promise of queer in challenging entrenched beliefs and institutions of hetero-normativity, queer has been linked with the concept of “performative power”. It is seen as political energy securing an action of disidentification (Pulkinnen in Mizielinska 2006, 88) in various fields, including the field of culture and art. The politics of visual representation constitutes a crucial field of feminist theory and activism: “The struggle is... over imaging and naming. It is about whose representations will prevail” (Braidotti 1994, 72). The importance of the politics of representation in queer theory and practice is reflected in the proliferation and undecidability of discussions around queer and *visibility*: both continue to function as “struggle terms” that fuel analysis and actions (Hennessy 1994, 31).

An important aspect of the *queer dilemma* (Gamson 1995, 390) is tied to the issue of language as a matter of global circulation of narratives of sexuality. Queerness has been conceptualized in *transqueer narratives* - a term that brings together translation and queerness to emphasize the process of negotiation/translation among many intersecting dimensions of identities (race, ethnicity, religion, class) that constitute “queerness” (Baldo 2008, 56). In my research, the issue of translation at work within queerness is linked to the trajectories of queer as a travelling concept across political, geographical and disciplinary boundaries. My understanding of queerness as a practice in this research is informed by the fluidity and indeterminacy of *queer(ing)* theory and politics as it travels and translates/gets translated in (to) LGBTQ politics and aesthetics in the course of its movements in post-Yugoslav countries. If the queer arts festivals are placed within what Buden, Mennel and Nowotny (2011) have conceptualized to be the *Europe as translational space* – “not only as a given space within which translation occurs, but as a space-in-translation whose spatiality is

precisely determined by translational social practices” (Ibid.:5), then the dynamics of the translation and creation of queer visibility around them constitute one important practice of democratic intervention in contemporary European political and artistic space.

My main argument, discussed in detail in Chapter 1, is that the post-Yugoslav queer festivals negotiate and compete not only within the boundaries of new nation-states, but in a region and in the wider international context for recognition and for time-space that is not repressive of non-normative sexualities and gender expressions. The practices of negotiation included in my analysis are: organizational strategies of creating festival symbolic geographies, those of politics of naming, and of programming. Since festival chronotopes include various actors in addition to the organizers, the practices of negotiation also include the participatory strategies and tactics of artists and audiences. I will show how the practices of inhabiting queer festival heterotopias rely on constant switching back and forth between the strategies of queering the region, art works and identities, and the strategies of producing a queer/lesbian/gay region, art works and identities.

My interest in queer space-time as a possible “escape route” links the analysis of the festival phenomenon to Sara Ahmed’s (2006) conceptualization of orientation as a metaphor of how subjectivities work/move in space: following certain *lines* makes some objects available to us while it simultaneously turns us away from others. What is within reach as our life choices is not “casual” but presents itself as a visible option as a result of the paths and turns we have previously taken. Ahmed further complicates this life-mapping by drawing the attention to *desire lines* – a term from landscape architecture for “unofficial paths” that show many daily usages of paths outside the prescribed ones (Ibid.:16). As desire lines leave their marks on the ground and hint to the history of deviations from official pathways, so, for Ahmed, desire that leads to deviations from normative direction leaves the traces on the body and shapes (Ibid.:20). The life orienting itself away from the official paths faces the

“disorientation of encountering the world differently” since such body and life does not fit neatly into the world “organized around the form of the heterosexual couple” (Ibid.). In my reading, the exit signs at post-Yugoslav queer festivals emerge as sites of intersecting desire lines and the actual art festivals function as sites of such queer collective direction.

Seeing orientation as a question of residing in space and being orientated toward certain objects that should have the capacity to provide particular shared experiences allows Ahmed to reconsider “sexualization of space” as well as “the spatiality of sexual desire” (Ibid.:1). Residing together in space and being oriented in the same direction brings about “collective direction” or “collective orientation” when belonging to an imagined community means following or *facing* the same direction and thus noticing the same objects (Ibid.:65–109). Challenging the assumption about some collective dedication to following particular norms, Ahmed’s queer moments are “moments of disorientation” (2006, 19) that may create alternative, non-prefigured landscapes. In my reading Ahmed’s “disorientation” refers back to the queer dilemma of instances when identity is not a fixed subjectivity. I will use Ahmed’s concept of collective orientation as a lens to look at the formation of the post-Yugoslav urban network of queer festivals as alternative spaces of sociability. I am interested whether they function as spaces of “collective direction” for “imagined communities” of queerness.

In what follows, I will analyze queer visibility as a matter of representation based on the ethnographic study of the particular series of events called the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. Chapters 1 and 2 are devoted to theoretical concerns: the formation of a regional queer festival space-time, and questions of queer representation, culture and art, respectively. They engage in discussions in the field of visual culture, cultural geography, and queer theory. Since I assume that the region of post-Yugoslavia (as named in everyday speech) or of Western Balkans (as called in political discourse) is important both for theoretical and contextual understandings of the Croatian queer festival, the whole of Chapter 1 is devoted to

the analysis of the creation of a broader network of post-Yugoslav queer festivals, and to the discussion of the implications of the concept of “regional queerness” for queer research. I shall explore to what extent it is possible to see post-Yugoslav queer festivals as moments of transformative belonging - both in the sense of challenging the geo-political marginalization in the global queer space and that of the local heteronormative marginalization within the particular ethno-nation states.

Throughout Chapter 1, the analytical interest in queering space and time is explored through category of *symbolic geographies*, Bakhtin’s chronotope, and Foucault’s heterotopias. The subversive potential of these variably conceptualized time-space instances of queer festivals is approached through Bakhtin’s (1984b) concept of the *carnavalesque*. The analytical framework of the chapter is meant to contextualize my interviewees’ perceptions of affects and embodied experiences of a queer festival week; of the mobility and networking in the festival field, as well as their approaches to defining and appreciating post-Yugoslav queer art – all analyzed in Chapter 7.

In Chapter 2 I discuss visibility and visibility in relation to queerness drawing on Mitchell’s (2005) concept of desires of images in order to discuss what queer images “want”. While I suggest that queer images invite us to exit (hetero) normativity, I identify two ways through which images may communicate such queer messages: through visibility politics and/or through queering visibility.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the methodological issues arising from my interdisciplinary qualitative ethnographic approach. In addition to describing my data, sources and main methodological concerns, I will do two things. First, I explore the metaphor of the visual archive that has guided both my methodology and the conceptual framing. Second, I engage with some ethical concerns arising from feminist research principles.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 represent the actual analysis of the written and visual materials of the Zagreb Festival, and of its programs. In Chapters 4 and 5, I ask three sets of questions concerning (1) process of festival organization, including how the art works are selected; (2) organizational negotiations of festival chronotope; and (3) organizational struggle in between community-legitimization and the institutional field. All three of these issues are based on the analysis of two sources: festival manifestos and programs.

Chapter 6 analyzes visibility of the Zagreb Festival based on the analysis of the Festival posters over the ten years of its existence. I will provide the analysis of a particular street performance as an instance of subversive regional queer art by Željko Zorica. In my reading it subverts the normative reading of Croatian historiography through straight-looking visibility of a queer monument. The other piece I have chosen to analyze is the theatrical performance *The Banquet* by the Brazilian group *Teatro Oficina* in collaboration with regional professional and amateur actors. This collaborative theater piece enabled bringing together of queer and carnivalesque visibilities. I read the time-space opened up by *The Banquet* against Foucault's characteristics of heterotopias, with an aim to account for the political potential I see in some of the art works at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*.

In Chapter 7, I analyze the reception of *Queer Zagreb Festival* based on the extended fieldwork and the interviews I made with twenty participants: Festival organizers, artists, volunteers, and members of audience. I explore my interlocutors' mobility across the field of post-Yugoslav queer festivals and their experiences of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* chronotope as a potentially empowering time-space for queer participants. Furthermore, the focus is on my interlocutors' emic⁶ understandings of the meanings of queer art – their definitions of queer art in connection to the art exhibited at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. As a result, Chapter 7 situates the interpretations of post-Yugoslav queer art at regional festivals, in particular at

⁶ I am interested in "emic" ethnographic accounts in the sense of the term in social and cultural anthropology (see Barnard and Spencer 1996, 91–94), and in "emic theory" as used in queer ethnography by Tom Boellstorff (2010, 218).

the *Queer Zagreb*, in relation to its negotiations through travelling, experiencing of its time-space, and art works, from the perspective of the Festival participants.

1 SITUATED SUBVERSION: STAGING REGIONAL QUEERNESS

The main question guiding this chapter is to ask whether it is possible to find a common aesthetic and shared politics of sexual and gender non-normativity in the successor countries to former Yugoslavia. And if so, is it legitimate to refer to such commonalities as regional queerness? A first glance at the last ten years of lesbian/gay/queer festivals in the region suggests so: they imagine the previously shared geopolitical space in different terms, but co-create its queerness through intensive networks of representation. However, given the questioning of identities implicit in the term *queer* and the political uses of dividing a geopolitical space into regions, thinking (about) regional queer itself is to be discussed. In what follows I will navigate between the regional meanings encountered in my ethnographic research at one post-Yugoslav queer festival, and the theoretical implications of configuring the travelling of the term/politics/aesthetics of queerness when looking at the new “wave” of queer visibility in successor countries to former Yugoslavia. The negotiation of a regional/local understanding and practicing of queerness can be identified in the “manifestos” published by different queer festivals as well as LGBT organizations, in practices of networking among festivals, or in the participants’ and organizers’ views about space and mobility. Still, it is important to consider the theoretical difficulties that appear with linking queer to a geographical understanding of the region.

The question of belonging to a region relates to Kulpa and Mizielińska’s (2011) discussion of local and regional reworking of sexual politics. Their concept of “Central Eastern Europe locality” refers to practices of “local translation of politics and theories” (Ibid.:13). Their regional “locality” de-centers and destabilizes common geopolitical dichotomies, and allows them to ask simple but potent questions: not just about the queerness

of Central Eastern European time, but also about the location and the boundaries of this region. When asking “Where is CEE?” (Sic), they cannot but also ask: “Where is the West?” (Ibid.:12).

1.1 Imagining Regional Queerness While Queering the Region

Taking into account potential problems with connecting such unlike concepts as queerness and geographical understanding of regions, it is necessary to briefly look at the region that the countries of former Yugoslavia belong to, and to re-frame the very concept of the region. The territory taken up by the states successors to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is seen as approximately corresponding to the region of the Western Balkans. The European Union definition does not include Slovenia into this region, but it does Albania, although the membership in this region remains disputable and at times unclear⁷. The volatility and the political motivation of belonging to regions are to note in the probable redefinition of the boundaries of the Western Balkans region after Croatia’s EU accession in July 2013. Maria Todorova (2009) has shown how belonging to the “Balkans” resounds with ambiguous, mostly pejorative connotations. In her analysis, the discourse of *Balkanism* and its accompanying politics construct this region as the undesirable “Other” of Europe. I did not find it surprising therefore to notice that there is a lack of common consent on belonging to the Balkans in the Balkan states themselves. While the language of public politics uses the term Western Balkans, it is equally likely for the citizens of Croatia or Bosnia, for example, to

⁷ The flexibility of defining a region is illustrated by the EU definition of the Western Balkans region - former Yugoslavia with Albania without Slovenia (see: <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/regions/balkans/>), and the changes it may undergo with Croatia entering the EU. The EU definition of the Western Balkans has been perceived as a description of a political grouping of European states still not accepted in the EU – more than a reference to a geographical region. For instance, Igor Štiks (2011) sees the region “christened ‘the Western Balkans’ by Brussels’ quite graphically as “basically a space squeezed between EU Member States, supposedly destined to join them but without a clear accession timetable” (Ibid.:123).

speak of their countries in relation to the region of South Eastern Europe. On the other hand, the counter-discourse of “belonging to Balkan” as discussed by Keiko Mitani (2007), for instance, has continued functioning as an influential cultural “self-identification” (Ibid., 306)⁸.

Debates about meanings of place, space, region and territory in post-modernist and queer geography studies provide a basis for understanding the lack of agreement on belonging in the Balkans, against which we can conceptualize regional queer. What is at stake here is forging a discourse of territory that articulates place and locality as not necessarily reactionary. David Harvey’s (2009) geographical concept of regions as “spatially distinctive collective phenomena” (Ibid.:172) that have been created through historically specific modes of living together and sharing specific place and time is instrumental in how to approach locality. One could say that the various critical models of spatiality try to produce a dynamic, process based theory. The corollary to this thinking is the emerging difference drawn between place and space as Marc Auge, for instant, argues that a place is “relational, historical, and concerned with identity”, and different from what he calls the non-places of supermodernity (1995, 77–78). Influential distinction between place and space is that developed by Michel de Certeau (2011). According to him, a place entails “order” of elements and functions as “an indication of stability”, while space is “practiced” (Ibid.:117). For him, a street is a place planned by architects and “transformed into a space by walkers” (Ibid.).

David Harvey refers to the long-lasting tradition of thinking about regions not as given but made through the practices of everyday life of particular communities⁹. This way, Harvey debunks the much-used myth of the “territorial imperative” as instinctual and innate to humans that naturalizes aggressive territorial behavior and its accompanying political and

⁸ Indeed, for Mitani (2007), the changes in the meaning and usage of “Balkan as Sign” serve as far-reaching indications: “Usage and occurrence of *Balkan* (Sic.) will be a clue to understand the change of language performance and of the society which uses it, and to keep up with *Balkan* will be our future task” (Ibid., 310).

⁹ Harvey relates to the work of Vidal de la Blache, a nineteenth-century French regional geographer, who has influenced the tradition in geography and history of considering regions as “symbiotic practical achievement of long-maturing human cultural endeavors in given environmental settings” (2009, 171).

military consequences (Ibid.:172–173). He exposes the genealogy of the codifications and institutionalization of territorializing behaviors and modes of representation that he traces back to the 17th century¹⁰.

However, there are alternative modes of imagining and use of territory already available. Saskia Sassen (2012), for instance, claims that the practice of the *Indignados* and the *Occupy movements* is reshaping our understanding of the term *territory*. By occupying, these movements are transforming public space - they are creating a hole in the heart of capitalism, and putting into existence a communal territory of vital importance. In a similar way, Doreen Massey's (1994) work on reclaiming thinking about place and locality as not necessarily reactionary is quite inspiring for my concept of region. Massey analyses how certain nostalgia for a "sense of place" in the age of globalization has been associated with nationalism, romantic search for "heritage" and intolerance towards the outsider. From this point of view, place is conceptualized as fixed, stable, tied to clear-cut identities, and as offering a way to cope with anxiety caused by constant change. In contrast, Massey offers a "progressive concept of place" that thinks place not as static but in process. This differently imagined place is not necessarily defined by boundaries. On the contrary, it strives to be open and non-exclusionary, allowing for multiple identities as well as conflicts and differences (1994, 151–152). However, she indicates the difficulties in expanding a progressive model of place to the region, considering the troubles that geographers have been having with defining the latter. According to Massey, the main problem with a geographical concept of the region is that "this question of 'definition' has almost always been reduced to the issue of drawing lines around a place", which effects immediate consequences for creating differences between

¹⁰ Harvey also directs us to David Delaney's useful clarification of the way in which this process had transformed the territory into "a device for simplifying and clarifying something else, such as political authority, cultural identity, individual autonomy, or rights" (Delaney in Ibid.:173). According to Delaney, the territory gets interpreted as "relatively simple and unambiguous" in order to be able to function as a simplified metaphor, and as such, it "does much of our thinking for us and closes off or obscures (relational) questions of power and meaning, ideology and legitimacy, authority and obligation and how worlds of experience are continuously made and remade" (Ibid.:174).

inside and outside, and “constructing a counter-position between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Ibid.:152). It is the practice of drawing boundaries then that makes the concept of the region more difficult to reconceptualize as progressive, multiple and fluid.

In my understanding, queering the region should entail imagining territory as space that is open to sexual diversity. Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst (2010), for instance, estimate that the debates on meanings of place and space have constituted the grounds of “geographical imagination”, but propose the research on “geographies of sexualities” as vital for “unraveling some of the complex power relations that congeal around sexuality and spatiality” (Ibid., 15–18). A queer concept of place/space developed by Judith Halberstam (2005) provides a much-needed impetus for theorizing space not bound by heteronormativity. Halberstam critiques postmodern geographers in the neo-Marxist tradition, such as Harvey, for privileging the category of class, universalizing the global at the expense of the local, and for completely missing out on theorizing place/space in connection to sexuality and normativity. In contrast, Halberstam’s analysis is framed by paying careful attention to non-normative recourse to time and space that is very much linked to queer subjectivity. In her model, *queer time* refers to the modes of living time in post-modern societies that fall out of “temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance” (Ibid.:6), and *queer space* is linked to “the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage and also the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics” (Ibid.).

The notion of queer time in post-Yugoslav region is further complicated by its intersection with a politically loaded figuration of post-socialist time. Shannon Woodcock (2011) lays bare the content of what this post-socialist time stands for: “capitalist belatedness”, and the constant falling behind of the more advanced “Europe” (Ibid.:64). According to Woodcock, the concept *post-socialism* reflects the power of the West to define

the space and time that Central and Eastern Europe belongs to, and places the Central Eastern European countries “in a stagnant moment of time before capitalism and after socialism, lagging behind the singular trajectory of European development” (Ibid.:65). Some other anthropological studies understand post-socialism in a less embattled way. Laszlo Kurti and Peter Skalnik (2011), for instance, frame their edited volume on anthropological research on post-socialist Europe as studying the “varied legacies of state socialism” while “debunking notions of homogeneity” of post-socialist geography and temporality (Ibid., 1).

The alternative ways of thinking time-space are inspiring for my research on the practices of building non-normative public cultures and visibility around post-Yugoslav queer festivals. It is still to be clarified whether these concepts are useful for thinking of community-making practices in relation to the category of the region; if regional queer is an example of queer time/space; and if the drawing of boundaries (that links categorization to violence) entailed in the construction of a region precludes the possibility of merging it with the concept of queer that questions identitarian practices as such. In other words, should we rather talk in terms of queering the region instead of regional queer – questioning both the *concept of region* and the *actual region*? For this purpose, the following section will explore if the practices of post-Yugoslav festival communities engage in queering the region as a result of which they create different symbolic geographies of queerness. In so far as we can identify such modes of imagining queer belonging to the region, it testifies to the vitality of the festival project of creating progressive, queer concepts of the region.

The concept of regional queer allows me to enquire in the rest of this chapter into shared affective and political ground in the apparent multiplicity of strategies of queer festivals in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Macedonia. However, the question I began with remains unresolved: the utility of the concept of the region cannot escape its loaded

geopolitical and historical traces, and its exclusionary force. Therefore, I will continue to adopt it with a dose of suspicion.

1.2 How Post-Yugoslav Arts Festivals Translate “Queer”

I will relate the symbolic geographies¹¹ of regional queer in post-Yugoslav countries (Queeroslavia, post-socialist queer etc.) to particular strategies of entering or exiting normativity. My main interest in this subchapter is the transport and exchange of regional queerness in post-Yugoslav queer art and politics which is visible on three levels: symbolic geographies created around different festival communities; politics of naming and programming of individual festivals. The analysis of interviews which asked about each of those three “points of transport” is encountered in Chapter 7.

1.2.1 Symbolic Geographies

There are various symbolic geographies that emerge out of the post-Yugoslav queer festivals in Sarajevo, Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Novi Sad and Skopje. They imagine a common time and space in different ways and are informed by various approaches to the politics of visibility. In the following, I argue that the utopian tendencies of longing for *Queeroslavia* in the context of the Belgrade cultural festival, or for *post-socialist queer* in the

¹¹ My understanding of the term “symbolic geographies” is informed by its usage in contemporary cultural geography to describe interdependence of geo-historical and affective map-making practices. See Alexander Maxwell’s (2010) edited volume on the history of East-West symbolic geographies. For discussion of symbolic geographies in relation to the successor countries to former Yugoslavia, see a chapter by Vesna Drapac (2011) in the same volume, and Zorana Djaković and Novica Petrović (2004) on symbolic geographies in contemporary art.

context of the Zagreb festival constitute possible queer symbolic geographies that re-frame the region as an imaginary space of queer belonging.

“Queeroslavia” is the name of the country and space where the first Queer Belgrade Festival in 2005 took place, as written on the festival flyers (Dioli 2011). Irene Dioli (2008) has analyzed the travelling of queer theory and politics in post-Yugoslavia as not rooted in academic work but rather in political and cultural activism, especially in cultural festivals labeled as queer, such as the *Queer Belgrade Festival* (Ibid.:78). Dioli (2008, 2009) conceptualizes the symbolic geography of Queeroslavia as transnational, nostalgic and utopian. Queeroslavia reflects a “post-Yugoslav longing for queer transnational citizenship” (Dioli 2009, 2). However, as she points out, nostalgia links post-Yugoslav queer visibility to a certain Yugo-nostalgia via idealizing a shared space beyond national boundaries and ideologies, allegedly similar to how Yugoslavia used to be. The reason for perception of this symbolic geography as a non-normative and democratic step into the future is its utopian aspect: Queeroslavia is simultaneously imagined as a safe and inclusive place for queerness that Yugoslavia never was (Dioli 2009, 2).

Inspired by Dioli’s approach to symbolic geography of Queeroslavia, I additionally focus on a related *queer time and place* concerning other festivals. Based on my ethnographic fieldwork, I will suggest that there is another set of relevant symbolic geographies, in addition to Queeroslavia, involved in queering the space and time of post-socialism, the Balkans and Europe. I propose that the *Queer Zagreb Festival* has consistently worked with the concepts of *post-socialist queerness* and *Balkans queerness*, while, for instance, the *Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film* in Ljubljana has constructed its image as the oldest gay and lesbian film festival in Europe.

The space experienced by the *Queer Belgrade Festival* community as Queeroslavia is conceptualized by *Queer Zagreb Festival* organizers in its first year in 2003 as the space of

“post-socialist queer” and later on in 2007 as that of “ex-Yu” (i.e. former Yugoslav) queer. Local meanings of these two symbolic geographies emerge in detail in chapters 5 and 6 in relation to analysis of festival manifestos and programming strategies. Here it is important to point out that while these formulations render regional queer partially less utopian and nostalgic, they also make the Festival more legible for the art world and for funders.

Potentially, both of these symbolic geographies extend the margins of belonging beyond post-Yugoslav LGBT communities. However, the *Queer Zagreb* program director Dobrović (2004) explains that the “geographical area” he has in mind, both in writing about and programming post-socialist queer (art), is indeed the “territory of the former Yugoslavia” (Ibid.:132). This choice is justified by the perception of Yugoslav socialism as being “somewhat more liberal than the Soviet model” (Ibid.). Interestingly, for Dobrović, post-socialism functions both as a geo-political chronological marker for time after socialism, and as a critical mode for “deconstructing the global world as a world in which all cultural, social and political differences are reduced to a minimum” (Ibid.:133). While post-socialism becomes a conceptual tool for dismantling globalization, he presents a neologism “post-socialist queer” as a “hybrid term” loaded with possibilities to be discovered in his festival’s future (Ibid.).

In Slovenia, Queeroslavia seems to be subtly rejected through insistence of the organizers of the *Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film* in Ljubljana on their festival’s belonging to “Europe” (conflated with the country’s membership in the European Union). The organizers’ investment in the Europeanness of their festival is detectable from the inclusion in the Impressum of each of the festival catalogues of one sentence, establishing the festival started in 1984 as “the oldest festival of gay and lesbian film in Europe” (Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film Ljubljana 2010, 2). Parallel to this, however, the programming choices and film preferences of the organizers and spectators remain in constant dialogue with the regional

queer since they program regional film retrospectives and give prominent place to showcasing regional LGBT films.

In addition to the instances of the reclaiming of geographies by the art festivals singled out above, other events have been organized as well. In Macedonia, the *Queer Square Skopje*, the art festival organized by the LGBT organization *Masso* in 2007, was intended to take place in the central square of the Macedonian capital but was denied permission by city authorities. However, as the first half-successful attempt, it still managed to question the normativity of the square dedicated to Mother Teresa as a Macedonian cultural and religious icon.

The first *Queer Sarajevo Festival* in 2008 and the *Red Dawns (Rdeće Zore)* festival since its start in 2000 in Ljubljana also belong here as events contributing to the production of the queer space and time of feminist and queer art in the region and beyond. There have been several other gay/lesbian/queer festivals such as *Merlinka* in Belgrade, Serbia since 2009; *L'art pour l'Action* lesbian festival in Novi Sad, Serbia organized in 2012 for the 5th time; *Lesbian art festival* in Zagreb, Croatia since 2010, and feminist festivals featuring queer art/film as part of their program such as *Pitchwise* in Sarajevo, Bosnia since 2006, and *Vox Feminae* in Zagreb, Croatia since 2007.

1.2.2 The Politics of Naming

Before going into the details of the strategic choices of self-naming, I would like to establish that although the festivals have chosen different names, in my research they are grouped under the collective noun “queer festivals” in order to underscore their commonalities. The organizers may have either explicitly chosen to call their festival a queer festival or named it differently (gay and lesbian festival, anarchist art festival) but almost all

see themselves exhibiting *queer art* and/or defining and relating to the term queer as one of the most important denominators of what they perceive the event is about (even when they are highly critical of the term, as are the organizers of the *Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film* in Ljubljana).

In this subsection, I propose that the symbolic geographies of post-Yugoslav queer festivals can be interpreted in relation to their different naming choices: queer used as both subversion and camouflage in Zagreb; *kvar* used as a playful, provocative general strategy in Belgrade; queer misinterpreted by its opponents as a term of endangering in Sarajevo, while opting to remain with the “older” practices of naming the festival event as lesbian and gay in Ljubljana to maintain continuity with the history of LG organizing in Slovenia.

As for the linguistic problem of how to translate the actual English term, in Belgrade, Serbia, queer was first transliterated as *kvir*, which refigured the foreignness of the word by giving it a local spelling. The second event of the *Queer Belgrade Festival* was then named by using a Serbian term *Kvar (Malfunction)* that not only meant something similar to, but sounded similar to the English term as well.

In Sarajevo, Bosnia, queer was first conceptualized as an action: the opening motto of the first *Queer Sarajevo Festival* in 2008 was “okreni okvir” (“turn the frame around”)¹². In a playful linguistic gesture, the frame (okvir) that the Festival wants to unsettle contains the word kvir (queer), as if turning itself the frame around. However, the linguistically indexed promise of a turning-around has changed drastically since the first *Queer Sarajevo Festival* was attacked by the Wahhabis on its opening night and could not take place in public as the organizers could not ensure safety. The festival was renamed “Queer Sarajevo Festival *in a Box*” (emphasis added) as a response to the danger of visibility. The beginning of queer in Bosnia is now remembered as *queer in a box*. In addition to the reference to the “box” of

¹² If not indicated otherwise, all the translations in the text are mine. However, the “manifestos” in the catalogues of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* come both in Croatian and in English, in their translation. The exception is the 2006 Festival catalogue, as indicated in the Footnote 26.

Bosnian (hetero)normativity, it means the actual DVD box with films and performances that could not reach the public at the 2008 *Queer Sarajevo Festival*.

In Zagreb, Croatia, the Festival used the approximate Croatian translation *nastrani Zagreb* (*perverse Zagreb*) along with the English “Queer Zagreb” on public banners that hung in the main city square during the Festival. However, the Croatian name, in spite of its familiarity, apparently did not register with the actors since the organizers, participants as well as the media only talked about the “Queer Zagreb Festival”. Either “nastrani” or queer, the *Queer Zagreb Festival* as a cultural space seems to have found its “high art” niche of safety in the Croatian public discourse – except for the queer art works it stages, as I will elaborate in analytical chapters (4, 5, and 6).

In Belgrade, Serbia, *Merlinka*, a new *International Queer Film Festival* was planned for September 2009, but it got eventually postponed to December 2009 due to the anxieties generated around the tentative plans for the Belgrade Pride at the same time. The festival name chosen is homage to Vjeran Miladinović Merlinka, a transgender person and the actor in Želimir Žilnik’s movie, *Marble Ass*, who was murdered in 2003. In calling their festival “Merlinka”, the organizers opted for a name which is readable as queer but not instantly recognizable as such.

The travelling category of queer is paralleled with the constant mobility and travelling of the organizers, artists and audiences of the cultural events, as well as with the meanings that these travelling agents attribute to the festivals. I argue that the pull of the regional queer is one of the *desire lines* (Ahmed 2006, 19) that shape the symbolic maps of meanings of non-normativity in the successor countries to former Yugoslavia. The dynamics of the regional queer influence the formation of different variants particular to a specific festival or community (Queeroslavia, post-socialist queer or *Red Dawns* anarchist queer feminism in Slovenia).

One constitutive dimension of regional queer includes, for instance, the transnational network of queer festivals of post-Yugoslav countries that has met several times, discussed and exchanged strategies and hopes at the beginning of the queer festivals' wave. Though the network no longer exists, the practices of regional communication continue. An instance of this transnational festival networking is the travelling of the Belgrade *Merlinka* Festival to Sarajevo in 2013, three years after the last attempt to realize the *Queer Sarajevo Festival*. The festival *Merlinka* will again in 2014 take place not only in Belgrade, but also travel to Sarajevo for the second time and to Podgorica in Monte Negro for the first time. The regional queerness also includes the regional, transnational support mobilized around Pride parades in the region – where LGBT persons from the region travel to support and participate every year in Zagreb Pride, Ljubljana Pride, or in the Belgrade Pride, when the latter is not prohibited.

However, in the context of globalization, the regional is not and cannot be the only influence in creating queer symbolic geographies. The cultural form of the festival makes it *per se* a “space of flow”; a network of complex interrelations, always in “relationship with elsewhere” (Harbord 2002, 59–60). Many of the artists and art works/films at these festivals come from the international “elsewhere”. So much so that Kevin Moss (2004) even seems to dismiss queer film festivals in Central Eastern Europe for showing films that are “90% or more of Western (US or Western European) origin” (Ibid., 262). However, discussions in the emerging field of festival studies have clarified that US/Western European hegemony is the order of the day at most film festivals (Evans 2007) and in this regard the post-Yugoslav queer festivals are part of this tendency. Still, as Owen Evans argued, the European film festivals, and by extension also other arts festivals in Europe or beyond, function as “loci of cultural dialogue” between “the Hollywood and the rest of the world cinema” – between the Western art world and “the rest” of the world art production (Ibid.:24). At the same time, this outcome is not necessarily automatic. During my fieldwork at the *Festival of Lesbian and Gay*

Film in Ljubljana, I learned from the organizers how their programming politics try to balance the overwhelming influence of “Western” films by providing enough space and attention to regional LGBT films. Tatjana, an LGBT activist occasionally connected with organizing the Ljubljana festival, explains:

We need to have a certain quota of films for the festival each year. Of course, the production of these films in the West is much bigger than here in this space (the post-Yugoslav region). But I think that each year the Festival is trying very hard to bring some films or some content that have to do with this region (...) There is always a big interest when we have something like that, people are interested. Since all of us have some connection with that space (...) I think we are very connected to (our region) - willy-nilly, it's here, it's happening to us. (Tatjana 2010, 3)¹³

When asked for a local and/or regional meaning of queer, my interviewees show awareness of the subtle re-imagining of the meanings and practices of queerness through the work of local queer festivals. As we will see in Chapter 7, some of them refer to the strategies of the *Queer Zagreb Festival's* usage of a post-socialist queer or regional queer to account for the specificities of living queerness in this particular geo-historical time and space and talking about art created by local artists.

1.3 Post-Yugoslav Queer Festivals' Chronotopes

In this section, the temporal and spatial practices of post-Yugoslav queer festivals are revisited in relation to the recent debates in the fields of festival studies and urban geography. A lot of recent work in queer theory is concerned with the queering of space (Bell and Binnie 2000), and the theoretical implications of queer space (Halberstam 2005). At the same time,

¹³ All interviews conducted in Croatian have been translated into English by me, except several interviews with foreign artists conducted directly in English.

some accounts of Pride parades and queer festivals focus on their commercialization and their touristic appeal (Johnston 2005). Still, I argue that what connects the various LGBT festivals of post-Yugoslavia is the act of politicizing queer use of public spaces, and their ties with new social movements (LGBTIQ, feminist, anti-war).

Queer cultural festivals are film or art festivals that call themselves so self-consciously and/or present queer works as well as claiming that an important part of what they do relates to queer politics. The field of festival studies focuses overwhelmingly on film festivals (cf. Loist and de Valck 2008). Within the realm, the subcategory of LGBT/queer film festivals is categorized as “specialized”, “identity-based” cultural events – similarly to the logic of naming women’s festivals or national and regional festivals. My research contributes in several ways to the existing festival studies: it extends the focus of festival studies by comparatively researching the complex festival forms of film and arts festivals, and it links performative/visual arts and activism. It also integrates two hitherto specialized and separate(d) research fields – the studies of queer festivals and festivals in the Balkans and in Eastern Europe.

Furthermore, it is important to contextualize post-Yugoslav queer festival in regards to the international film and arts festivals circuit. The origin of the major European film festivals can be traced back to the post-Second World War reconstruction of Europe and its individual nation-states. As Vanessa Schwartz (2007) points out, the *Cannes Film Festival* was “reborn”¹⁴ in 1946 as the “first major postwar international cultural event” intent on circumventing the impasse of the Cold War and creating “a collaborative international film culture” identified with cosmopolitanism (Ibid.:57). The Cannes festival was soon followed

¹⁴ Parallel to the history of European film festivals as projects of reconstruction, nation-building and international cooperation is an equally fascinating history of festivals as competing political projects. According to Schwartz, the first opening of the Cannes festival “on the unfortunate date of September 1, 1939, as Hitler invaded Poland” was a direct reaction to the perceived fascist tendencies of the 1938 *Venice Film Festival* (Ibid.:59).

by other major post-war film and art festivals such as the Edinburgh Festival and the revived *Venice Film Festival* – both in 1947, and the *Berlinale* in 1951.

Marijke de Valck (2008) points out that while the historical and artistic importance of these older festivals grants them the “A status” on the international film festival circuit, the newer festivals need the spatial or geopolitical “added value” of “exoticism, exclusivity or current (political) relevance” (Ibid.:136–137). In a similar manner, Ken Turan (2002) traces the popularity of the *Sarajevo Film Festival* both in the centrality of the event to the feelings of national pride, and its geopolitical attractiveness for international film-making community. Turan understands the current central symbolic status of the festival that first happened while the city was under siege in 1993, as stemming from the viewers’ desire to “reconnect” with the world through film. The “city’s desire not to be forgotten”, according to Turan, has found a strong response in international, in fact, “the West’s guilt at having forgotten for as long as it did” – making the *Sarajevo Film Festival* into a significant international festival with a “geopolitical agenda” (Ibid.:107).

Although the smaller film festivals may need to find their “added value” to match the attractiveness of major international festivals, they still may be seen as belonging to the same time-space – that of the international festival circuit. The queer film festival circuit has experienced growth since the first *Frameline* film festival in San Francisco in 1977 that was followed by an upsurge of LGBT film festivals worldwide (Rhyne 2007). However, I think that the different disposition to two contemporary Sarajevo film festivals give evidence of their belonging to two different chronotopes. On the one hand, the *Sarajevo Film Festival* is visible in official postal stamps of Bosnia (Turan 2002, 94), is funded through governmental resources (Federal Ministry of Education and Sport, Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina etc.), and it is lauded as the most important cultural event in Bosnia in the media. *Queer Sarajevo Film Festival*, on the other hand, happened for just one opening night in 2008

and only virtually in the internet space in 2009. It was turned down by all the cultural institutions of Sarajevo except for the *Academy of Fine Arts* where the exhibition opening took place in 2008. As I analyzed in “*Battle” for Sarajevo as “Metropolis”*: *Closure of the first Queer Sarajevo Festival according to the Liberal Press* (2010), both the timing of the *Queer Sarajevo Festival* during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, and its very presence in the public sphere of Bosnia, were perceived by the majority of Bosnian citizens as out of sync.

However, the overwhelming (international) media focus on the small group of attackers with a larger popular support does not reflect the complexity of reactions to the Festival in Bosnian society. Taking into account the ambiguous and embattled support that the Queer Festival received from the liberal press and civil society, we can say it is the moment of a heterotopic time and space to which the *Queer Sarajevo Festival* belonged as opposed to the time and space of national pride and international fame of the *Sarajevo Film Festival*. Ger Zielinski (2012) adopts Foucault’s concept of *heterotopia*, as space of either criminality or deviance in relation to and from the perspective of normative space, for his analysis of contemporary international queer film festivals. Reflecting upon the recent wave of troubles with queer festivals in places as distant as North Korea, Russia and Bosnia, Zielinski asks whether “the queer film festival (will) always carry with it the promise of a site for the unruly carnivalesque” (Ibid.:2). We will return to the heterotopian space of the queer festival in relation to the political potential of the carnivalesque in Section 1.4.

Researching post-Yugoslav queer festivals as acts of staging regionally and locally situated resistance to heteronormativity also contributes to an ongoing endeavor of theorizing festivals as spaces of affective and performative political interventions. The existing conceptualizations of the festival phenomenon range from relying on Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1982, 1984a; 1984b) concepts of the carnivalesque and dialogism; through analyzing

festivals as hybrid *spaces of flow* that provide for the commercial circulation of art products while functioning as a site for the creation of specialized knowledge and particular audiences (Harbord 2002); to theorizing the influence of queer festivals on the formation of collective identities and socialities (Brocka 2008; Gamson 1996).

The research in festival studies on experiences of the artists, organisers and audiences in the global festival circuit testifies to different reception of art work in national and international contexts, as well as to the difference of the works exhibited in mainstream festivals as opposed to “specialized” events such as queer festivals (Onir 2008; Ducastel and Martineau 2008). The discussion of the significance of queer festivals - drawing on the debates in the field of festival studies on the cultural role and importance of festivals – sees the event either as cultural and tourist attractions (Crespi-Vallbona and Richards 2007) or as spaces for forging political awareness (Becker 2003). “Specialized” festivals, such as queer or feminist film festivals are seen to satisfy “a social need” for a group of audience members who might not otherwise have a space in which to experience “a feeling of communion” around a cultural/artistic experience (Basquin 2008, 124). The focus in these studies is on the discussions of queer festivals as occasions of “queer reproduction” (Ibid.) and venues for making (non-global) queer art visible. The tendency in festival studies to perceive film and art festivals as spaces of political and cultural empowerment has certainly shaped my interest in exploring the particular configurations of space and time of post-Yugoslav festivals.

One of the major categories of analysis for my research is the *chronotope*. As is the case with many other concepts of Bakhtin, his category of the time-space nexus called chronotope has been developed as an important mode of literary analysis, traversing many other disciplinary fields. Bakhtin first theorized the notion of chronotope for reflecting on how space and time are represented in literary texts in “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” in his *The Dialogic Imagination* (1982). In it, he uses this term to signify both

“internal chronotope“ meaning “the time-space of (the) represented life“, which he relates to “autobiographical self-consciousness“, and the “exterior, real-life chronotope“ of the “biographical“ (Ibid.:131). In literary theory the concept of chronotope remained an analytical category of relations of different genres and ideologies to the specificities of linguistic articulation of time-space relations within texts. It has been used in literary analysis to talk both about the ways in which historical time and space have been represented in the work of art, and about the creation of imaginary space, time, plot and characters specific for that work (Vice 1998).

In my research, the chronotope is used to reflect on the inseparability of categories of time and space. Transposing the concept of the chronotope to the research on queer festivals enables me to analyse the ways in which the festival organizers conceptualize the actual historical time and space their festivals belong and communicate in – as we will see in Chapters 4 and 5. Additionally, the chronotope also offers a way into investigating the imagining and inhabiting of the particular space-time of the festivals by their participants in the interview analysis in Chapter 7.

Although it might seem that the formulation of regional queerness in this chapter somewhat privileges spatial relations, the temporal dimension is equally crucial for understanding post-Yugoslav (festival) queerness. The focus on queer time in contemporary festival research relates the field of the festival studies to the insights gained in post-colonial theory by way of de-centering the normative visions of time-space relations dominant in Anglo- and Euro-centric queer theory (Kulpa and Mizielska 2011, 15). For imagining the temporality of queer festivals, it is useful to refer briefly to Shohat and Stam’s (2002) questioning of the traditional narrative sequencing of visual culture in the light of alternative accounts of “Third World, postcolonial, and minoritarian cultural practices” (Ibid.:29). They call for seeing visual culture as a “multi-temporal heterogeneity” – the interconnection of

different cultural texts and practices which are “hybrid, heteroglossic, unevenly developed, characterized by multiple historical trajectories, rhythms and temporalities” (Ibid.). The visual culture they want to narrate, drawing on Bakhtin’s work, thus testifies to the dialogism and “temporally embedded intertextuality” of all art and culture, as well as to the hybridization of cultural production with the “currents from elsewhere” (Ibid.:30).

This dialogic approach has important implications for situating post-Yugoslav queer festivals. They are not seen as late followers of supposedly mature Western queer festivals, thus avoiding the baggage of “the infantilizing trope” that constructs “developing societies” as culturally more immature (Ibid.:28), but as venues of hybrid artistic practices engaged in articulating the aesthetics of queer in its particular historical context. The approach also speaks to contemporary refigurations of time and space of Central and Eastern European queerness. Kulpa and Mizielinska (2011) write of time disjunctions between some presumed “Eastern Europe” and the “West”, where the western modality of geotemporality is constructed as linear and progressive, while eastern temporality, “Eastern time of coincidence” in their terminology (Ibid.:15–16), is characterized by the explosion of occurrences happening at the same time, and burdened by the discriminatory uses of temporal categories of progress as opposed to backwardness.

Out of the total of eight queer festivals in the capitals of the five (out of the seven) successor countries to former Yugoslavia that were active between 2003 and 2012, seven festivals started during those 10 years. The only exception is the *Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film* in Ljubljana that started in 1984. As I said above in Section 1.2, these festivals do a lot of networking and exchange artists, art works and audiences, as well as concepts and strategies of representation and politics. In my view, the geo-historical links of the organizers and audiences to a former shared country, as well as their embeddedness in the transnational space created through activist networking (feminist, LGBT, anti-war activism) can be

accounted for in terms of belonging to versions of what Halberstam (2005) calls queer time and space (Ibid.:4) and justify the need to research those art festivals as engaged in creation of regional queerness.

My research is thus engaged in *cognitive mapping* (Jameson 1991, 51) of the spatial and temporal relations of post-Yugoslav queer festivals, and the ways in which festival audiences use these events and their visibility to negotiate resistance. My tentative ethnographic map of post-Yugoslav film and arts festivals researches a small part of the international film festival world. Furthermore, what Kulpa and Mizielinska call “Eastern time of coincidence” characterized by the occurrence of “everything at once” (2011, 15) is a good description of messy and fluid temporalities of post-Yugoslav queer festivals of the last decade. An influential approach to the dynamic perception of cultural flows is Arjun Appadurai’s (2006) concept of *scapes*. Challenging the hypothesis of a simplified cultural imperialism and homogenizing influence of globalization, he proposes to look at circulations of global images and influences by using the suffix “scapes” as of landscapes. His model of analyzing fluid global movements of cultural influences and capital provides an opportunity for me to perceive power relations within them, avoid a one-way cultural flow model, and follow instead the trajectories of, for example, an image’s global circulation.

Tracing the “scapes” of art works, images and organizational strategies of post-Yugoslav queer festivals leads my project towards Ahmed’s (2006) model of non-normative orientation in landscape seen as movements following *desire lines* created through individual or collective acts of repetition aside from normative paths (2006, 19). This fluid model of individual and collective orientation in social space as constitutive of its possibilities speaks to the practices of networking of various actors (artists, organizers, audience members) in the field of queer festivals. Chapter 6 devoted to the analysis of (queer) visibility of the Zagreb Festival will track down the pro-democratic instances of queer visibility imagined and

performed at/around this festival. Such “moments of disruption” will be conceptualized as “desire lines” that have a decisive influence in orienting individual as well as collective actions (Ibid.:19). Indeed, queer in the sense of practice and politics in the Anglo-Saxon context had its starting point in performance and direct action (Berlant and Freeman 1993), and its continuation in performative community organizing (Shepard and Hayduk 2002).

The visibility of queer, subversive or radical qualities embodied by the visual (and performative) arts at these festivals (discussed in Chapter 2) also shapes the public space. My understanding of space is informed by Doreen Massey’s (2005) theorization of space as “simultaneous multiplicity” (Ibid.:61) which is seen as dynamic and constantly changing. Consequently, public space is “necessarily negotiated, sometimes riven with antagonism, always contoured through the playing out of unequal social relations” (Ibid.:151). I adopt this view and argue that the negotiations of meanings of public space around queer festivals, and multiplicity of discursive and material practices that accompany queer visibility in the public space of post-Yugoslav countries result in the simultaneous formation of multiple spaces. These negotiations of queer festival spaces range from exclusionary to transformative: from the conservative politics of cultural institutions in Sarajevo that all but one refused to host the first *Queer Sarajevo Festival* to the queer spatial “occupation” of central cultural places of the Croatian capital by the *Queer Zagreb Festival*.

Each post-Yugoslav queer festival of the past decade may be analyzed in terms of its differential appropriation of particular venues as an act of symbolic translation of the mainstream “places” into a particular festival time-space. The Queeroslavia of the *Queer Belgrade* was staged in the festival’s first year on the roof-top of a deserted building in Belgrade (Dioli 2008, 1). This organizational choice located the imaginary queer country in the central but abandoned urban space, yet imagined as full of possibilities.

The Ljubljana festival, in accordance with their self-perception as the oldest European lesbian and gay film festival, has taken place in two established and centrally located cinemas of the Slovenian Capital - *Kinoteka* and *Kinodvor*. Equally established are the legendary Ljubljana LGBT clubs where the entertainment part of the Ljubljana Festival takes its place. The centrality of the Ljubljana Festival venues can be argued to be an outcome of the cultural success of almost 30 years of Slovenian lesbian and gay activism. *Queer Zagreb Festival*, though a relatively new phenomenon when compared to the history of the Ljubljana event, also staged its events in equally prestigious culturally central institutions from its inception.

The Festival organizers presented this strategy of spatial centrality as a means of its politics of queering the mainstream, and of extending the spatial reach of post-socialist queer and regional queer beyond the margins (Queer Zagreb Festival 2005a). In its ten years of existence, the Zagreb Festival brought queer art works to almost all prestigious theaters, cinemas, as well as art galleries and museums all over the capital, with the closing event in 2012 pointedly taking place in the *Croatian National Theater* as the symbolic place of belonging to the Croatian cultural canon. The *Queer Zagreb Festival* has expanded spatially across Croatian borders. Since 2012, it has been organized as the *New York Queer Festival*, based on the model and the experience of its organizers with the Zagreb Festival. Additionally, this new festival has featured in 2012 the works of art already seen in Zagreb – either at the *Queer Zagreb* or at the *Perforacije (Perforations) Festival*, further destabilizing the one-way perceptions of the flows of cultural exchanges. Although “closed” in 2012, the *Queer Zagreb Festival* has expanded also temporally, being revived as the *Queer Zagreb Season* – staging cultural events throughout 2013 and on in 2014.

In contrast to the relative organizational capital and flexibility of the Zagreb and Ljubljana festivals in negotiating or playing with the limitations on access to queer festival time-space, similar possibilities are quite limited for the smaller festivals that worked within

more tense political and organizational conditions. The first *Queer Sarajevo Festival* in 2008, for instance, was refused exhibition space by all cultural institutions of the town except for the *Academy of Fine Arts* (Durkalic 2008). In Novi Sad, Serbia, the small-scale *L'art pour l'Action Festival of Lesbian Art* in its first year in 2007 took place in the space of a private home, and in the later years since 2008 it has been extending its spatial reach to exhibition and workshop places in the city. In Belgrade, Serbia, *Merlinka*, the *International Queer Film Festival* since 2009 has been screening the movies in the cinema halls of the *Belgrade Youth Center* without homophobic threats that beleaguer all attempts at Pride activism in Belgrade. The space of a mainstream cultural venue, away from the contested public space of the streets, serves as safe space for queer films and audiences.

It is possible to extend the analysis of symbolic geographies and time-space configurations of post-Yugoslav queer festivals and to take into account the larger international networks they belong to. Drawing on the analysis of European film festivals that uses postcolonial theory for grasping the specificity of the European festivals as spaces of cultural “border exchanges” between Hollywood and other national cinematographies of the rest of the world (Evans 2007:24), it is possible to argue that the post-Yugoslav queer cultural festivals can be researched as spaces of unequal exchange in a twofold way: both in regard to the mainstream art festival circuit, and in regard to the transnational queer festival circuit. The network of queer art festivals (mostly) in the capitals of post-Yugoslav countries intensively negotiate such exchanges in multiple directions: within the regional network of festivals, transnationally with other (queer) festivals, with their audiences, and with hegemonic regimes of the “visible” in their respective art-culture systems.

1.4 The Carnavalesque of Queer Festival Heterotopias

In this section, I test the conceptualization of festival time and space through Foucault's (2002) concept of *heterotopia*. I discuss the main characteristics Foucault observed in heterotopic spaces; and proceed to the use of the concept of heterotopia in Zielinski's (2012) analysis of global queer festival sites. Later on in Section 6.2, I analyze one theater performance against Foucault's understanding of heterotopia, while in Section 6.3, I enquire into the political potential of queer festivals as the time-space of contingent subversion of normativity through Bakhtin's (1984a; 1984b) concept of the carnevalesque.

For Foucault (2002), heteropia and heterotopic spaces reference all the strange and marginal spaces that come to exist “in relation with all the other sites” even if they “contradict all the other sites” (Ibid.:231). He uses the visual metaphor of a mirror which he places between utopia and heterotopia. Foucault's mirror functions both as an utopia of the “unreal, virtual” space of the image and as a heterotopia that makes the space one occupies seem “absolutely real” and “absolutely unreal” at the same time (Ibid.). What matters for my purpose of analysing queer festivals as heterotopias of subversion is Foucault's elaboration of salient characteristics of heterotopias. Heterotopic spaces are defined through six characteristics. Heterotopias are to be found in all cultures in relation either to spaces of crisis or deviance; they are subject to change and history; the “hetero” in the term signals the sense of difference in intersecting many often contradictory spaces in one place; heterotopia is bound with its time aspects i.e. “heterochronies”; they are both “isolated” and “penetrable” – the dynamics of this process been regulated by “a system of opening and closing” of access to this space; and finally, they give meaning to the rest of the social space (Ibid.:231–234).

Foucault's analysis of heterotopias was first delivered as a lecture, and published a year before his death in a version unrevised by him - preserving the “quality of lecture notes” (Mirzoeff 2002, 236). Ger Zielinski (2012) replicates this quality and structure of the Foucault text in his own analysis of international queer festivals: he confronts each of the characteristics of heterotopias as developed by Foucault, and raises numerous open-ended questions about the “festival” as an instance of heterotopia as he goes along. I find his work important because he points out that although heterotopia as a category has no necessary relation to sexuality explicitly defined by Foucault, it is possible to infer the assumptions pointing in that direction. Therefore he sets out to “capture the sense of those radically heterogeneous spaces, spaces of difference that lay figuratively and sometimes literally at the edges of society, its built spaces and its norms” (2012, 1) as spaces of subversive sexuality. For Zielinski, the understanding of space that has got multiplicity integral to it may function as an indispensable analytical tool for theorizing the “unique(ness of the) space of lesbian and gay film festival” (Ibid.:1–4).

I will test Foucault's six characteristics of heterotopias, as well as Zielinski's questioning of queer heterotopias, against my interlocutors' experiences of festivals' time and space in Chapter 7. Also, in Section 6.3, I will analyze a collaborative theatrical performance at *Queer Zagreb Festival* in 2009 as an instance of artistic production of a queer heterotopia illustrative of what for me represents the Festival's political potential. Clearly, Foucault's notion of heterotopia and Zielinski's interpretation of its potential for thinking about spaces of queer festivals are important theoretical influences for my ethnographic enquiry. However, I have chosen to engage with one particular instance of queer heterotopia: queer festival space as the space of carnivalesque and the ecstatic. Among possible models of theorizing festival, I have focused on the social function of festivals and their influence upon collective identities. I

approach the post-Yugoslav queer festivals through Bakhtinian concept of carnivalesque since this move enables analytical engagement with the subversive potential of these events.

Here, I argue that the sense of liberation and democratic participation achieved through the queer art festivals correspond to the subversiveness of Bakhtin's "second life" (1984b, 8) as lived at carnival time. Furthermore, I also contend that in so far as the festival form provides a forum of participatory politics and viewing pleasures, it functions as a productive site for challenging the elitist presumptions about what counts as "queer art". This section therefore prepares the way for interview analysis in Section 7.3 which sheds light on the contradictory relations between democratic, community-oriented aspects of the chronotopes created around queer festivals, and the constant negotiations of legitimacy and artistic value of queer art they present.

Bakhtin's (1984a; 1984b) *carnivalesque* has been employed in literary and cultural studies to analyse ways of subverting hegemonic representations through laughter and parody. In Section 6.3, I analyze *The Banquet* performance as an instance of the use of "carnivalesque" in queer art, but also in staging queer festival events. However, here I am mostly concerned with Bakhtin's insistence that the medieval paradoxical tradition of subverting the social normality at regularly scheduled intervals continues to exert its influence stretching towards our time. For Bakhtin, carnival is a "pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators" (1984a, 122). It is a shared space of temporary subversion of social hierarchies.

Besides its indisputable popularity, Bakhtin's understanding of carnival and carnivalesque has been criticized in some feminist readings as "unconsciously patriarchal and essentialist" in how it approaches the gendered body and voice (Makaryk 1993, 517). Critical readings of Bakhtin's carnival function as a guard against over-enthusiastic rendering of queer festivals' subversive potential. The admonition in point is Nancy Glazener's (1989) criticism

of feminist approaches to Bakhtin that overestimate carnival's subversiveness. According to Glazener (in Vice 1998), carnival "offers only a temporary suspension of class and not of patriarchy", and this "suspension" never amounts to complete refusal (Ibid., 178). Feminist critique of Bakhtin's carnivalesque is of relevance in Chapter 7 in relation to my interviewees' reflections on gendered dimension of queer festivals. While gender equality in politics and representation is a vital principle for organizers of the Ljubljana festival, the organizers of the *Queer Zagreb* have had more ambiguous approaches in their programming politics and in reacting to the criticism of (gay) elitism from a part of the Croatian LGBT community.

Still, the cohesive function of festivals resonates with Bakhtin's (1984a) theorization of carnival as an alternative time-space, as "second life" which is "organised on the basis of laughter", where all the hierarchies and rules get suspended and turned upside down for the duration of the popular-festive period (Ibid.:8). Bakhtin's carnival is "not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it" (Ibid.:7). It has been claimed that the quality of the productivity and openness of queer festivals transforms the festival into a space open to filmic representations of non-normative sexualities, be it through festivals' dedication to showcasing LGBT films (Loist 2007; Loist 2008) or through following or contributing to the creation of new "waves" such as the appearance of the films of the "new queer cinema" (Rich 2004, 53–54). With the commercialized representations of the "gaystream" or what has been termed "homonormativity" (Duggan 2002) on the rise, the importance of researching the functioning of the term "queer" in the domain of art and representation, and of the specificity of queer festivals as alternative spaces is clear. Still, the significance and even necessity of queer festivals continues to be a "contested" topic, even among queer audiences and artists (Rich 2004, 56).

There are important differences between the purpose and form of carnivals and festivals, but they achieve a similar effect of suspending dominant social hierarchies – putting the world “upside-down”, in Bakhtinian terms (1984a:370) for a short period of its duration. Bakhtin’s paradoxical understanding of the carnival as a site of temporarily allowed subversion offers one model for imagining collective events such as carnivals and festivals as engaged in achieving social cohesion through the temporally bounded enactment of social disruption. Similar to this is Barbara Ehrenreich’s (2007) account of carnivalesque collective festivities, the Dionysian rituals, the Roman Saturnalia, and other European and world festivals as based on “ritual inversion” of social roles: “During Saturnalia, masters had to wait on their slaves; carnival allowed peasants to impersonate kings; and Dionysian worship gave women license to hunt” (Ibid.:38). In her genealogy of carnivals and street celebrations Ehrenreich writes the history of “collective joy” (Ibid.:248) of people’s being together in the streets.

However, Nancy Glazener (1989), among others, points out that contemporary carnivals and festivals have “betrayed” their historical subversive potential as a result of their institutionalization or privatization (Ibid.:161). She remains convinced that the truly ambiguous and subversive carnivalesque is still to be found only in “some literary traces” (Ibid.) – confirming in this way Bakhtin’s own orientation toward the carnivalesque as a literary mode of representation. In my understanding, the carnivalesque reversal is not exactly the same as queering of time-space. The practices of queering geo-temporalities, art works, and identities that I research are inspired and partly created through the festivals as sites of temporary subversion, but they also extend beyond those sites. I tentatively explored this going “beyond” as ordinary practices of escape, conceptualized as “imperceptible politics” by

Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos (2008, 13), by asking about queer posters in my participants' home spaces¹⁵.

The queer art festivals in this study certainly do not gather large popular masses into their time-space¹⁶ as did some of the historical festivities analyzed by Bakhtin, as well as Ehrenreich. In that regard they might be perceived as a carnival on the margins. However, the principle of subversion is a crucial part of how they function. Part of their carnivalesque effect is played out around the social function of the festival that brings together LGBT communities in time-space of local, regional and international "border-exchanges", and revalidates queer sociability. More importantly, I suggest that an additional carnivalesque effect of festivals of queer and LGBT art is to be seen in the subversive reshuffling and re-evaluation of queer art and aesthetics itself that takes place at festival time.

My interest in festivals as carnivalesque heterotopias that disrupt normativity needs to be tied to the critiques of heteronormative geographies of public spaces (of art). Roman Kuhar (2011) develops the paradoxical concept of "transparent closet" of the public space in Slovenia in order to analyze the everyday lived experiences of Slovenian gay and lesbian people. The transparent closet is seen as a relational process of "unfinished coming out" – a situation where a queer person is out but at the same time pushed back into the closet by the environment that prefers not to know (Ibid., 162).

¹⁵ The analysis of a small visual archive of "exit signs" on my interviewees' home walls remains outside of the scope of this text.

¹⁶ There are no official estimates of the size of post-Yugoslav festival audiences. The *Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film* in Ljubljana had screened eleven films in its first year in 1984. In 2003, the start of the decade I research, the number of films was 13. It grew to 22 films in 2004, and then to some 35 films – which remained the constant approximate number of films up to the time of writing this in 2013. The Festival has, since 2005, extended its spatial reach to include not just Ljubljana but three other smaller Slovenian towns – Celje, Koper and Maribor – as festival sites. In contrast, the program of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* includes a variety of genres. Since the number of festival events remained relatively constant since its beginning in 2003, a brief overview of the 2012 Festival should suffice. In 2012, the *Queer Zagreb Festival* week included 11 dance or theater performances, 16 films (and 8 second screenings), 1 exhibition and 1 concert, as well as 7 party events – at the end of each festival day. If one takes into account that the cinema and theater halls at both Zagreb and Ljubljana festivals are of a small to medium size, it seems clear that neither of those two festivals reaches the festival turn-over of around 150 films and some 35.000 viewers that the *Torino GLBT Film Festival* is proudly claiming in 2012 (Torino GLBT Film Festival 2012, 1).

Based on empirical studies, Kuhar shows the persistent hold of heteronormativity on the lives of Slovenian queers and the occasional, one-day in a year events of exit from this transparent closet at the time of the Ljubljana Pride when the logic of normativity gets disrupted by lesbian and gay visibility on their own terms. That is, the Slovenian LGBT people spend the most part of the year in externally imposed invisibility, while public activist events such as Pride march are the only moments of self-defined “seeability” in Hennessy’s terms (2000, 142). In my reading, Kuhar’s transparent closet stands for the regional experience of vulnerable visibility of non-normative sexualities, and following the argumentation of this chapter, could be conceptualized as a *regional transparent closet* – disavowing the already visible but grudgingly acknowledged networks of regional queerness.

As in Kuhar’s analysis, the regional Pride marches, where they are allowed to happen, shake the old practice of preferring not to see queer people. However, I think that the regional queer arts and film festivals trouble the transparent closets of the post-Yugoslav countries even further for two reasons. First of all, the chosen means of cultural struggle of the queer festivals overwhelmingly consists of visual strategies of queering. The proliferation of queer images threatens the transparency and imagined security of boundaries containing the closet from its heteronormative outside. Second, the carnivalesque aspect and potential of regional queer festivals for collective celebration and pleasure disturbs the disciplining of the transparent closet. In my research, I understand pleasure in relation to spatiality in the sense of Ahmed’s (2004) *enjoyment*. According to her, joy or enjoyment is an emotion through which “spaces are claimed”, and this pleasurable spatial experience depends on being “witnessed by others” (Ibid.:165). Ahmed is aware that at times witnessing “the display of queer pleasure” creates *discomfort* in heteronormative spaces (Ibid.). This discomfort is a reaction to the visibility of queers on their own terms. At least during the festival week, the festival time and space engulfs more audience than the transparent closet can hold, and the transgression and

laughter spill over into the heteronormative geographies of the given countries and beyond, temporarily blurring the boundaries simultaneously across geopolitical and artistic borders.

2 REGIONAL QUEERNESS: VISIBILITY POLITICS AND QUEERING REPRESENTATION

My ultimate interest in this project is to explore the ways in which queer visibility, as a way of representing and understanding sexuality, has been used in post-Yugoslav region from 2003 till 2012. The fact that in 2013 a mainstream theater is advertising its lesbian-themed play with a poster showing an embrace of two Madonnas, that provokes either protest letters against “Christianophobia” (Bitno.net 2013) of this visual image or letters of support, testifies, I think, to the complex intertextual work of queer visibility of the preceding decade.

In broad terms, I argue that public reactions brought about through “new” lesbian and gay and/or queer representations can be read as an index of broader changes in post-socialist sexual and gender hierarchies. My ethnography of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* and its contextualization in the field of post-Yugoslav queer festivals investigates into different approaches to the politics of sexual and gender non-normativity. These models of resistance to the heterosexism of Croatian and other post-Yugoslav societies give insights into visual as well as political practices of challenging normativity. This chapter introduces the theoretical questions that motivated my enquiry into the visual modes of resistance at those festival sites.

One of the key discussions in cultural theory concerns the meaning of representation (Chaney 1994, 64; Edgar and Sedgwick 2008, 294), and the interrelatedness of representational practices with the questions of power and politics (Bagnall et al. 2008, 144). Meanings through which we communicate – the “made meanings”, representations (Rose 2007, 2) - enable us to engage in interpreting the world. This process of making sense is what Stuart Hall (1997) defines as culture: a “set of practices”, as “the production and exchange of meanings” (Ibid.:2). I follow Stuart Hall’s call for treating representation as both a concept

and a practice that is perceived as “the key first ‘moment’ in the cultural circuit” (Ibid.:226). When looking at how *difference* is made to signify and “speak” in meaningful ways in contemporary representational practices, Hall foregrounds the inscription of racial and ethnic belonging as differences of relevance. At the same time, he also warns that “(i)n representation, one sort of difference seems to attract others – adding up to a ‘spectacle’ of otherness” (Ibid.:232). In my case this entails differences of sexuality and gender.

Especially relevant for the *queer dilemma* in representations in queer art in post-Yugoslav countries is Hall’s conceptualization of the “split” and the paradoxical ways of representing minorities. According to him, minorities toil under the weight of binary representation where they simultaneously signify the attractive and the repulsive, the good and the bad side of the binary. “Racial” and ethnic (but also sexual minorities) find themselves in this impossible double-bind where they are “required to be both things at the same time” and function as “split figures or ‘tropes’ of representation” (Ibid.:229). I argue that queer visibility aims to redefine the practices of representation on the terms of the minoritarian community. While the images of some LGBT campaigns negotiate the terms of visibility of queer people by asking for rights, other images – in particular the posters of the Zagreb Festival – do not seek acceptance in this way and negotiate visibility through queering visibility (see its discussion in Section 7.1).

In Section 2.1 I ask what queer festival communities may want through subversive images. I inquire into how these aims are achieved, and propose two main strategies: visibility politics, and queering of visibility. In Section 2.2, I analyze the questions of visibility of social identities, and particularly LGBT visibility politics. In Section 2.3, I focus on the strategies of queering of visual semiosis – through curatorial practices, arts, and festival images that relate queer aesthetics with non-normative sexual identities and practices.

2.1 What Queer Images Want: Visibility and Visuality of Resistance

Before I ask how the Zagreb Festival images contribute to the struggle around queer visibility and resistant visuality, it is necessary to consider what is meant by images and signs in cultural criticism. Griselda Pollock (2008) has pointed out that while images, in art criticism, can be “sculptural, two-dimensional, dreamt, spoken, or written”, they have to be understood as not only visual and representational but more importantly as “a holding place of meaning, of affects, fantasies, and displaced meanings” (ibid:4).

The complexity of how images function is discussed by W.J.T Mitchell (2005). His major point is that they do not necessarily have a “clear” message; they do not “say” anything transparent without a reader who brings her own voice into making sense of the image. Mitchell defines images as “dense, iconic (usually) visual symbols that convey non-discursive, nonverbal information that is often quite ambiguous with regard to any statement” (Ibid.:140). Mitchell’s understanding of images as non-transparent, ambiguous symbols that become meaningful only in the course of the viewer’s act of making sense is important in my research for conceptualizing queer festival posters as *exit signs* that emerge through the viewers’ engagement with them.

The second consideration is to ask what would make visual images queer at post-Yugoslav queer arts festivals. In local contexts where *queerness* lacked immediate associations of danger and marginalization, the concept had particular local trajectories (Mizielinska 2006; Puaca 2005; Rosenberg 2008), with direct effects on the perception of queer in art or queer art in those local contexts. Rosenberg (2008), for instance, analyzes the paradox of the meaning of queerness in the Swedish context. She contends that there was no consensus on what queerness meant among Swedish theorists and activists when adopting the concept. At the same time, they aspired to keep its potential open when refusing to define it

clearly. My concern is with the ways in which the travelling of visual (and performative) art work in the festival circuit overlaps with the travelling of the concept and practice of “queerness” in the post-Yugoslav region.

I imagine the work of post-Yugoslav queer images using the figuration of escape through the concept of *exit sign*. For the metaphor of exit sign I draw on Deleuze’s (2007) concept of *lines of flight* – creative trajectories fleeing control. For Deleuze, lines of flight are the third kind of lines that constitute society – in addition to the “molar lines” that are fixed and the partly established “molecular lines”¹⁷. Lines of flight are “strange” in that their effect is “as if something carried us away, across our segments, but also across our thresholds, towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not pre-existent” (Ibid.:125). Though his optimism for escape from control is both contagious and guarded, and should be treated as such, in what follows I suggest that there are some commonalities between queer subversive signs and lines of flight.

Papandopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos (2008) have revisited Deleuze’s “lines of flight” and reformulated them as “escape routes” that describe the ways of escaping capture and exiting normativity in the 21st century. They in fact conceptualize escape as “a betrayal of existing forms of representation” (Ibid.:XV), while *exit* is one of various possible, ambiguous, historically and politically situated “acts of escape” (Ibid.:55). Following their lead, I think of visual images of sexual and gender non-normativity at queer festivals as *exit signs*. In my opinion, queer visibility at festival time-space opens up possibilities of exiting heteronormativity. Queering concerns both the visibility of the art works – performances, films, concerts even, and the visibility of images and posters. These two endeavors, in fact,

¹⁷ According to Deleuze (2007) our life is made up of these three kinds of lines, or rather it is organized along these trajectories. The segmentary lines are of “rigid segmentarity” which Deleuze explains as a mostly chronological listing of events: “family-profession; job-holiday: family - and then school - and then the army - and then the factory - and then retirement” (ibid.:124). Furthermore, there are two kinds of segmentarity differentiated in Deleuze and Guattari (2004): the more rigid and hierarchical *molar lines*, and more fluid *molecular lines*. They are said to attempt to block the movement of the lines of flight.

can be analyzed as separate projects. I choose therefore to look at the posters - focusing on *signs/images*, aware that this approach does not do complete justice to the *routes*.

My approach to the art works exhibited at the post-Yugoslav queer festivals and the festival events as time-space sites of regionally situated subversion draws on Papandopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos' (2008) understanding of escape as an "often neglected engine of transformation" that can have creative and empowering effects (Ibid.:61). In my reading of festival ethnography, escape emerges as situated – as a locally and regionally informed strategy of subversion. I agree with Papandopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos that escape is creative in that it "creates a form of energy which is potentially rupturing the equilibrium of an existing regime of control" (Ibid.:52). Queer images at festivals are multiple and often fleeting; they include visual images created at individual performances, exhibitions, events, as well as those of individual works of art, and their reception in viewers' minds. Since I cannot even begin to deal with this heterogeneity, I do not talk about "escape routes" but concentrate on poster images that signal acts of exiting.

In Section 6.1, I will interpret the posters of the ten years of *Queer Zagreb Festival* in detail to see what kind of exit or entrance invitations they provide for their viewers. I also build a small inconclusive archive of exit signs – posters that my interlocutors brought home from the post-Yugoslav queer festivals and put on their walls. What I cannot do is count the times and ways in which *Queer Zagreb* posters get used as exit signs pointing out of monocultural, monoreligious heterosexist disposition. Neither do I count the times when these same posters serve as *entrance signs* into various mechanisms of belonging – to particular identities and communities, or enable access to various discursive and organizational opportunities. I do, however, see in these posters, in the viewers' encounters with them, and

their presence on their home walls some evidence of traces of the energy of escape¹⁸.

Another crucial distinction that informs my research is the difference between how vision, visibility and visibility have been conceptualized. Debates within cultural studies differentiate between vision - actual capacity to see, and visibility - the *scopic regimes* of seeing. Vision, describing the physiological ability of humans' to see, falls outside the scope of cultural studies though it is recognized that understandings of this faculty of vision have also differed across cultures (Nelson and Shiff 2003, 454; see also Brennan and Jay 1996). It is visibility, describing the social and cultural mechanism that influences what and how we come to see, "how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this

¹⁸ The discussion of my provisional archive of queer exit signs remains out of the scope of this thesis. Let me, however, engage briefly with one visual image that has been able to function as an exit sign. Ivana, a volunteer at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, sent me two images of the walls of her shared student dormitory room. The visual trace of the 2007 *Queer Zagreb* poster on the walls of Ivana's student dormitory is important to introduce at this point as an argument in support of the creativity of post-Yugoslav queer festival visibility. The close-up photograph (Figure 1) shows two posters that she has chosen to display over her bed. One is the Dimchev poster from 2007, which was the most popular of all *Queer Zagreb* visual representations for most of my interviewees. The other is a black and white poster for the ongoing anarchist lecture series "Subversions" (Subverzije) that shows a figure with a face mask and the title "Attack on the symbols of capitalism" (Napad na simbole kapitalizma).



Figure 1: Ivana Anić, "Ivana's wall," 2013; Figure 2: Ivana Anić, "Ivana's room," 2013.

The second photograph (Figure 2) shows a larger plan of Ivana's room, which gives us a spatial sense of the location of the posters and their importance for her. The room is small, and her half of it even smaller. Both of the posters are above her bed, taking up almost all of the available white wall space. Ivana's second photo is, in my interpretation, one of the most powerful visual representations of my informants' tactics of escaping control that I encountered. Escaping normativity is not a practice that is easily captured, yet in an image like this one, one can intuit some of its traces.

seeing and the unseeing therein” (Foster (1988: IX) in Rose 2007, 2), that needs to be explored. It is this analytical interest in queer visibility produced by and around festival communities, and their implications for LGBT politics in the post-Yugoslav region, that guides my focus on changes in how it is possible to see non-normativity in the region in the last decade.

Theoretical interest in the relationship between visibility and visibility has provided the framework for the questions I asked in participant observation and interviews. Analytical chapters on the Zagreb Festival investigate organizational, artistic and audiencing strategies of queering arts and visibility. The intersections of art discourse as well as the discourse of activism, are perceived here as particular forms of knowledge - in Foucault’s (1980) sense of the term - that structure the ways we see objects, subjectivities, possible actions, and social relations.

Art historians using the Foucaultian framework have specified the extent of visual and social relations that form a particular art discourse including everything from ”concatenation of visual images, the language and structures of criticism, cultural institutions, publics for art and the values and knowledges made possible within and through high culture” (Lynda Nead 1998: 4 in Rose 2007, 142). I understand the post-Yugoslav LGBT activism of the last ten years as incorporating all of those components – visual, textual and institutional, and their dynamic social use in concrete negotiations in Croatian and other post-Yugoslav societies. However, my research necessarily goes a step further in its interest in the visual. As Rose (2007) points out, visibility itself can be conceptualized as a form of discourse. Thus, a particular visibility “will make certain things visible in particular ways, and other things unseeable, for example, and subjects will be produced and act within that field of vision” (Ibid.:143). This is the main theoretical concern that informed my fieldwork and visual analysis. I wanted to find out about the discourses of visibility at the festivals: how they are

imagined and created by the festival organizers and artists, and discussed and used by their audiences.

However, I understand that, although different art forms at queer festivals all produce visual representations of non-normative sexualities in post-Yugoslav countries, they do not necessarily share the same economies of looking: painting, photography and advertising images construct a “gendered field of visual pleasure” in ways specific to its medium and context (Thornham 2007, 29). This research analyzes the wide range of visual materials generating (around) queer visibility in post-Yugoslav states but focuses mostly on the particular workings of the genre of photography and its connections to the gendered and sexualized visual fields around visual and performative arts.

When it comes to the question of the relationship between the medium or the genre of the art work/image and its subversive potential, this research is influenced by the theoretical work regarding the genre of photography. I approach the visibility of ten years of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* through the analysis of its posters, but I was also interested in the materiality and travelling of its posters and visual materials. Although not all of them are originally photographs, they function as still images – as photographs, I would argue. Both Barthes’ (1990) search for emotional truth and consolation in the photographic image, and Susan Sontag’s (2004; 2009; 2010) guarded fascination with the photographic artistry and materiality have influenced my methodological decision to pause at festivals’ posters as significant affective puzzle-pieces that relate something of the powerful non-normative visibility they come to represent, while at the same time they also continue to invite ambiguous readings.

As Sontag’s biographer Sohnya Sayres (2009) points out, in her final essay on photography “Photography: A Little Summa”, Sontag explains her lifelong fascination with the medium of photography also through its overwhelming impact on how we see the world –

photography has so conquered our perception to function as the “modern way of seeing” in which we see the world as “fragments” (Sontag, 2007, in Sayres 2009, 226). While the medium of photography has increasingly influenced our ways of seeing, I strongly feel that the fragments that make up post-Yugoslav queer visual images can tell us something both about the world they represent and the chosen ways of seeing that world – both through the materiality they embody and the strategies of subversion they keep record of.

As we will see in the analytical chapters (4, 5 and 6), especially in those sections that engage in close reading of festival materials, post-Yugoslav queer festival images have political as well as aesthetic effects. Though in many ways representing contradictory approaches to LGBTQ politics, the visibility of the Zagreb Festival, and that of other post-Yugoslav queer art festivals, has brought about considerable progressive changes in their local contexts and in the region. The visibility of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* aimed at queering the posters, the art they represent, and their audience’s perceptions. At the same time, it also meant direct visibility of actual LGBT persons in Croatia. It has complimented the political visibility achieved at Zagreb Prides.

The importance of these queer visibilities – and their negotiations of artistic and activist representations – consists in their distance from the substitute or metaphorical visibility that represents queers as metaphors of something else. Such metaphorical visibility has been analyzed by Kevin Moss (2004) who argues against the flattening out of Eastern European cinematic queer characters into metaphors of political troubles, such as in the Croatian film “Fine Dead Girls” or the Serbian film “Take a Deep Breath”¹⁹. Queer festival visibility reclaims the images of queerness for its own very different purposes. In my analysis I shall point out that the performance stills of queer artists on the Zagreb posters do not serve as metaphors but as “faces” of post-Yugoslav Queeroslavia.

¹⁹ Concerning the reduction of the Roma in East European movies to metaphors, see Dina Iordanova (2001).

2.2 *LGBT Transformative Collectives through Visibility Politics*

In Section 2.1 I have identified the stakes of what queer communities may want through queer images. I have argued that the most prominent “desire lines” are two: visibility of non-normative sexualities (and gender expression) and visibility that queers or subverts hegemonic representations. In this section, I turn to some discussions of the former: the significance of visibility politics for social movements.

Mario Diani (1991) surveyed the studies of social movements since 1960s, and found that most of the approaches agree upon three main characteristics of what makes a social movement. Social movements are networks of informal interaction; organized around a political or cultural conflict; and formed around collective identities (Ibid.:17). Following this definition, both LGBT rights organizations and queer arts festivals count as social movements and take part in the *social movement family*, in Steven Buechler’s words (1990, 42). Furthermore, both organizations are social movements for recognition. This section relates the discussions in social movements theories on politics of recognition (Taylor and Gutmann 1994), and on differentiating between social movements for recognition and for redistribution (Fraser and Honneth 2003), to the debates on the rights and representation approach to politics (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008).

The analysis of the strategies of visibility politics employed by different social movements can be discussed in terms of the categorization of democratic struggles. According to Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (2003), social movements can be divided into struggles for recognition (such as LGBT movements) and for redistribution (movements for welfare rights and against poverty). Their differences are argued to be reflected in the

different motivations and tactics of participants in those movements. Social movements fighting for recognition emphasize group differentiation that implicates a claim to group visibility. On the other hand, the movements fighting for redistribution opt for “dedifferentiation” that entails the eradication of the conditions that single them out as a group (of poverty) and therefore they will turn away from using strategies of group visibility. My extension of Fraser and Honneth’s discussion concerns the ways in which the social movements for recognition use group differentiation through visibility politics to negotiate that visibility on their own terms. The initial phases of feminist as well as gay lesbian cultural struggle for recognition in the form of searching for *positive images* while trying to reappropriate stereotypes, for instance, employed cultural strategies of challenging and rearticulating the terms of hegemonic visibility.

Political objectives of social movements can be discussed as a matter of visibility. However, visibility has also been theorized as a matter of social control and disciplining, notably in Michel Foucault’s work (1980) on the interconnectedness of power and knowledge. According to Foucault, there is nothing “natural” about the ways in which objects and subjects are shown or seen. The practices of exhibiting and looking are tied to the operations of power/knowledge. They make it possible for something to be seen, which he shows through his analysis of the institutionalization of the “medical gaze” in 18th century France and of the architectural formulations of the panoptical gaze (Ibid.:146–147).

The way in which visibility in and through discourse opens some while precludes other options testifies to the political implications of visibility. In order to resolve the apparent contradiction between LGBTQ movements’ struggle for visibility and Foucault’s claim to the impossibility of rewriting the power of the panoptical gaze, and to argue for the possibilities of subversive visual representations, I refer to Rosemary Hennessy’s (1994) distinction between *visible* as what has been made visible in terms of dominant regimes of looking, and

seeable as what has become possible to be seen on the terms created by the stigmatized community. Hennessy draws attention to alternative meanings that are “made seeable” through countercultural “frames of knowing” articulated from the positions of non-hegemonic viewing practices (Ibid.:125). Her theorization of visibility that functions in accordance with the regimes of visibility, and of seeability as critical disposition that exposes what is not supposed to be seen, makes it possible for me to argue that not all forms of visibility are necessarily reinforcing the scopic regime. That is, Hennessy’s framework enables a more integrative approach to analyzing the uses of visibility strategies within social movements for recognition. It provides balance between the instrumentality of Fraser’s understanding of visibility politics and Foucault’s skepticism of its embeddedness in the regimes of visibility. The strategies through which marginalized spectators make different visibility seeable have also been theorized as the practices of “oppositional gaze” (hooks 2003, 94), and “oppositional reading” (S. Hall 1992, 127) that point to the possible connections of countercultural viewing and reading practices to the standpoint epistemologies of particular collectives.

The recent volume on “Queer Visibility in Post-socialist Cultures” edited by Andrea Balogh and Narcisz Fejes (2013) studies the specificities of varied local approaches to post-socialist visibility politics. In my reading of other authors in my field, the post-Yugoslav LGBT visibility politics have traversed a long way from the first lesbian and gay organizing in mid ‘80s in Slovenia (Velikonja 2003); the ‘90s activism in Croatia and Serbia (Sagasta 2001; Vuletic 2004); the first Pride marches in several cities since 2001 on (Duhacek 2011), and the LG/queer festivals throughout the region in the last decade (Puača 2005; Puača 2007; Puača, Jeremić, and Jet 2008). The debates about the empowering potentials of visibility for social movements that fight for recognition are taking place in connection to activist and artistic practices of making identity visible. In post-Yugoslav countries, the LGBT/queer

visibility politics are negotiated on the streets through Pride marches in Zagreb, Ljubljana, Split, and Belgrade; and in spaces of regional queer festivals. On the other hand, visibility is concerned with visual representation, with the negotiations of what is made possible to be represented and how, in particular through practices of visual semiosis at queer festivals.

Fraser's discussion of social visibility as one of the strategies in social struggles for recognition, and Foucault's theorization of regimes of visual representation, are of importance equally for activist as for artistic practices. Both of these theoretical approaches speak to the analysis of exit signs of queerness in post-Yugoslav countries – recognizing them at times as a matter of social visibility, at others of artistic representation. My goal is to show through the analysis of the multiple uses of queer images that they function as *exit signs* that are ambiguous markers of social visibility, while at the same time taking seriously their visibility (Rose 2007). Although in political and social theory, *escape* is often discussed as “passive, weak and irresponsible” reaction to social conflict, my research draws on perspectives that, on the contrary, see escape as belonging to the “heart of social conflict, and (constituting) a form of creative subversion capable of challenging and transforming the conditions of power” (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008, 55–56). Imagined in this way, exit signs correspond to Hennessy's seeability: both concepts describe visual practices that make perspectives running counter to hegemonic representations seeable.

The politics of visibility has become one of the key fields in which the debates around the “queer dilemma” as conceptualized by Gamson (1995) are played out. The dilemma is said to revolve around the paradox of making a claim to identity: identity categories seem to function both as the “basis for oppression and the basis for political power” (Ibid.:3). A way out of this impasse of assuming that identity is inherently fixed and as such harming and harmful might be in arguing that identity is a concept and as such a discursive articulation. This makes it possible to ask what is there to produce the discursive effect of a stable identity

i.e. modes of exclusionary ruling that are partly enacted via visual signification. At the same time, we can also ask how identification can be an effect of non-stigmatizing and non-exclusion. Although self-identification is not necessarily sufficient for avoiding such shortcuts, practices of making seeable (Hennessy 1994) in unexpected ways, and practices of queer belonging (Ahmed 2006) may point toward such non-exclusionary acts of identifications.

The “cultural anxiety” about identity in the academic arena and in politics is built upon the perception of identity as always exclusionary, i.e. an act of stigmatizing others and hence a danger to democracy. Linda Alcoff (2006) argues that the intellectual “pathologization of identity” is abstracted away from the actual influence of stigmatizing identities on people’s lives in particular contexts (Ibid.:11). This systematic oversight reinforces intellectual skepticism of identities and its representatives’ anti-identity positions, which would be more difficult if taking into consideration the actual forms of dispossession. According to Alcoff, it would prove problematic because power relations operate mostly connected to the functioning of social markers visible on our bodies revealing the investment of cultural ideology in people’s sense of identity.

Alcoff justifies her focus on gender, ethnicity and race as visible social identities that are “fundamental” in that they cannot be dissimulated as class or sexuality might be (Ibid.). I would, nevertheless, like to extend her analysis of visible social identities to the intersections of sexuality and ethnicity in the context of the post-Yugoslav region where the visibility of sexuality and gender non-normativity is in the very center of collective claim-making by the stigmatized groups. The Pride marches in Zagreb, and at times in Belgrade and Ljubljana, are highly politicized demonstrations that once a year make visible the extent of homophobia and the possibility of solidarity around non-normativity (Dota 2011; Duhacek 2011; Kajinic 2003; Simic 2001). That visibility struggle in post-Yugoslav countries is not manifest only on the

streets but also in the spaces reserved for “culture” (see, for instance, the attacks on the *Queer Belgrade Festival* in 2008 (Grew 2008), and the closure of the first *Queer Sarajevo Festival* in the same year²⁰).

Regarding the field of festival studies, festivals have been discussed in terms of their potential for community formation in general. The impact of queer festivals on collective identities is not a clear-cut or undisputed process, given the continuous though underrated formative influence of the organizational practices and the institutional field on changes in formulations of collective identities. According to Gamson (1996), although LGBT festivals act as “community organizations” and represent those communities, still they are to a great degree independent of them since they practically gather once a year for the occasion of the festival. On the other hand, he points out that the festivals negotiate within the field of changing institutional requirements, and so depend both on the institutional fields they gravitate within and the communities they communicate with for their survival and legitimacy.

I argue that the visibility politics of post-Yugoslav LGBT movement(s) is formed to a large extent in reaction to the constraints by ethno-nationalist heterosexism. The new queer visibility in the post-Yugoslav public sphere challenges what has been theorized by Stephen Murray (1997) as political heterosexism. Its hegemonic “will not to know” is based on “avoidance in acknowledging” non-normative sexual behavior in hope that it will disappear (Ibid.:14). The specificity of this new visibility has been analyzed in terms of the sense of danger it entails (Lambevski 2009; Radoman 2007). Post-Yugoslav queer visibility intersects with various articulations of religious and national/ethnic belonging in the post-conflict space (Djurkovic 2008; Vuletic 2003; Vuletic 2004), and with practices of foregrounding sexuality as resistance (Puača 2005; Puača 2007; Puača, Jeremić, and Jet 2008). In this new space the

²⁰ See the “Queer Sarajevo in-a-box”, the account of the events, aims and the closure of the first *Queer Sarajevo Festival* on the web-page of the Organization Q at: <http://www.queer.ba/en/content/queer-sarajevo-festival-2008-0> (Accessed November 26, 2013).

post-Yugoslav queer festivals can be seen as generating alternative public spaces that instigate rethinking of the meanings and practices of hegemonic forms of art and culture. The process is similar to what Bojana Pejić (2005) has pointed out when she analyzed one art-work by the contemporary Croatian feminist artist, Sanja Iveković, who is said to be creating “public as sculpture” through public controversy that creates productive discussion and “cultural space for articulation of public discourses” (Ibid.:1).

While some LGBT/queer movements both in Western Europe and in Central Eastern Europe have used the tactics and politics of reclaiming nationalism and belonging to the nation (Berlant and Freeman 1993; Imre 2008; Renkin 2009), for the most part, the nationalist imaginaries of post-communist countries have been structured by suppression and violent reactions to the visibility of LGBT activism in public (Graff 2009; Radoman 2007). I argue that queer solidarities in post-Yugoslav states bring about new possibilities of visual expression. These new representations expressed in arts and activism help to articulate and name what was previously unnamable: the existence of practices of escaping local (hetero)normativity and that of communities gathered around them. However, these visual images and heterotopias can themselves be exclusionary, for instance, on the basis of class or gender, and may emerge as entrance signs into “normality” as well.

Feminist research of gender and nationalism problematized the heterosexist foundations of the concept of nation as a collective identity category (Atluri 2001; Peterson 2000). Interrogating nationalism as a historical project structured on heterosexism reveals the functioning of “heterosexist commitments” which ensure that “queer agendas” be overlooked in historical and contemporary nationalisms (Peterson 1999, 53). The disruption of this regime of visibility through the moments of queerness generated around visual culture at queer festivals may challenge the heterosexist grounds of national identities. Prior to the last decade of queer visibility through Pride marches and queer festivals in post-Yugoslav

countries there was a rich history of “homosexual” everyday life (Dobrovic and Bosanac 2007), and lesbian and gay organizing since the 1980s (Sagasta 2001; Velikonja 2003; Vuletic 2004). However, in comparison to the practices of visibility and of queering visibility of the last decade, the politics of visibility in the 1980s can be seen to be at least partially informed by what James Scott (2008) calls *hidden transcripts* – creative, shared knowledge of oppression that the subordinated group members conceal in communication from the majoritarian group (until up to a point when the change happens).

Scott describes the moment of becoming publicly visible as an instance of “political electricity” (Ibid.:206): this is the energy of “social electricity generated by the first public declaration of the hidden transcript” (Ibid.:224). In so far as the heterosexist “overlooking” that strives to render queerness invisible in contemporary post-Yugoslav societies functions as one (less violent) mode of disciplining, I argue that the queer art festivals may be seen as chronotopes that disrupt the continuation of this invisibility²¹.

The visibility achieved through cultural events such as queer festivals is, however, partly different from the public visibility at the annual Zagreb Pride marches. The two different forms of visibility received different public reactions: open homophobia accompanied the Prides, while arts festivals attracted little opposition. This difference in public reactions is evident in the initial lack of comprehension of what “queer” actually means. The only ones who seem to have done the work of translation in the first years of the Zagreb Festival were the members of the *Church of the Full Gospel* (including their leader Župančić, cited in the Footnote 21) who held a counter-demonstration at the opening night of the 2004 *Queer*

²¹ Instructive is the following reaction of a local religious activist to visibility of queerness brought about through the Zagreb Festival:

With full respect for tolerance and human rights, after analyzing those events, each conscientious citizen will conclude that *Queer (Zagreb Festival)* is a deviant cultural event whose goals are pretty insidious (...) We pose the question of how will the future of our children, city and country look like if the support for such manifestations will continue. The testimony of history is negative. (Župančić 2005, 1)

Zagreb, shouting messages through the megaphone. They expressed their disapproval also on banners with warnings such as: “Homosexuality is a sin”, “Homosexuality – sin against man and God”, “Immorality in the name of culture?”, “Big sin on small birth rate” (with a graph presenting the decline of the birth rate). The concern with low birth rate, the so-called *white plague*, has been high on the agenda of conservative currents in all former Yugoslav states since the mid-1980s and played an important role in the “production of ethnicity” (Žarkov 2007, 3–4). The slogans of the *Church of the Full Gospel* demonstrators highlight the strong link forged locally between homosexuality and disloyalty to one’s nation. This religious paranoia about an endangered because childless Croatia is taken up by the *Queer Zagreb*’s organizers and incorporated into the 2004 program (see more about this in Sections 4.1 and 5.2).

In this section I discussed how visibility politics serve LGBT communities in a struggle for political rights and presence in the public space. As informal networks sharing collective identities and fighting for social recognition, regional LGBT movements are engaged in political and cultural negotiations of visibility. I discussed different public perceptions and reactions to LGBT street protests as opposed to queer arts festivals. An intersectional analysis revealed that in addition to heteronormativity there is another set of oppressive norms refuting queer visibility, namely ethno-nationalism and political heterosexism.

2.3 Queer Seeability

I argue that differing approaches to visibility politics correspond to at least two, broadly conceived, visual strategies in response to the queer dilemma in the urban locations in post-Yugoslav countries. Generally speaking, some LGBT visibility campaigns use the strategies

of resistance typical of traditional state-based or alternative cultural politics. In contrast to this openly politicized approach, other activist or artistic images engage in queering the identity dilemma as well as representation in a manner that remains skeptical of the “instrumentality” of political activism. Such visual strategies work on creating (queer) art and representation but stay wary of making coherent political claims. Instead they seem to be looking for what Papandopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos (2008) conceptualized as escape through “imperceptible politics” (ibid.13–15), and what Rosemary Hennessy (1994) theorizes as countercultural seeability. In this section, I analyze the second strategy I have identified – the queering of visibility, and approach it through understanding queer curatorial strategies in Subsection 2.3.1; conceptualizing queer art in Subsection 2.3.2; and analyzing queer images in 2.3.3.

2.3.1 Queering Visibility and Practices of Curating

It is not only art theoreticians who have tried to grasp the specificity of queerness in art but the participant artists and curators as well, contributing to the current discourses of queer art. Here, I turn to discussing how practices of curating and organizing the Zagreb Festival relate to strategies of queering arts and visibility. To be sure, curating does not equal organizing festivals, and curators do not perform the same work as artistic or program directors. Even in contemporary curatorial discourses where their role has been seen as “curator-as-artist” (O’Neill 2012, 6), they conceptualize and organize exhibitions. Curating, in the words of Hans Ulrich Obrist (2011), “continues to be, for the large part, a story of objects” (Ibid.:49). The artistic director, on the other hand, is understood to be a professional role in arts and cultural management, although it may be performed by artists as well. An artistic director

“wants to create great art” in contrast to an executive director who “wants to show great fiscal results” (Kaiser 2008, 86).

In Chapters 4 and 5, I examine the organizational strategies of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* team, with a focus on the selection process performed by the Festival artistic/program director. The analytical focus is on the organizational and programming strategies of the artistic director and his team. Yet I continue to draw on the theoretical debates about curating because I want to connect the strategies of organizing with the discussion of regional queer art. In so far as a curator organizes concepts and objects in the time-space of an exhibition, I take a festival’s artistic director to be performing a similar task within the larger chronotope of a festival week.

While curator “curates” art, an artistic director “directs” the arts at the festival in the sense of the choice of the program, tastes and trends. Sara Ahmed (2006) analyzes the significance of being orientated in the world toward particular objects and events. A festival’s artistic director can be seen as “orientating” the festival. Ahmed brings to our attention the act of “turning”, the act of becoming orientated, that is essential for becoming a subject (Ibid.:15). For her, we can speak about *collective direction* when, as a group, people face the same objects and events while they also become a group through this act of collective orientation. Individual or collective orientation influences what we see but also what we overlook: “Depending on which way one turns, different worlds might even come into view. If such turns are repeated over time, then bodies acquire the very shape of such direction” (Ibid.). In my research, I take the artistic director, the organizing team, and occasional curators, to be involved in the work of orientating the festival communities toward particular art works and events, while turning them away from others. I will see these orientating practices as organizing and curatorial strategies. In particular, I explore strategies of queering visibility within the chronotopes of regional queer arts festivals.

Although I have mentioned strategies of queering, it is important to differentiate between strategies and tactics in order to look at the practices of different actors in various post-Yugoslav festival communities, and in particular at practices of festival organizers. Visual practices my participants are engaged in are at times emphatically strategic as when they pose a clear organizational plan for representing the festival in a certain way or when they react strategically to counter external political pressures or express a clear political stance in an ongoing debate. Then, however, strategic trajectories turn easily into tactics when individual organizers or participants negotiate their own political priorities, esthetic preferences or the demands of everyday life. For Michel de Certeau (2011), practices are everyday modes of behavior that individuals employ in order to make sense of life, and creatively resist being relegated to the role of passive “consumers” by “a dominant economic order” (Ibid.:xi–xiii). He defines practices as “innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to (their) own interests and (their) own rules”, and through them the *users* “reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production” (Ibid.:ix). He distinguishes two models of employing these practices: strategies and tactics. Strategies are “ways of operating” that connect one with an institutionalized framework and a panoptical or “synoptic” view from above. Strategies are used by individual “subjects” who occupy their “proper” and clearly individuated place in society. But de Certeau sees this appearance of objective rational position as “concealing (...) connection with the power that sustains them from within the stronghold of its own ‘proper’ place or institution” (Ibid.:xx).

Aside from the strategic mode that is connected with institutions as producers of power, there is a tactical mode commonly used by individual persons to make sense of everyday life. Tactics are fragmented, have no “proper” place of their own but “belong to the other” – to “the weak” who continually negotiate or “manipulate events in order to turn them

into ‘opportunities’” (Ibid.:ix–xx). In “Walking in the City”, de Certeau uses the metaphor of the voyeuristic gaze of a city planner as standing in for strategies that plan the City, and an ordinary pedestrian walking along a city street as a consumer inventing tactics of movement that become “pedestrian speech acts” (Ibid.:91–97). De Certeau likens these daily tactics to the “wandering lines” (Deligny’s concept) – “‘indirect’ or ‘errant’ trajectories obeying their own logic” (Ibid.:xviii). These *wandering lines* of individual tactics can clearly be related to the “desire lines” that break up the landscape of heteronormativity when individual queers follow different desire paths as theorized by Sara Ahmed (2006, 19).

The queer festival community tactics and strategies negotiate the “queer dilemma” which Gamson (1995) articulated as deconstructive questioning of claims of belonging, still at the core of both queer theory and queer politics today. In another text, Gamson (1996) analyses how different takes on this dilemma by two New York lesbian and gay film festivals result in different organizational practices; different approaches to visibility, and festival attendance experiences. As he explained, the *Experimental Festival* “wants to see the identity challenged and destabilized”, while the *New Festival* “wants to see it affirmed and unified” (Ibid.:4). It is important, however, to heed to his warning that these differences constitute the “division” that is “neither sharp nor conflict ridden” (Ibid.:4). I see the post-Yugoslav festivals organizers’ use of a range of strategies aimed at destabilizing normativity as similarly flexible.

The curatorial strategies of the mainstream art world - what Ine Gevers (1998, 1) calls *dominant* curatorial strategies - have experienced their own changes as well. These changes, she argues, include “representing the grand narrative of the history and triumph of Modern Art, falling apart during the '60 and leading to a focus on the curator as author that proved to be an even more fruitful instrument of legitimating in the '70s and the '80s” (Ibid.). To these dominant “exhibition-making” strategies, Gevers opposes the strategies that subvert or “divert

(...) the often-not-reflected rules of the game” (Ibid.). These alternative, subversive strategies she finds in the avant-garde curatorial and artistic strategies at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as in the subversive art practices of the second avant-garde generation in the ‘70s and in the third generation in the ‘90s. As Gevers observes the postmodern strategies of avant-garde art have been reinvented in order to attend to the “shifting of positions, identities and roles of artists and observers. Not so much the object and author are of interest here, but more the contexts, the processes and the observer” (Ibid.:9).

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I will examine whether the festival organizers’ strategies as articulated in the festival manifestos, programs and visual material, respectively, relate to what is emerging through queer art festival organizing as strategies of queering art. I am mostly interested in strategies of queering visibility. The question concerns how the festival organizers’ strategies engage in queering the art world. I explore what strategies *Queer Zagreb Festival* organizers use when transforming the festival manifesto each year. My focus is on understanding the strategies of queering the arts as well as of space through the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. I analyze the organizers strategies of self-representation, programming, and alliance-making.

It is perhaps surprising that I propose that the organizational strategies of post-Yugoslav queer arts festival engage in the debates on the relationship between high and popular art, as I will analyze in Chapters 4 and 5 in regards to *Queer Zagreb Festival*. There I suggest that the Festival organizers use the strategy of programming high art as queer art to distinguish their festival from other regional queer festivals and negotiate a prestigious status for the event in the international arts festival circuit. Here I discuss some implications of the debates in cultural studies on differences between high and popular culture for contemporary understanding of queer art. Although it is possible to ask whether this distinction is of any relevance in the twenty-first century, some authors, such as Herbert Gans (2008), consider the

distinction still important because it “reflects and expresses” an actual “socioeconomic hierarchy” (Ibid.:vii). In his sociological reading, high and popular cultures are “ideal types, or stereotypes”, which he remediates by detaching these terms from value judgements of a culture’s worth, and by analyzing particular “taste cultures” (Ibid.:5). Gans distinguishes between creators, users and suppliers of a taste culture. He sees upper classes still supporting “high culture”, while its tastes are shaped primarily by cultural professionals, and audienceed by amateur publics with “middle- and lower-middlebrow” tastes (Ibid.:7).

Although cultural theorists agree that nowadays the distinction between high and popular culture is “weakened” (J. R. Hall, Grindstaff, and Lo 2010, 369), the debate about the relevance of the distinction still remains. John Storey (2006), among others, critiques approaches that treat popular or mass culture as an inferior or *residual category* – allowing to “accommodate texts and practices which fail to meet the required standards to qualify as high culture” (Ibid.:5). This superseded but still influential valorisation of high culture is based on a set of arbitrary but conventional value judgments. So, in Storey’s view, the tacit agreement says that “to be real culture, it has to be difficult. Being difficult thus ensures its exclusive status as high culture. Its very difficulty literally excludes; an exclusion which guarantees the exclusivity of its audiences” (Ibid.). While Storey is referring to Bourdieu’s (1984) analysis of taste as a marker of class distinction, I find Storey’s focus on exclusivity of the definitional practice of designating high and “low” art useful for analyzing organizational strategies of queer festivals. Surprisingly, as I will discuss in analytical chapters, the productivity of this definitional practice is still at work in the strategies of queering art and visibility of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. Though productive of hybrid and subversive possibilities, the reliance on “quality” in the arts cannot but lead to the resurfacing of the questions of its elitist and exclusionary effect.

Although much has been said in cultural theory since to complicate the divide and valorization of high and popular cultures, Bourdieu's juxtaposition of elitism of the aesthete's aspiration and the democratic tendencies of popular consumption has not lost its analytic relevance. In my research, it enables me to ask whether the elitist, artistically ambitious approach to selecting works of art to be presented at the *Queer Zagreb Festival* relates to Bourdieu's "pure taste" and its belonging to the field of "legitimate" cultural production. If so, it is possible then to link Gamson's "queer dilemma" to this classical division between high and low culture, and position "queer art" in relation to lesbian and gay culture as queer theory and politics is to lesbian and gay identity politics. However, even if we accept this necessarily simplistic though indicative analogy, there remains an important qualification. The format in which this elitist art is framed, namely the popular and potentially subversive festival form, opens these art works and festivals up for what I see as strategies of queering visibility.

Extending Bourdieu's distinction between the two opposed forms of tastes, in relation to the pure taste we find "a sort of censorship of the expressive content... a distancing... and a refusal to communicate", and in popular taste, the drive is toward the will to participate and the pleasure it brings to the audiences (Ibid.:34). The "popular 'aesthetic'" finds its ultimate realization in "collective festivities" (Bourdieu analyzes popular genres such as popular music-hall, light music, blockbuster movies) – they "satisfy the taste for and sense of revelry, the plain speaking and hearty laughter which liberate by setting the social world head over heels, overturning conventions and proprieties" (Ibid.). I propose that the organizers of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* use strategies that bring high and popular arts in contact during the festival week, and engage in queering both, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

In this section, I argued that while transgressive curatorial and organizational strategies seek to question traditional practices of what is perceived as dominant curating,

they still retain certain elitist premises which are reflected in their strategies. Although queering of visibility through curating differs from avant-garde and other radical art curating, in the arena of curatorial practices, they may come to share the high-art perception of the curator as himself an artist basing his decisions on valuable professional experience and cultural capital.

2.3.2 Queering Visibility and Art

I want to enquire into how aesthetics and politics come together in queer visual art forms at the festival sites. This does not mean that I take “queer” at face value as defined by the participants. Indeed, in Section 7.3 devoted to my interlocutors’ perspectives on queer art at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, it becomes clear that the participants’ understandings of queer art are every bit as complex as the ones we find in theory. It is important to acknowledge long and complex trajectory of debates on what makes art queer (Waugh and Straayer 2007). The queerness in/of the arts has an impressive multiplicity of meanings – ranging from locating queerness in characters or viewers, or reading it in relation to art producers, art forms, or the audiences (Benshoff and Griffin 2004, 2).

The “label” of queer art has at times been used to describe the balancing acts between the “truth” of the lived experiences (sexuality and identities) of the artists, on the one hand, and their artistic practice, on the other (Meecham and Sheldon 2004, 240). Cultural theorists have located queerness in the reception/viewing practices shared by a variety of audiences (Sullivan 2003), claiming that queerness as a “mass culture reception practice” allows for different viewers to engage with any cultural text and find “queer moments” in it (Ibid.:2). Nikki Sullivan argues therefore that queerness is not a property of a text but is created “in and through the ever-changing relations between texts, readers and the world” (Ibid.:191).

However, I argue that this constitutive relationship should also be seen to be at work at the production moment of the art cycle, between the artists and the texts, contributing to the complexity of the process and hence to the transformative potential of the art work.

The ambiguities in defining queer art and visibility echo the “resistance to definition” (Banes 1998, 3) of performance art, alternative and experimental arts. On the one hand, these negotiations testify to the troubled relationship between politics and aesthetics of subversive arts in terms of their transformative potential to speak to alternative “imagined communities” of inclusion. On the other hand, what is also at stake is the visibility of *subversive art* in cultural institutions and in public space. The focus on art in public space engages with defining queer visibility in arts as a matter of “performance of politics” (Muñoz 1999), with a special focus on queer festival as a cultural carnivalesque form, and on the visual (and performative) art works (i.e. films, video installations, photographs, performances) circulated at such festivals as potential exit signs.

My approach to visual arts draws on the developments in visual studies that have a critical stance to defining art. These approaches locate artistic practice and theory in their political and social context, and analyse art production as collective endeavour in meaning-making (Becker 2003; Wells 2004). This angle therefore allows for broadening the scope of visual objects and events that can be studied as art (Nelson and Shiff 2003); and reformulate the traditional categorizations that see visual arts as “autonomous, archetypal entities” into conceptualizing them as activities, as dynamic sites of negotiations – as “basic forms of visual expression” creating artistic artefacts (Sowers 1990, 2). Focusing on the act of creation of the art work as an inter-subjective process and an activity, instead of on the “product”, makes it possible to analyse the “gesture” of visual expression as an emergent act embedded in the political and the social (Meecham and Sheldon 2004, 239).

Furthermore, aware of what Simon O’Sullivan (2008) rightly warns of as the dangers of “the definitional problem with art” which “haunts modernism” (Ibid.:23), I’m attracted to his application of Deleuzeguattarian machinic paradigm to art and thinking about art. Enquiring about art as a Deleuzian machine allows O’Sullivan to ask not about the meaning of art, what art is, but about the work art does and the things it moves and makes happen. The machinic paradigm allows him to see art as “that which produces an aesthetic effect” (Ibid.). In a similar way, in the encounter with the emic understandings of queer art expressed by my interlocutors, thinking of art-machines allows a perspectival shift beyond definitional focus toward listening to what queer art does.

From the vantage point of the sociology of art, “the label ‘art’ is never neutral” – the field of *art* is profoundly implicated with the domain of politics (Inglis 2005: 12). This is why the similarly ambiguous labels such as radical, alternative, subversive, and queer art, need to be carefully examined for what they reveal of cultural politics and the social struggle for meaning they participate in. In this way, *subversive art* can be analyzed in relation to collective orientations and identity formations within communities that are orientated towards it. What is of interest for my project is the complex interrelation that can be established between social visibility of queers in post-Yugoslav countries and artistic visibility that thematizes queerness, circulated in the spaces of queer art festivals. My research interest, in other words, concerns the subtle links that can be found between the subversive or queer tendencies in visual and performance arts and the negotiations of the seeable in the processes of identity-formations of queer collectives. This is why in Chapter 7, I engage in analysis of emic understandings of queer art through my interlocutors’ voices who talk about queer art around the *Queer Zagreb Festival*.

The discussions of the relations between politics and aesthetics, that is the reflections on alternative/avant-garde/political art as opposed to institutionalized high/apolitical art, have

been in the focus of interest of feminist and queer theorists and artists. My aim is to connect broader discussions on relations of autonomy and/or political engagement of art and “life” to specific strategies of queering arts and visibility. Artistic practices of visibility have been theorized as salient aspects of cultural ideologies of various communities (Mirzoeff 1999; Sturken and Cartwright 2009), while in recent years intense theoretical interest arose around feminist and queer visual practices (Jones 2003; Hanson 1999; Kaplan 1997). I would like to argue, drawing on Sara Ahmed’s (2006) suggestion, that it is possible to consider practices and products of artistic/cultural visibility as shaping festival participants’ “collective direction”, producing a belonging to a shared collectivity.

Some queer artists claim that it is the specificity of the conditions of production and reception of queer art that account for its valence as “truly” queer art. As Onir (2008), a filmmaker engaged in queering Bollywood, claims: “Art has always thrived under threat and resistance, and that is the condition under which many queer films are made” (Ibid.:130). According to Michael Toppings (2008), an artist and curator of *Queer City Cinema Lesbian and Gay Media Arts Festival* in Regina, Canada, queer art

in all its spectacular forms is founded largely upon change, upon the acts of changing, of becoming, and of eventually being. The work created is the journey, records of advancement, reflecting the significance of transformation within the queer community; how there exists a need to challenge what is fixed, to redefine and reclaim, and re-invent regardless of what some deem a pandemic assimilation. (Ibid.:1)

The wide spectrum of visual and performance art forms on the program of post-Yugoslav queer art festivals ranges from an exclusive focus on films, as is the case at the *Gay and Lesbian Film Festival* in Ljubljana, to “high” queer art - mostly contemporary dance, performance and body art, at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, with the combination of visual and performance arts, for instance, at *Rdeće Zore* and *Queer Belgrade* festivals. The field of visual

studies has been profoundly interested in the “ever changing interplay between social and aesthetic forces” (Nelson and Shiff 2003, 453). Similarly, one of the most productive premises of feminist film criticism concerns the relationship between aesthetics and politics (Jones 2003; Kaplan 2004; Kuhn 2004; Mulvey 2004; Tyler 1998). Some of the feminist authors in visual studies are primarily concerned with analyzing the projects and theorizing the possibilities of “art as activism” (Barndt 2006), while other theorists rather trace the connections between women’s movement and feminist film-making and feminist audiences (Aufderheide and Zimmerman 2004). Doane (2004) suggests returning to the history of the debates on the autonomy in arts and the relations between aesthetics and politics in order to inform our understanding of why avant-garde and other oppositional artistic practices have been perceived as “both site of resistance and failure of resistance” (Ibid.:1233). She points out that “films have a direct impact on or are directly impacted by a hierarchical organization of sexualities and subjectivities” (Ibid.:1233).

The debates on political art tend to underscore a historical opposition between revolutionary art (i.e. avant-garde) and art that supports revolution – the new distribution of power in society through “positive” representation (Aronson 2000). While traditional/official/mainstream art “comforts” the spectator as it “appears to reinforce habitual ways of thinking and affirm accepted wisdom”, the avant-garde/experimental art creates approaches that challenge artistic “competence” of the viewer (Ibid.:8–9). In this sense of disturbing the intelligibility of shared cultural codes, it is possible to compare the strategies of visibility of queer art and politics with those of the avant-garde art and curating.

Another way in which it is possible to conceptualize the subversive politics of queer art is to take into account its resistances to definition. It can be seen to share what some theorists highlight as the fundamental qualities of any “good art”: the belief in transformative (either redemptive or disruptive) potentials of art, and an interest in art’s effects on its

viewers. Julia Walker (2009) in her essay on Susan Sontag's work in theater claims that Sontag shared with Artaud the belief that "good art always touches a nerve, sending shock waves throughout the audience member's body, transforming it into a materialization of a new and potentially revolutionary consciousness" (Ibid.:132).

Complex considerations of what queer art is cannot in any way be pinned down to identity or the intentions of its creators. As Susan Sontag put it: "One cannot use life to interpret the work. But one can use the work to interpret the life" (Susan Sontag in: Walker 2009, 111). Still, Sontag's categorical insistence that "life" cannot help us say something useful about the "work" can be somewhat modified. Many feminist, post-colonial, gay and lesbian critics have attended to the problematic of authorship, in the light of the continuing need for political engagement for the rights of minority groups. So, Kobena Mercer (2003) reevaluates his earlier essay on Mapplethorpe's black male nudes as simply performing the artistic form of fetishisation of black skin, and claims that it actually matters very much that a gay man authored these photographs. In *Skin Head Sex Thing*, Mercer moves away from post-structuralist theories of the death of authorship to suggest that

The question of enunciation - who is speaking, who is spoken to, what codes they share to communicate - implies a whole range of important political issues about who is empowered and who is disempowered in the representation of difference. It is enunciation that circumscribes the marginalized positions of subjects historically misrepresented or underrepresented in dominant systems of representation. To be marginalized is to have no place from which to speak, since the subject positioned in the margins is silenced and invisible. (Ibid.:245)

In art that deals with "the representation of difference", the issues of who is speaking and who is representing whom continue to matter. Mercer makes clear the stakes in keeping the consciousness about situatedness of both authorship and viewing central when he discusses the question of authorship as "a question about agency in the cultural struggle to 'find a voice' and 'give a voice' to subordinate experiences, identities and subjectivities"

(Ibid.:245). At times it seems that the “queer dilemma” in queer theory, art and politics takes away the solid ground connecting a position of enunciation with what has been voiced at the very moment when those marginalized positions have finally gained some social centrality. Still, in discussing queer art, it remains important to analyze the reasons and “gains” for queering the artistic voice.

Creation of queer representations, I argue, constitute one of possible strategies for engaging with the limitations of what Mercer (2003) calls “burden of representation” – the impoverishing requirement placed on artists from the margins that frames their work as representative of the group they belong to. The alternative to such reductive artistic and cultural politics is, according to Mercer, found in the complex, “dialogic” representational practices of contemporary black artists that “interrupt this restricted economy of representation by making it possible to imagine a democratic politics of difference and diversity” (Ibid.:260–261). Mercer focuses particularly on the art work of black gay and lesbian artists in order to show how their intersectional artistic positioning and choices “pluralize available representations in the public sphere”, and circumvent the “burden of representation” by creating on their own terms (2003, 261). I ask about the ways in which regionally queer art and visibility do the similar work of reinventing the terms of visibility of non-normative sexualities and gender expression in post-Yugoslav context as Hennessy’s seeability – renegotiated visibility on terms of local queer communities.

The problem raised by organizing festival as a form, and particularly the queer festival form, consists in an uneasy question whether its commitment to showcasing artistic transgressions does not inadvertently tame the representations it exhibits. In analytical chapters (4, 5, and 6) I explore the dynamics of transgression and/or queering, and the ways in which organizational and artistic “translations” of queer within the context of the Zagreb Festival generate meanings, alliances, and limitations in their concrete context.

On the other hand, the radical potential of art is sometimes understood in connection to the outsider status of the artist in relation to social norms and traditions. The Romantic view of the artist as a social outsider was given a new dimension when the art by socially disenfranchised people was taken into account. Michael Hall and Eugene Metcalf (1994) in the introduction to their volume on *Outsider art* delineate its history starting from the 1920s art collectors' interest in folk art, through the French artist Jean Dubuffet's 1950s enthusiasm for *Art brut* created by mental asylum patients and amateur "visionaries", to the 1970s rediscovery of *Art brut* by the British critic Roger Cardinal who reformulated it as *outsider art* (Ibid.:xiii). According to Hall and Metcalf, the term "outsider art" continues to be used for many different art forms and approaches "apart from mainstream traditions", and to describe avant-garde arts' position outside of the canon as well (Ibid.).

Although I find it tempting to attend to the debates on queer art in connection to its outsider status, it is important to heed some critics' warning against an easy conflation of the artistic and the social. So, in the same volume, Joanne Cubbs (1994) reveals the Romanticist undertones of art world's relative openness to *Art brut* and *Outsider art*. She argues that *Outsider art* is

the most extreme example of the Romantic tendency to conflate social and artistic nonconformity, to re-encode social marginality as a willful act of creative individualism. Often underlying this mythic transformation of the disenfranchised is the strong rhetoric of protest, a championing of the otherwise culturally and artistically dispossessed as well as an attack on the lifeless conformity and repressive moral authority of "high culture". (Ibid.:85)

Indeed, I will show in Chapters 4 and 5, the *Queer Zagreb Festival* makes recourse to organizational strategies that seek legitimization on both sides of the alleged gap between the high and outsider art. The complexity of strategy of queering (high) arts from the Festival's

outside/inside position serves as a check on a tendency to perceive art from the margins as necessarily subversive.

The anti-institutional and subversive charge of some of queer art may be related to the sense of danger in challenging the cultural codes of heteronormativity in the art world. Jose Esteban Munoz (1996) relates the paradoxical aspect of queerness made visible through visual (or performance) art to the way in which queerness often works as “innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments and performances” that reach their (intended) audiences but not always through overt visibility that would imply danger (Ibid.:6). Munoz’s conceptualizing of the ephemeral in performance art makes it possible to understand queer art in general as consisting of such “fleeting moments” of queerness that escape heteronormativity.

Moreover, it has been claimed that the defining characteristic of queer performance art is its transformative and political potential. In his study of queer performance artists of colour and their performances of *disidentification* with hetero- and white normativity, Munoz (1999) formulates “a queer performance-studies lens” that theorizes the “political force of performance” as “reformulation of the world through the performance of politics” (Ibid.:XIV).

The disidentificatory potential of queer arts and politics brings us back to the understanding of queerness that is based on imagining “the textual (and extra-textual) spaces wherein normative heterosexuality is threatened, critiqued, camped up, or shown to be an unstable performative identity” (Benshoff and Griffin 2004, 2). This view enables exploration of queer arts festivals as alternative spaces for questioning normativity and performing politics in counter-hegemonic ways. Such conceptualizing of queer arts and queer festivals encourages asking about processes of dis/identification enabled through queering visual and performance arts; dynamics of constructing alternative seeability through artistic practices; and interrelatedness of visual representations with the creation of queer collectives.

2.3.3 Queering Visuality and Festival Images

Defining “queer” in queer art also concerns the question of what would constitute a subversive image. This section touches upon theoretical approaches to understanding queer communities’ struggles to negotiate visibility through queering the images. As a part of my methodological commitment to learning from theorization coming both from academia and the “field”, Chapter 7 follows the meanings that my interlocutors attribute to visual representations of “queerness”. This section therefore discusses approaches to queer images in contemporary art theory and practice. My research is not devoted to the history of the post-Yugoslav LGBT movement(s) for visibility and political influence in public life, although this, together with the global sexual liberation struggle, is its broader framework. Rather, I choose to see the struggle for visibility as a struggle for various interpretations and materializations of visibility present at any one time within LGBT communities and competing with hegemonic representations of minority sexualities. Within the broader discourse on sexuality, visual representations of non-normative sexualities use elements ranging from high to popular culture, from stereotypical to artistically innovative. My main interest here is to ask what queering of images does in this embattled domain that might be experienced as empowering by its viewers.

From the point of view of feminist theory, visual representation is a contested field: the “aesthetic moment” is potentially a “manipulative moment” (Lentricchia in Thornham 2007, 29) since it naturalizes “gendered techniques of objectification” (Lury in Thornham 2007, 29), and produces a “gendered field of visual pleasure” under the mask of universally

shared aesthetic and artistic values (Thornham 2007)²². In the field of art criticism, the power of art is understood in relation to profound effects it has on its viewers, both sensuous and in terms of knowledge/awareness it brings about. So, Luebbbers (2009) stresses that the work of art does not produce “conceptual knowledge” but something beyond the realms of language and rationality: “something like an excitation, a phenomenon of commitment, judgment in a state of thralldom or captivation” (Ibid.:181). In her appreciative essay on Susan Sontag’s contribution to visual art criticism, Luebbbers reminds us of Sontag’s insistence in *Against Interpretation* on the necessity of the viewers “cooperation” and direct affective and sensuous openness to a work of art: “But art cannot seduce without complicity of the experiencing subject” (Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, p. 22, in Luebbbers 2009, 186).

While Laura Mulvey’s (2009) theorizing of the “male gaze” as objectifying practice has been criticized for leaving few imaginable options for escaping its iron grip, she does offer one way out, in which she also engages as an artist – that of avant-garde filmmaking and artistic practices. Some images at queer festivals in post-Yugoslav countries, as well as, I would say, the visuality of *Queer Zagreb Festival*, tend to play with the aesthetics and visual elements of the avant-garde art. However, both (feminist) film critics and audiences have expressed misgivings about the limits that avant-garde filmmaking poses to pleasure in viewing. This suspicion of the necessity for cultural politics to follow a deliberately avant-garde aesthetics has been associated with a move toward renewed embracing of the pleasures in viewing and consuming popular culture²³.

²² Not only when it comes to gender binarisms and heterosexist constructions, but also very much in the field of racist stereotyping and racialization, visual representation functions as one of the major discursive categories (Adusei-Poku 2010, 177).

²³ To the practice of revaluing popular culture belong some of the images at post-Yugoslav queer festivals - especially the visuality developed by the *Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film* in Ljubljana. While its poster images could be perceived as relying on attractive poster stills from LGBT films, its confrontational impact is strengthened by the “gejevski” (gay) and “lezbični” (lesbian) in the name of the Festival. Furthermore, the visibility politics of the Ljubljana Festival are directed at creating visuality of lesbian and gay equality: each year, the Festival alternates the order “lesbian” and “gay” in the title. If the name reads “Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film”, then a gay film opens the Festival, and vice versa.

Among others, Caroline Evans and Lorraine Gamman turn to theorizing the “queer gaze” (2006). Engaging in the longstanding debate between feminist film theory and (feminist) visual studies on power in looking relations, they criticize the concept of queer gaze as an unfortunate continuation of the much discussed “male gaze” and the attempts to postulate a “female gaze” (Ibid.:80). They prefer to use the notion of “queer representations” that are characterized by “the capacity to disturb stable definitions” (Ibid.). Queer representations, according to them, do not have to be positive or empowering images. In fact, they are often “ambiguous, slippery, and in total don’t add up to a coherent whole. They often leave the spectator/viewer questioning” (Ibid.:81–82). While the reclaiming of visibility through empowering images has been among the most important strategies of cultural politics of various new social movements, the new wave of queer artistic and political representations tends to explore the possibilities of queering visibility.

The question arises of how to bring together the in/visibility of non-normative sexuality as a social marker; representations of such sexualities, and their social and political functions. Richard Dyer (2002) discusses problematic practices of typifying gay people who need to be “seen to be believed”, and whose representation as typical assuages societal imperative to be recognizable. This “gay typification” functions as “a repertoire of signs, making visible the invisible”, which serves as “the basis of any representation of gay people involving visual recognition”, and according to Dyer, seems to be taken as “a near necessity for representation of gayness” (Ibid.:19). In particular, he draws attention to the overwhelming differences in meaning of those types depending on the social position of the viewer. Importantly, the practice of producing visual types is “not just something wished on gay people but produced by them” (Ibid.:21), both in the realm of spectatorship and in direct cultural production. It is precisely the creative and unstable representations that leave viewers

uncertain, produced around and communicating with queer community which, I argue, are found in the visuality of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, discussed in Chapter 6.

The struggle for visibility in the arena of the social in the case of queer festivals is inextricably linked to the questions of performativity and productivity of images. Antke Engel (2009) tests the terrain of theories of performativity, finding them lacking in fantasy which for her is a sine-qua-non ingredient of queer politics. Instead of discussing the clichéd “power of images”, Engel uses the term “social productivity of images” to locate their power in social sphere, and emphasize their use in cultural politics (Ibid.:119). The concept of performativity is important for her in order to understand how “representations and discourses become effective” (Ibid.). She follows the genealogy of the concept of performativity from J.L. Austin through Derrida to Butler to diagnose a definite “lack of fantasy”, although she does point out that Butler discussed it briefly yet ambiguously – as “cultural life of fantasy” (Ibid.:120–122).

For Engel, fantasy is a “performative force” that puts back hope and agency in performativity’s somewhat depressing boundedness to the repetition of norms (Ibid.:121). The images that Engel works with - queer calendar pin-ups, allow her to offer up to a reader’s imagination a possible viewing scenario that queers looking relations. I follow Engel’s lead when looking at the posters of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* in Chapter 6 to ask about the strategies of queering legible in Festival posters and certain art works; ways of looking at these images that bring those potentially subversive visual elements to life, and the strategies of queering of looking relations that Engel calls for in queer viewing.

3 METHODOLOGICAL ROAD-GUIDE: RESEARCH PROCESS AND ITS MANY CHANGES

This research is a result of an engagement with theories of queer festivals and their visibility, and above all, with the festival people whom I socialized with during many years of festival occasions and could approach to make interviews with. This chapter is an opportunity for me to look at the interface of encounters of theory with fieldwork; that of methodological expectations with ways in which they come to be actualized. My research project has taken several surprising turns in its development. At the outset, I was planning a comparative ethnography of *Queer Zagreb Festival* and *Queer Belgrade Festival*, since I perceived them as representative of practices of creating very different festivals out of partly shared regional queer politics. This is why I had attended almost all of the Belgrade Festival occasions, as well as the Zagreb ones.

However, just as I was about to start my fieldwork in the fall of 2010, it became clear to me that the *Queer Belgrade Festival* would not be happening again. At that point of my research, I had no idea that the *Queer Zagreb* would have its last festival edition in 2012 either, just as I was writing up the results of my ethnography. In 2010, I was still looking for a “living” festival so I decided against relying on my previous experiences with the *Queer Belgrade Festival*, and looked for another regional LGBT festival as a counterpart to the Zagreb event. This is how I ended up doing participant observation and interviews at the 2010 *Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film* in Ljubljana, attending it for the first time, and feeling excited to be in a role of an ethnographer. However, as the thesis developed, it grew to be more concerned with negotiating the meaning of queer art than with comparative festival ethnography. I had to make a difficult decision to limit my analysis here to the Zagreb festival and its relations to the regional queer festivals. In Section 3.3, I will go into more details on

the implications of this and related changes during the research project for my understanding of the field, and for the writing process.

I introduce my fieldwork here while Section 3.1 goes into the details of the actual data-collection and steps of analysis. I have done an extensive amount of fieldwork at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. I attended the Festival since its beginning in 2003 and as an enthusiastic viewer, I saw most of the films and attended most of the festival events in the 10 years that concern this research (except in 2011 when I was not able to participate in the Festival time). I conducted most of the interviews with my Zagreb interlocutors – organizers, artists, viewers, volunteers – in 2010, together with engaging in participant observation at the Festival. In addition, in two years, in 2005 and 2009, I even volunteered at the Festival (participating in one collaborative art project; and working in the office and welcoming the participating artists, respectively), and had the opportunity to experience the festival organization from the inside as well as to go along to all of the events – film screenings, concerts, parties – as a member of the volunteers’ team and make intensive field notes. As for the consistency of the semi-structured interviews I have made with the total of twenty participants altogether over the years, the ten interviews I conducted in 2009, mostly with the participating artists and members of the audience are somewhat different (conducted at festival sites after the shows, so shorter) and I have used them carefully in analysis in the following chapters. In 2010, I made additional nine interviews with organizers, artists and viewers in Zagreb following similar semi-structured interview pattern. In 2012, I made one last interview with the Festival posters designer²⁴.

²⁴ I use the real names of all of my participants, as allowed by them. I chose to use mostly first names of my interviewees to give a sense of their engagement in the festival community, with sometimes intensively interlapping roles – of a viewer, organizer, artist, volunteer. Only in several instances, when I interviewed artists and designers as such (when their connection with the Festival was very much oriented through their professional role), I chose to refer to them with both their first and last name – as their work/profession was more prominent in their interviews than their (potential) viewer/participant status.

3.1 *An Interface: Research Methodology and Theoretical Questions*

This section relates my theoretical concerns with the actual work of ethnographic data-collection and data analysis. I hope to render visible the processes of how the theory influenced my questions and approaches to interpretation, and how the visual data and the voices of my interlocutors talked back to the theory and made me see it in a different light. My research questions and methodological choices have been formed at the intersection of the fields of cultural studies and visual and linguistic analysis of discourses on queer representation. Both approaches to understanding language/visuality and culture share a common concern about the workings of power as pointed out, among others, by Barker and Galasinski (2001), and both have been used in gender and queer critique to unearth the ideological content, or rather inflections of cultural texts of gender and sexuality. It has been claimed that both cultural studies and critical studies of discourse have a common “concern with the constitution of culture in the matrix of language and power” (Ibid.:26). Here, I discuss the questions that led my ethnographic research in the direction of asking about signs, or rather, acts of signification – both textual and visual – of resistance to normativity, and practices of their use in the particular social context of the queer cultural festival.

My data come from three broader sources. They are festival visual materials (websites, programs, published materials, posters, billboards); interviews (with festival organizers, activists, artists and members of audience); and, to some lesser extent, media coverage (newspapers, web articles, internet forums, TV coverage, you-tube uploads). In the early stages, it had seemed to me that all three of those sources will be equally important for the project, starting my research in an ambitious way in 2007.

There is an important qualification to be made about the range of the researched visual material. The cultural events referred to as *queer festivals* in this research are not “pride

festivals”, i.e. they are not cultural events around pride parades. Still, since visibility and public visibility of “queerness” are the intersected lenses of this project, I consider all forms of visual products of the Zagreb Festival embedded in the post-Yugoslav queer culture, regardless the venue where they are produced: visual campaigns of pride parades and pride festivals, billboard or media visual campaigns of various LGBT organizations all serve as a background visual framework for comparison with the visual material of the queer art festivals themselves.

At the beginning, my approach was overly broad not only regarding the kind of data and its collection, but also in conceptualizing the limits of the field. At its initial stages, I hoped to conduct a comprehensive comparative ethnographic research of all of the queer/LGBT festivals in post-Yugoslav countries (in fact eight different kinds and locations of festivals over 10 years) and even investigate the reasons for the lack of festivals and queer visibility in Monte Negro and Kosovo. What I learned in the process is that I needed to examine closely my motives and research questions in order to narrow my research focus, finally, on one festival so as to be able to enter the field in a “realistic”, i.e. insightful way.

During the process, and especially in the writing-up period, I came to realize that I needed to change the focus and leave out some of the data I had collected for the time being. The questions informing my activities in the fieldwork and the writing process are for the most part concerned with the visibility and visibility dilemmas around the queer festivals and so the question of visibility and visibility through the visual and linguistic materials I have collected remains at the heart of the project. In addition to the actual visual art works, equally important is the ethnographic material based on interviews and participant observation. During the writing, it became clear that the material I collected concerning the Croatian media perception of the festival would take the thesis in a direction other than the focus on organizers’ and artists’ strategies and the audience’s perceptions of the cultural

products/events. This is why I eventually put the media coverage aside of the main line of analysis, but occasionally use it to support as interpretative context for the discussion of the rest of the data.

One other data-set that should be mentioned is the data I have collected on the visual campaigns of the LGBT organizations in Croatia and other post-Yugoslav countries, hoping that they might be used to establish the specificities of the festivals' strategies of visibility. Eventually, they are present in this research only through my interviewees' references to differences between activist and festival approaches to visibility. As often reported by ethnographers, I have also ended up using in this thesis only a small proportion of the huge material I have collected. This is also true of the interview material. During the coding and analysis, I focused only on about one third of the questions discussed in the semi-structured interviews. The rest of the interview material – covering a wide range of topics from history of LGBT festivals to discussions of queer politics in post-Yugoslav countries, as well as my analysis of the *Gay and Lesbian Film Festival* in Ljubljana, may hopefully appear in some other future publications with a somewhat different perspective.

In this dissertation, I explore the festival political potential of queer visibility in the spaces of cultural festivals with the help of feminist theorizations of intersectionality. I find it inspiring to look at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, as the space created through and for questioning non-normative situatedness of sexuality as a site of various dimensions of life intersecting at and around the festival event. Kimberle Williams Crenshaw (2003) first used the concept of intersectionality to “account for multiple grounds of identity” in her analysis of the ramifications of both race and gender on violence against women of color. She showed that racism and sexism both had strong influence on black women's experience of violence, and that they should not be considered separately since they join forces, even if unintentionally, to create “(I)ntersectional subordination (... that) is frequently the

consequence of the imposition of one burden interacting with pre-existing vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment” (Ibid.:358–359).

Gloria Wekker and Helma Lutz (2001) give a useful explanation of the development of intersectionality into a precise methodology for researching how cultural texts are structured around “interdependent, interwoven systems of ideas and practices with regard to differences between people” (Ibid.:21). Intersectionality enables us to look at how those differences function and relate. Wekker also points us toward a strategy developed by Mari Matsuda who does critical race studies in the field of jurisprudence: the practice of asking “the other question”: “When I see something that looks racist, I ask, ‘Where is the patriarchy in this?’ When I see something that looks sexist, I ask ‘Where is the heterosexism in this?’ When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, ‘Where are the class interests in this?’” (Matsuda in: Wekker and Lutz 2001, 22).

Despite the importance and popularity of interdisciplinarity for gender studies, there are few research projects that bring together queer theory and queer studies with intersectionality (Dietze, Haschemi Yekani, and Michaelis 2007; Haschemi Yekani 2008). In this regard my work belongs in this small innovative scholarship that uses analytical tools developed by theorists of intersectionality to analyze how multiple axis of discrimination (Collins 1998; Crenshaw 2003) intersect in the (visual) strategies of representing queerness in post-Yugoslav countries. My analysis will bring in the categories of ethnic, national and religious identities into play with activism in order to question the organizational strategies of queering.

I draw on the methodology of intersectionality to trace down how (much) the actual queer festivals as spaces of articulation of non-normative artistic practices in the region can provide us with insights into the interconnectedness of class, gender, ethnicity and other forms of (discriminatory) social differentiation. I wanted to see what kind of “other questions” are

posed by the events of *Queer Zagreb* and other post-Yugoslav queer festivals. What are the ways that these festivals problematize the non-normative social positions? How do the relations between gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, play out in festivals' manifestos and program? The analysis of the *Queer Zagreb Festival's* programs and their annual mission-statements functions as a step towards the understanding of the broader social context of intersecting sexism, homophobia and nationalism which the post-Yugoslav queer festivals face.

In line with its intersectional approach, this project relies on multiple methodologies. They are as follows: participant observation and in-depth interviews with the organizers, artists, volunteers, and audience members; the analysis of textual and visual representations (visual materials used by queer festivals, media coverage, works of art – films, performances, exhibitions); the archival data collected and recordings of actual events; the ethnographic observation of the social life of visual objects (in audience member's homes or offices); and photo-documentation. Methodological triangulation when analyzing these various kinds of data is multiple and has many levels: that of research materials; research methods; as well as of modes of analysis and theoretical approaches.

The benefit of using an “explicitly multi-method[ological] approach” (interviewing, participant observation, making photographs and asking about images in interviews) in researching visual materials consists of helping the researcher “understand more dimensions of both how images are used and what they can mean to the people who possess and/or produce them” (Crang and Cook 2007, 126–127). Such approach also helps with engaging local meanings that various participants ascribe to these visual materials as well as their actual political potential in the cultural events – but always situated in their broader social and cultural context of validity. The main approach to interpreting my research material consists in analysis of written and visual material. I am indebted to overlapping concerns of the fields

of cultural studies and critical discourse studies with “power and the politics of change”, in order to sustain the “dialogue between the non-linguistic and the linguistic”, as pointed out by Barker and Galasinski (2001, 25–26).

I analyze instances of visual art works that function as temporary and contested moments of queerness escaping the heteronormative matrix (see Chapter 6). It is therefore important to point out the difference it makes to talk about “queering” and “queerness” instead of “queer”. The importance of the dynamism of meaning making can be better captured by the former two terms that imply doing, the act of accomplishing queer-ing hence positing “queer” as a verb, rather than capturing it by a noun that functions as an adjective that suggests a given entity, implicating “queer” as seemingly a product. Such emphasis is informed by Tamson Wilton’s (1995) similar concept of “lesbian-ness” that engages in queering “lesbian identity”, conceptualizing it as an “activity rather than an entity” (Ibid., 49) and as a process encompassing “a more flexible set of meanings” (Ibid.:X).

3.2 Critical Visual Methodology and the Metaphor of a Queer Archive

This section introduces the influence of the visual methodological concerns and of one particular methodological metaphor, that of the queer archive, for this project. Halberstam (2005) insists that “the nature of queer subcultural activity requires a nuanced theory of archives and archiving” (Ibid.:169). In Halberstam’s view, a queer archive is not “a repository” nor a place that holds material and memories of non-normative sexuality; it is much more than that: “it has to become a floating signifier for the kinds of lives implied by the paper remnants of shows, clubs, events, and meetings” (Ibid.). This evocation of traces of lives implicated in material records has inspired my interest in the posters on people’s walls as

traces of exit signs. Furthermore, as Halberstam argues, the queer archive accomplishes important work: it is “also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity” (Ibid.:170).

In addition to ethnography, in-depth interviewing and collecting other textual/visual material in the media, I also made use of two other *critical visual methodologies* in Rose’s sense of the term (2007), namely researching the social life of visual material, and photo-documentation (Ibid.), because such “filmic approaches” (Crang and Cook 2007) are argued to open up possibilities for bringing together the functioning of visibility in the everyday, the theoretical framework of queer phenomenology, and its potential for political activism. Taking photographs as part of the fieldwork reflects my interest in combining the “doing” and the “knowing” central for “new ethnography” that is believed to enable the researcher to ask: “What do we see when we acknowledge the shadows we cast in the field? What do we hear, smell and taste?” (Barz and Cooley (1997) in Lüdtke 2009, 13).

The issues of vision, visibility and visibility are central terms for researching and conceptualizing queer visibility in the making in post-Yugoslav countries - hence they had to be integrated as part of the research methodology itself. The common theoretical and practical ground shared by the fields of visual anthropology, visual sociology and visual cultural studies converges around investigations of the “transformative potential of the visual” (Pink 2007, 15). According to Rose (2007), “photos do analytical work most helpfully when they are used to evoke something that is itself visual, at least in part” (Ibid., 256). This is why my research used an anthropological approach of *researching the social life of visual material* as well as an *interventionist methodological approach*, i.e. making photographs as a part of the research project.

The first method I deployed consisted of finding out about the visual materials connected to the queer festivals, and at times, for comparison, also the images of the LGBT

visibility campaigns (photographs, posters, private photographs) during the interviews and also asked about viewers' reactions. This included asking about the presence or absence of the visual objects in the everyday life of my informants. This ethnographic approach does not just concentrate on interviewing but it is also informed by anthropological interests in the *materiality*, *mobility* and *effects* of visual objects (Ibid., 216–237). The observation of the “materiality” of the actual visual objects entails what those images show; in their texture/material as well as the settings in which they are presented. The “mobility” of visual objects is concerned with their travelling, re-contextualization and/or passing on in different urban contexts. In analyzing the “effects” of the visual materials, I relied on the analysis of the interviews but at times²⁵ on my own observation and notes concerning the interviewing process.

The second method of intervention I made use of is the so-called “photo-documentation” by researcher. The photo-documentation method uses photographs in a particular way: as visual “evidence” or rather as semi-structured invitations for participants' responses used in interviewing, functioning as point of reference for further analysis and development of the theoretical aspect of the research (Ibid., 244). Some of the photos made through photo-documentation may also function in different ways: as “specified generalization” that will add visual specificity to the analysis (i.e. they may illustrate as specific visual examples what theory attempts to describe in concepts), or as providing “texture” to the analysis and the descriptions (adding visual texture to theory, as enrichment deserving of consideration in its own right) (Ibid., 246–247).

I have been taking photographs at the festivals to generate data according to “shooting scripts” that were linked to the research questions (Ibid., 243). The research questions that oriented my practice of “photo-documentation” ranged from practical ones, such as

²⁵ While only one interview with an organizer took place at his home, most of the other interviews happened in public space – usually connected with the Festival. However, I have asked all of my interviewees for the festival visual material in their home space, and solicited photographs.

identifying and documenting the spaces where these visual events take place, to questions directly informed by the research interest in escape and capture through visual representations – attempting to identify the queering points of exits. While I have created a small visual archive of photographs in this way, the approach of “photo-documentation” has taken a surprising turn during the research project. Showing the photographs to my interviewees turned out to be in a way unnecessary since the last ten years of the Festivals’ visual material were fresh enough for my interlocutors, and we seemed to share this visual archive. This is why I turned to “photo-solicitation” to learn more about the social life of the Festival’s posters in my interviewees’ home spaces. However, due to space constraints, I make only a very limited use of this solicited visual archive here (in Section 2.1), and hope to publish more on it in the future.

3.3 Thinking about Queering Methodology

My research design and interview questions asked about the research participants’ festival experiences, their perception of local and regional queer politics. However, as I was listening to my interlocutors talking about the art works they had seen at the queer festivals, I realized that their attempts to define what they were witnessing at the *Queer Zagreb Festival* resembled the theoretical difficulties of defining queer art. The discussions on what queer art actually means to my participants resemble the complex discussions in and around queer theory on what “queerness” might be. In bringing together these two discussions, I was influenced by Tom Boellstroff’s (2010) suggestion to leave the terrain of epistemology and ontology to interrogate how the less explored terrain of methodology offers possibilities for not talking about queerness as an object. Instead of *queer studies* where queer persons,

practices or life-styles are analyzed, and where “studies” functions as a noun, he proposes opting for a transformation of the discipline into a *queer studying* – an analysis “even of things not self-evidently queer” (Ibid.:215).

My project, on its broadest horizon has also been influenced by contemporary discussions of the practice of reflexive anthropology (Zenker and Kumoll 2010), as well as by similar developments in self-reflexivity of the researcher in queer and feminist ethnography (Browne and Nash 2010). Contemporary approaches to reflexive anthropology are engaged in refining the premises of Clifford and Marcus’s *Writing Anthropology* that aimed for reflexivity in ethnographic writing by continuing to ask about processes of writing ethnographies and the role of the researcher (Heintz 2010, 140). This commitment to reflexivity in analyzing epistemological and representational practices is shared by recent writing on queering ethnography. Bringing together ethnography and queer theory “hones queer theory and qualifies it within the context of everyday life”, and, on the other hand, “explore(s) the normative logics of ethnographic research and writing” (Rooke 2010, 26–29).

I am also aware of the criticism of and within sociology of art that warns of the limits to explaining art through sociological and anthropological approaches. Ian Heywood (1997), for instance, critiques some major sociological approaches to art for doing sociological violence and risking reductionism of the art worlds they research. He finds in some of them “tendencies towards acquisitive, expropriating social relationships” (Ibid.:57). Heywood suggests turning a reflexive gaze toward social sciences as well - as an antidote to these tendencies.

Apart from exploring critical visual methodology and reflexivity in research, I am also interested in asking what a queer methodology might “look like” – given that queer theory rarely discusses questions of methodology, apart from voicing skepticism of conventional research methods (Plummer 2005, 366). I think that researching such transient events as queer

festivals and visibility campaigns in a politically volatile context, which generate excitement while taking place but whose effects tend to pass under-theorized, needs to grapple with potentialities of queer methodology. Here I am inspired by Halberstam's (1998) use of "scavenger methodology" that "raids"/deconstructs a vast array of theoretical and cultural texts in order to unearth the readings of curiously overlooked phenomena - in her case that of "female masculinities" (Ibid.:9–13). Halberstam's conceptualization of queer research as *scavenging* recalls de Certeau's (2011) redefinition of the practice of reading as *poaching*: in my reading both share an investment in re-imagining the activities in question as complex and multidimensional. My research design of combining a bricolage of qualitative research methods with special focus on visual methods to analyze subversiveness of queer representations makes use and tests the limits of visual "scavenger methodology".

4 CULTIVATING QUEER ART IN ZAGREB: FESTIVAL MANIFESTOS

The ethnography of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* in Chapter 7 will show the complexity of the field through the voices of its participants – activists and artists, organizers and members of the audience. Here and in Chapters 5 and 6, I turn to the Festival organizers – to the texts, visuals, programs and events of their creation, to get a clearer picture of the practice of realizing the Zagreb Festival. Conceptual attention paid to symbolic geographies, festival chronotopes and heterotopias corresponds to triangulation in regards to analysis of sources in analytical chapters. First of all, I will read organizational strategies through analysis of texts (festival “manifestos”), festival programs, and visual material. Second, I will investigate specific queer festival heterotopias through analysis of several chosen works of art. Finally, I will approach the participants’ experiences of festival chronotopes through interview analysis.

The chapter structure is loosely informed by the framework of “critical visual methodology” as developed by Gillian Rose (2007) – particularly the analytical interest in all three sites of creation of the meanings of an image: site of production, site of the image itself, and site of audiencing (Ibid.:13). Since any festival as a cultural phenomenon generates multitude of images, I have to admit inability to analyze all or even most of them. This is why, I have decided for methodological shorthand that enables analysis: in manifestos, I look for self-representations; in programs, for strategies of bringing together various art forms and audiences; in festival visuality in Chapter 6, for ways of queering posters that signal the broader practices of queering art and politics.

In general, I shall argue that the preferred visuality of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* aimed for a radical queering of the Croatian public discourses of art and politics. This

queering was imagined in manifestos as the subversion of the oppressive mainstream. However, since the programming strategies framed the Festival as the time-space where high art and avant-garde influences meet popular culture, the project of queering was envisioned also as a project of cultivation. This cultivation presupposed both the “invention” of a queer audience and nurturing of its tastes, and the maintenance of the radical questioning of the forms and nature of queer art staged at the Festival.

I intentionally foreground the trope of cultivation as central for understanding the organizational strategies of the Zagreb Festival. In addition to its creative aspects, cultivation as practice implies the division of the field into those who have the professional artistic, organizational or theoretical expertise to influence the rest of the community or other members of the audience – who are presented as in need of becoming cultivated through audiencing.

Not only the Festival audience, also the artists are unfortunately placed on the passive side of the binary created through the cultivation metaphor. As the manifesto analysis will show, regional queer art and the work of regional artists dealing with sexuality is presented as always already present on the ground, but needing an expert eye and skills of the organizers to bring it to the attention of the audiences and transnational art world. In this chapter, I suggest that it is this elitist, self-satisfied presumption behind cultivation of queer art that brings the entire project of queering of normativity into doubt.

In this chapter, I take the annual “manifestos” of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* as indications of development and changes in strategies of the Festival organizers. The analytical focus is on reading the annual invitations to the Festival and the introductory texts in Festival catalogues in order to outline a genealogy of the Festival’s self-representation.

The genre of “manifesto” is theorized as important for feminism, both historically – in bringing about new waves of activism, and conceptually – as enabling new imaginings of

empowerment and change. Janet Lyon's (1999) distinction between utopian and political manifesto is of particular importance, as both forms have influence on festival manifestos analyzed here.

According to Lyon, while the *utopian manifesto* seeks political change through ambitious, instantaneous, complete turn of the events, the *political manifesto* settles the steps necessary for achieving this change, and focuses on its process and historical context. Furthermore, to understand the functioning of the genre of manifesto, it is instructive to observe its goals. A political manifesto (as does a utopian one, to a large extent) centralizes, in its own terms, a previously marginalized history; it reconstructs the crimes of the oppressor; it appeals successfully to a violated code of justice; it defines its own potential audience by providing a model for a provisional coalition (Ibid.:192).

The challenge of postmodernism to the representational possibilities of the manifesto genre has to be taken into account when looking at the self-presentation of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. Lyon analyzes several poststructuralist and postmodernist feminist manifestos that ironically or earnestly play with the *we* they employ as "an index of multiplicity rather than as a signifier of univocality" (Ibid.:171). As opposed to the postmodern skepticism of collectivity, Lyon discusses the *Aids Action Now!/ACT UP* manifesto published in 1989 in Montreal as a different type of manifesto constructing provisional collectivity in three languages and based on concrete proposals of direct action instead of on identities. She argues that the collective identity constructed through this manifesto functioned as "an ideological sign (...), which can mean 'we' and 'anger' and 'immediate action', even as it accomplishes, and records through its capacity as a performative speech act, that angry collective action" (Ibid.:197–198).

In addition to utopian and political manifestos, it is also the articulation and legacy of art manifestos that bears relevance for analyzing textual self-representation of queer festivals.

Art manifestos share many of the features of political and utopian manifestos such as testifying to dissatisfaction with the past and suggesting future changes and alliances. They, however, differ in that the situation they want to change is primarily located within the art world. Already in Section 2.3 I discussed uncertainties in defining “queer art”, while in Section 7.3 I will focus on multilayered local meanings of queer art current among my interviewees. What theoretical discussions share with my interviewees’ statements is aligning queerness in art with politics and aesthetics of transgression. The sense of art as devoted to breaking the norms also unmistakably characterized the legacy of Yugoslav avant-gardes, as discussed by Djurić and Šuvaković (2003).

In this Chapter, I am concerned with textual self-representations of *Queer Zagreb Festival* as a project of queering mainstream art and culture in Croatia. In following sections, the analysis of the Festival manifestos is structured around the issues of (1) practices of programming, (2) negotiation of Festival chronotopes, and (3) relations in the Festival’s field of action.

4.1 Organizing Queer Festival in Manifestos

In this chapter, I analyze how the organizational strategies of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* team – including art work selection criteria and broader programming choices – come across in the Festival manifestos. Here I focus on one major strategy that helps us understand self-representation of Festival organizers’ practices – this is the choice and framing of topic for each Festival as a strategy of defining and creating (regional) queer art and Festival’s role in it. In what follows, I propose that Festival manifestos can be divided into three groups: those

that define (regional) queer art; those that directly confront the mainstream; and the manifestos/programs that do not have a set theme but let the art works speak for themselves.

Analysis of the manifestos enable us to track Festival's self-representation through topics chosen by the organizers for framing the Festival as a major player in discovering and/or producing queer art works. The ten *Queer Zagreb* "manifestos" open up one tabooed issue after another as invitations to the Festival throughout its ten years. The challenging themes include, for instance, post-socialist queer identities; the genre of regionally queer art; exposing the harmful effects of heteronormativity on children, and questioning the established public/private divides in Croatian arts and politics. Not only do the manifestos touch upon topics related to queerness thematically, they engage with what could be recognized as intersectional questioning of complex categories that constitute the (mostly) stigmatized meaning of "queerness" in Croatia and the region. They refer to the narratives and histories of militarism, nationalism and of masculinism.

4.1.1 Festival Manifestos "Defining" (Regionally) Queer Art

I see the first group of manifestos as using the strategy of defining queerness and queer art in Croatia and the region. This strategy is used as means of "cultivating" local and regional queerness and its artistic perceptions – unearthing and taking care of something that already existed in local terms to make it bloom. So, in the first Festival manifesto in 2003, the primary focus is on defining the basic terms of a possibility of queer representation in Croatia, a curatorial and political project that opened the doors to other more subtle political strategies in the years to come. The manifesto situates the Festival as searching for a way out of a complex web of discriminatory social normativity, and suggests the method of using a *queer perspective*:

Social stereotypes, prejudice, militarism, church and state relation, different family structures are just some of the constructs we are observing through the queer perspective, which does not set out from categorizing people. Because any categorization, whether it is based on sex, ethnicity, color of the skin, color of the eyes or sexual orientation, can in any moment become the inspiration for discrimination. (Queer Zagreb Festival 2003a, 1)

Similarly to the first year's manifesto, the authors of the 2004 manifesto contextualize the Festival so as to emphasize its relevance. Thus, we hear both the freshly self-confident voice of the organizers motivated by the success of the first event as well as the echoes of the societal context that changes slowly. Never having suffered from modesty, the organizers describe their festival as "a significant cultural festival" bringing together "art, theory, and activism dedicated to queer identities" (2004a, 1). The context that makes queering art and culture in Croatia challenging is again presented as a complex set of relations informed by an understanding of the interrelatedness of practices of domination: "The legacy of nationalism and fundamentalism in religious beliefs, as well as militarism and machismo, still plays an important role within the Croatian society; such a legacy strongly contributes to the process of heteronormativity within Croatian society" (Ibid.).

With the geopolitical context thus established, in a decisive though somewhat generalizing way, the organizers' authorial voice in the second manifesto then presents the Festival as a space of reacting to this situation, and providing ways of escape for the local queer community. The text of the manifesto explains that the *Queer Zagreb Festival* is

trying to challenge Croatian heteronormativity through presenting new views on queer identity using a diverse and interesting programme (Sic.) and presenting it in some of the most institutional venues throughout the city, which allows it to be extremely visible in the media and public life. At the same time Queer Zagreb is empowering local queer artists to present their work publicly and to further the development of queer identity. (Ibid.)

In a similar vein, the manifesto of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* in 2007 celebrates the growing of a wave and summarizes the importance of the Festival that consists in “empower(ing) the independent cultural scene not only in Zagreb, but in the whole of Croatia” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2007a, 1). I see this manifesto as belonging to the first group of manifestos which set the terms of post-Yugoslav queerness in as far as here we see the moment where the task of defining regional queerness is no longer pressing and gives way to its celebration. The fifth Festival in 2007 is conceptualized as a “jubilee”, a festivity of success, and this accomplishment is established through an ironic rendering of the Festival’s (few) opponents who had peacefully protested in front of Festival venues in its first years: “After (only) five years it can be proudly said that police cordons in front of theatres and cinemas where the festival is taking place have thinned out. Different interpreters of Biblical truths have given up on giving us their non-benevolent advice” (Ibid.). This tactic of ironic distancing and ridiculing of religious normativity aids the function of the 2007 manifesto as a celebration of the Festival’s programmatic and political success.

The final Festival manifesto of 2012 is an editorial by the Festival program director. Although playing with the daunting task of closing a series of events yet leaving open the space created in wake of the ten years of the Festival, it is still much more of an “eulogy” than a programmatic declaration oriented to the future. The text starts with a recollection of the Festival's ten years. I think it is worth attending to how the text presents the actual processes of negotiations and the political struggle of the organizers that made the event possible. Finally in this text, the organizers seem to be able to afford opening up to the risks and vulnerability in order to make the Festival even more of an achievement. Here, it is possible to see which are the events that the Festival organisers consider important and at the same time what “importance”, the criterion of the value judgement, comes to mean:

It was only yesterday that we were planning to start a festival; dealt with announced and unannounced protests against the festival; arranged discounts with private security firms; discussed potential risk for each location where the festival program takes place; asked for sponsorships; applied for funding to the Ministry and the City; applied for additional funding to foreign embassies and foundations; entered theaters and institutions and disturbed the regular lives of theater technicians and management with our AIDS, illnesses, perversions and whatever they thought of us; pretended to be stronger than we were; remembered each unexpected support; resented lack of each expected support; tirelessly spoke with the media; cooperated with each organization and initiative which sprung in the field that is our community; worked with artists that inspired us; decided not to work with those artists that were a pain; raised expectations of the audiences; raised the standard of our work and that of others; simply put – we had fun discovering all what queer could be. (Queer Zagreb Festival 2012b, 5)

Here in a concise and dense paragraph, we have a dramatic recollection of ten years of organizational struggles that the Festival organizers find important to share. It is a single long sentence devoted to the organizational tasks of fund-raising, organizing festival venues, networking with the media, cooperation with other similar organizations, negotiating with artists, trying to get the appeal to the audience right. To qualify the generalization, more than two thirds of the achievements relate to purely organizational tasks. Only one third of the constituent clauses of the sentence are devoted more directly to the actual participants of the event: working with the queer community and with the artists, interacting with audiences, influencing the understanding of queer art.

Yet the final statement of this sentence unifies all of those very different endeavors under the common mission of “discovering all what queer could be”, with the modality verb “could”, in a highly mitigated and indirect way, but still opening it up to the future. In Section 5.1, I will discuss if and how the declarations are present in the actual programs. In short, those are the spaces from where these triumphant self-evaluations and “what queer could be” come to be assessed if successful and for what reasons.

The Festival ended in 2012, but continued with a yearlong program as *Queer Zagreb Season* in 2013 and in 2014. It is of interest to look at the current short description of the “Queer Zagreb” that can be found on their website since 2013 in a prominent position – that

of a manifesto or at least, of a mission-statement: “Queer Zagreb: An empowered new concept of queer as a wider platform for excellence in arts, capable of tracking, discovering and interpreting new trends while daring to speak openly about the norms that constitute society and artistic practices” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2013, 1).

This post-manifesto gives a fascinating insight into the aftermath of the Festival manifestos’ project of defining queerness and queer art in the Croatian context. It is important to notice that although the Festival encouraged local and regional queer artists, and contributed to strength and diversification of the local queer community, what and who is empowered according to this formulation is not queer individuals or artists, but the concept itself. Here we arrive to what I see as the “managerial” concept of queerness, already implicit in the cultivation metaphor. The “concept of queer” has been empowered in the Festival’s ten years and has grown into a “platform”, while festival week has transformed into an entire annual “season”. This concept-turned-platform had grown into a powerful organizational tool with anthropomorphic qualities – it can perform professional curatorial tasks of “tracking, discovering and interpreting new trends” in the art world. In the process, however, it had also taken on an ability to “speak openly about the norms”. The Festival had cultivated a queer platform that speaks out instead of queer curators, artists, theorists and activists – substituting them, and rendering them partially invisible.

4.1.2 Festival Manifestos Testing the Mainstream

In contrast to the manifestos that define the terms of queerness and of queer art in Croatia, the second group of manifestos uses the strategy of directly confronting and subverting the local and regional heteronormativity through festival program. This strategy is set out in the

manifestos as acts of provocation of the Croatian mainstream through queering of arts and culture. To this group belongs the 2005 manifesto, though a change is made to the manifesto genre. From this year on, the unsigned invitation/mission statement of the 2003 and 2004 Festival catalogues, which I read as Festival “manifestos”, is modified into an “editorial” at the beginning of the catalogue signed by the *Queer Zagreb* program director Zvonimir Dobrović. The author writes about the 2005 Festival as if about a three year-old-child: unsure about proper behavior for boys and girls, right colors and actions, frequently misunderstood by the others. In other words, the Festival organizers felt strong enough to take on a contentious topic for its focus: “Heteronormativity of childhood”. As a result of this personification of the event, the assumption of some childish exploration is hoped to give the 2005 Festival the strength to confront the questioning of the pressure put upon children when automatically presumed to be heterosexual.

As the strategy of each political or utopian manifesto consists in identifying a form of social injustice and offering radical political solutions to it, it is not surprising that this text does the same. What is exceptional is the perception of the actual form of injustice as well as the “solution”. It offers the Festival and the queer art works it exhibits as a possible way out for its potential non-normative children viewers or at least for the “inner-children” of its adult viewers. The 2005 manifesto invites all of them to its events, indirectly making a confident claim to providing a safe space for children.

The 2005 edition of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* was the occasion that provoked the most heated reactions in the media while the Festival organizers remained loyal to the path they delineated in the 2005 manifesto: “(The) festival as a form (sic) can rarely give answers. Festival as a platform, on the other hand, is an excellent forum for posing questions” (2005a, 4). The logic of unfavorable answers to the questions posed by the 2005 *Queer Zagreb* can be best heard in the alarmist tone of a newspaper article warning that the Festival organizers “do

not hesitate to use the weak and the most innocent” to promote their agenda of “advertising homosexuality through culture in order to present it as modern and normal behavior” (Župančić 2005, 1).

The author of the article is Vatroslav Župančić who happens to be the preacher of the *Church of Full Gospel* the program provocatively mentions, as discussed in Section 5.2. He gives voice to his moralizing with full force, protesting against the fact that the *Queer Zagreb* “dared dedicate their festival to children”, and claims to be scandalized by the fact that festival was partly funded by city authorities, a fact he reads as sign of despair about the “future of our children, city and country, if the support for such manifestations will continue” (Ibid.). Yet, in spite of such scandalized reactions, the Festival did continue.

To the second group of manifestos, also belongs that of the fourth *Queer Zagreb Festival* in 2006 which focused on presentation of international as well as local artists dealing with queerness or lack thereof in division between public and private - in search for queer “models of transgressing privacy” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2006a, 3). The 2006 manifesto, in the form of Dobrović editorial, prides itself on “a selection that raises expectations from (sic.) those ten to fifteen times financially more appealing similar events” (Ibid.).

The choice of the art presented at the 2006 festival is explained in this text in terms of the search for courageous articulations of practices of resistance. This implies that by this point there exists a sufficiently big queer art scene that is made up of diverse artistic approaches. According to the 2006 manifesto, the queer art presented at the Festival offers to its viewers only the ones they see politically provocative (enough): “the models of transgression of privacy from privilege to obligation. That which makes us different often forces us to silence, while the artists we present this year, quite the reverse speak about it loudly” (Ibid.:1).

The second group of directly confrontational manifestos includes also the 2008 manifesto. It presents the 2008 Festival as exhibiting the works of art that deal with gender,

sexuality and crime from points of view that go beyond the usual mode of representing transgression. According to the manifesto, the Festival wants to “open the questions of patriarchy, construction of maleness, gender binarism and other interesting issues of identity in the context of their possible source of crime. This opens many new opportunities of interpretation of crime as political, ideological, and economic” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2008a, 4).

Critical artistic approaches to bringing queerness and criminality in connection are postulated in the manifesto as an opening to imagining of new possibilities for conceptualizing difference. The social issue identified is a lack of exploration of mechanisms of criminality in connection with gender and sexuality in the sphere of arts. The manifesto claims that the Festival counters this tendency through

touching upon issues of patriarchy, construction of maleness, binary division of genders, homophobia, etc. and (...) putting these norms (directives, orders, epistles) in context of possibility of them generating crimes which have many victims – directly and indirectly. (...) open(ing) space for interpretation of crime as political, ideological, economic and ecologic. (Ibid.:4)

The critical solution to this state of affairs is offered at the end of the 2008 manifesto as transgression of oppressive norms through art. The 2008 Festival is a “place of challenging norms, interaction and provocation” due to some thirty art events that break the silence around normativity. In this way, the (hetero)normativity is presented as the silencing of differences, while the radical action is constituted as finding voice through art.

4.1.3 Open(ing) Festival Manifestos

One catalogue – that of the 2010 Festival – includes a manifesto-text, a Dobrović editorial, which, however, does not define an overarching Festival theme - as other manifestos do. I see

this as the third strategy of not having a defined theme for the Festival - a strategy which takes the focus off the organizer's and artistic director's framing, and allows the space for the interaction between the art works and audiences.

In so far as the 2010 catalogue does not frame the art works in relation to one selected festival theme, we can interpret this sudden change of practice either as accidental occurrence in the life of the Festival, or an alternative strategy on the part of the organizers that was imagined to open interesting horizons for its artists and audiences since it was not tied to a specific theme or vision. However, as we will see in the following chapter (Section 5.1), it does not mean that there are no principles informing the organization of the event. Programming strategies follow their own trajectories, even when the festival theme is not made explicit.

The 2010 Dobrović editorial gives an overview of the "Theater Dance Music" section with ten dance and theater performances, three concerts, and two "Film program" sections. It gives detailed and flattering description of each of these works, without attempting to offer an overarching topic bringing them together as in previous years. Also, it seems that in the Festival's eighth year, there is no need to define queerness and queer art any longer – the art works are self-evidently taken as belonging to the time/space of a queer festival. Where I still take this editorial as exhibiting manifesto-like characteristics is in a narrative of organizational and financial troubles that the Festival team had to go through in order to realize the 2010 festival, as I will discuss in Section 5.3. The second manifesto-like quality is its appeal to Festival audiences – the program director is certain that the Festival "will deliver excellent experiences to those interested in seeing shows with a different approach to performance (or even the possibilities of performing certain content), genre definitions or, simply said, to those interested in seeing exciting work" (Queer Zagreb Festival 2010a, 2). In the *Queer Zagreb* manifestos we can trace an absence of fear in the face of the prospect of

queering Croatian arts and politics. The *we* that the manifesto genre creates does not have to be explicit in the text but is the effect of reading of that text that creates its desired practitioners and audiences gathered around particular subversive practices.

The intersectional questioning that I have identified in *Queer Zagreb* manifestos reflects awareness of the interconnectedness of aesthetics and politics that is also characteristic of the avant-garde, as discussed, for instance, by Peter Buerger (1984). However, the strategies of queering art and visibility tend to be primarily concerned with questioning the societal norms in connection with sexuality and gender expression through visual and performative means. In my reading, strategies of queering visibility go toward using visibility as situated lines of flight.

Nonetheless, as Judith Butler (2011) warns, it is ill advised to rely on unchanging criteria when evaluating culture and art – “for it may be precisely the partiality of a text which conditions the radical character of its insights“ (Ibid.:XX). This is why I find it necessary in this thesis to look at concrete art works, as well as actual festival events and strategies they employ in order to attempt to evaluate the distinction and its usefulness. In other words, I do not see queering strategies as a property of any particular group, any artist, or a festival. Instead, I try to analyze how the *Queer Zagreb Festival* organizers, artists, art works, and audiences can be seen as at times bringing about the strategies of queering visibility that enable its functioning in the modality of exit signs out of normativity. At other times, although subversive in intention or framing, their strategies fall short of creating an escape route.

In this section, I analyzed how the art selection and programming choices of the *Queer Zagreb* organizers get presented in the manifestos. The first group of manifestos I identified as using a strategy of framing each Festival topic – from post-socialist queer art to the Festival’s ambiguous last manifesto devoted to hopeful closure – as an occasion of

intersectional defining of (regional) queer art, and centering the Festival as a key cultural player in the field of queer art. The value judgments and negotiations behind the selection criteria and processes are not rendered transparent. On the contrary, the manifestos present the choice of festival topics and art-works as necessitated by some transcendent criteria of the queer art world, chosen by the curator in-the-know. However, this is not unusual as here the Festival manifesto follows the conventions of the art catalogue: the focus is on presenting the outstanding characteristics of the work of art in question, but such mode of textual presentation often hides the work that went into the production of the art and the event, and the values upon which it is based.

The second group of manifestos employs the strategy of testing the boundaries of Croatian arts and culture field through the Festival themes and program that subvert its heteronormative assumptions. In the one Festival manifesto that does not set the Festival theme, I see an opening up of the interpretative field to the Festival audiences. I suggested that the queer manifestos voice a desire to transgress the norms of the dominant (art) world, and formulate a radical questioning of alleged neutrality of art.

4.2 *Textualizing Queer Zagreb Chronotopes*

In this section, I read the manifestos for the strategies of queering the festival space in Croatia. I aim to show that from its beginnings, the Festival engaged in the construction of queer chronotopes for non-normative representations, audiences and coalitions. Festival time-space can be approached by looking at the chronotope created through individual art-works – as analyzed in Chapter 6; at Festival's actual venues and negotiated spaces – as done in Section 5.2; or at the participants' experiences of the Festival week – as discussed in Chapter

7. I will not analyze each textualized chronotope but turn now to three instances of manifesto versions of time-space that I find particularly significant.

Here, the focus is on how annual Festival manifestos contributed to this project through textual envisioning of possible festival chronotopes. I identify as important the following chronotopes: the chronotope of regional queerness; the chronotope of the festival conference as an interface of theory, art and activism; and the chronotope of resisting the heteronormative matrix through regional queer art. I name these chronotopes only provisionally, as they are frequently renegotiated and just as often overlap.

4.2.1 Chronotope of Regional Queerness

The first chronotope I discuss is the time-space of a search for understanding and creating regional queerness. From its beginning, the manifestos conceptualize the Festival itself as the week in which Zagreb becomes a place where regional queerness is redefined in intersectional terms through artistic and cultural questioning. In retrospect, the first manifesto presents a narrative of searching for regional queerness. The first *Queer Zagreb* in 2003 does not seem as explicit yet about its “identity”. It presents itself more as a “project” than as a festival: “Queer Zagreb is a multimedia project which attempts to relate queer theory and practice” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2003a, 4). More importantly, the Festival project is explicitly said to introduce the questioning of the notion of “queer”. Thus, in this initial manifesto, *Queer Zagreb* presents itself indirectly as a festival relating “queer theory and practice”, and sets out to define and translate the notions that will eventually turn out to determine its program and its artistic and political goals from this year to the very end. We learn that the Festival is about

using art, theory and activism to present shifts from heteronormacy, which is a set of traditional rules based on defined gender roles. With our programme we are

questioning systemized social models based mainly on the relation between genders and sexes and are directly opening discussions relevant to empowering civil society and human rights. (Ibid.)

What interests me in the first manifesto in terms of chronotope construction is the double paradoxical utopian move that the organizers enact in the manifesto i.e. simultaneous invention and cultivation of queerness through the Festival. In the manifesto, they are both arguing for the need to invent “local and regional queerness” (defining the concepts, “bringing (...) over” queer theory and queer art) and claiming that there exists local and regional forms of queer art and queer thought “hidden” right here in the space they are talking from. In the course of translating the mission-statement into the first festival program, the organizers choose to resolve the ambiguity of importing what is already in a “hidden” way there by the division of labor between a conference that brings together international and local queer scholars and a visual art exhibition showing local and regional queer art but created upon the invitation by the Festival organizers.

The manifesto described the conference as “bringing queer theory to Zagreb” while spelling out what those queer thinkers were expected to accomplish: “We are exploring the ways of queer expression and thinking hidden in this town and the region. We want to question whether we have the right to be queer, in which ways can we be queer and what does queer mean” (Ibid.:7). Thus, the conference is to do the work of “bringing queer theory to Zagreb” that can be paralleled by an arts program that brings the already existing queer art works visibly in the public arena. The program of the 2003 Conference will be discussed in detail in Section 5.1.

In its second year, in 2004, the Festival chronotope is conceptualized as the time-space of awakening to queerness: “Queer Zagreb is a cultural festival which awakes queer identities through art, theory and activism” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2004a, 3). Here, the self-perception

of the geopolitical relevance of the *Festival* changes dramatically. In the light of the success²⁶ of the first year's Festival, the organizers are confidently positioning their Festival as "the biggest queer festival" in the region of Central Eastern Europe (Ibid.), which from then on becomes the standard claim of the Festival's self-representation in the subsequent eight manifestos.

The authors of the 2004 manifesto, based on their assumption that the key terms, above all queer and heteronormativity, have been defined in relation to the 2003 event and that they have tapped into a substantial existing interest, devote the textual space to what could be perceived as a complex chronotope, based on intersectionality, of bringing together an understanding of how nationalism and militarism of the region's recent history continue to inform and construct the precarious status afforded to non-normative or minority identities with queer artistic practices in Croatia. The conceptualizing of queerness in the countries of post-Yugoslavia has to take into account the force with which the dominant individual and national identities get constructed around normative gender and sexual practices, as analyzed by George L. Mosse (1985) among others.

To further complicate the picture is the intensive revival of religious discourses in their many variants. The political situation may have changed for the better since Tatjana Pavlović (1999) critiqued Croatia under Tudjman in the 1990ies as the state in which "(n)ational homogenization, religious revival, and monopolistic control over media go together with a generalized fear of differences and otherness" (Ibid.:132). However, Branka Magaš's (1999) analysis of the involvement of the church – in Croatia as well as in Slovenia and Serbia – in the struggle over access to abortion and moral panic over low birthrates, remains current also

²⁶ The success of the first Festival is evaluated by the organizers in subjective terms, relying primarily on the audience feedback: "The reactions from the audience and viewers of 2003, gave us a sensation that we were doing the "right thing" and doing what the people wanted and needed" (Poessnecker 2013:1). Other indicators may be found in the interest of the Croatian media for the event, successful funding-raising for the second Festival in 2004, and growing international interest.

in the decade I research here – from 2003 till 2012. In the case of Croatia, it means the powerful controlling influence of the Catholic Church both on people’s mindsets and on party politics. The *Queer Zagreb Festival* organizers set off from this complicated legacy toward constructing an intricate space of visibility that wants to question this religious revival. The cultural and political strength of the Catholic Church in Croatia constitutes the most salient specificity to keep in mind for contextualizing the impact of the 2005 Festival (see the detailed discussion in Chapter 5). Through focusing on children, the Festival engaged in dialogue that was perceived even more provocative than usual by the media and the public opinion, while the religious values and beliefs served as a background framework both for the Festival organizers, and for the opponents.

4.2.2 Chronotopes of Intersection of Art and Activism

The second type of chronotope I identify concerns the time-space of interaction between arts and activist practices. At times, this interaction is conceptualized as mutually exclusive. The manifesto analysis had shown how at times the *Queer Zagreb Festival* organizers see their mission as “cultivating” the garden of queer arts. The perception of the field of arts and culture as separate, protected, and somehow “safer” social field is to be found also in some interviews with my participants. On the other hand, the field of LGBT activism is conceived as the chronotope of sometimes dangerous visibility, located in the public space of Croatian streets. I try to highlight but destabilize this dichotomous understanding of queer arts and activism, of the chronotopes of the *garden* and the *street*, by analyzing variants of festival chronotope that bring together arts and activism. One of these is the conference chronotope

that in the total of four Festival years brought together theory, arts and activism in the same time-space of thinking about regional queerness.

I will analyze the conference chronotope in Subsection 5.2.2 in connection with the implications of programming these conferences as occasions of encounter between art, activism and theory. Here I turn to how two manifestos (in 2011 and 2012) construct the Festival as a garden and its effects as the blooming of regionally queer art in Croatia. The penultimate manifesto conceptualizes the Festival as the chronotope of queer spring. In 2011, program director Dobrović writes in his *Introduction* to the catalogue almost a romantic and rather personal piece devoted to the Festival. I find this change in style significant in relation to the intersection of politics and aesthetics that is the mission of the Festival, but also interesting on a smaller and textual scale of the Festival manifestos. Though the playful tone is already heard in the 2005 manifesto, when Dobrović writes about the Festival as a three-year-old child, the tone is even more personal here.

This text is personal in the sense that the authorial voice includes us directly as readers into an intimate relationship with the Festival. *We* who are reading are the 2011 Festival's audience; both the art works and the Zagreb spring are here for us. There is a sense in which this strategy can be seen as queering reading relations, and turning some "innocent" hetero Croat readers into queer readers. In another sense, however, it is also a classic manifesto-writing strategy, bordering on textual manipulation. What I am interested here, though, is the way in which the personalization of the 2011 manifesto creates the contours of the chronotope of queer spring.

The author declares that the timing of the *Festival* is symbolic – it brings special beauty to the beginning of spring in Zagreb. By extension, spring comes to be connected with the "celebration of diversity looming over the Croatian cultural scene" (Queer Zagreb Festival 2011a, 3). The sexual diversity is seen from the perspective of aesthetics and is located

equally in the artists and the audience: “the aesthetic that plays with the desires, identities, dreams and nightmares of both the audience and the performers” (Ibid.).

Before the detailed description of some 40 international, local and regional artists present at the Festival, the author directly calls on the Festival's audience as experts “who know the aesthetics” of the Festival and who “will be pleased” to expect and prepare for a “varied program ranging from strong visuals, energetic performances and intense physicality to subtle musical backgrounds, gentle dance and witty dramaturgical remarks and directorial interventions” (Ibid.). In Chapter 5, we will see in more detail how these promises work out in the festival program. Here it is important to notice the direct interpellation of the Festival audience as the knowledgeable, experienced connoisseurs – those who “know” and are “pleased” with what they will see at the Festival. In Chapter 7, we will attend to the “other” side of this relationship - how the viewers dialogue with the Festival organisers' expectations and the visuality of the event.

In Subsection 4.1.1, the manifesto of the last Festival in 2012 is cited at length. What is important here is the emphasis in the 2012 manifesto on the chronotope of the Festival as a queer *garden*. To start with, the 2012 text points to an important distinction between the position of the organizer and that of the artist. For the organizers, the event starts well before the encounter with the artists, with the community and the audience. Conversely, for their viewers and to a lesser degree for the artists involved, the encounter with “what queer could be” in this context starts with the beginning of the festival week. This discrepancy is significant in terms of the festival chronotope.

The classical understanding of festival time-space, similar to the carnivalesque chronotope discussed in Chapter 1, envisions it as a short-time span sanctioned subversion – a festival week the power of which is in the temporally and spatially condensed experience of the transgression of norms. This holds true for the majority of the Zagreb Festival participants

– the viewers, the artists, even the volunteers. For the organizers, on the other hand, the preparation for the Festival lasts one entire year before the actual festival week. The program director Zvonimir Dobrović told me about this strangeness of the festival chronotope, experienced both during the actual festival week and for a year before it:

As an organiser, I think that festival is a terribly strange form, actually - since you work for one year on something that blows up in one week. Something similar to one big explosion happens, and after that it all gets deflated, and you can throw away all those papers from your desk (...) As if a great task was finished, you forget it immediately and you go on. That is why festival is really a strange form – for performance, for the performers, for the audience, and for organising. But it is very rewarding. It gives something – some special rhythm happens. (Zvonimir 2010, 7)

Queer temporality is picked up by the last *Queer Zagreb Festival* manifesto in 2012 which represents again the Festival time-space as a chronotope of “cultivation” of queer art. The 2012 manifesto is especially concerned with the temporal aspect of the garden chronotope. The last Festival has “special rhythm” – which is represented in the manifesto as the time-space of negotiated endings and beginnings. In Section 5.1, we will see how this curatorial interest gets transformed into an ambitious program that celebrates beginnings of queerness in new places and therefore a provisory ending at stake in Zagreb. What is interesting at this point is the reaffirmation of the politics of “bringing” queerness to Croatia that is introduced in/by the first manifesto as a necessary first step for the explorations of queer art and politics. This way, in accordance with the logic of a eulogy, the speaker can legitimately assess the project to meet its own objectives and so successful.

As the text puts it: “in the beginning it is important to name things – to be able to continue with thought, word and deed to search for all future meanings of queer” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2012b, 5). From within this opening frame, the organizational work done by the Festival organizing team in these ten years is presented as coming full circle. However, it is not without paradoxes. The text of the first manifesto also proposed unearthing “hidden”

therefore existing local and regional artistic forms of queer “waiting” to be recognized while the last manifesto speaks of “planting the term queer” in local communities, implicating the place void of the queer art forms thereby vindicating even the arrogant gesture of “giving birth” to “queer”, itself, not only to “what it could be”. What I find important to point out at this point is the discursive implications of the “waiting” position in which the local and regional queerness is imagined by the Festival organizers. “Waiting” of the local queer art for curatorial interest of the organizers implies too much of a non-agentive position, while delivering self-congratulatory positing for the curators²⁷.

Simultaneously with repeating the above strategic paradox, the 2012 Dobrović text is also engaged in building unexpected global alliances that should be productive not only of a queer festival but making the whole of the city of Zagreb *queer*, creating the “presence” of the Festival in its formative effect “happily ever after”: “for a Queer Zagreb, or a Queer Jerusalem or a Queer Johannesburg it is important to know that with opening up the possibility of recognizing queer in some local community we are always planting the term queer next to it – whether there is a festival or not” (Ibid.:5).

The end of the final manifesto then explicitly acknowledges that “queering” does not need to be done through the festivals. Indeed, by ending the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, the organizers implicitly as well as directly claim that the cultural and political struggle will go on by other means, that “Zagreb will be able to be queer even without *Queer Zagreb*” (Ibid.).

Up to this point, we have seen how the chronotope of the Festival as a queer garden has been built in manifestos, and sometimes opposed to the activist chronotopes of LGBT politics of the streets. As the next step in my discussion of the second Festival chronotope of relations between arts and activism, I argue that the dichotomy between activism, arts and theory is bridged through the strategy of programming conferences within an arts festival.

²⁷ I thank my supervisor Erzsebet Barat for drawing my attention to these important implications of the term in this manifesto context.

This conference chronotope reflects the relationship established by the Festival between (art) practice and queer theory - as realized partly through organizing academic conferences as part of the arts festival. Here I focus on analytical negotiations concerning the meanings of regional queer art that bringing together of art and theory raised in the manifestos.

In the first Festival year in 2003, the manifesto created an interdisciplinary chronotope that provided opportunities to explore *post-socialist queer identities*, partly through mixing of theory and arts. The Festival took place for five days, from 25th till 30th of April. Although it strongly profiled itself as a visual and performative arts festival, the organizers of the first *Queer Zagreb* decided to include a three-day international conference called *Cheers Queers* held at the *Goethe Institute* at the beginning of the Festival, and another two-day theoretical and activist gathering entitled “International Lesbian and Gay Cultural Network” at the *MM Center* at the end of the Festival. The practice of programming conferences as part of the arts festival continued in three other Festivals to come.

The “second conference on queer theory”, as described in the 2005 Festival catalogue, was devoted to the three-days of discussing of “Heteronormativity of Childhoods” at the *Goethe Institute* in 2005. One of its main goals was to “understand how and why society ‘protects’ children from ‘queer influence’” and “to understand the queer children’s rights, especially the rights related to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2005a, 59).

The third conference that was part of the program took place at the 2009 Festival and was entitled “New perspectives: migration in Central and South-Eastern European region”. The 2009 catalogue presents it as

an international symposium with interdisciplinary lectures which challenge and focus on Western production of knowledge on the background, dynamics and effects of migration. The symposium focuses on one-sided media presentation and reception of migrations

from the perspective of receiving countries as well as on the migration policies being developed. (Queer Zagreb Festival 2009a, 58)

In Subsection 5.2.2, the lectures and events of the 2009 conference are discussed in more detail. However, what is important to notice here is an extraordinary openness to broadening the scope of what can be programmed as a salient discussion within a queer festival. The 2009 conference was a coproduction of the Festival and three other cultural institutions, and the majority of the lectures presented the discussions from within the mainstream migration studies, with only one presentation talking about queer migrations.

Still, even without mentioning queerness or queer perspective, this conference found its textual place in the 2009 catalogue and program. In this way, the meanings of queerness as conceptualized within the 2009 manifesto are extended to include theoretical and activist work in the field of contemporary migration studies. On the other hand, the mainstream migration studies approaches of most lecturers were brought in dialogue with queer questions – through the framing that made them part of a queer event, and encouraged local queer audience to attend the conference as well as the conference audience to visit the queer arts program.

The last instance of what I take as the strategy of staging border-exchange meeting between academic, activist and arts influences happened at the last Festival in 2012. The ambitiously conceived conference was entitled “End of the Beginning – Beginning of the End: Emancipation Policies of Sexual and Gender Minorities in the Balkans, Caucasus and the Arab World”. It brought together activist organizations fighting homophobia in these regions for two days of discussions on “different forms and mechanisms in the emancipation of sexual and gender minorities” across these regions, and provided an “opportunity for

reflection on activist work in the context of distinct nationalist tensions, post-war conflicts and radical religious doctrines” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2012b, 54).

4.2.3 Chronotope of Resistance

The third chronotope that interests me in this section concerns the ways in which the manifestos depict the Festival as the time-space of resisting the heterosexual matrix. This is visible in the manifesto of the third Festival in 2005 devoted to the topic of “Heteronormativity of Childhood”. The chronotope imagined in the 2005 manifesto is presented as ambitious marginal space of resistance to the “matrix” of traditional upbringing. The focus of the Festival is argued to be examining the “heterosexist matrix” that colonizes children’s lives: “Through educational institutions dealing with childhoods, the heterosexist matrix is multiplied and it spreads norms that are being presented as the safest environment for children. (...) It is ironic that these kinds (Sic.) of promoting and exercising violence against children by society are perceived as protection” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2005a, 5).

Instead of the first strategy of manifestos’ rather abstract move to define what heteronormativity and its queering should mean in Croatia, the 2005 manifesto takes it as given and moves on to grapple with an actual instance of queer intervention into the highly tabooed and “sacred” territory of normative understanding of childhood. It exposes the common-sense perception of childhood as time of innocence that is in need of “protection” from queer sexuality and posits this normative protection as itself violent and harmful: “Queer kids exist even if they are made invisible, and more or less heteronormative childhoods have been imposed on all of them. Most of the Queer Zagreb’s programme (Sic.) raises the questions of influences these childhoods have on the clients of heteronormative upbringing –

children” (Ibid.).

The strategy of textual imagining of the Festival week as a chronotope of resistance is also seen in the 2008 manifesto. This text builds an image of the Festival as the time-space of resistance leading to empowerment: “Queer Zagreb is a protest against spiritual and intellectual sedimentation – a protest against silent consent” (2008a, 4). That the time-space of voicing dissent through art, according to the Festival organizers, is a queer chronotope can be inferred from the 2008 Festival’s program that brings in polyphonic artistic voices into this discussion, as discussed in Section 5.1.

In this section, I analyzed the ways in which manifestos represent and talk about time-space in connection to the Festival. The first chronotope analyzed I conceptualized as the chronotope of intersectional negotiations of regional queerness. This chronotope is given depth in the manifestos as an intersectional space and time of a post-conflict, transitional society struggling with legacies of religious conservatism and machismo but with a strong social movements' legacy and free spaces encouraging artistic and activist dissent. The second chronotope of the Festival as time-space of contact between activism and theory is discussed in two moves. Step one establishes how the Festival has been styled as a queer garden that was already there anyway but needed cultivating by organizers and artists. This queer garden is often presented as opposed to the street struggles of LGBT political activism. In step two, I try to bridge this false divide through discussion of the conference chronotope that brings together activism, art and theory within Festival time-space. The third chronotope concerns the ways in which Festival time-space of regional queerness is presented as opposing a totalizing *heterosexual matrix*.

Through the analysis of the manifestos of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, I have suggested that their textual representation of time-space of the Festival shifts each year from the beginning focus on the chronotope of intersectional exploration of what constitutes regional

queer art through confident self-representation of the Festival as the ultimate regional and transnational forum for artistic questioning to the more grounded account of Festival's contribution to the wave of queer festivals. The conference chronotope which enabled bringing queer theory, activism and art into interplay at four Festivals, made possible unexpected and fruitful alliances while at the same time, it legitimated the festival project.

While the organizational goals and ambitions changed, the Festival continued to develop its engagement as a queer visual arts festival in the “wave” of the ongoing queer/LGBT movement in Croatia and the post-Yugoslav region. As the *Queer Zagreb Festival* extended its artistic and political ambitions and playfulness, the Festival itself had become an important chronotope for exhibiting and questioning the artistic articulations of regional queerness, as well as bringing it in contact with transnational currents.

4.3 “Inventing” the Audience, Inviting the Transnational Art World

The third guiding question of this chapter deals with the functioning of the Festival in its cultural field in terms of negotiations of the organizers with the (local) LGBT community, on one side, and its institutional context, on the other. Here I analyze how organizational negotiations of relationships with these diverse and at times mutually opposed actors become visible in Festival manifestos. I focus on the manifesto construction of three sets of relations – Festival's relationship with (1) audiences; (2) international arts festival circuit; and (3) institutional field, particularly the funders.

4.3.1 Audience in Festival Manifestos

The first set of relations I am interested in concerns the Festival's relationship with its audiences, as represented in the manifestos. Appealing to an especially close relation to their audiences remains one of the main strategies through which the *Queer Zagreb* organizers lay claim to their belonging to the local and regional LGBT community. On the other hand, however, this does not preclude them from appealing to the straight arts audience also.

Already the second Festival manifesto in 2004 speaks of its "devoted" audience, as well as the Festival's contribution to the development of queer culture in the region and globally: "Many spoke of the importance of the festival for Zagreb, Croatia, the region and for the queer culture in general. Our large audience devoted to all festival events gave us strength to continue and create an even more challenging programme" (Queer Zagreb Festival 2004a, 3). This self-affirmation of the Festival's success at the beginning of the manifesto text establishes the local and regional standing of the Festival.

It also lays claim to an existence of a "large audience", as well as to a special relationship that exists already in this second year – their audience is "devoted" to the art events they organize. With such a strong claim that established the existence of a large number of viewers dedicated to following queer art at the Zagreb Festival, the manifesto tone grows more playful towards the end of the text that presents the two sections of the 2004 Festival – "Film" and "Music". The very last paragraph is aimed at their viewers again, inviting them to an almost intimate arts encounter: "Queer Zagreb FM is looking forward to all (queer) bodies that will be vibrating in the rhythm of the music presented at the festival as well as all (queer) eyes blinking in our cinemas. Be with Queer Zagreb again!" (Ibid.).

As will be analyzed in Section 5.3, the LGBT community members make up just one part of the Festival audience, the other constituted mainly of mainstream Zagreb arts and

culture goers. This is an important context for reading the 2004 manifesto appellation to its visitors – the manifesto in fact affects the double move to both of its audience segments. It invites the mainstream audience - “all (...) bodies”, and “all (...) eyes” willing to pay a ticket to see provocative high-art cultural events. Indeed, its strategy of incorporating the non-queer audience into its loyal audience is successful, which differentiates it, for instance, from the *Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film* in Ljubljana which orients itself (intentionally) almost exclusively towards the lesbian and gay community.

But the 2004 manifesto, in an ambiguous move, includes also queerness – queer being and queer looking – into the whole of their audience: the manifesto invites “all (queer) bodies (...) as well as all (queer) eyes” to participate in the Queer Zagreb 2004 chronotope. This textual gesture is ambiguous because it turns all Festival visitors into queers just through the act of participating in the queer arts festival. To a certain extent, this move intervenes into the contemporary debates in queer theory - what Gamson (1995) formulated as “queer dilemma” asks precisely about such a situation: if we do away with identities altogether, what basis of political action remains at our disposal.

The second pole of ambiguity of the manifesto invitation is to be found in the brackets in which the queerness of Festival participants is placed. The Festival is a queer space and still in this part of the text, queerness of its viewers is enclosed in the bracket that visually function as a containing force, a mild kind of a closet, of its impact on their bodies and eyes. Although through such placement, the queerness in the brackets exerts its influence both backwards – towards everybody (“all”), and forwards – towards everybody’s bodies and eyes, still it remains an ambiguous, strangely planted, term. Here, the term “queer” is all over the place, but still – as fits a “queer dilemma” - curiously scattered and in need of definition.

4.3.2 Festival Circuit in Manifestos

The second set of relations concern those with the transnational and international art world, including the international arts festival circuit. So, at the occasion of the 5th Festival, the manifesto sets a somewhat different emphasis that brings in another set of actors important for the Festival – the international arts festival circuit. The 2007 “jubilee” manifesto is especially proud of three accomplishments: Festival’s functioning as a point of intersection of art and politics; its role in queering Croatian art, and the Festival as the space of coming together of international (queer) art world and the world of the local and regional queer art. The 2007 manifesto succinctly enumerates these landmark accomplishments:

Lastly, Queer Zagreb has been recognized as an interesting crossing point of aesthetics, art and socially relevant contents (...) Artists from Croatia and further thirty or so countries have allowed the festival to introduce the term queer to the local language, to redefine it and make it more contemporary. In many international cooperations with festivals and institutions from Tokyo, New York, Sao Paulo, London and Berlin programmes were created which used Croatian and regional queer experiences and impulses. (2007a, 1)

This manifesto very self-consciously presents its investment in styling *Queer Zagreb* as a success story of international arts festival cooperation. It also insists on the practical and programmatic intersectionality of the Festival as the conceptual and actual space for combining art, aesthetics and politics. The five years of existence allow for evaluation of changes that have taken place in the Croatian public, in relation to queer art and artists locally as well as through numerous international collaborations. In this, as in most of the manifestos in other years, the Festival context is a global transnational network of exchanges.

4.3.3 Institutional Field in Manifestos

The third set of relations of interest here concerns the ways that the manifestos present the Festival's negotiations of the institutional field, particularly Festival's relations with the state and the funders – both national and international. At the end of the 2005 Festival catalogue, eight pages are devoted to the Section called “Big Thanks”. “Thanks” to the *Sponsors* and *Collaborators* share two pages with the *Impressum* and thirty two colorful logos of the *Funders*. Squeezed in between the *Impressum* and thanking the *Collaborators*, is a text which is an ironic gesture characteristic of organizers' relation with unresponsive institutions. The text reads: “Queer Zagreb project was rejected by: Delegation of European Commission in Zagreb, Government Office for Human Rights, Reiffeisen Bank, Ministry of Culture (Queer Fairytales project), and US Embassy in Croatia” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2005a, 73).

The text is inconspicuous, not highlighted in anyway, and yet bound to have an effect on careful readers or representatives of those institutions. Its tone reflects the playfulness of queer organizing strategies that dare to make transparent the secretive relations to the funding world, but also the sense of entitlement of the organizers who do not miss a beat in signaling to local and international donors in a tongue-in-cheek manner the kind of treatment they should avoid in the future.

Also in the following years, the Festival manifestos occasionally comment on the problems in relationship with local funders – with especially critical tones reserved for the state support for the arts. For instance, the text of the fourth manifesto in 2006 presents an already established festival, with a strong program and eager audience. The only problem identified is located elsewhere: the insistence in this manifesto on the problems of funding is attributed to the unsupportive attitude of the local authorities. The tone of the Dobrović editorial is exceedingly sarcastic, testifying to the tensions in the Festival's relations with

local cultural funders, but also to a self-presentation that locates the Festival as an independent cultural project and due to this, morally superior to local institutional norms:

from the windy couloirs of the City and state institutions, there are ever new rumors of stuffy bureaucrats about further financial malnutrition of the Queer Zagreb. Reaching those tombs of tragic political-bureaucratic mathematicians, who are constantly calculating their own position on the orbit within the (heterosexual) universe, became meaningless in the very moment when, *nomen est omen*, the Festival was named “queer”²⁸. (Queer Zagreb Festival 2006a, 8)

Another instance of the almost haughtily critical tone directed toward the local authorities is to be found in the 2010 manifesto. The 2010 editorial reports on the risk that the Festival ran when the organizers found out only several months before the beginning of the Festival about the reduced amount of money granted by the city authorities in 2010: “we found out that a third of our budget from the City of Zagreb, one of our main sources, has been cut” (2010a, 2). The foreign funders, in contrast, are always presented in positive light, and in 2010 - as Festival saviors: “just as we were days away from reducing the program, good news came from several US based Foundations that made it possible for us not to lose any of the segments of the program” (Ibid.).

In this section, I have analyzed the ways in which the Festival manifestos talk about their audiences, their belonging to the arts festival world, and to the larger institutional field. The queer festival field of action has been theorized as involvement with the LGBT community, on the one side, and the institutional field, on the other (Gamson 1996). I have suggested that the manifestos represent the Festival audience as in the process of “invention” in the first year in 2003, and that immediately from 2004 on they refer to it as an important source of its community legitimization. The communities on whose support the Festival draws

²⁸ My translation. This is an exception since all of the Festival catalogues bring the introductory text both in Croatian and in English. However, in the 2006 catalogue, the text is, mistakenly, given twice in Croatian.

are twofold – the local and regional LGBT community, and the Zagreb urban art-going audience, as I will discuss in Section 5.3.

The relationship with the institutional field is similarly multiple. The representation of international collaborations with other festivals, with artists, and even with foreign funders, is presented in manifestos as almost a seamless story of success and as a proof of the Festival's outstanding status. On the other hand, in the manifestos, we hear the troubled tones of negotiating for finances, recognition and acceptance in the cultural space in relation to Croatian city and state funders. The Festival seeks legitimization through ties to local and transnational queer community and arts audience, but maintains a critical tone toward the state.

5 SUBVERTING THE CROATIAN MAINSTREAM: FESTIVAL PROGRAMS

In this chapter I analyze the programming strategies of the program director and other members of the organizational team of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. I want to examine how the manifestos get translated into actual Festival programs and so reflect on the validity of the claims made in the manifestos against the actual programs. I suggest that the Festival organizers at times use strategies of queering while at other times they make use of traditional organizational strategies that strengthen their standing in the (mainstream) art world.

The current chapter provides the analysis of the programming of those subversive strategies of the *Queer Zagreb* organizers that aimed, from the very beginning, at queering the Croatian cultural institutions. I shall argue that the organizers perceived their organizational strategies to function as the subversion of the Croatian and the regional art world and that would bring them in direct relation to the legacy of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav avant-garde arts. In what follows, I will analyze the Festival organizers' strategies of staging queer art.

My focus is on the strategies of the *Queer Zagreb* organizing team primarily on the basis of the Festival's annual program. The analysis of the programs is clustered around three different sets of issues – selection process and criteria, chronotopes, and Festival's field of action - in order to pay more attention to actual organizational choices and aims that emerge around each of these questions. In other words, in the following, I focus on three issues: strategies of creating annual Festival programs in Section 5.1, processes of negotiating Festival chronotopes in Section 5.2, and the struggles in the organizational field in Section 5.3. All those three issues are tested against the source material of the Festival's ten programs.

5.1 *Negotiating the Queer Program*

In so far as the program of the Festival can be seen as the actual practice, enacting the manifesto's claims, I argue that the program is doing this work of "defining" through deciding on how to divide the program, how to invite artists and works to the Festival. This section deals with the processes of negotiating the annual programs of the Zagreb Festival. Through looking at the selection criteria, programming processes, changes and reactions to the program, I analyze the implications of these processes of practical negotiations for the politics of the organization and the meanings of the concept of "queer art" it works with.

The selection process at the *Queer Zagreb Festival* follows the model of festival programming where a professional festival selector has the power to decide who gets on the program. Although contemporary programming and curating are increasingly practiced and theorized as self-reflexive critical practices (O'Neill 2007, 7), the organizational model, I think, remains problematic if intended for queering purposes. In this model, the selector has a considerable budget at his disposal for travelling around the world on the international festival circuit, watching the shows, being in-the-know, and based on his professional arts selection skills and together with his organizing team back home putting together a program for the following year. Art critic Hans Ulrich Obrist (2008) conceptualizes the practices of contemporary high-art curating as artistic practice in itself, and the figure of the curator as that of the curator-as-artist.

In other art-critical writings, the curators are presented as star practitioners of the contemporary art world – such as in Carolee Thea's (Thea 2001; Thea and Micchelli 2009) books on curating practices of selected international curators. However, from the intersectional or queer-feminist point of view, the accumulation of power – financial, decision-making, of cultural capital – in the hands of one person in this model seems rather

elitist and traditional than innovative. Although this model enables programming of cutting-edge art works that contain elements of avant-garde as well as queer art, I argue that the model itself is not queer.

On the contrary, professional programming, as practiced at the Festival, concentrates all the power of decision making and artistic value judgments in the hands of the person of the program director and a small circle of his immediate collaborators. In the field of feminist visual culture, the “good eye” approach in Irit Rogof’s terms (Roggof (1998: 17) in: Rose 2007, 35) – as the method of analyzing visibility that relies on cultural capital and “visual connoisseurship” – has been critiqued by Gillian Rose (2007) as elitist and methodologically non-transparent (Ibid., 35). The “good-eye approach” criticized by Rose forms the basis of traditional understanding both of art-historical approaches, and of practices of curating.

The curatorial practices of connoisseurship are not characteristic only of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, of course - as high art and even avant-garde art, and related curatorial and programming practices, have been frequently accused of elitism. Beret Strong (1997), for instance, describes the interwar transnational poetic avant-garde as “caught between its desire for a large public, its inherent elitism, and its need for some measure of personal expression and privacy” (Ibid.:15), and names its practices “elite ‘fellowships of discourse’” (Ibid.:1). What I see as particularly questionable in the case of the Zagreb Festival is its mission of queering the mainstream and subverting (hetero)normativity while continuing to use the “master’s tools” in Audre Lorde’s (2007) words.

At this point, let me review the main strategies of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* organizers in order to establish them as the interpretative context for the analysis of the Festival programs. First of all, the Festival is conceptualized and realized in its actual program as an event of high culture, a prestigious contemporary arts festival but one that operates under the sign of queerness. Second, Festival organizers equally put together a program that is

a mix of art forms, genres, and works in order to submerge Zagreb in the rich flow of queer art during the festival week – and preferably beyond. Third, the Festival takes an active role in producing and exhibiting regionally queer art.

5.1.1 Strategy of Queering (High) Art

The first strategy I focus on is the organizational strategy of profiling the *Queer Zagreb Festival* as a prestigious festival of contemporary (high) arts – theater, film, contemporary dance, performance and body art - and redefining the high art in question as queer (high) art, without giving precedence to either. It is important to grasp this subtle shift in emphasis in comparison with other regional queer festivals that because of their low budget for programming or their more community-oriented politics (and at times both) do not have the aspirations to program “high art”. The differences in festivals’ approaches to regional queer politics and culture are analyzed in Chapter 1.

The Festival program director, while always in communication with, and seeking legitimization through the Zagreb Festival’s connection with the local queer community, often stated and pointed out that his interest is in looking for genuine, cutting-edge contemporary art works. In our interview, he was critical of the regional queer cultural and artistic production, particularly referring to regional queer festivals.

What is really missing, regardless of all the existent (cultural) production, is some kind of more serious production (...) What is missing is a more sustained support to that (art) scene, and a stronger production in the sense of more and better produced work. All of this until now is, in fact, more of a community activity than something else (...) It is not so much about systematically developing some new aesthetics. (Zvonimir 2010, 9–10)

As a professional festival organizer, Zvonimir is aware of the lack of consistent support for queer culture in Croatia, and the hard work of regional queer festivals on encouraging and sustaining queer art. However, he sets apart the *Queer Zagreb Festival* as the only queer festival in post-Yugoslav region successful in “queering” (high) art. Claiming this distinction for the Zagreb Festival is performed indirectly in the interview, through a critique of difficult conditions for production of queer art and culture in the region, affecting all festivals, but better confronted by the Zagreb organizers.

My research is grounded in the hypothesis that post-Yugoslav queer festivals are creating a new aesthetics of queerness - regional queer art. However, its meanings and forms are a contested topic, perceived differently by festival organizers and by artists and audiences – as we will see in the interview analysis in Chapter 7. What is clear is that the *Queer Zagreb Festival* is one of the major cultural projects that generate this new queer aesthetics. Indeed, Zvonimir talks about the search for the “new visibility” that would be in dialogue with the international art world. However, he is also acutely aware of the limitations to this kind of experimental visibility if it is based only on community efforts and limited production resources.

I am afraid that I see mostly the copying of something which has already been seen somewhere else. I still do not really see something local (that is) really new. (Not) aesthetics but some new visibility that would mean something in a wider context. In our region, there are artists (...) who create out of their identities work that might be connected with queer. But when it comes to festivals, I don't know. For example, Queer Belgrade – the problem there is the same as in Croatia: the level of production. Everything looks, how I should describe it, as a workshop product; it is not artistically relevant. It is more of a community-engagement (Sic.) thing. This is, I think, the maximum that this region can give for now in this area. For anything more serious and more systematic you need to have support, a lot of support. (Ibid.:10)

The first organizational strategy of *Queer Zagreb* organizers that I discuss has provided the organizers with an opportunity to approach queering the high art spaces from a

“generous” point of view in that the works of art exhibited often come to “be” queer because framed as queer within the time-space of the festival. The strategy of focusing more on “quality”, ironically, enables greater programming freedoms, but never stops to encourage ongoing discussions on the nature of what counts as “queer art” according to the Festival’s practice.

A closer look at some of the Festival programs will help us get a sense of this first strategy in use. In 2003 then, the program was divided into sections such as “Exhibitions”, “Dance”, “Theater”, “Film”, “Conference”, “Video presentation”, “Lectures”, and “Additional program”. When describing the works of art presented at the Festival, I draw on the descriptions from the Festival catalogues – often representing the artist’s statements; on other internet discussions of the work; and/or on my experience as a viewer and researcher.

The first performance I ever attended at the *Queer Zagreb Festival* was the show entitled “Exposures of a Multi-spirited, Haitian-American, Gender-Illuminating WoMan©” by the USA performance artist Dred. In this funny and poignant drag-king performative history of African-American male media icons, Dred deconstructs the workings of gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality. It was through shows like these – radical gender-queer art performances that prior to *Queer Zagreb* you could not watch in Zagreb in any other cultural institution – that the Festival won appreciation and audience following from among the local and regional LGBT community. As discussed in Section 5.3, this community constitutes only one, but an important, part of the Festival’s audience.

In addition to the focus on the “Film” and “Music” program at the 2004 Festival, and the dominance of “Theater”, “Dance” and “Film” sections at most of the other Festival years, there were also other sections to the program in different years such as “Visual Arts” section in 2008, “Clubbing” section since 2009, “Installations” and the “Exhibition” sections at most of the Festivals.

The program of the 2006 *Queer Zagreb Festival* is important for discussing what I have identified as the first organizational strategy – one aspect of which consists in staging performances of internationally renowned artists in the context of a queer festival in order to reconfigure and so queer “high art/culture” in the country. The inclusion of both queer and “straight” high art in a queer festival enriches the actual works of art in the given genres, the festival’s significance, and contributes to discussions of definitions of queer art. To understand why should the scene of “high art” be queered or even in what sense is it seen as “normative” from the perspective of queer art and so in need of queering, I refer to an early interview with the Festival program director in which he explains his motivation for starting a queer arts festival after seven years of work as an artistic programmer at a *mainstream* contemporary arts festival.

I propose that the motives for starting a queer arts festival in Zagreb tell a great deal of the tensions between “high art” and queer art festival framing. In addition, the initial motives for a separate queer arts festival largely continued to frame the Festival’s politics in all of its ten years. Dobrović (in Klasje 2005) refers to his seven years of apprenticeship and work at the prestigious Zagreb contemporary arts festival *Eurokaz*²⁹, and the turning point at the 1997 *Eurokaz* when the festival featured radical body art, hosting the performances of artists such as Franco B, Orlan, and Annie Sprinkle.

These performers, among others, have revolutionized and radicalized the genre of body art performance – bringing in controversial radical practices of body harm, body modification, “using their bodies as their basic space” (Ibid., 6) as Dobrović explains. However, the framing of these artists work within the high-art festival, which although provocative and contemporary did not question heteronormativity per se, seemed problematic

²⁹ *The International Festival of New Theater Eurokaz* is a prestigious Zagreb festival that started in 1987. Similar to *Queer Zagreb*, it presents a mixture of genres – theater, performance art, dance, body art, new circus and so on. Another shared feature is that the *Eurokaz* also programs lectures and theoretical discussions, film and music happenings as part of its program. See the Eurokaz web site: <http://www.eurokaz.hr/> (Accessed April 22, 2013).

to young Dobrović and inspired his awareness of the need for radically different framing. He explains the trajectory of his thoughts and actions in the following:

What interested me in that situation was that the majority of those artists were, in fact, queer. (...) What struck me was that the majority of the reactions to the shows on the part of the audience and the commentators did not even touch upon the queer aspects of those performances. In the context of Eurokaz, which is a mainstream festival, that aspect was silently overlooked because it was possible not to pay attention to it. (...) I worked for Eurokaz for seven years, and slowly I was developing this idea that the only way to avoid something like that is to organize a festival which would be called queer festival. The festival I am organizing now is in a position to put into programme something which is not queer but is seen through that prism. Now, the things have been reversed. (Ibid.)

It is important to keep this initial inspiration – the move from the mainstream “high arts” into queer arts festival organizing as an important background framing of the Festival director’s programming strategies. Another important distinction emerging here is the conceptual disengagement of evaluating the queerness of an art work from the biography of the artist, and leaning towards the “queer prism” where the queerness is located in the framing of the art piece within the festival that questions sexual and gender normativity and thus renders the art it exhibits also at least potentially queer.

This conceptual distinction will have influence on programming strategies that, in accordance with the preference for queerness-as-framing, make the Festival into a flexible space in the range of art works it encompasses. The Festival, throughout the decade of its work, is the space of mixing what might be termed queer art, and art works that may be queerly interpretable through having been shown at a queer arts festival. Although this strategy of queer framing raises questions of definition of queer art, and concerns about conflating queer art and queerly interpretable art, I find that it reflects the contemporary discussions in the field of queer visual culture, discussed in Chapter 2.

In 2006, the famous German choreographer Raimund Hoghe was a Festival guest for the first time³⁰ with his piece *Swan Lake* that questions the beauty myths. Hoghe is usually presented as Pina Bausch's star dramaturgist, and an almost mainstream though cryptic dance artist. On a general level, it is important to keep in mind that the *Queer Zagreb Festival* programming functions on the model of prestigious, high-art festivals where the participation in the program is based on the decisions taken by the festival programmer/artistic director. The role of the program director of the Zagreb Festival is to travel all year round to art shows across the globe, and form judgments as to the most exciting and cutting-edge pieces that then his Festival will invite to the next season.

Only occasionally, the artists also get invited to participate in the Festival program through an open call for participation – as was the case with the exhibition “Post-socialist Queer Identities” at the first Queer Zagreb in 2003. It seems clear that the call for participation in 2003 was issued in order to invite new work on a new topic – a thematic field that was not already represented in the art world. Also, the analysis of the ten Festival programs reveals the repeated returns of several artists such as Raimund Hoghe, the Bulgarian performance artist Ivo Dimchev, the Croatian theater director Ivica Buljan, and the Croatian conceptual and performance artist Željko Zorica. The Festival program director through his programming has established a kind of relationship between the Festival and the work of these artists who get repeatedly invited to present their new work at the Festival. This privileged relationship is especially clear in relation to Raimund Hoghe's work. His work is programmed to happen in the prominent time slot – in 2009, his “Bolero Variations” opened the Festival, and in 2012, his three-hour long show *If I Die, Leave the Balcony Door Open* closed not just the last Festival but the Festival decade.

³⁰ He will return for three other Festivals and also for post-Festival Queer Season in 2013.

Reversely, the inclusion of Hoghe's work in a queer art festival, has given his experimental dance pieces a new dimension, an effect which was enriching for the artist himself, as evidenced in his many returns to the Festival, and as he also confirmed in our interview (see my analysis of this interview in Section 7.1). In the interview, he emphasizes the artistic value that he finds in the "diversity" of the art works presented by the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. He explained that the reason his performances do not fit in with the programs of the "gay festivals" in the West – he talks about the UK and Germany – is these festivals' programming of queerness as "entertainment": "(I)t's a cliché for many people - queer. In England or in Germany if you perform in a queer gay fest, people will think you will do entertainment. And this is not what I'm doing. For me this diversity (here) is important. And (changing gay culture is interesting) - it is gay, but many people do not fit into this" (Hoghe 2009, 1–2).

So even though neither his choreography nor his public image are immediately associated with queer art, Hoghe became one of the signature artists of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. His thinking about diversity in queer art at the *Queer Zagreb* is analyzed in more detail in Section 7.1, but here we also get a glimpse of his artistic motivation for looking beyond clichés, and for difference beyond appearances of sameness, even in a countercultural context. This is visible in his artistic approach to choreographing dance pieces that deconstruct classical dance form into experimental work that could be read as formally queer, but that also always questions the presumptions of heterosexuality and able-bodiedness built into viewers' and dancers' conceptions of the dance form and the dancing body. These, and other, are the reasons for which Hoghe's work was repeatedly invited to the Festival by the program director.

In the 2006 program, an intriguing ending of the Festival consisted of the fashion-show *Exposed to Virus and Fashion* by Silvio Vujičić. This fashion "performance" explored

the workings of the HIV virus in relation to the body and society in terms of experimentations with digital “virus” inserted in the production of the textile of clothes, which were later exhibited at the show by the actors of a gay porn production company from Berlin. Vujičić’s fashion show brings deconstructive methods to material production of strange clothes that worn by porn actors engage on multiple levels with the history of AIDS and transnational gay community. The ambitiousness of the Festival project that stages art works such as these raises also the issue of the financial dimension of the Festival. This “class dimension” that differentiates the *Queer Zagreb Festival* with its generous budget from other queer festivals in the region is discussed in Sections 4.3 and 5.3 in relation to the organizers’ framing of funder relations in manifestos and in the programs.

In terms of the ongoing debates on the meaning of queer art – the Festival’s strategy would only partially seem to correspond to what can be taken as a shared understanding that queer art necessarily needs to bring the norms around sexuality and gender into turmoil. The choice of programming new work of well-known or promising young artists – chosen through the traditional curatorial system of selection by a professional program director – helps profile the *Queer Zagreb Festival* as a high arts festival which chooses to explore queerness in a particular institutional cultural field of prestigious arts festival. However, as discussed in the following sections, the Festival itself functions as a space of mixing of high and popular art, of different genres, and is positioned in the dynamic field in between the LGBT community, the wider festival circuit, and its institutional field of action.

The programmatic interest in both emerging and well-known performers in theater and contemporary dance is evidenced by the strong program in 2008 with artistic performances from the United Kingdom, France, Brazil, South Africa and Croatia. The shows took place in

3 prestigious mainstream theater houses: Gavella, Vidra and Histrionski Dom³¹. One dance performance was staged at a private house, creating an unusual performative chronotope in Festival's history. In the performance called "House of the Other" ("Casa do outro/Kuća drugog"), two Brazilian contemporary dancers Angelo Madureira and Ana Catarina Vieira collaborate with local dancers and the local host to create a unique performative experience. The artists start off from their own local conditions and questions that ask about

the inferior production position of dance as well as lack of space for dance in Sao Paulo. In a very direct manner, they react to the obstacles of lack of space by creating a public performance space within a private living space. (They) invite local dancers and performers to present their work in a confined space of someone's living space – in the bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, balcony – which will redefine the meaning of public/private notions of the audience, performers and also the host in whose house it is taking place. (Queer Zagreb Festival 2008a, 18)

Even experimental performances such as the dance piece (in) "The House of the Other", or the performance piece "Green Wedding" by Annie Sprinkle and her partner Elisabeth Stevens, however, are considered as prestigious art. The effect of prestigious art is produced, it seems, through the programming that frames the Festival as the event that brings together high art, radical art, and contemporary art using elements of avant-garde art – all intent on questioning (hetero)normativity or framed as such.

In 2008, the traditionally strong "Film" section is especially concerned with the major world religions' (in)tolerance of queerness. In addition, there is an emphasis on the different visual art forms in general as of 2008. This is especially noticeable in that the organizing team had four additional curators joining the program director of the Festival. While the program director selected the works for the "Theater" and "Film" sections of the program, the four (professional) visual arts curators created the "Visual Arts" section at the 2008 Festival.

³¹ These theaters are long-standing mainstream cultural venues, all located in the very center of Zagreb, in the vicinity of the main square. This centrality – in terms of urban geography and/or cultural prestige – characterizes all other *Queer Zagreb* venues as well.

The 2008 “Visual Arts” section was composed of three segments. The “Visual Art” segment curated by the feminist curator Leonida Kovač revolved around visual questioning of *structural violence*. It exhibited a video installation and a video work by the Polish video artist Katarzyna Kozyra, two experimental films by the Iranian film-maker Tina Gharavi, and an art action of putting up posters of the German visual artist Andrea Geyer around the city. All of these works deal with the intersections of gender and sexuality with the structural violence of which the curator Leonida Kovač claims:

That omnipresent and all pervasive invisible structural violence is the starting point and legitimization to all those visible and recognizable forms of violence which are qualified as crime, as violence generated by representational practice which reproduce generally accepted patriarchal and/or heterosexist social norms – as well as body politics defined by those norms and implemented by regulating gender and sexuality. (Leonida Kovač in Queer Zagreb Festival 2008a, 50)

In addition to the “Visual Arts” segment curated by Kovač, the 2008 Festival staged two more visual arts exhibitions. One was the exhibition “Nazi persecution of homosexuals from 1933 to 1945” of photographs and historical documents, including several recorded testimonies of the survivors. The other was a collaborative exhibition, “ALUdiranje”³², organized by the curatorial *Wo_collective* together with the students of the *Academy of Visual Arts* in Zagreb, questioning the normative institutional framework of the national arts school. The *Wo_collective*, comprised of three visual arts curators: Jelena Graovac, Marijana Rimanić and Tanja Špoljar, explained the impact of the exhibition as exploring the “institutional knowledge/practice” of traditional arts education in terms of its “reproducing current norms and social rules” (Wo-kolektiv in Queer Zagreb Festival 2008a, 56).

The *Academy* in this work is criticized from the inside by its current and former students for its “monopole over specific knowledge – art(istic)-historical and practical –

³² The exhibition title is a word-play, incorporating the abbreviation for the Academy of Fine Arts (Akademija likovnih umjetnosti – ALU) into the verbal noun of the verb *to allude*.

present(ed) as generally valid, neutral and universal” (Ibid.). The exhibition presented the work of art students that explored “the detachment from the heteronormative cannons” (Ibid.) and possibilities of resistance by young Croatian artists from within the institutional framework.

Taking a further step and relating (high) art “quality” to the concept of queerness and non-normativity can be witnessed in the program of the 2009 Festival. The Festival organizers’ chosen strategy is to bring to Zagreb highly regarded queer artists together with renowned international artists who were not previously programmed as doing queer art. This strategy offers both to the participating artists and to festival audiences a challenging and thought-provoking festival experience, and fosters further discussion about queer art and art in general.

The famous German choreographer Raimund Hoghe is back in 2009 with his version of *Bolero Variations*. The potential of this performance to queer looking relations and the conventions of Dance Theater are put to the fore by the framing provided by a queer arts festival. The surprise-effect of a queer framing of a high-art dance performance does not wear off with repetition. In his second year performing at the Festival, it is clear that queer art is an important frame and inspiration for the choreographer, as I will discuss in Chapter 7 analyzing our interview. The Festival visitors also already “know” his work, and have strong opinions about attending or not, discussed as well in Chapter 7. The element of surprise and opening up of horizons comes out precisely because the framing of a high art performance within the program of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* has its specific effects on processes of interpretation at the occasion of each single performance. The *Bolero Variations*, coproduced with the arts funds from France, Austria and Germany, first played at the established *Autumn Festival* in Paris. As Zvonimir exclaimed in our interview:

Actually I prefer those (performances) like Raimund Hoghe's who is maybe not so queer – it depends on the context! If you are watching him in the middle of Paris at the Autumn festival, half of the audience will go out having no clue what would be queer about that! But if you watch him at Queer Zagreb, everybody will go out saying: that's a queer performance! (Zvonimir 2010, 7)

The difference in reception and very interpretation of the same art work depending on the institutional framing is a constant concern of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, and I suggest – the most important organizational strategy through which they intervene in the festival field.

5.1.2. Strategy of Programming Diversity

Here I turn to the second organizational strategy outlined above as the strategy of programming a melting pot of art forms, genres and occasions – through the analysis of the program of the 2004 *Queer Zagreb Festival* that focused particularly on the art forms of film and music. As for the strategy of diversity in the sense of programming the festival as space of exchanges and mixing of genres, perspectives and topics, it may be argued to be a constitutive strategy of festival form. However, in the case of the Zagreb Festival, diversity acquires also another meaning – that of openness to queering. Choreographer Raimund Hoghe posited this “diversity” in the openness to experimental work that queers arts as well as identity politics in contrast to the clichéd perceptions of gay art as “entertainment”, as discussed in Subsection 5.1.1. Performance artist Dominic Johnson found this diversity in a series of daring performances that queered viewers' perceptions of sexual and gender relations to be a specificity of the Zagreb Festival (see Section 7.3).

Concerning the use of this strategy of diversity in the 2004 Festival program, the importance of a wide selection of queer films, both in terms of their genre - documentaries, feature films, short films – and of the diversity of cinematic representations of queer lives, can

be seen as an effort to speak to a prospective audience of diverse taste and preferences. Furthermore, in so far as sixty-one films screened in 2004 within the span of eight days were all premier screenings, we can see how the value of “novelty” is appealed to by the organizers, hoping to cut-across political concerns and hostility. The strategy of offering numerous genres and styles is indicative not only of the film program but also the music program in the 2004 Festival. The music section is said to be devoted to “music curiosities” such as performances of queer hip hop artists, in addition to various international queer djs. The highlight of the “Music” section was the concert of the *London Gay Symphony Orchestra* featuring the Croatian music icon Radojka Šverko. Šverko is one of few Croatian female singers who have diva status. Her performance with the *Gay Symphony Orchestra* has been described in the following way in the 2004 *Queer Zagreb* press-release, illustrating the strategy of diversity as genre cross-fertilization on the level of one musical show:

After her colleague Josipa Lisac refused the offer of the organizers of the Queer Zagreb Festival to sing as a soloist with the London Gay Symphony Orchestra in the Concert Hall Vatroslav Lisinski, Radojka Šverko readily accepted this challenge showing one more time her atypicality. The choice of the program that she sang contained almost subtle queer elements – such as the fact that at the concert of a gay orchestra several pieces were performed that set texts of catholic liturgy to music. She also sang some classics such as “Somewhere over the rainbow” from the Wizard of Oz, and “People” – originally performed by Barbra Streisand. (2004, 1 my translation)

In line with the strategy of bringing together multiplicity of art forms and artists from different places, the 2005 program presents artists from the USA, Brazil, Japan, France, Slovenia and Croatia who explored the highly controversial topic of childhood and queerness in three art forms: children’s theater, dance performances, and films. The “Film” section in 2005 included the first screening of the film *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (fifteen years after its screening was interrupted on state television in 1990) and the *Anime* selection of Japanese Girls’ comics.

In a playful self-reflexive gesture, typical of their strategy of queering Croatian “normality”, the organizers counted on the probability of protests against the Festival (that happened in relation to the previous two years’ Festivals) and included “the local religious activism of the Church of the Full Gospel and their traditional *Protest Against Queer Zagreb Festival*” (2005a, 1) as if an actual art piece and part of the program. Ironically, the “local religious activists” did not show up from this year on to perform at the scheduled time of their “performance” – no matter how “eagerly” expected by the Festival participants.

The second strategy of programming I have identified as central for the organizers’ understanding of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*’s aesthetics and politics is the intentional mixing of a variety of art forms and putting “high art” in direct dialogue with popular art so that the program and the experience of the festival week may push the boundaries of what is considered (queer) art. The *Queer Zagreb Festival* has in its ten years focused on programming of art comparable to the body of works that have been theorized as *liminal art*. According to Susan Broadhurst (1999), liminal performances are works of art that are “hybridized and intertextual, and share common quasi-generic aesthetic features, such as heterogeneity, indeterminacy, self-reflexiveness, eclecticism, fragmentation, a certain ‘shift-shape style’ and a repetitiveness that produces not sameness but difference” (Ibid.:169). Here, however, I am concerned not so much with the characteristics of particular works of art staged and screened at the Festival, but with strategies of Festival programming itself.

The understanding of liminal art in contemporary art criticism as blurring boundaries between genres but also between art, theory and everyday life, as theorized by Broadhurst (Ibid.:174–176), is of importance in my thinking about the influence of art practices on programming strategies. My suggestion is that organizers’ programming strategies draw on artistic practices – strategies of avant-garde and of contemporary art practices such as that of liminal art – in the hope of producing the effects of queering the space of contact between the

art works – the space of the Festival and of the broader Croatian social context. As important as the queer art that the Festival actually presents are its ambitious suggestions of possible connections between extremely varied art scenes, artists and art works. The case in point is the way in which the program of the 2011 Festival brings together art works, genres, and locations.

The 2011 Festival program is structured around 2 main curatorial interests. On the one hand, around the interest in presenting a “younger generation of Italian theater” – their work is framed at the Festival as “profoundly queer“ since it questions the “normality and naturalness“ in life and art (Queer Zagreb Festival 2011a, 3). On the other hand, the programming focus in 2011 is also on Asian queer film production – represented in the “Film” segment called “Queer Asia”. The “Queer Asia” film section was divided into two thematic parts: *Asian Queer Film* and two short films sections – *Experimental South Asia* and *Pink Homemade*. The scope of this ambitious programming project is not only reflected by the number of films, but by the intensity of cooperation of the *Queer Zagreb* program director with “several film festivals” in order to put together a selection of “a number of recent titles from a dozen of Asian countries” (Ibid.). In actual fact this meant eight movies from six countries, in addition to two sections of short films. The *Experimental South Asia* section presented five short films from India; the *Pink Homemade* section screened five Indonesian shorts.

Beside the two main thematic interests, the 2011 Festival also presented performances by French, Irish and Spanish contemporary dancers; a Croatian theater play, and an evening entertainment program organized in collaboration with the producers and queer performers of the New York queer clubbing scene. The closing event of the Festival was a queer circus cabaret performance featuring “performers from a dozen countries” (Ibid.) that grew out of a

collaboration with the Festival of New Circus³³, one of the most exciting new art festivals in Zagreb. The scope of the curatorial and organizational ambition implicit in such a diverse program created an intriguing space of cultural “border-exchange” during the Festival week.

5.1.3 Strategy of Cultivating (Regional) Queer Art

The third programming strategy I am interested in is the strategy of staging and producing of regionally queer art. Besides the exhibition *Post-socialist queer identities* at the first Festival in 2003, discussed in Section 5.2.1, the first Festival year already brought two other works of art that problematized belonging to the region³⁴. The “Theater” section of the program included four performances by international performance artists, and one installation/lecture-performance called “Queer Visualities” by two regional queer artists. In this piece, actors Bojan Đorđev and Siniša Ilić from Serbia gave a performative lecture of manifold, complex visual influences of queerness on their sexual identities.

The second art work in question – the theater piece *The Son of Dracula*, directed by Kathleen Brant, written and performed by David Drake, dramatized the interconnectedness of political issues of myth of origins, and of confronting one’s past. The 2003 catalogue description emphasizes the salience of the performance for the Festival’s exploration of belonging to the region through queer art: “The importance of presenting this show at Queer Zagreb is its direct link with some of the most important issues in Croatia such as life in the rural regions, the Serbian national minority after the war and regaining one’s past” (Queer

³³ The *Festival of New Circus* is being organized since 2005 in Zagreb. The Festival presents various forms of performance art and body art that explore circus techniques such as juggling, acrobatics and clowning within contemporary theater. See: <http://www.cirkus.hr/?lang=en> (Accessed on 13th April 2013).

³⁴ Belonging to a region and the region in question are negotiated throughout this thesis and the life of the Festival, as well as other post-Yugoslav queer art festivals. The terms of negotiation range from the region of post Yugoslav countries (discussed in Chapter 1, and used as framework for the 2009 Zagreb Festival); the post-socialist region invoked at the first *Queer Zagreb Festival*; to the Balkans, Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central Eastern Europe – all variously mentioned as regional framings by different actors I encountered.

Zagreb Festival 2003a, 9). Here, the region is the wider Balkans region of Dracula's Transylvania, including transnational art production overlapping³⁵. However, as the 2003 catalogue makes clear – the Festival framing of the play puts it in dialogue with other queer art from the region and with the regional social attitudes towards minoritarian identities.

At the 2004 Festival, through the exhibition called *Transvestitism*, Danish artist Lasse Lau explored the “transvestitism/travesty” of Y-chromosome, connecting it with the local context by reading the skinheads' aggression at the first Zagreb Prides as “a transfiguration of the penetration or even sadistic sexual act” (2004a, 1). Croatian visual artist Silvio Vujičić created a rainbow zebra crossing close to the park Zrinjevac where the Zagreb Pride events take place, in the cultural and institutional heart of the city. Another local visual artist Kristijan Kožul playfully exhibited fetishistic objects in a shop window in the center of Zagreb. These artistic interventions into the heteronormative public space tested its changeability and offered some interpretations of what queer may mean in Croatia.

In this way, queer art relating queer aesthetics and politics in Croatia in 2004 spoke to those complex regional issues through visual and performative art: an oppositional reading of the homophobic performance of dominant masculinities; an engagement with the changes in the cultural imaginary through the reappropriation of public spaces/discourses; and last but not least, hurling a bit of camp into the seriousness of Croatian “normality”.

In the Festival's fifth year in 2007, it is possible to note the continuation of the production of regional queerness – the strategy that started in the very first year in the Festival's search for “post-socialist queer”, but this year it got reformulated into an exploration of queer art coming exclusively from the region, conceptualized here as referring to the post-Yugoslav states. Following the lead of the Festival manifesto, the 2007 program focused on the regional queer art through the film selection presenting portrayals of gayness in former Yugoslav

³⁵ The 2003 performance of the play was the “European debut” of the play written and directed by the US artists. See the web page of the writer David Drake: <http://daviddrakeproductions.com/#/writer/4532396412>.

cinematography, as well as regionally queer contemporary dance, theater and performance pieces.

According to the organizers' manifesto, the 2007 program puts an emphasis on regional queer art, "present(ing) a sort of mapping of queer tendencies within all regional/mainstream cultural body, that appeared due to the existence of emancipatory activist/cultural projects such as Queer Zagreb Festival" (Queer Zagreb Festival 2007a, 1). It is a strong conceptualization and affirmation of regional queerness: "The celebratory program still has an unstoppable desire for intimate experience of queer through art, theory and activism with a special focus on regional geography" (Ibid.:9).

This strategy of *regional queerness*, found in the manifesto as well as in the 2007 program, represents a very important gesture toward re-appropriating both terms in the Croatian context through their juxtaposition. The region in the context of the 2007 Festival refers both to the post-Yugoslav states and the wider Balkan region. The evidence for this claim is in the 2007 program, which brought "Theater", "Music", "Entertainment" and "Film" sections – all representing regional art. The organizational choice in 2007 to turn the Festival completely toward the region, in conceptual as well as in programmatic terms, produced the effects of desirability around the terms that were being reclaimed – queer art and the Balkans.

The tendency in Croatian politics to shy away from any mention of Balkan connections goes along with the project of making claims to the "Europeanness" of Croatian culture. Discursive distancing in Croatia and Slovenia has been interpreted as an attempt to "exclude themselves from the Balkans or at least to create a double regional identity" (Kavaliauskas 2012, 7). In this context then, the introduction of the focus on regionally queer art emerges as a provocative concept, open to politically invested interpretations.

In terms of practices, this mobilizing around queer as a regional concept translated into an inventive program that has instances of reappropriation of the cultural and artistic heritage of

the former-Yugoslav film industry. As part of this agenda, the Croatian film critic Nenad Polimac gave a lecture on “Gay Motifs in ex-Yugoslavian (Sic.) and Regional Cinematography”. His lecture tracks “gay relationships and motives” on the margins of former Yugoslav cinematography of the 1960ies and the 1970ties to a higher incidence of gay representations in comedies and erotic dramas of the 1980ies (Polimac in: Queer Zagreb Festival 2007a, 51). According to Polimac, “gay theme” becomes much more visible after the break-up of Yugoslavia, illustrated by recent films from Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia where lesbian or gay relationship is central for the film. Polimac’s approach is criticized as “homo-spotting” by Nebojša Jovanović (Forthcoming 2014) in his PhD research-in-progress. However, Jovanović points out that although critical engagement with non-normativity in former Yugoslav cinematography needs to go beyond making of “catalogue of homosexuals and other sexual outlaws appearing in Yugoslav cinema”, this cataloguing does in fact perform the work of dispelling the “post-Yugoslav ‘epistemologies of ignorance’ regarding homosexuality and Yugoslav cinema in socialism” (Ibid.:6).

In this section, I explored three programming strategies: (1) bringing well-known names of the international “high” art world to Croatia and framing their art as part of a queer festival in order to open up those works to new possible readings; (2) programming festival devoted to diversity through bringing together a mixture of art forms and genres, and (3) supporting and staging regional (queer) works of art.

5.2 *Programming Queer Zagreb Chronotopes*

In this section I analyze strategies of the organizing team that enable particular chronotopes to get actualized during the Festival week. In Section 4.2, I focused on figurations of time and

space, and their effects, that can be read from the Festival manifestos. Here the concern is with the programming strategies that enable some chronotopes, either characteristic of that year's Festival as a whole or of particular art works, to get constituted as space open for use and interpretation by its viewers - as discussed in Chapter 7. In this section, the structure follows the three chronotopes individuated in Section 4.2 i.e. the chronotope of intersectional understanding of regional queerness; the conference chronotope; and the chronotope of resistance.

5.2.1 Programming the Chronotope of Regional Queerness

The first time-space I analyze here is the festival chronotope of regional queerness. This chronotope is not always clearly separated from the time-space of exchanges between queer theory, activism and artistic practices, analyzed as the conference chronotope in the following subsection. In 2003, the organizers approached the questioning of the meanings of post-socialist queerness both through theory and activism at the 2003 conference, and through organizing a collective exhibition. The exhibition called "Post-socialist Queer Identities" was imagined by the organizers as involved in the creation of post-socialist queer aesthetics as "the aesthetics of displacement whose ambiguity warns of a forgotten proximity of (the) odd, (the) weird and (the) strange" (Queer Zagreb Festival 2003a, 5).

The organizers invited the participation of regional artists, asking them to create thematic work that would be exhibited for the first time at the Festival. The selection and organization process is described as follows in the 2003 Festival catalogue:

Exhibition on postsocialist queer identity will present works of eighteen artists from Croatia and the neighboring countries. The selection has been made based on the applications to our call for submissions. As the topic of queer identity has not had

continuity in the art scene in the region we were interested in the artists' reaction to the concept that was offered. (Ibid.)

Eventually eighteen artists from the region were selected for participation. The concepts related to queer/post-socialist/identities, and the resulting exhibition put forward a “jigsaw” puzzle of artistic interpretations and embarked upon creating a pioneering aesthetics of queer in Croatia:

Along with works that explicitly deal with lesbian and gay issues we are also presenting those which dissect and undermine the significance of traditional sex/gender divisions as well as ones playing with the idea of the third sex and androgynous existence. (...) The exhibition is a jigsaw filled with signs where all presented works communicate through either one of the three terms: queer, postsocialism and identity. But, within the different forms and contents of the selected works (...) it is possible to find an aesthetic. (Ibid.)

The regional origin of the artists, in this case equating the region with the post-Yugoslav states, potentially made the 2003 exhibition into a space devoted to post-socialist queer identities and as such a landmark event that resonates with the complex discussions on the nature of queer art. The 2003 *Queer Zagreb* exhibition therefore can be perceived both as the starting point as well as the continuation of the creation of regionally queer art: the first event that invited already existing artistic tendencies and related them to the field of aesthetics and politics implicit in them but to be made visible and “seeable” only through this curatorial intervention.

Another important consideration, in terms of intersectional approach to the chronotope of regional queerness, is the “class differences” among post-Yugoslav queer festivals, with *Queer Zagreb*’s omnipresent billboards, prestigious program, as well as the ticket prices, differing significantly from the *d-i-y* grassroots politics and budgets of most of the other regional festivals (for example, *Queer Belgrade* in Serbia and the *Red Dawns Feminist Queer Festival* in Slovenia); while it both differs and resembles in some aspects the established

Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film in Ljubljana. Beside the differences in access to funding and prestige, it is interesting to note comparatively irregular presence of lesbian representations in the program of the Festival, which to a certain extent reflects the situation in the art world/culture – the lack of cultural production by/for lesbians/women, and which the *Queer Zagreb* organizers have countered with varying success in different years.

5.2.2. Programming the Conference Chronotope

The second Festival chronotope discussed in this subsection is the time-space of queer festival conferences: festival chronotope as space of “border-exchanges” between queer theory, art and politics. Here I am interested in Festival organizers’ decision to combine queer theory, activism and art through programming.

Two meeting spaces of theory and activism were programmed as a part of the first Festival in 2003. One was the conference called *Cheers Queers*, and the other was the symposium of the *International Lesbian and Gay Cultural Network*. The focus of the talks at the *Cheers Queers* conference in the first day, if we look at the titles and abstracts³⁶, was the global state-of-the-art in queer theory and politics, discussed by well-known authors such as David Halperin, Dennis Altman, and Mandy Merck.

The second and the third day of the Conference were devoted almost entirely to the LGBT and queer activism and artistic expression in the post-Yugoslav region, and the conceptualization of “queerness” in connection to art and activism in post-socialist, transition contexts. The 2003 conference gathered altogether twenty one activists and academics from the region and beyond, thirteen of them from post-Yugoslav countries and nine coming from the USA, the UK and Poland. Two of the talks were by two *Queer Zagreb Festival* organizers

³⁶ The program of the 2003 *Cheers Queers Conference* is available at: <http://www.queerzagreb.org/2003/engl/program-list.htm#> (Accessed on April 13th 2013).

– the program director Zvonimir Dobrović discussed “Postsocialism and Queer Identities”, while the co-director Gordan Bosanac talked about “Queer in Transition”. This overlapping of organizers’ roles – organizing the Festival but also reflecting theoretically on it, and organizing both artistic and activist events – continued throughout the Festival’s ten years.

The second conference in 2005 gathered activists and academics for three days of discussions on “Heteronormativity of Childhoods” at the *Goethe Institute* in Zagreb. The range of topics discussed is presented in the 2005 Festival catalogue as covering issues from discrimination of queer children, heteronormativity of educational institutions, to transgender and intersex children, and queer children’s rights. In contrast to the first conference with a strong regional thematic focus and participation of LGBT activists and researchers from the post-Yugoslav region, there was just one presenter from Croatia at the 2005 conference. The program director explains the lack of regional *experts* in the following way: “We had the impression that people do not feel as experts in that field. (...) Unfortunately, it seems that this topic is so intriguing and almost controversial that they do not dare to deal with it too much. This only proves the extent to which this topic is neglected” (Dobrovic in: Matasović 2005, 3).

The third conference happened in 2009. In addition to the film screening program and the evening parties program, the 2009 Festival included a conference on migration in South and Central Europe that partly focused on discussing queer migration. The conference called “New Perspectives: Migration in Central and Eastern European Region” was jointly organized by the organization *Minority Initiative* from Vienna in cooperation with the *Goethe Institute Croatia*, *Center for Peace Studies Zagreb* and *Zagreb Queer Festival*. While most of the presentations were concerned with the politics of migration in the CEE region, one lecture by Amir Hodžić discussed the findings of his research on *Queer migrations*³⁷.

³⁷ See Hodžić’s CV on information on his research project “Queer migration in and out of Croatia, 2008-2010”: <http://www.policy.hu/hodzic/cv.htm> (Accessed March 3rd 2014).

Beside the lecture, the conference also included screenings of two migration-related films: *Paper Dolls* – the 2006 film by Tomer Heymann on queer migrant workers in Israel, and *Croatia: E(n)d-en on Earth* – the 2006 film on experiences of asylum seekers in Croatia by Oliver Sertić. Looking at the programming of this conference as a part of the 2009 Festival, it is clear that the strategy of bringing theory, practice and art in dialogue broadens the possibilities of the Festival as the space of contact. In the contexts of the 2009 Conference on migrations in Central Eastern Europe, the meaning of queerness is extended beyond artistic, cultural and theoretical implications of the previous six years. In this case, a queer festival provided a programming headquarters and the space where migration politics and policies could be discussed, and on several occasions analyzed in relation to queer migrants and queer theory. The conference chronotope happened also at the last Festival in 2012 through the conference “Ends of the Beginning – Beginning of the End”, discussed in detail in Subsection 4.2.2.

5.2.3 Programming the Chronotope of Resistance

The third time-space analyzed is the chronotope of resisting the “heterosexual matrix”, discussed in practical terms i.e. regarding the actual Festival project as realized in each year. The Festival organizers have proven successful in securing publicity, the funds, and the cultural capital necessary to realize a week-long Festival integrated into the cultural life of the Croatian capital, and of the international arts festival circuit. This integration into the arts and culture institutional space through networking, professionalized knowledge, and a sufficient budget enabled them to have access to the established venues for Festival shows. The route to this access is institutional but negotiated, which has interesting implications for the strategy of reconfiguring high art spaces as spaces of resistance. I have already discussed how the

organizers conceptualize their Festival as a project of subverting the mainstream of the Croatian arts and culture. Interestingly, this subversion is not marginality. On the contrary, the organizers choose to spread it from within the established institutional spaces as a means of bringing forth the changes from the center. In this way, the centrality emerges as one of the most important characteristics of this practical Festival chronotope - determining how this queering is programmed through the Festival.

The Festival venues are either geographically or culturally central. In the very center of Zagreb are the cinemas *Europe* and *Tuškanac*; cultural centers *MM Club*, *Booksa*, *Mama*; theater houses *Theater ITD*, *Gavella*, *Zagreb Youth Theater (ZKM)*, *Zagreb Puppet Theater*, *Histrion Theater*, *Theater Vidra*; contemporary dance theaters – *Zagreb Dance Center*; museums such as the *Museum of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences (Gliptoteka)*; galleries – *Gallery Nova*, *Gallery Josip Račić*, *Gallery of the Student Center*; other cultural institutions such as the *Goethe Institute*; night clubs *Gjuro*, *Hotpot Bar*, the squat *Medika*, and the historical gay club *Global* which is now closed.

Culturally central, even though on urban periphery, are the mainstream concert and art venues such as *Cultural hall Vatroslav Lisinski*, the *Museum of Contemporary Art*, and smaller cultural venues such as the *VN Gallery*. On the periphery of Zagreb, but important for urban alternative culture are spaces such as that of the countercultural club *Močvara* (the Bog) and its *Pogon Jedinstvo Theater*, which housed many *Queer Zagreb* performances. It can be claimed that in ten years of the Festival, the art works were exhibited at the majority of the most respected cultural institutions in Zagreb.

From its very start, the Festival organizers are aware of the importance of cultural centrality and effective publicity for their politics of queer subversion of the mainstream art world. They make sure that the Festival's venues are central: established theaters, galleries, cinemas, discotheques. The Festival is well advertised and thoroughly followed by the

Croatian media³⁸. The sponsors and supporters of the Festival range from the City of Zagreb to small businesses³⁹, while the opening nights are crowded also with politicians and mainstream cultural figures, as I have noticed in my fieldwork.

All of those are in dramatic contrast with the habitual responses to LGBT activism in Croatia⁴⁰, and reflect both the ambiguous functioning of the term “queer” in the cultural domain, and the playful politics of queer alliances pursued by the Festival organizers. Different public responses to queer art and activism are important for understanding all three forms of Festival chronotope analyzed here. The regional chronotope enables complex conceptualization of queer art that thinks across the gap between art and politics. The conference chronotope implements the intersectional perspective through bringing into contact diverse modes of doing (regional) queerness. The chronotope of resistance renegotiates the practical terms of what is possible to accomplish within the festival format. In all three of these chronotopes, the stage and the street are in dialogue.

This section focused on the ways in which particular chronotopes envisioned in manifestos have been enabled through programming to, at times, actually take place or to become imaginable by the Festival participants. What has been conceptualized in manifestos as the chronotope of a queer garden - as time-space of discovering local meanings of queer art, in Festival practice took multiple forms. Here I have discussed three chronotopes: the

³⁸ As an illustration for this claim, the *Program report of the association Domino* (2011), which is the NGO behind the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, reports that there were 157 newspaper articles and TV reports made about the 2011 Festival (Ibid.:2).

³⁹ For instance, the catalogue of the 2004 Festival lists 14 local and international institutions as Festival funders; a long list of organizational and media partners, and the logo of a local wine distributor who sponsored the Festival opening.

⁴⁰ Unlike Queer Zagreb, the events of LGBT activism, namely the annual Pride parades, and NGO campaigns, met with extended hostility and were contained as if a matter of directly targeted “minority”. The homophobic attacks have been extensively researched (Duhacek 2011; Kajinic 2003; Simic 2001) – the explicitly political activist demonstrations tending to be seen as anything but attractive for the general public, especially in the initial period at the beginning of the 2000s. They have been “sponsored”, after a lot of lobbying, mostly by police protection. However, this has also been changing in the recent years, as we have witnessed increasing cross-fertilization of strategies of political and cultural activism in Croatia and the region (Skokic 2011).

chronotope of regional queerness; the time-space of intersections between theory, activism and art as the conference chronotope that bridges the (problematic) division between art and activism; and the chronotope of resistance to heteronormativity analyzed through focusing on spatial organizational choices.

5.3 Queer Program for “Loyal” Audiences

In the manifesto analysis in Section 4.3, I argued that the *Queer Zagreb Festival* organizers presented their relations with the local LGBT audience in an idealized way, while over-criticizing the cooperation with the local funders. Here I look at their programming strategies in order to ask the same question of Festival’s functioning in the dynamic field between community legitimization and institutional survival. In particular, I look at how the Festival organizers related through programming to three sets of actors – (1) audiences and the arts festival circuit; and (2) the institutional field.

As discussed in Chapter 1, queer festivals have been researched as organizations that can have considerable influence on LGBT communities. Joshua Gamson (1996) analyzed two New York queer film festivals in terms of changes in their organizational politics over time and their influence on collective identities. He showed how these two festivals negotiate with the communities on whom they draw for audiences and legitimization but whom they meet practically once a year, and on the other hand, with the institutional field to which they need to adapt. According to Gamson, the (queer) film festivals are “as accountable to their film- and art-world memberships as to the breadth of lesbian and gay community members they seek to serve” (Ibid.:258).

5.3.1 Between the Community and the Festival Circuit

In considering the first two sets of relations – those with the Festival’s audiences and the international festival circuit, I propose that the *Queer Zagreb Festival* has a more frequent contact with the LGBT community than once a year – through monthly film screenings, parties and their many other community events. Still, it is important to keep the question of the Festival’s institutional field at the front, since it is easy to disregard its importance. In addition, Skadi Loist (2007), upon comparing several US and German queer film festivals, emphasizes both local and transnational influences on the festival’s organizers decision-making: “the festivals operate within specific local frameworks of community politics, industry and funding contexts that inform and limit the scope of their decisions” (Ibid.:8).

From 2004 onwards, the organizers have decided and succeeded in expending *Queer Zagreb* beyond the actual event that lasted only during the festival week. They started to screen a queer movie each month of the year at the *Cinema Tuškanac* to maintain and satisfy the newly created demands, thereby strategically re/producing the audience for the next year’s festival. That is, the film section of the Festival turned into a significant, consistent initiative highly contributive to the formation of the local queer audience and their tastes.

During the festival week and throughout the year, the *Queer Zagreb Festival* organizers nurtured an active if paradoxical relationship with their audience. Their strategy is that of educating and creating the audience, while their claim to significance of queer art (partly re/produced by the invitation of outstanding international (queer) artists) is based upon the pre-existence of this audience. I call the strategy of constant work on forming the audience’ tastes while drawing legitimization from community involvement an act of “audience invention”.

When reading the manifestos, it is possible to see traces of imagining “hidden” audience desires that the festival events may be forming them into a “loyal” “(queer)” audience through exposure to local and international queer art. However, participant observation and interviewing process provide insights into the ways how the members of the audience remain critically engaged with the works of art they witness, and with the Festival as an institution. I am indebted to de Certeau’s insight into the “silent production” (2011, XXI) of meaning by “consumers” which is far from passive. Although counted upon as “loyal” participants in the Festival manifestos, the members of audience actively produce local meanings of queer art, as discussed in Section 7.3; the queer festival chronotopes as shown in Section 5.2, and various meanings of the *Queer Zagreb* as a cultural event.

The organizational strategy of how to imagine and relate to what will become *Queer Zagreb Festival’s* “loyal” audience was of key importance for the future of the event. In the programming strategies of the second *Queer Zagreb Festival* in 2004 it is possible to trace the trajectories of confronting the issues that the 2004 manifesto held of prime importance: to create a space for the (local) artists to engage with what queerness means in the local context and to reclaim the public space by queering it.

The strategy of creating regional queer art and regional/local queer audiences while at the same time counting upon them as one of the pillars of the Festival’s legitimacy, is articulated throughout the Festival’s existence, but most clearly in its last year in 2012. I would like to relate this strategy of audience invention to the consideration of Festival’s negotiation of belonging to the larger regional and international art world. I analyze the second set of relations – with the arts festival circuit and international art world – as processes of conceptualization and programming of queer art as practices of trans- and international cultivation.

At this point, it is possible to name the strategy using the metaphors of gardening from the first and the last festivals' manifestos as the strategy of "planting the term queer" in the local and regional context in which queerness was already "hidden" like a seed awaiting for its attentive cultivation – by the festival series. This *cultivation* of queer art is explicit in the first and the last Festival manifesto, but traceable throughout its ten years. In terms of programming, this constant curatorial interest gets actualized through a very ambitious program, for instance at the last Festival. As we hear in the 2012 manifesto: "In programming terms this is the most demanding festival to date as it thematically touches upon questions of beginning and end" (2012b, 5), running the full circle from the beginning to the end and to a new beginning.

"Beginnings" as far as the program itself is concerned are presented through contemporary dance performances from Tunisia and Mali, a performance art from Brazil and Capo Verde, and an international queer film program. While "endings" of the program refers to the *Queer Zagreb Festival* closing ten years after its conception, with a 3-hour marathon of a closing theater piece by Raimund Hoghe. And the forward to/through the past refers to the conference "End of the beginning – beginning of the end". It was devoted to the emancipatory social movements in the Arab countries, in the Balkan and the Caucasus regions.

This ambitiously drawn space for queer artistic and political solidarity reflects the search and reinforcement for the post-socialist queer space and its communities within the space of the first conference at the 2003 *Queer Zagreb* and its "end" in 2012. With this "planting" and unearthing strategy, the organizers never stop the cycle of "importing/exporting/transporting" (Mesquita, Wiedlack, and Lasthofer 2012) of queer aesthetics and politics, ambiguously but consistently and productively using and unearthing the local and regional queerness that already has been there before them.

5.3.2 Relating to the Institutional Field

The relations and practical negotiations in the actual institutional field within which the Festival functioned are not as visible when analyzed from the vantage point of Festival programs as they are made to be in Festival manifestos. What is clear is that the Festival team successfully managed to procure a big budget for ambitious artistic program in each year, for the organizational infrastructure, and the publicity material. In Subsection 4.3.3, I pointed out that harsh criticism of local city and state funding for independent arts and culture is voiced in several manifestos. In contrast, the last pages of each Festival catalogue bring tens of logos of funders, sponsors, and media sponsors. In the ten years of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, the association “Domino” which organized it had expended its activities in multiple directions: they started organizing another performance art festival – *Perforacije* since 2009; ventured successfully into publishing queer titles; organized a version of the Festival abroad – the *Queer New York Festival* in 2013 and 2014. All of these organizational accomplishments testify to the successes of the organizers activities in their institutional field, and are not necessarily related to their community standing. Moreover, what seems as a success story to the observers may be experienced as a series of negotiations and compromises to the actors. So, Gordan Bosanac, co-director of the Festival, reminisced at a round-table at the 2013 *Subversive Festival* on many internal organizational discussions in the first years of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* on relations with the funders, concretely corporate funders (Bosanac in: 2013). While his personal stance was for taking money from mainstream and corporate funders to use it for cultural subversion, these negotiations remained abstract since the only corporate sponsor they had was the Toyota in 2005 that lent a car for the Festival (Ibid.).

The fields in which the Festival acted and exerted its influence from 2003 till 2012 are multiple. On the one hand, part of the legitimacy for its existence and the meaningfulness of

its program came from its connections with the local and transnational LGBT community. However, as Gamson (1996) pointed out, such claims are often rhetorical since queer festivals in general meet the community only once a year during the festival week. We have seen how the strategies of the *Queer Zagreb* organizational team have extended this meeting ground to monthly film projections, and since 2013, also to the continuation of the Festival as the *Festival Season*. Likewise, the Festival audience composed of the Zagreb arts events goes constituted another part of the Festival's "loyal audience". Similarly, the Festival's claim to their loyalty was carefully managed through strategies of professional programming, good press, and the work on the Festival's reputation as a significant arts event.

The Festival's negotiation of the terms of their belonging to the larger arts world and the arts festival circuit was undertaken through ambitious international programming, as well as through the construction of the Festival as a major cultural player on the global map of international queer arts cooperation. Concerning the third set of relations, the Festival functioned successfully in a complex institutional field between the demands of funders and sponsors, yet remained critical – particularly of national support for arts and culture.

6 NEGOTIATING FESTIVAL VISUALITY IN ZAGREB

This chapter is devoted to the visual analysis of the ten years of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* posters in order to explore the “queerness” of their visuality, as well as to the analysis of two works of art performed at the Festival in order to tie the focus on visuality with the considerations of regionally queer art and political potential of queer festival heterotopias. As discussed in Chapter 2, new political LGBT visibility in the post-Yugoslav states also brought about possibilities of renegotiating the terms of that very visibility. Rosemary Hennessy (1994) admitted for a possibility of *seeability* – of redefining visibility on the terms of the marginalized community, despite the dangers of cooptation by the commodity culture.

I have analyzed the functioning of seeability, in Chapter 2, as strategies of queering visuality – making visual semiosis “queer” through images, artistic and curating practices. Here I argue that the *Queer Zagreb Festival* had in its ten years relied on practices of queering visuality in order to redefine the terms of non-normative visibility in the Croatian context. I take the Festival posters as important documents in the Festival’s visual archive. Their analysis enables me to individuate how the claims and tactics of queering visuality changed with each Festival year. However, the Festival visuality cannot be limited to some ten posters. The Festival visual archive is immense – comprising not only the visual art exhibitions, and film screenings, but also the temporary visuality brought forth through performance art. As it is not feasible to do justice to the entire archive, I discussed some aspects of exhibited and performed art works in Chapters 4 and 5. Here I choose to engage two selected works of art important for understanding the practices of queering visuality in connection with my theoretical concerns.

6.1 Visual Deconstruction of Taboos: Festival Posters

We have already seen that the manifestos of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* set out ambitious intersectional aims for the Festival and its audiences in proposing to confront the sexual and gender normativity of the Croatian society, but also its patriarchal and ethno-nationalist norms. I argued as well that the Festival organizers employ a whole gamut of strategies in positioning and actualizing the festival time-space as a queer antidote to the local normality. In this section, we encounter the interface of this research's main theoretical interest in visibility and its formal visual and discursive implications for the main research material – festival posters. In what follows, I will analyze how organizers' textual and programming strategies relate to actual visual material and festival visibility of ten years of *Queer Zagreb Festival* posters.

I will do the analysis of the visual semiosis in the posters of the ten Festival years, each corresponding to the textually formulated programmatic statements and actual programs over the ten years of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. The main analytical interest is to see if the posters in themselves, as a particular genre of visibility, can rewrite the straight imagery of visual representations into queer visibility the Festival itself would want to harbor and “cultivate”.

When analyzing the posters, it is important to keep in mind Hennessy's (1994, 149) distinction between the “visible” as what has been allowed for by the scopic regimes to emerge on the horizon of intelligibility and the “seeable” as that which is made visible through alternative viewing practices of a particular community and in opposition to those hegemonic ways of seeing. The analysis that follows traces the visual elements of this visibility or rather what the festival visibility is reacting to as prescribed visibility, and of

seeability as the visual potential of these images offered up to its viewers.

Queer Zagreb visuality, I argue, creates images that disrupt heteronormativity, and make non-normative practices of seeability possible. The analysis will show how the queering of Festival posters (and through them) is tied to their visual impact, while their materiality remains that of traditional, high-budget posters. The potential of the Festival posters to expend the limits of seeability is to be found in their use as exit signs: the interest of the Festival participants to have them and to put them on their home walls as reminders and invitations out of normative visibility, as discussed in Section 2.1.

It is relatively difficult to find a poster of the first *Queer Zagreb Festival* on the internet and almost none of my informants mention it or remember what it looked like. This fading of, anonymity, or non-remembrance that surrounds the first poster testifies to a comparative lack of strategic investment in the Festival's visual identity, i.e. in a poster in the first year, and, indirectly is also telling of the growing emphasis on the visual recognizability of the Festival in the following years. The poster designer⁴¹ confirmed this variation of the flyer as also the poster of the first Festival (Figure 3)⁴². The image shows simple graphic play with the “Q” of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* logo. I find it interesting that although the 2003 poster image may be seen as visually hinting at “queerness” – the shape of the letter “Q” – as an exit sign, still none of my interlocutors remember it or have used it as such. While the Festival visuality changed drastically from the 3rd year on, this flyer/poster contains the basic Festival information – the name, dates, website – as it will in the following years.

⁴¹ First three posters were designed by Sunčana Šprian, whose work is accessible at www.xvision.org.

⁴² As the posters of the first two years are not on the *Queer Zagreb* website nor otherwise on internet, this is an image of the 2003 flyer, exhibited at the *Unstraight Museum – virtual queer archives*. The flyer designer confirmed to me that the same image was used as one version of the poster for the 2003 Festival.



Figure 3: 2003 poster and flyer (Queer Zagreb Festival 2003b)

The 2004 poster (Figure 4) appears somewhat more elaborate than the previous one. The image shows an animation sequence of a human figure leaping over the Festival logo. In contrast to all of the poster images that will follow over the next eight years, there is no visual strategy of provocation in this poster: it could be a poster of any mainstream dance or theater festival. It is only in conjunction with the inscription “Queer Zagreb” that it implies sexual and gender non-normativity on the streets of Zagreb. Although the activity of leaping may be seen as an illustration of exiting, none of my interlocutors mention this poster or have it on their walls.



Figure 4: 2004 poster (Queer Zagreb Festival 2004b)

However, it is important to remember that the English word “queer” would not have been directly meaningful or translatable for a lot of poster viewers in 2004 yet. The only sign of recognition of the word in relation to the poster were the protests by the members of the American-led *Church of Full Gospel* (later confidently ridiculed by the 2005 program as pointed out above) who had no trouble understanding the word “queer”.

I suggest that such relatively unproblematic public reception of the Festival has to do mostly with the Festival organizers’ strategy in the first two years of masking the Festival through a neutral visual iconography and a foreign linguistic marker. The subversive artistic program and heated political discussions going on at those first two events were not visible to the majority of the poster-viewers. In Hennessy’s (1994) terms, for the broader public it functioned as relatively neutral “visibility” if at all, while for the members of the Croatian and regional queer communities, it enabled some alternative seeability though only in so far as they were familiar with the meaning of the English term⁴³.

The only thing that the 2005 festival poster (Figure 6) shares with the previous two is that it cannot be found on the *Queer Zagreb Festival* website in their poster archive but not because of its artistic insignificance. I would rather assume this is possibly due to the fact that it was created by an artist different from the producer of six of the remaining seven posters that were created by the same designer⁴⁴. Similar to the poster, the front page of the *Queer*

⁴³ The linguistic history of the term “queer” in post-Yugoslav region is discussed in detail in the Introduction. Although the concept was mentioned in several articles in the 1990ies, as well as discussed in activist and academic circles, it was first “explained” to the broader public in media reports in connection to the first Festival in 2003. Some of the titles of articles in the Croatian media in 2003 indicate the sense of novelty and searching for ways of explaining the term “queer” to the readership: the daily *Novi list* reported on “Six Days of Alternative Sexuality” (2003), the daily *Večernji list* on “Queer for the First Time in Zagreb” (2003), and the weekly *Globus* talked about “Gay Festival in Zagreb” (2003).

⁴⁴ The 2006 poster was prepared by the designer duo Mario Aničić and Jele Dominis of the *dizajn-ured Zagreb*. The Festival posters from 2007 till 2012 were created by Andre von Ah, Visual Arts Curator and

Zagreb Festival 2005 catalogue shows a child's hand gripping an iron rod (Figure 5).

Visually, the image raises questions - it is not clear to whom the hand belongs, what kind of iron bar it is gripping, and what are the affects of that grip. The ambiguity of the front page of the 2005 catalogue parallels the radical questioning of the 2005 Festival program of the effects of the institutionalization of heteronormativity on children. The image on the back page of the 2005 catalogue shows the face of the playing child – so that both images taken together correspond to the 2005 poster image (Figure 6). Only observing them together or seeing the poster, one knows that the hand belongs to a child at play. This ambiguity was purposefully created as an important part of Festival's visibility in 2005. The designer of the 2005 catalogue and poster, Sunčana Šprioivan, explained the process to me – the photograph itself was chosen by the program director, but the visibility of the poster and the catalogue was the result of a long process of negotiations between two of them. She clarified:

The (visual) solution came through discovering slowly that whole story together. The first part of the material (catalogue) came with that part of the photograph where you see only the hand on the bar – so it is not clear if you are in the prison or what... Only on the poster, one could see that it is an entirely different story, telling something completely different. (2013, 1)



Figure 5: 2005 catalogue (Queer Zagreb Festival 2005b)

Communications Director of the Festival (see the Festival web site: http://www.queerzagreb.org/?page_id=2 , accessed April 14th 2013).

Indeed, the poster image gives a different picture (Figure 6), draws on other emotions and questions than the photography fragment on the catalogue. The visual strategy with which the 2005 catalogue and poster images push the viewer to guess, then quickly change one's presumptions, but still continue questioning, make the 2005 images central for understanding the emerging Festival visuality as well as its politics in general.

The 2005 poster image is a still from the 2004 film *Nobody Knows* by the Japanese director Hirokazu Koreeda, a moving tale of four small siblings abandoned by their parents to a life of secretive getting-by on their own in modern-day Tokyo. The 2005 program booklet calls this film “one of the most critically acclaimed movies in Japan last year”, and lists “exquisite acting and gloomy realism of modern Japanese city life” as reasons that make the film “one of the highlights of this year(‘s)” Festival (Queer Zagreb Festival 2005a, 41).

In visual terms, the image conveys happiness – the boy is shown in the moment of joyful play, when the outside world is blurred out due to the spinning movement of the merry-go-round. Without familiarity with the film, one would not know in which way the child protagonist could be interpreted as a figure of a queer child. With film in mind, I see the poster as another example of the Festival's deliberately open approach to understanding queerness. The protagonist is seen as queer by the Festival organizers and the poster designer, I argue, because he is the hero of a non-traditional childhood. He keeps his three other, even smaller, siblings safe and together, while keeping secret the fact that they have been abandoned. In addition to troubles, the film shows him also as joyful – as in the scene on the merry-go-round.

The image shows the close-up of the ecstatic face of a renegade child, and the background blurred through spinning. Both of these elements of the image – the boy hero and the escape from normative environment found in play and symbolized through blurring – represent the

reasons, I argue, for the effectiveness of the poster as an exit sign. The normativity is conceptualized by the 2005 manifesto as “the heterosexual matrix” disguised as “the safest environment for children” (2005a, 6). The poster works as an exit sign from heteronormativity by visualizing a moment of childhood freedom as a possibly recoverable queer memory.



Figure 6: 2005 poster (Queer Zagreb Festival 2005c)

The subtle change in the visual strategy is that the image of a child playing draws directly on the Festival theme. The 2005 manifesto carefully worded its claim to the transgressive potential of children – still framing it as the mission of the Festival’s questioning of *Heteronormativity of Childhood*: “the potential of all children to grow up as people aware and respecting of importance of differences and equalities” (Ibid.). Although the implications of opening up childhood to non-normativity and subversion may not be immediately seeable in the poster itself, they are visually available if dormant in the vicinity in which the child figure and the Festival name function in the image. In addition, times have changed already in 2005, and the media, intrigued by the Festival’s provocative theme, are commenting on the Festival much more closely. As a result of this, I think that since its 3rd year, the *Queer Zagreb* posters became more legible both visually and textually to a wider range of viewers and therefore opened up Festival’s visibility to more direct subversiveness through imagery.

The poster of the 2006 *Queer Zagreb Festival* figures in a cultural context of an already translated “queerness” for Croatian viewers. Within such an “outed” context – mitigated imagery will not work anymore. The 2006 image (Figure 7) is a production still of a male dancer from the dance performance, *Swan Lake*, directed by Raimund Hoghe. This choice starts the Festival designer’s visual strategy of choosing the image of a, usually male, performer’s body to articulate messages about queer art in general and the Festival itself.

The 2006 image is modest and simple: for the majority of viewers - a young man in a t-shirt, for the more knowledgeable ones – a dancer from the famous choreographer’s show. Hence, the text announces the unexpectedly provocative theme of the Festival: “Dance Theater Porn Fashion”. It should be noted that the four segments of the 2006 program announced in this way are written in English.

Although the poster image shows a dancer, the posture that draws attention to clothes resonates also with the “Fashion” segment of the Festival’s program, and fashion’s significance for queer culture. The visual proximity of “Dance” and “Fashion” – spelled out and implied in the image – are not the only ambiguous relations available on the poster. While the “Fashion” segment of the program can easily be related and fit with the “Dance” and “Theater” segments, the “Porn” segment seems odd in relation to mostly high-culture genres. In Subsection 5.1.2, I have discussed the ways in which the program puts in dialogue seemingly unrelated genres as an instance of an organizational strategy of programming diversity. Here, it is important to notice that the poster performs the same work in a single image – queering a seemingly innocent dancer’s potential to signify transgressive cultural mixing of worlds and genres.

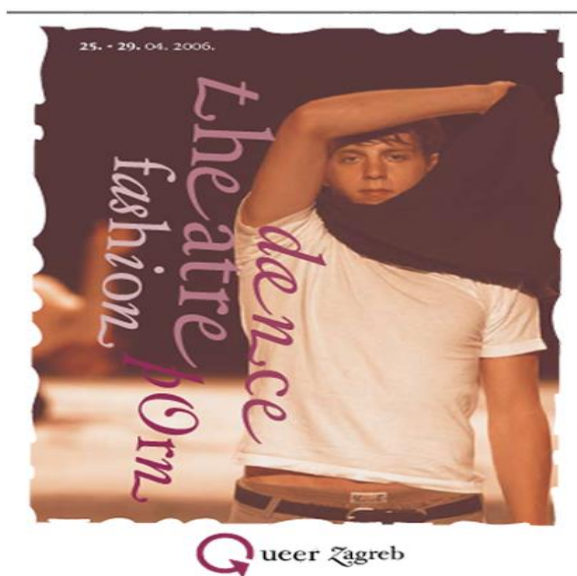


Figure 7: 2006 poster (Queer Zagreb Festival 2006b)

In the Croatian public discourse, this poster as well as the Festival it represents, have gained the visibility and intelligibility with which the organizers just flirted initially. However, it is interesting to note that none of my interviewees mentions this poster or seems to have it saved in their own memory or home archives when asked about it. As if for memorability, the strategy of visual simplicity combined with textual frankness were not enough. I see this assumption confirmed through the clamorous reactions to the 2007 festival poster that is characterized by some visual shock-effect.

The most talked-about poster both within and outside of the queer community, is the 2007 *Queer Zagreb Festival* image. The poster originally used the production still of Ivo Dimchev's performance of *Lilly Handel*. The image (Figure 8) shows the performer's naked gender-queer body in high heels, wearing pearl-jewelry, and make up, while he's pulling a red plush theater curtain.

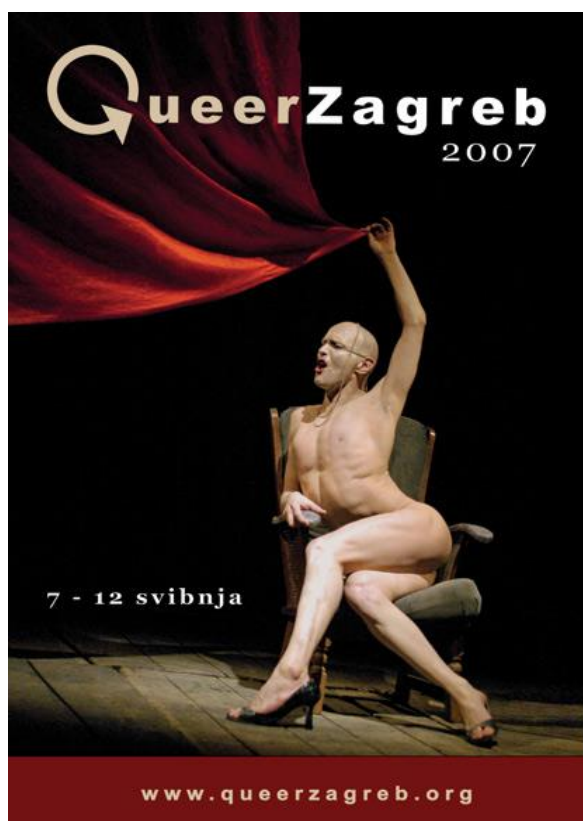


Figure 8: 2007 poster (Queer Zagreb Festival 2007b)

While the image on the poster is often the same as the front page image of the Festival catalogue, the two images differ in 2007⁴⁵. The image on the 2007 catalogue comes from the same performance. It shows (Figure 9) the performer's naked body seated in an armchair, wearing high heels, and holding a trumpet in front of his face. Confronted with two striking images of queer embodiment, the designer Andre von Ah decided to use them both (2012).

⁴⁵ Not only in the case of the 2005 and the 2007 Festivals discussed here, but also on the occasion of four other Festivals (in 2003, 2004, 2010 and 2011), the images on the catalogue and on the poster differ. However, I find their simple abstract graphic solutions in the four of the Festival catalogues mentioned not adding significantly to the purpose of discussing Festival visuality – this is why I do not analyze or reproduce them here. In contrast, the 2007 catalogue front-page is often mentioned by my interviewees as one of the most important visual images of the Festival. Due to its potential as an exit sign (discussed in Chapter 2), I include it here in the discussion of Festival visuality.



Figure 9: 2007 catalogue (Queer Zagreb Festival 2007c)

The billboard version of the 2007 catalogue front-page (Figure 9) nevertheless was met with much debate in the media and in the Croatian public. The image was even petitioned against by a group of concerned citizens who wanted it removed from their neighborhood. They submitted the petition to the police, but failed to make the authorities deliberate in their favor. At the same time, this is the poster most popular among my interviewees, the one most often taken home and put on private walls. Arguably, it is the most subversive image representing *Queer Zagreb Festival*.

In general, the strategy of visually deconstructing sexual and gender normativity through an image of an alternative embodied performer-figure is the preferred strategy of Festival visuality. The two images are seeable as queer because of the iconography of the figure depicted, which powerfully confuses easy readability of gender and sexuality of performer's embodiment. In contrast, the chosen stylistic means by the poster designer can be interpreted as belonging to mainstream poster tradition: both the catalogue and the poster image are materially glossy and expensive prints that, together with the name "Queer Zagreb Festival" and its dates, are recognizable as advertising a high-art event. Still, I think it is

important to emphasize that the subversiveness of the poster images in themselves, placed in the public space of Croatian streets, do function as transgressive visuals – disturbing some, and offering figurations of escape to others.

The *Queer Zagreb Festival* poster in 2008 is a figurative poster – a photographic version of a drawing that was part of the exhibition by young students of the *Academy of Fine Arts* of Zagreb that aimed to challenge the heterosexism and homophobia within the institution. The poster (Figure 10) shows two figures of undecidable gender and sexuality, though what is most telling about the image is its non-humanness. They are draped in cloaks, and wearing gas-masks, resonating with a Cyber figure iconography.



Figure 10: 2008 poster (Queer Zagreb Festival 2008b)

The poster image is based on the work of young artist Lea Kralj-Jager, shown at the exhibition “ALUding” discussed in Subsection 5.1.1. One of her drawings, showing similar two figures, also incorporated a text in a cartoon-like bubble: “You are too pretty to be a lesbian”, defying and reestablishing the visual connotations of the figures. The representational strategy of this poster is based on refusing easy subject positions for identification. This seemed attractive to my informants when asked about their poster choice on their walls.

Many of my interviewees also mention the 2009 *Queer Zagreb* poster (Figure 11) as one of the most attractive *Queer Zagreb* images. The still of the British queer performer Dominic Johnson, though, was not of his 2009 *Transmission* performance at the Festival but from his previous performance pieces. The figure hanging upside down is almost naked, except for a red cloth. The ankles of his legs are held up by chains, resonating with the context of gay alternative sexual practices.

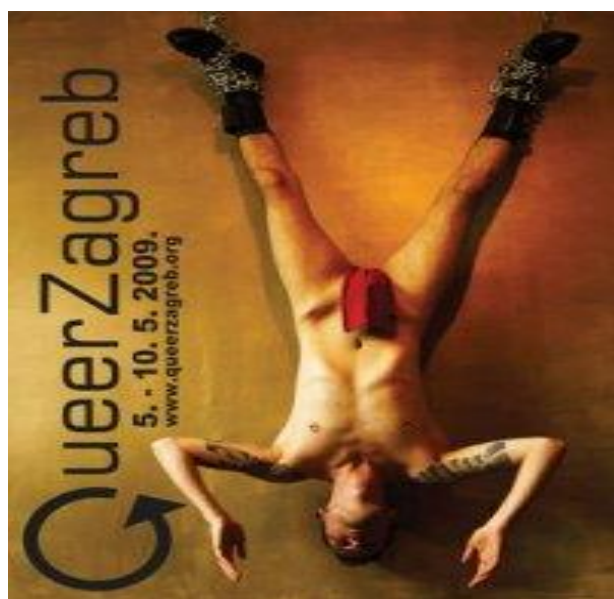


Figure 11: 2009 poster (Queer Zagreb Festival 2009b)

The imagery reflects the visual strategy of aesthetization of graphic representation of radical body art and alternative sexual practices such as S/M. An image from a body art performance, the body turned into art itself - this poster did not cause a stir in public. This is surprising given graphic almost-nakedness of the performer's body – something which has caused public offence with the 2007 poster.

Although both the Dimchev and the Johnson stills on the 2007 and the 2009 posters are highly aestheticized images of male performer's bodies, they have been interpreted differently in the Croatian public sphere: misinterpreted in the case of the first, and under-

interpreted in the case of the second poster. To me it seems that the visual implications of a naked male performer's body in "feminine" high-heels have triggered the stereotypical interpretations on the part of the concerned members of the *Church of the Full Gospel* who had filed a complaint with the police against the poster in 2007. In this case, bringing male body and feminine accessories in visual interplay seems to signify queerness directly and cause offence in Croatian context. Interestingly, although Johnson's naked body in black leather boots and chains clearly reference alternative sexuality and sexual practices in British context, the Croatian mainstream viewers of the 2009 poster seem to have lacked sufficient cultural capital to fully grasp the queerness of the image. It seems to me that the image did not cause offence because the nudity of the performer's body was read as masculine. The 2009 poster is admired and taken home by many of my interviewees, which testifies to different interpretational practices of the Festival participants.

In its eight year, the visual strategies of the Zagreb Festival got even bolder in daring to touch upon one of the most sensitive taboos in Croatian society – the relationship between sexuality and Catholicism. The 2010 *Queer Zagreb* poster (Figure 12) represents the reworked *Pieta* image from the theater performance *Amado mio* by the two actors of the Slovenian company, *Slovensko Mladinsko Gledališče* (Slovenian Youth Theater). The performance is based on the diary of the famous Italian writer Pier Paolo Pasolini, poetically chronicling his love with a younger man. The visuality of this image, besides obvious religious connotations, also functions as a reworking of Richard Dyer's (2002) "sad young man" type of figuring gay male sadomasochistic beauty and sexuality, and is reminiscent of the sad young man still from Kenneth Anger's film *Fireworks* (1947) - analyzed by Dyer as a figuration of a gay martyr. In addition to been queer in its visual deconstruction of a canonical religious motive, I suggest that the queerness of the 2010 poster was constituted also through its oppositionality to Croatian cultural and religious traditionalism.



Figure 12: 2010 poster (Queer Zagreb Festival 2010b)

This is the other of the two Festival posters (in addition to the Dimchev poster, Figure 9) that (not unexpectedly) provoked indignant public reactions. The 2010 Pieta poster got sprayed, and vandalized throughout Zagreb. From the whole edition of some 1000 posters, the majority of them were torn down (Ines 2010), and on the day of the 2010 festival opening, the remaining posters still present in Zagreb streets were few.

Visual strategy of daring to imagine a homoerotic re-imagining of religious iconography showed that there are strong taboos guarding the local normality - a gay pieta queering received understanding of what is sacred and worthy of reverence remains provocative in catholic Croatia. The reception of the 2010 poster met with more hostility compared even to the reactions to the 2007 poster.

While the 2007 Dimchev poster disturbed public propriety through its queering of male nudity, the 2010 Pieta poster seems to have prompted exceptional instance of self-organizing: it lead to an ad-hoc “activist” campaign of tearing down all of the posters before the beginning of the Festival. While the 2007 poster was petitioned against, the 2010 posters were torn down. This closing down of any openness to dialogue with the image has to be

contextualized. In Croatia, connecting the meaning of the Pieta with the representations of non-normative sexuality, which according to Vatican's official position is a sin in itself, is read as even more contentious statement than representations of transgender embodiment. The 2010 poster's visual rendition of man-to-man passionate love relation is deceptively simple. I propose that its mobilizing effects at the occasion of the 2010 Festival rendered it regionally queer.

The visuality of the 2011 *Queer Zagreb Festival* is exceptional in its multiplicity: there are six posters representing the Festival (Figure 13). All of them are the stills from the 2011 performances. Andre von Ah (2012) explained to me in an interview many negotiations between him as the designer of the posters and his supporting team. In 2011, exceptionally, they decided that they did not need to narrow their choice down to one poster solution, and offered all six versions to the public as Festival posters. In all six posters, the textual part of the poster lists the main performances, Festival organizer, and Festival name and dates. Visually, these six posters remain faithful to at this point recognizable *Queer Zagreb* visuality that shows a still of a performer's body that simultaneously attracts queer looks and questions heteronormative expectations.

It is interesting, though, that none of my informants talk about this series of posters nor were there media comments. The strategies of symbolic representation of embodied queerness in these posters are based on implications of non-normativity and playfulness of gender expression and/or sexuality of the performing body. However, although my informants acknowledge them as likable posters when reminded of them, it seems that such a strategy of multiple posters ironically prevented a single poster from 2011 to stand out in viewers' mental archives of festival visuality.



Figure 13: 2011 posters (Queer Zagreb Festival 2011b)

The poster of the last *Queer Zagreb Festival* in 2012 (Figure 14) is a production still of the performance *Guintche* by Marlene Freitas, a contemporary female dance artist from Capo Verde, which was one of the most noted performances of the last Zagreb Festival. According to the artist's own words, the mysterious character she brings to life in her performance is Guintche, "a clown, a puppet, an entertainer, a cannibal, a machine, a boxer, a dancer, an enigma... Although without political intention, Guintche is intrinsically political in its embodiment of transformation" (2012b, 23).



Figure 14: 2012 poster (Queer Zagreb Festival 2012a)

The image on the poster is equally ambivalent: it represents Guintche/Marlene with her skin painted in metallic blue, wearing bright red lipstick, and both eyes covered by hands with palms facing outwards showing two abstractly painted Guintche's eyes – one open and one closed. No longer functioning as hands, these “looking” palms function as a part of her face, and become the face and the closed/open eyes of the Festival at its end. I have asked the poster designer Andre von Ah⁴⁶ (2012) about the symbolism of this look for the Festival that is finishing - whether it is closing its eyes or looking into the “queer future”, as the manifesto implied. For Andre, the ambivalence constitutes the power of this image, and he could think of a no better way than this visual to indicate the optimistic uncertain future of post-festival queerness of Zagreb.

The ten annual posters of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* represent the Festival's double project of queering art and queering heteronormative space. Their visuality used various graphic means to represent questioning of heteronormativity, and in this way, we could say that it worked mainly with queering the poster genre. This queering remained within certain limits since the posters materially always functioned as glossy, expensive invitations to a high

⁴⁶ Andre is originally from Brasil, where he has collaborated with a local queer festival before coming to Zagreb in 2005 and working as a designer and curator at the *Queer Zagreb Festival* since then. The interview was conducted in English.

culture event. However, the visibility of the posters showing non-normative bodies of performers and non-heterosexual figurations of sociality appeared as exit signs in Croatian public space. Many Festival posters put up on people's walls at their homes testify to their use as exit signs that have enabled seeability of queerness and queer art in Croatia.

6.2 *Performing Regional Queerness*

This section focuses on one work of art through the lens of the concept of regional queerness in order to think about new visibility made possible through post-Yugoslav queer art. In the following I will analyze the life story of a certain queer artwork that stages an invisible, possibly improbable, love affair in the heart of the city of Zagreb – and at the very center of the Croatian cultural canon. In 2007, the *Queer Zagreb Festival* ended with a performance piece by Zabludovsky, the fictional performance persona of the Croatian artist Željko Zorica, devoted to two lauded Croatian writers, namely Ivan Goran Kovačić and Vladimir Nazor. The event included performances by *Le Zbor*, the Croatia's first lesbian choir; a string quartet; a dance company; a reading of Kovačić' and Nazor's poetry by professional actors. The central moment of the performance, however, consisted of Zabludovsky's unveiling a memorial plaque (see Figure 15) to the imaginary love affair of the two authors. The plaque was placed at the intersection of the two streets named after Kovačić and Nazor in the center of Zagreb. The inscription brings in the artist's persona as the text reads: "As the war was dawning, with the help of H.C. Zabludovsky, at this very place centaur I.G. Kovačić met satyr V. Nazor. Remember, oh traveler, their cry for beloved dizzying freedom; in Zagreb, May 2007, Željko Zorica and Queer Zagreb".



Figure 15: Artist Željko Zorica and *Queer Zagreb Festival* program director Zvonimir Dobrović at the performative inauguration of the plaque at the 2007 festival (Queer Zagreb Festival 2007d)

Asked for an explanation of this cryptic text, the artist mused about the wine-drinking, poem-writing sessions of the three protagonists on the eve of the Second World War. He explained his hope for the plaque to function as “a referent point wherefrom to transmit the insights into the free zones within the occupied geographies of collective memory” (Matejcic 2007b, 34).

I would like to imagine that those “free zones” that reclaim the gap in the collective memory which has not kept track of the lives of its queer citizens function as possible exit signs⁴⁷ from heteronormativity or as *portals*⁴⁸ that offer unexpected mobility in the particular geopolitical space in which they flash. Dean Vuletić (2003) in his work on the history of the gay and lesbian movement in Croatia, investigated the lively rumors around Kovačić and Nator’s relationship, and the indications that they would run away to join partisans during the

⁴⁷ My interest in the work of visual representation of queerness as exit signs draws on the reconceptualization of Deleuze and Guattari’s *lignes de fuite*, lines of flight, as *escape routes* from control in the 21st century by Papandopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos (2008). See Introduction for the discussion of the concept of *exit sign*.

⁴⁸ In the Science Fiction genre, portals/gates/stargates are the entrances into other dimensions through which objects or beings get transported into different time and space (Prucher 2007, 76).

Second World War in order to be together. He also uncovered the equally persistent efforts to cover up those rumors by the canonizing processes of national Yugoslav historiography.

Interestingly, this provocative posthumous “outing” is what interested the Croatian media the most at the time of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* in 2007. The headlines read like: “Nazor and Kovacic Got Their Queer Memorial Plaque” (Matejcic 2007b, 34) or more allusively “Ode to a Tender Friendship” (Matejcic 2007a, 15). Two years after, the discovery of Vuletić’s work by the daily newspaper *Jutarnji list* caused the renewal of this discussion in the media, as in the article entitled “I.G. Kovačić and Nazor Were Lovers” (*Jutarnji* 2009:1). Although there was no mention of the memorial plaque, this article appeared only two months before the plaque was destroyed in August 2009, and might have performed the translation work for anonymous vandals.

The organizers of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* had obtained permission in 2007 from the city authorities to leave the plaque in place during the following six months. It was, after all, a performance and not an officially approved cultural homage. However, the plaque was sort of forgotten or rather it fit in with the urban landscape. It was only in 2009 that the attention of the wider public was drawn once more to its existence, when Croatian and regional newspapers (*Danas*) and internet portals (*Index*, *Tportal*, *Libela*, *Gay-Serbia*) reported that it had been vandalized (see Figure 16).



Figure 16: “Homophobes destroyed the plaque to poets Kovačić and Nazor because of hatred?” (Queer Zagreb Festival 2009c)

In 2007, the festival organizers, interviewed for the weekly *Vjesnik*, explained the piece as drawing attention to the absence of research into the history of lesbian and gay artists in Croatia, and to the silence and invisibility this aspect of their lives is fated in the national historiography (Matejcic 2007a, 1). The destruction of the plaque in 2009 in my reading comes to stand in for the precariousness of queer art and queer life in Croatia, but also for its creativity and persistence. The brief article and the photo that accompanied it (Index.hr 2009), against the lack of any further public notice of the destiny of this artwork, can be read as an obituary. However, the fact remains that the wording of the plaque had puzzled the inhabitants of Zagreb for some two years, and the majority of that time – though its permission expired – the plaque continued to function as a queer portal, as an exit sign without being authorized to do so.

In a very direct sense, we can speak of regional queer precisely because for a person from the former Yugoslavia the commemoration of a love affair between Ivan Goran Kovačić and Vladimir Nazor brings a recognition of hushed-up consequences of a queer alliance. I went to an elementary school named after Ivan Goran Kovačić, and so did many other former Yugoslav citizens: we all read their poems, so, this sense of intimate recognition of queering

two literary icons of the socialist period – by the audience/spectators/passers-by, I argue, constitutes the “regional” in the regional queer of post-Yugoslav countries.

The “queer” part refers to the sensibility whereby the performance does not aim at establishing the veracity of Kovačić and Nator’s sexuality or alleged relationship, but blows the historical gossip out of proportion and simultaneously creates access to imagining non-normative identifications at/around the location of the pseudo-monument.

For the plaque to make sense, one’s⁴⁹ entrance to the regional queer could start with a perhaps haphazard sighting of the plaque at the intersection of the Kovačić and Nator streets; an explanation of the writers’ significance for LGBT people in successor countries to former Yugoslavia, and the artist’s trick in bringing them in relation. Numerous possibilities for misinterpretation of this monument bring to light its functioning in the mode of a portal or exit sign of regional queerness. Not understanding the language it’s written in or taking it at face value, one misses out on the meaning and the word-play; not knowing the performance-art framing of the piece, one misreads its conventional “looks” and placement as representing cultural authenticity and official approval; belonging to a younger post-war/post-transition generation, one might not experience the importance of the poets’ queering.

The visual life of the fake plaque can be read as a metaphor of the new visibility of non-normative sexualities in the post-Yugoslav region. Until 2000, the *Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film* in Ljubljana, starting in 1984, was the only festival around; the Pride parades in the region were only getting started in 2001. Since then, there has been a resurgence of queer festivals (Zagreb, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Ljubljana, Skopje, Novi Sad), feminist art festivals, and the turbulent continuation of Pride activism (Sagasta 2001; Simic 2001; Hvala 2011). At the current point in time of writing this thesis, the artistic and political contestations of heteronormativity burst into the space/time of weeklong festivals, have gained foothold and

⁴⁹ Here I am imagining a possible passer-by at the intersection of Kovačić and Nator’s streets in Zagreb between 2007 and 2009, not my readers.

become extended spatially and temporally – some of them through yearlong programs, platforms, and actions. The regional queer is to be found in a mutually comprehensible map of this cycle of emergent visibilities as well as in the shared, or at least, commonly discussed approaches to putting queer signs in public space.

My understanding of regional queer is closely related to what Tea Hvala (2009), an organizer of the *Red Dawns* feminist and queer festival in Ljubljana, calls *politics of memory* that characterize post-Yugoslav feminist and queer festivals. These politics of memory are put into practice through “building connections between generations, but also reclaiming the terminology and meaning of solidarity, alliances, and left-wing politics in general” (Ibid., 1). The work undertaken through creating regional queerness in post-Yugoslav countries, I argue, is the same: local and regional expressions of queerness are reframing the terms of what is possible in the arena of the visual and the political.

6.3 Collaborative Theatrical Performance as a Queer Heterotopia

Here I would like to demonstrate the usefulness of Foucault’s heterotopia, discussed in Section 1.4, for understanding *Queer Zagreb Festival’s* political potential by referring to the 2009 theatrical performance of *The Banquet* as an instance of heterotopic space.

In 2009, the Festival closed with the theater play *The Banquet*. The performance was a collaborative piece of the Brazilian *Teatro Oficina* with professional and amateur actors (Festival volunteers) from the post-Yugoslav region. This re-staging of Plato’s *Symposium* was directed by the internationally renowned Brazilian theater director Ze Celso, one of the leading artists of the Brazilian post-colonial experimental social and art movement *Tropicalismo*. The piece lasted more than three hours, and involved a large number of actors

on and off stage, involving each and every member of the audience in one way or another. The performance started in the yard of the *Itđ. Theater*, an important student theater in the center of Zagreb, transformed for this occasion into a time-capsule for the carnival.

Even before entering the theater and allegedly before the actual beginning of the piece, the *Banquet* chronotope started. The audience were asked to take off their shoes, leave them at the cloakroom, and enter the theater barefoot. In the yard, their feet were washed by the actors and participants, and some viewers were immediately adorned with flowers and already began to look like the rest of the dispersed actors dressed as bacchantes. Upon entering the auditorium, we were offered a glass of wine, while trays full of fruit, bread and cakes encircled the audience seats like in an actual banquet. The glasses were refilled by the actors or friends, and people ate the food offered during the show. The biggest auditorium of the *Itđ. Theater* was so full that people were sitting on the floor and close to the stage. Some actors could be identified as acting on the stage, but what seemed more as a discussion than a staged performance soon was dynamically moving with the actors toward the audience (Figure 17).



Figure 17: The Banquet at the Queer Zagreb Festival 2009 (Vaupotić 2009)

As an involved viewer one was not watching a theater piece in the dark. There were several moving scenes at each moment of time, so we were positioned to try to locate the most interesting piece of action and conversation at a time. We were eating grapes, drinking wine, commenting and participating. After some two hours of this, fully intrigued, I had to leave, so I have not seen the exact mode of closure of the *Banquet* and of the queer time-space of the 2009 *Queer Zagreb Festival*. However, for me as a participant observer, this is the festival year where the line between the Festival and the carnival was the thinnest. Already as I was leaving, it was hardly possible to tell apart actors from non-actors, and the excessive sociality of carnivalesque had taken over the theater, if not the streets. In what follows, my intention is not to claim that the post-Yugoslav queer festivals always or only rely on the democratic, subversive potentials of the carnivalesque to generate a sense of belonging to an

alternative time-space for the duration of the festival. However, the example of the Brazilian performance should serve as the most telling moment of inhabiting the queer festival time-space that I will explore in Section 7.2.

The Banquet staged an opening up of a heterotopia both in its *crisis* mode – as the audience’s rite of passage from viewers to acting participants, and in its *deviance* mode – in acting out a collective discussion of queer Eros of a marathon-length. The heterotopia of *The Banquet*, and by extension of the 2009 *Queer Zagreb Festival*, allowed for change through inviting audience participation and daring to mix theatrical script with viewers’ unscripted responses. In this way, this piece that was supposed to close the 2009 Zagreb Festival rather actualized its potentiality of bringing people together – an aspect of festival time-space which is characterized by Thomas Elsaesser as “the potential of festivals to serve as an agora” (Thomas Elsaesser (2005) in Zielinski 2012, 3).

In addition, *The Banquet* intersected several different spaces in the real place of the *It'd. Theater*: the proper acting space of the stage was continuously upstaged by proliferation of acting spaces in between viewers’ seats, passages, and banquet tables. The space of the theater hall extended to the courtyard where the piece started with taking off of shoes, and to the cloakroom where barefoot viewers queued up to deposit their shoes and coats. *Heterochronies*, thought of by Foucault (2002) as a “break in traditional time” (Ibid., 26), lasted in the case of *The Banquet* for unusually long and open amounts of time for the participants. The audience were coming and going as it suited them, and the time of the theater piece led into the time of the last party event of the 2009 Festival. The “system of opening and closing” of Foucault’s heterotopia was translated into the opening ritual of becoming barefoot and the closing gesture of picking up one’s belonging upon leaving the *Banquet*. The system is flexible since not all of the viewers had to go through it – for example, the late-arrivals entered as they were. Another regulation for entering this

heterotopia consisted of course of the act of buying theater tickets or possessing a festival pass. However, as *The Banquet* proceeded, there was nobody checking tickets at the entrance door, and still I had the impression that new viewers were arriving, with or without tickets. As for the last characteristic of Foucault's heterotopia, this particular heterotopia of the 2009 performance of *The Banquet* brought about, I argue, a sense of belonging to a shared queer space where (hetero)normativity was suspended for at least a couple of hours.

I have analyzed visibility created around the *Queer Zagreb Festival* as instances of queering visibility on the terms of minoritarian aesthetics. Close reading of ten years of the Festival posters showed a visual articulation of strategies of queering of festival posters that stand as a shorthand, I propose, of the processes of queering of visibility through works of art at the Festival as a whole. Analysis of the life-cycle of a commemorative performance by Zabludovsky gave insight into the playful and poignant dynamics of regionally queer art as articulated at the Festival. Critical examination of main features of Foucault's heterotopia against key moments of the realization of *The Banquet* directed by Ze Celso at the 2009 Festival helped formulate what I see as the political potential of queer art for bringing forth transformative communities – and sliding the festival form toward the carnivalesque. In Chapter 7, I engage with my interlocutors' voices to attend to emic sense of festival chronotopes, mobility, and meanings of queer art.

7 REGIONAL QUEERNESS AND THE ZAGREB FESTIVAL COMMUNITY

The year 2012 brought the tenth and final *Queer Zagreb Festival*⁵⁰. Surprising the audience as well as their critics, the organizers celebrated this end, redefining the closing as a prospective continuation - still having things to say and show. The closing event of the last *Queer Zagreb Festival* took place in the *Croatian National Theater*: the Festival organizers and guests held speeches and performed in front of the stage scenography. The visibility of the 19th century painting *the Croatian Revival* in the curtain symbolized the ultimate recognition of the Festival as part of the Croatian national canon⁵¹. The choice of the venue for the last Festival queered the heteronormative national cultural space, for one evening. In my view, it is the enactment of the organizers' strategy of the queer subversion of the mainstream, pursued from 2003 on. The spectacle of the lesbian choir, *Le Zbor* from Zagreb, singing their most provocative cover songs in front of the institutional decorum of the most prestigious Croatian theater house was accompanied both by giggles and an awareness of the long path traversed by the Festival since its opening in 2003.

In this chapter, I reflect on the *Queer Zagreb Festival* through the analysis of the interviews made with the Festival organizers and volunteers, participating artists, and members of the audience. For that, it is important to recall the immediate context in which the Festival appeared in 2003. In 2003, when the *Queer Zagreb Festival* was launched, the

⁵⁰ See the analysis of the manifesto that discusses ending the Festival series in Section 5.3.1.

⁵¹ The *Croatian National Theater* possesses a ceremonious curtain-painting by the renowned painter Vlaho Bukovac. His 1896 masterpiece *The Croatian Revival* shows the mythical rendition of the Illyrian Movement that is equated with the modern awakening of the Croatian national consciousness (see: http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datoteka:Vlaho_Bukovac,_Hrvatski_preporod_%28svecani_zastor_Hrvatskog_narodnog_kazalista_u_Zagrebu%29.jpg). This curtain is drawn on the stage on special occasions of national interest. It was drawn for the closure of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*.

traumatic events of the first Belgrade Pride in 2001 and the first Zagreb Pride in 2002 were still fresh. At the Pride parade in Belgrade, the participants were attacked by the mob while the police just watched, with the chief of police later commenting that Serbia was not ready “for such public display of deviance” (Radio B92 2006, 1). The Zagreb Pride, organized with high precautions the following year, was accompanied by crowds of skinheads shouting “Faggots into concentration camps” (Human Rights Committee 2009). In addition, some 30 participants were attacked after the Zagreb Pride (Ibid.). The battle for the right to visibility in public was waged not only on the streets and in the media but extended to the myth-making in the Croatian Parliament when a conservative party MP explained that “the whole universe is heterosexual” and that there would be dire consequences if this would change⁵². The Pride events helped the local LGBT community mobilize intense lobbying for changes in legislature, as well as activist and cultural organizing in the region.

I had participated in the Pride marches and interviewed lesbian women in Croatia and Serbia on their experiences of direct homophobic violence at these Prides and its influence on their sense of identity (see: Kajinić 2003). I was very much on the lookout at the *Queer Zagreb Festival* in 2003 for an event that might bring some relief into the tense situation. It was into such a scene that the *Queer Zagreb Festival* emerged and eventually made a distinctive change to the strategies of representing non-normative identities in Croatia.

In this chapter, we encounter voices of my interviewees, be they organizers, artists, volunteers or Festival viewers. The previous chapters focused on different data-sets to enquire into the self-presentational, organizational and visual strategies of the Festival organizers. However, my research has a broader aim to find out about the multitude of strategies and

⁵² The infamous words of the CDU (HDZ) representative, Lucija Čikeš, spoken during the parliamentary discussion on registered partnership on March 17th 2006, which later got transformed into a popular *Queer Zagreb* t-shirt, are as follows: “The whole universe is heterosexual, from the atom and the tiniest particle, from the fly to the elephant. The laws of physics say that the same (charges) reject and the opposites attract. If the same charges start to attract, everything would collapse and disappear. The Moon would not spin around the Earth, but fall down; the Earth should not spin around the Sun but tumble and burn or wander off and freeze” (see Bosanac 2006, 5).

tactics of the “festival people” in using queer art and politics to confront and potentially exit normativity. In what follows, I explore the processes of negotiation of meanings of queer art, visibility and space of post-Yugoslav queer festivals through the interviewees’ perspective. I will analyze the ways in which the members of the Zagreb Festival community negotiate regional queerness through travelling, experiencing queer festival time-space, and understanding art.

7.1 Regional Queerness in Motion

In this section, I approach festival travelling as a mode of negotiating the meanings of regional queerness. Intrigued by the trajectories of art and persons in-between post-Yugoslav queer festivals and its implications for the symbolic geographies of queerness, I used my fieldwork in 2010 at the *Queer Zagreb Festival* to ask my interlocutors about their festival travelling. Among twenty persons I interviewed in Zagreb (in 2009, 2010 and 2012), four of them were Festival organizers; four were participating artists, eight were viewers, while four were volunteers at the Festival. All of them were involved in the Queer Zagreb, but some had also visited other regional festivals or Pride events.

First of all, I was surprised by the lack of close ties between *Queer Zagreb Festival* and the *Gay and Lesbian Film Festival* in Ljubljana, quite atypical of the other queer festivals in the region. When asked, the organizers of the film festival in Ljubljana (whom I interviewed in 2010) gave voice to their concern about the use of the term “queer” which they perceived as endangering lesbian and gay identity politics. They expressed strong doubts about the usefulness of “queerness” for their festival and their movement, and also suspicion of regional queerness as developed in the arts festival of Zagreb. The Ljubljana activists

ground their reservations in their historical position as by far the oldest lesbian and gay film festival in the post-Yugoslav region. It started in 1984, and not in the wake of the split of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the new millennium, as the rest of the queer festivals in the region. In this way, the two festivals in Zagreb and Ljubljana represent different but intersecting temporalities of LGBT activism and cultural organizing. Their changing symbolical geographies are articulated as the “biggest queer festival in Central Eastern Europe” gaining strength in Zagreb and “the oldest gay and lesbian film festival in Europe” going proud and local in Ljubljana.

However, the different choices of arts and politics of the two festivals also account for a certain diffidence and lack of interest among their respective festival-communities. This is why Gabe, as a viewer of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* and an organizer of another feminist art festival in Zagreb – the *Vox Feminae*, expresses a common view of the Ljubljana film festival, as seen by my interviewees from Zagreb: “I had no clue at all – how big it was! What is it like when you come there – how many people are there? There is no feedback at all – nobody ever talked about having been there! So that's why it seems so distant to me! In principle, it is very close“ (Gabe 2010, 1)⁵³.

In a similar vein, Karla, one of the organizers of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, explains the reasons why the “Zagreb audience“ would go to a Ljubljana queer arts festival like *Rdeče Zore* but not to the gay and lesbian film festival in the same city:

It's like that with film festivals – I don't need to go to another state to see a movie! I can see it in Croatia – we also have a festival (...) I think the same happens with the Zagreb audience who thinks: we can watch queer movies here! It is not the same with other queer art content. When it comes to music or performance art, there is already the question of that direct experience – the aura of Walter Benjamin, here and now (laughter)! But the film is always the same - the celluloid that travels from city to city. (Karla 2010, 5)

⁵³ Page number indicates that of the transcription.

On the other hand, Karla points out the difference of the other Ljubljana queer festival, *Rdeče Zore*. It is a festival of queer and feminist art that in Karla's perception seems to attract more audience from Zagreb than the Ljubljana film festival:

There is a lot of Zagreb audience at the Rdeče Zore, really! When I went there, I entered into a room, and there were six women I knew from Zagreb. Literally six – that is not a small number. But again, that depends on the festival – how a festival opens itself toward the regional audience, that's what it's about. (Ibid.:4–5)

The festivals' map of mobility becomes very complex when we take the travelling of artists and organizers as well as that of audiences into account. With considerable variation in motives and individual social positions, activists travel from festival to festival in the region; students volunteer or carefully choose the festival events they can afford; queers from smaller cities head for the capital during the festival week. For some of my interviewees, especially for students, festival-mobility gets played out within one city. For many students, volunteering is one affordable way of getting involved in a festival they are interested in, which enables them to meet the artists, organisers, and audiences, and watch some shows. Especially in the case of *Queer Zagreb Festival* with its expensive tickets, this might be even a long-term strategy. Ivana had been a *Queer Zagreb Festival* volunteer almost from its beginnings and volunteers also for several other festivals in Zagreb that sparked her interest: "I usually don't travel to art festivals because of purely practical reasons of not having enough money for something like that! (...) But in Zagreb I travel from festival to festival! I have my favourite festivals where I always volunteer, that I always watch" (Ivana 2010, 3–4).

Superficially, it might seem that the intense involvement of the Zagreb audience with the Queer Zagreb and local Zagreb festivals might disprove my assumption about "regional queerness". However, I argue that even when making a decision not to travel to a festival in a neighbouring country, the organisers, artists and festival-goers engage in a complex set of

negotiations of subtle differences in politics of sexual and gender non-normativity in the regional context. So for instance, the two festivals, *Queer Zagreb Festival* of queer high art, and the *Gay and Lesbian Film Festival* in Ljubljana, are situated at two opposing poles of post-Yugoslav lesbian/gay and queer cultural politics. Even if the communities around each festival overlap only a little, as Karla's disposition shows, the constant discussions and processes of dis/identification do circulate around the shared or disavowed "regional queerness".

On the one hand, queer festival participants engage in imagining shared regional belonging such as "Queeroslavia" created around the *Queer Belgrade Festival*; the post-socialist queerness of the post-Yugoslav region explored at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, or the post-Yugoslav lesbian activist solidarity thematized by activists at the Ljubljana film festival. However, there exist widely divergent readings of post-Yugoslav queer geotemporalities even among local LGBT activists themselves, disclosing some discriminatory practices within the current "geometries of power" – as Doreen Massey (1993) calls contemporary geopolitics.

While not faring so neatly in the embattled geopolitical division between "east" and "west" as Slovenia, other post-Yugoslav queer festival communities reinterpret the implicit geographies of value in ways that valorize their project. For example, the lack of interconnectedness of the Croatian art/film market with international distribution systems allows for an unexpected attractiveness of a small queer festival that brings to its audiences new art content precisely because of the unregulated situation that allows for action. In the interpretation of Zvonimir Dobrović, the program director of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, the geopolitical margin becomes an undisputable center, and as such, also a magnet. According to Zvonimir:

When it comes to the region and film – I think we are the strongest festival for queer films. Even in Europe, when you look at the festivals such as Hamburg or Koeln – we often screen films before they do! Sometimes this is because our festival comes first,

but sometimes we show them even several years before. This is because at times these festivals wait for European distributors, for example - German distributors, since the films cost less that way. We in Zagreb cannot wait for distributors since none of these films will have any distributor. Even if they get a distributor –we will not be able to show this film precisely because they don't want to connect the film with queer. (Zvonimir 2010, 2)

In the broader LGBTQ film festival circuit, it is the location of the Zagreb Festival on the margins of the commercial interests of film distributors that enables innovative organizational decisions and temporarily turns the margin-center topography upside down. However, Zvonimir argues for a qualitative disjunction between the Zagreb Festival and other regional queer festivals:

In the region, Ljubljana is an obvious example of a festival that is worth visiting. But for programming it is not interesting to me. It is rare that some program in the region surprises me in the sense that I haven't heard of or seen some film or that something would be really undiscovered. In programming sense, I think that Queer Zagreb is more of a destination than a starting point. (Ibid.)

In the above quote we see the other side of the coin of Kulpa and Mizielinska's (2011) “temporal disjunction“. From the “eastern“ side of the geotemporal divide, where everything came “all at once“ instead of gradual “accumulation“ of knowledge and experience (Mizielinska 2011), it is possible to read an ongoing struggle for resignification of geopolitical relations of power. According to Kulpa (2011), “geotemporalities of queerness“ are necessarily engaged in renegotiating relations of metropolis and periphery (Ibid.:1). The program director of the Queer Zagreb seemingly effortlessly reinscribes the geotemporal location of his festival as a periphery that is somehow better off than the center, as a margin that offers more to its festival community due to its temporal belonging to Kulpa and Mizielinska's “time of coincidences“ (2011, 15). He mentions the Ljubljana gay and lesbian film festival as “worth visiting“, but his “festival selector“ function turns him into a professional traveller who is hardly surprised by anything a local/regional festival providing

an international selection of films could offer. Instead, he claims to belong to the geotemporality that takes him for instance to Asia when preparing the 2011 Zagreb Festival that would showcase films from five different Asian queer festivals or to New York to bring his organizational experience from Zagreb to preparing the *Queer New York Festival* in 2012 and 2013. The annual travelling of the programmer of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* has a very direct effect on the festival programming: “Also it sometimes happen that I go, for example, in Japan. This year I was in Jakarta where we started this idea to have a festival devoted to Asian film next year. This way I select films as a programmer, and other programers (program directors) have a similar route” (Zvonimir 2010, 2). Zvonimir sketches the mode and motivations for his itinerary as follows:

There is a great number of queer festivals, especially film festivals, and the mobility among the organizers is incredible. Two festivals are crucial: in Europe - it's London, and in the United States - it's San Francisco and Los Angeles, which in fact have the same program with one month of difference. (...) Why are these two festivals so important? Because they have a very broad selection – they are showing almost all that was made during that year. (Ibid.:1)

The program director's mobility reflects the incessant travelling characteristic of a festival circuit. The work of programming exerts the pull to travel in order to be in-the-know: “For me personally, and probably for others for the same reasons, it is very important to be at those festivals as often as possible because at one place you can get a very broad insight into all that is been produced in a certain year” (Ibid.). The global bustling mobility around the *Queer Zagreb Festival* profoundly upsets all notions of “eastern” backwardness of places such as post-Yugoslav countries supposedly in need to catch up with the “proper” time-line of the “western” LGBT movement. The center and the margin division is troubled, and the cooperations between marginal locations take on new significance. As Zvonimir explains:

These are usually the same places, simply the spaces where things happen - San Francisco, London and Berlin among the film festivals. But often something comes up

outside of that map. In that way one gains an insight into some more local or more regional production. I like to go to the *Mix Brazil Festival* in Sao Paolo because they often have an excellent program, and are focused on Brazilian or South American film production. These are the films that do not become known on the outside. (Ibid.:2)

This flexible all-but-backward mobility and its accompanying privileged temporality of lucky coincidences is not always perceived this unproblematically. The well-funded mobility and programming practices, as well as the particular style of queer politics practiced by the Zagreb Festival, are seen by some participants as elitist, and at times exclusionary. Gabe, who is an organizer of the *Vox Feminae*, another feminist/queer festival in Zagreb, and an occasional viewer of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, expresses this critical view: “For me it is hard that the wishes of the community are not attended to. That's my problem with queer festivals – the Queer Zagreb for example. I try to correct things with the Vox, as much as possible. I don't care that the performers are not famous and don't have experience because I know that they need this chance“ (Gabe 2010, 8).

The two festivals she discusses, the *Queer Zagreb* and the *Vox Feminae*, represent two opposing approaches to queer politics and community organising. While *Queer Zagreb* is to bring “big names“ in contemporary dance and performance art and frame it as queer art for the Zagreb audience, which partially includes the local queer community, the *Vox Feminae* with an uncomparably smaller budget and less elitist cultural ambitions is presented as more in touch with the Croatian queer community and with the artists from that community as well. Gabe interprets the chronic absence of women artists, and feminist and lesbian art content, from the program of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* as an expression of disregard for the interests of that part of the LGBT community, and a conservative organizational practice that needs to be remedied. This alleged lack of attention to the “wishes“ of the local community and participation in power networks of cultural festival organising emerges as an important critique of queer politics that has turned into an elitist cultural practice. Gabe clarifies some of

the possible risks of an elitist mobility that is centralized in a single professional festival organizer: “The film program was really interesting to me. But, just looking at the program, you can tell exactly where he (the program director) has travelled this year! When you look at all the programs, you understand that he is everywhere, all around the world, he has networked with everybody“ (Ibid.:4).

The risks she mentions do not affect only the programming choices that reflect personal tastes of a single person. They also include more significant issues for queer politics, such as access to local and global funds and networks of international contacts; the ability to choose what is to be organized and who gets positioned as “being-in-the-(queer cultural)-know”. This privileged position of the cultural authority is reflected in the festival itinerary of the program director of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. When he says:

But since Queer (Zagreb) deals with much broader things, I also travel to theater festivals. Not to queer theater festivals because there are not so many or they have a much narrower program, and I would say, not of such high quality as ours – simply, they are not a good source for programming for me. I go to festivals or particular shows when they happen anywhere in Europe because that is much easier. (Zvonimir 2010, 1)

Diametrically opposite to such approach to queer organizing would be the *d-i-y* politics of the *Queer Belgrade Festival* and the anarcho-queer vision of the *Rdeće Zore* in Ljubljana. Even the organizational principles of the *Gay and Lesbian Film Festival* in Ljubljana differ a great deal from the *Queer Zagreb* centralized approach. The Ljubljana festival has a much smaller budget, which together with their activist egalitarian politics, curtails the dizzying mobility visible around more moneyed festivals. The organizers do not travel in order to see movies; they screen and select them in Ljubljana among the films that arrive as a response to their call-for-films every year. Since it is a small, “specialized” film festival, it might not be well-known among the film-makers internationally until the moment arrives to “niche-market” their “gay” film. Although the Ljubljana film festival does not give

out prizes, it attracts film-makers with its reputation of longevity, as does the *Queer Zagreb Festival* with its ambitious global programming practices. The festivals that miss out on the market of film circulation, such as the small queer festivals or the feminist-anarchist festivals in the region, are the low-budget activist festivals that carry no prestige for new films and so usually screen older documentaries or low-budget films. However, their lack of commercial appeal goes hand in hand with their radical politics, and the appreciation of their audience for non-commercial film stories.

Those smaller activist festivals rely a great deal on the support of the regional activist network – even for its audience. The network of post-Yugoslav activist cooperation accounts for a great deal of festival mobility as well as of Pride parades mobility across the region – when, for example, activists from Serbia and Macedonia come to Pride parades in Zagreb since there was no parade organised in their country or when the LGBT activists from, for example, Croatia and Slovenia travelled to Sarajevo to support the opening of the first *Queer Sarajevo Festival* in 2008. Gabe recalls one such “solidarity“ trip – travelling to the opening of the 2008 *Queer Sarajevo Festival*, but arriving too late since the Festival got shut down the day after the opening due to the attacks:

I went to the Sarajevo Queer Festival. But we didn't come to the opening - we came early in the morning. So that's why we missed it. (...) We were going to make a film about trans persons, and we knew that many from the trans community will come, so we were going to make interviews with them. (...) But then we haven't managed to do anything because everybody ran away – everybody was in such a state of panic that we couldn't do any work! (Gabe 2010, 10)

For students, this mobile regional solidarity is usually not so easy to practice for financial reasons, but if the cause is important enough, a lot of young queer people manage to travel to a Pride or a queer festival in a nearby country. Ivo, a recurrent volunteer of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, while writing his thesis, decided to participate and support the Belgrade Pride in 2010: “I went to the Belgrade Pride this year. I spent the last money I had on

(laughter) going to Belgrade. I needed a little fresh air before I start writing my BA thesis so I wanted to participate in the Pride“ (Ivo 2010, 8–9).

He was not the only one in my cohort of interviewees who found it important to support the Belgrade Pride. Karla, an organiser of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, and an active member of the Zagreb Pride Organising Committee in 2010, was there also. She chooses carefully where to go, due to her many involvements, but the Belgrade Pride and regional queer arts festivals function as a magnet for the regional solidarity of the post-Yugoslav queer community members: “I was this year at the Belgrade Pride. I went to the last Queer Belgrade in 2008. I intended to go that year to the Queer Sarajevo, but it didn't take place. I think it was 2008 or 2009 when I went to the Red Dawns (festival). I travel but not as much as I would want to unfortunately because my work does not let me“ (Karla 2010, 4).

Helena, a queer artist who has exhibited at the *Queer Zagreb Festival* and who has an active presence on the Croatian LGBT scene as a visual artists and a musician in a local queer rock band, engages in intensive regional queer festival travelling. However, this kind of nomadic mobility of participating in a festival often for just one day for a concert or an exhibition opening, instead of staying for the whole duration of the “festival time“ period has at times proved exhausting and left her with fleeting impressions of particular festivals: “To the Ljubljana film festival we also came for just one evening – only to see our “Bura band“ documentary. And then we left - we couldn't stay longer. So I have just a limited experience of these festivals. Since I mostly just did the performance or the exhibition or whatever it was, and then I would usually leave“ (Helena 2010, 3).

The attempt to organise the queer festivals in the countries of former Yugoslavia into a network in 2007 and subsequently through a mailing-list and individual contacts did not take root. This network was motivated by the intensity of travelling of the “festival people“ – in this case, queer festival organisers – who met at various festivals and art occasions across the

region, and hoped to begin using these encounters for more structured exchange of ideas and of festival-program. The intensive festival mobility sparked numerous regional and local projects and cooperations, as well as served as a vehicle of expressing regional queer solidarity across often conflicted borders. On the other hand, one of the inadvertent consequences in case of some new “specialized“ festivals has been an implicit reliance on the support of this regional network in addition to the dependence on the international NGO funding network, which has influenced the programs of the festivals and their integration into the local community. Gabe criticizes some aspects of this reliance on the regional activist mobility:

There is no in-flow of new people! That is the biggest problem - also at the Pitchwise Festival! When we went to Sarajevo for the Pitchwise – it was us: everybody from Belgrade, everybody from Ljubljana, everybody from Zagreb. I say: where are the local people from Sarajevo? They are not present! How can you do a festival in the middle of Sarajevo without them? (Gabe 2010, 2)

She is commenting on the lack of local spectators at the Sarajevo-based feminist art festival, and goes on to extend the parallel to some other regional festivals where one always sees the same faces – travelling from festival to festival, from Pride to Pride, in a vibrant but closed-circle hub of regional mobility.

This festival mobility revolves around complex regional connections, and brings international influences and participants together with local and regional ones as well. An intriguing case of the international/regional/local cooperation can be found in the theater piece *The Banquet* presented at the 2009 Zagreb festival. As discussed in Section 6.3, it was directed by a famous Brazilian theater director, Ze Celso, and involved his small theater company in collaboration with local Croatian actors (professionals and amateurs), with guest actors from the region. For Karla, this show was an important experience at the beginning of her organising career:

Quite a few of the actors in that show came from Serbia! At least six or seven of them! First we got an invitation – telling us that there exists a group of people who are interested in the Queer Zagreb Festival and would like to participate. Is there any openness to this, do we have some activities like that? We said: we have something this very year! The workshop lasted for two weeks, and then there was the performance. (Karla 2010, 4)

The network of organising solidarity around non-normative sexualities and gender expressions in post-Yugoslavia influences not only the audiences but also the organisers and activists. In order to enquire whether this interest in queer cultural and artistic production in the region was organized around shared cultural ties of a former sense of belonging to the same country and if it was influenced by the wider region and the current historical moment of post-communist or post-socialist time and space, I asked my interviewees about their immediate responses to the term “post-socialist queer“ introduced by the *Queer Zagreb Festival* in 2003. For some younger interviewees, the label did not carry much lived significance. Ivana, a long-term volunteer at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, searches for possible resonances of “post-socialist queer“ related to her life, but finds little: “When I was five or six years old, Yugoslavia fell apart, so that whole story seems chronically far away from me. But I understand it as some kind of transition from some older way of functioning toward the new: free market, neoliberalism, transitional society, capitalism, maybe more free space for different (freedoms)“ (Ivana 2010, 8).

Indeed, it is important to reflect on what “post-socialist“ would mean when linked to “queerness“ in Croatia. The organisers of the first *Queer Zagreb Festival* in 2003 creatively brought the two in a dialogue. Instead of giving a set of definitions, they issued a call for artistic works for an exhibition whose task was to bring those disparate terms into relation, as discussed in Subsection 5.2.1. An academic conference that accompanied the first Zagreb Festival had the same task: it was entirely dedicated to discussing “post-socialist queer“.

However, apart from those two venues, and one brief article written by Zvonimir Dobrović (2004) entitled “Post-socialist queer“ and published in the *Cultural Studies Review*, it seems that the phrase did not catch on in the LGBT community in Croatia. Most of my interviewees expressed their surprise as if they are hearing it for the first time or had certain reservations when they were already familiar with the expression. Indeed, in the years following the first Queer Zagreb, the Festival organisers abandoned the direction of the “post-socialist queer“ although they continued to experiment with linguistic terms that would bring together the focus on non-normativity, art and the region. In 2007, for instance, they came up with a film program dedicated to “gay motives“ in former Yugoslav films and a focus on “queerness through art, theory and activism with a special focus on regional geography“ (Queer Zagreb Festival 2007c, 9), which both as terms and as an aesthetics seems to be much more easily recognizable to my interviewees.

Organisers themselves, as well as viewers involved with the Festival from its beginning, dialogue more with the term itself, and the intentions behind using it to start the Festival. So, Jelena, a queer activist and viewer who was occasionally engaged in organising/volunteering at the Queer Zagreb, explains what “post-socialist queer“ refers to for him like this:

(It means) how the Queer Zagreb tried to pull together and attract some artists from the region of former Yugoslavia or from the Balkans, and how they tried to (deal) with the very concept of queer. They do not take the meaning of queer from the outside and just translate it here. They try to see what queerness means in this region. (Jelena 2010, 11)

Although not involved in creating the expression “post-socialist queer“ and the program, Jelena still translates its implications as meaningful for him and the local queer community: “In that context, post-socialist queer sounds ok. (...) They are trying to find some local meaning of queer. I don't think that in the first two years there were many local artists,

but I think that they are dealing with, also through films, the question of totalitarian regimes, and the (history) of Eastern Europe“ (Ibid.). In this quest for the “local meaning of queer“, Jelena recognizes the strategies of the *Queer Zagreb Festival's* usage of “post-socialist queer“ or “regional“ queer to account for the specificities of living queerness in this particular geohistorical time and space, and to imply art produced by local artists.

In Section 7.1 I have analyzed my interviewees' travelling to and inbetween post-Yugoslav queer festivals in terms of its negotiation effects. The map of post-Yugoslav queer mobility testifies to the significance of practices of regional queerness for its participants and renegotiates the geographies of the post-socialist margins.

7.2 Viewers Inhabiting Festival Chronotope

In this section, I analyze my interlocutors' accounts of chronotopes characteristic of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. The concept of the chronotope is an analytical tool for looking at the significance that participants in festival communities give to time-space relations during the festival. My interviewees in Zagreb speak about the queer festival as a special event in the year's duration. Only a couple of times in the interviews was I met with a puzzled glance expressing that my interlocutor had not thought or felt the event was important. Most of the times, there would be an acknowledgement that my question had struck a cord, that we both had entered a territory, affective and conceptual, that is shared.

The category of a special festival time as of time-space of cultural and communal resistance was recognized by most of the interviewees. Because of this, I have taken as significant also the answers that discuss the festival chronotope in relation to other festivals, and included them here. In the in-depth interviews with the total of twenty participants, one

question almost invariably⁵⁴ brought a smile to my interlocutors' faces: the question about their experiencing of the festival time and space. This section is devoted to queer festival people recounting their experiences of festival chronotopes and is meant to substantiate my argument that the post-Yugoslav queer festivals participate in the creation of a public space of pleasure by translating the straight place of their cultural context to a space of festival carnivalesque.

The analysis of festival manifestos in Section 4.2 and that of festival programs in Section 5.2 dealt with some forms of festival chronotopes: figurations of regional queerness; dialogues between art, activism and theory; and resistance to heteronormativity. During my long participant-observation of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* for almost nine years as a viewer; as a volunteer in 2005 and in 2009; and as a researcher engaged in fieldwork in 2010 I have observed a multitude of chronotopes realized through particular works of art or Festival events. For instance, on the occasion of the 2005 Festival, I participated in a collaborative community project that resulted in the installation "QueerNormal". In this project, the New York-based dancer/choreographer Jen Abrams and filmmaker Barbara Bickart worked with the members of the local LGBT community in Rijeka, Croatia. We danced Abrams' choreographies in the space of a gay cruising ground in the shipyards of the Rijeka harbor; performed LGBT *family portraits* in front of major heteronormative urban venues for Bickart's camera; and ventured the city with video-cameras for our individual video-stories, which became part of her "QueerNormal" installation at the 2005 Festival. Here, however, I turn to my interlocutors' experiences of participating in festival chronotopes and the affective intensity of their accounts of the festival time-space.

Some of my interviewees, due to their artistic, activist or organisational engagements, have extensively inhabited queer festival time-space and are able to choose among the

⁵⁴ Only a handful of my interviewees asked for a clarification of this question. They were, mostly, artists visiting the festival for the first time and not involved in the festival chronotope in the engrossing way described by other interviewees.

multitude of experienced chronotopes one which holds a paradigmatic status. Helena, a visual artist, selected her experience at the *Transgressing Gender* conference in 2005 as an instance of a personally and communally powerful time-space representative of her other experiences:

Why is everybody mentioning this one event? It was something special. Maybe it was because of the space – we were spending whole days at the ITD theater⁵⁵. There was that beautiful space of the ITD – you could come there, drink a coffee, everything was close by – all the screenings! I don't remember that I went to any (laughter), I was there at the ITD all the time. There were groups of people from Belgrade, Sarajevo, Ljubljana – all the activists came. I also think that there were international activists from Austria and Slovenia. All in all, that was an interesting combination of people. For those couple of days of the festival, it seemed as if the whole of life has moved into the ITD! (Helena 2010, 4)

Helena's memory of the intensity of the days of the conference (in her remembrance, it gets the status of a *festival*), when it felt as if “the whole of life has moved” there, captures the essence of the festival time-space phenomenon. This sense of intensity of the festival chronotope is even more evident in her words for describing the festival experience when she calls it “that magical time of the festival” (Ibid.). Her “magical time” comes close to Bakhtin's joyous unruly carnival, when the world is turned upside-down and the rules are subverted by all for its brief duration. So, Helena describes the sense of liberation that the festival events bring along: “And there were all these encounters with others, and all that! I don't even remember where I stayed in Zagreb during that time – where I slept. I just know that I was there all the time. This is that magical time of the festival. When you are in that space all the time” (Ibid.).

She describes the difference between being submerged into this magical festival time and just visiting a festival as she often did for a day or two: “Other festivals happened in other places, for example, in Ljubljana, and we would come, do our show and go immediately back

⁵⁵ The ITD Theater (“Itđ.” is an abbreviation for “and so on” in Croatian) is a leading student theater in Zagreb.

so I wouldn't stay for more days. I guess we didn't have that magical time of the festival – when you come and live for a couple of days in a place where festival is happening“ (Ibid.).

Through humor, Helena pinpoints the links between the intensity of the festival time-space and the emotions that make the experience for its participants so intensive. Her fashioning of a festival “syndrom“ downplays its intensity but makes clear the “symptoms“ shared by many of my interlocutors: a shared sense of belonging to a special chronotope where change seems possible, and an acute sense of longing afterwards: “Definitely that different time exists - when the days melt together into one, and it all becomes one long festival. Your post-festival life is a bit empty and depressing. The so called Post-Festival Depression Syndrom! So you have that PFDS, and miss that space where all that was happening; you miss the people, and the program!“ (Ibid.).

Ines, who volunteered at the *Queer Zagreb* in 2010 and who as a journalist follows the cultural happenings both for the *Queer.hr portal* and other newspapers, describes how the festival space and time has become her profession:

If you follow culture, you do not have to wait any longer let's say three months or a month for something to be happening in the city, you do not have to be expecting – you are in the middle of things all the time. Every week there is an opening of an exhibition here, a performance there, a book presentation. Now the festival time has turned into permanent time. (Ines 2010, 4)

This transformation of festival time into permanent time is especially intensive in my data for cultural workers involved with the festivals, most of all for artists and festival organisers. For the organisers of post-Yugoslav queer festivals and for artists, the queer festival circuit turns the calendar into a continuous queer festival period. Since the specificity of the festival time, as of Bakhtin's carnival, is the intensification of pleasure for the viewers through concentrated artistic and social experience, the question is what becomes of this festival time when it becomes permanent time? A permanent disruption of social hierarchies

with time may reestablish some form of rules and social order, and defeat the purpose and spirit of festival as carnival. The mobility of artists, organisers and viewers on the queer festival circuit brings together commodification and touristic motives, on the one hand, and the activist liberatory strivings of queer politics. Because of this, the dilemma that accompanies the transformation of subversiveness of festival time into “permanent time” is very similar to Gamson's “queer dilemma“. The question is whether queer time can keep its subversive edge if it gets prolonged into the everyday, but also, how to bring the potential of both queer and everyday time together and turn into effective community politics.

It would appear that for most of my informants the special status that the festival time holds in their lives is related to its difference from the rest of the ordinary time of the year. The intensification experienced during the queer festival week – when everything from art to parties seems to engage into making space for non-normativity – turns the regular time and space of heteronormativity upside down, and because of this, means more for queer viewers than the sum of individual films or performances. Dunja, a volunteer for the *Queer Zagreb Festival* in 2010, recounts her motivation to participate in queer festival space-time:

For me, this festival time and space is especially important. I do not really go to anything organised outside of the festival time. For example, these films at the “Queer moments“, I have not gone even once. I am not usually interested in films as much as in shows and performances. But even those, if isolated – they are simply not as interesting or I am not so much in the mood for them. (Dunja 2010, 4)

Dunja is interested in being an active participant of the queer festival time in such a degree that she also helps as a volunteer and takes an active part in the Festival community. The anticipation and experience of the festival period verge on “pleasure“ for her: “I opt for being a volunteer at the festival, which means that – not only do I have duties every day, but also realistically I have free entrance to the shows which I wouldn't have otherwise. But it is

not so much about the free tickets – I simply want to devote time to this, and I really love it. It is a special pleasure (laughter)“ (Ibid.:5).

Other volunteers also talk about the festival week as an especially intensive period they look forward to the whole year. It usually satisfies their expectations in terms of the novelty of the festival content and the sense of community they find. For Ivana, another volunteer, for instance, the festival time-space feels like living in a “totally different world“ for a short period, one she chooses to return to.

It is all terribly condensed – it lasts not more than five or six days. You are in it all day long, and you get separated from your ordinary life. This happens at any festival you are organising. You are doing only that. You are running to the City council and asking for the permits (...).Then in the evening, you come to the performance, and spend time there in company with others until one or two in the morning. That is a totally different world. (Ivana 2010, 5)

Ivana talks about her experience of the Festival in terms of inhabiting a “protected space“ and finds this atmosphere of “tolerance“ a strong motive for coming back to volunteer for six consecutive years: “This world is uncomparably more tolerant. It accepts the people who inhabit it to a much greater degree than ordinary life. You experience some kind of protected space - lasting those five, six days. Everybody there knows that the other person will not judge him for who he is“ (Ibid.:5–6).

From her point of view as a volunteer, she is aware that it is precisely this total immersion into spending time together and sharing space with other non-threatening but welcoming people that allows one the experience of this “totally different world“. She supposes that for the viewers who only show up in the evening for one show or a screening, it is “a whole other story“ in the sense that they take part in this world only in a less engaged way or combine it in some way with their everyday life. For her, as for many other volunteers and festival professionals, it is “much more interesting to be part of the festival than just to come, visit and go away. You get much more out of it“ (Ibid.:6).

Similarly to volunteers, organisers cannot but be immersed into the festival experience, which for them spans the year but culminates in the festival week when they finally encounter the artists and the art they have worked to bring to the festival as well as the audience and their reaction. It is not surprising that when talking with the organisers I encountered again the trope of Bakhtin's "second life" or as the program director Zvonimir puts it "enter(ing) into another world":

I come from the position of someone who makes festivals happen. I know that when I go to a festival – as many days as I am there, even as little as three days – when you arrive to some (festival), you enter into another world. (...) I especially feel it when I arrive to a festival which has already begun – when I arrive in the middle of the festival. I am suddenly washed over by the whole history of this festival – the history of its first three days. (Zvonimir 2010, 6)

Zvonimir's detailed description of this *history* of a festival chronotope walks us through the stages of immersion into the festival time-space. It also makes clear the affects behind the intensity of experience of belonging to a festival community:

They have already been drunk together, they watched great shows, things have already happened. At first, you feel like a stranger entering a space where some liasons have already been formed. I don't mean relationships but somebody hang out with somebody else, they made plans together, something has already worked out, they had a fabulous discussion until two in the morning. You understand that you arrived into a space that is bounded (...) That is what is beautiful about festivals, and, actually, I love going to festivals! (Ibid.)

Here we are offered a comprehensive description of how festival time feels to its participants, and how it gets noticed in the first place. Sometimes one is so immersed in festival time and space that one will realize how much it differs from your ordinary time only after the festival period is over. Zvonimir as an experienced festival professional and a festival-goer formulates the experience like "entering into another world". The easiest way, according to him, to notice the boundary between the ordinary and "another" world is when one is somewhat late in entering what has already begun to function as "festival chronotope",

with its own rhythm, relationships, and history. The image of being “washed over” by the festival's “history of its first three days” gives an insight into the experience of the moment of crossing over. The bustling intensity of festival time makes for the rules of its own, so that even such a short time span as the first day of the festival becomes a unit of history. By the end of the opening night of the festival, things have already happened.

The festival people in my data, from organisers and artists to viewers and volunteers, in general have an intense relationship with the space and time of their festival. At times, they are so involved that some question in our interview would trigger a long and complex response while at the same time allowing the speaker to take the step back from their immediate experience and reflect critically on what has become intimately known to them. Karla, organiser of the *Queer Zagreb* and editor of the Queer.hr portal, laughed when I asked whether she noticed something we could call festival space and time:

This is what I meant with differences between the film program of the festival and our monthly film screenings. In these monthly film screenings, what is missing is that festival fever, and people do not come for that festival mingling, and that something that is in the air. Obviously, I think that all those three things are present when the festival is in the city! (Karla 2010, 7)

Part of Karla's role as an organizer is focused on putting together the evening entertainment program that brings the Festival people together after all the shows. Here she explains her work on using the festival “fever”, the sense of “something in the air”, to make the Festival chronotope into a meaningful community experience:

That's more intensive when there is some night life happening. Then the people, after entire day at the festival, have a feeling that they can go somewhere, and collect their impressions. Because, you are watching a movie, watching a performance, socializing, and somehow you always see all those people. In the evening you can drink a beer with them. There are also the people who are organising the festival – not just us from the office, but a bunch of volunteers, all sorts of people who help us during the festival. Also the artists come to these night programs. I see this as the glue of the festival team. This is the thing that connects us the most. (Ibid.:7–8)

She identifies this festival “glue” that brings and holds a diverse community of queer persons and allies together during the festival week. The festival community around the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, as well as around other post-Yugoslav festivals, gets constituted around the sense of excitement of the artistic and cultural experience of the festival, around socializing with people attracted by these same events, and a sense of significant change, which might best be translated by connecting it to the sense of the “magical time of the festival” and fulness of possibilities associated also by other interviewees with this specific period of time. They perceive it as an “event”.

Karla described her trajectory from a young person coming to her first *Queer Zagreb Festival*, being impressed and taken in by the program and the people she encountered, to her becoming an organiser herself. She also offers a glimpse into the phenomenology of a typical festival moment: the moment when festival-goers recognise each other on the street afterwards and what that means for their experience of the festival and the city in terms of identity politics: “You are standing and watching – who are those people around me? After a week like that, you meet that person hanging around the city, you start greeting each other. You know each other! You are familiar with each other from the Queer (festival)! You wink to each other in the tram (laughter)! That is terribly cool!” (Ibid.:8).

Her description of the festival time and space that works as a site of attraction and functions as community “glue” speaks to Ahmed's “desire lines”: lines in the landscape trodden in by those who walk off the official paths beyond the actual events. In this instance, queer festival participants intersperse the city with a complex network of desire lines that extends long after the festival week. Karla gives us another sketch of the making of a community - this time of a small group of viewers becoming a large group of acquaintances and friends: “You are in front of the cinema, the film has just ended, and you would like to continue to some other place. Then some five persons appear behind you, a group, and you

also are with some two or three people, and they are like: hey, where are you going? All of a sudden you are a group of eight continuing together to some other place“ (Ibid.).

This spontaneous and productive effect of the “magical time of the festival“ – a formation of a bigger group “all of a sudden“ has to be understood in its full potential for a small queer community in a country where queer visibility is almost contemporaneous with the Festival. The making of a small group after a queer show and the winking in the tram are not just side-effects of cultural consumption that end with socializing. Karla points out the significance of these small steps for her and for the LGBT community in Croatia: it might seem banal at the moment when it is happening, but it has profound cumulative effects – it is “empowering“ for queer persons involved in the exchange: “You feel like you are now friends but in fact you have only watched a theater show together. This might be banal on one level, but it is empowering on the level of community. I find this important from the activist side“ (Ibid.).

Participation in the queer festival space and time can have powerful impact on the level of emotions. Zvonimir talks about festival time as a “very intense time“ and jokingly recollects his younger self as particularly susceptible to falling in love during this charged period: “That's why I love going to festivals – because I know that it is a very intense time. When I was younger (laughter), I would always fall in love at a festival. Because you feel so vulnerable in a way, so open for... That concentration of artists and ideas somehow opens you up completely. You are totally like a sponge“ (Zvonimir 2010, 6).

The existential metaphor of “a sponge“, susceptible and open to a multitude of influences, describes a heightened state of receptivness to the festival chronotope, possible among some participants when the “magical time of the festival“ is at work. This state of vulnerability and openness relates both to the pleasure in taking part in the festival and to the revolutionary potential of festivals: their potential to turn around hierarchies and norms of

everyday life and, in a way, to engage its participants into a temporary new social order. From reflecting on the profound influence this festival promise has had on his life, Zvonimir goes on to suggest that the participants go through a similar kind of experience and that sharing this sense of open possibilities might be the basis of what he calls “togetherness“, however difficult to achieve it may be:

Sometimes it might be very difficult to create some kind of togetherness. A festival needs to have a good team, good volunteers and a good audience – in order for a boom like that to happen. It does not happen at every festival. Some festivals never get it! You cannot get it from a particular festival simply by wishing for it. At the Queer, sometimes we get it, sometimes we don't. It depends on the program – there are many factors. When it does happen, I think it represents a success for the festival you can never plan for! (Ibid.:6–7)

Zvonimir easily shifts speaking positions, from that of a festival participant enjoying and looking for that “something extra“, from powerful experience of being in the queer time of artistic and interpersonal creativity, to that of an organiser searching for ways to have his festival make those “three steps“ extra toward that. From his professional experience, he is aware of obstacles that might prevent this festival “togetherness“ from taking off: “Sometimes what happens is just ten performances in seven days. Sometimes those ten performances really happen at a festival“ (Ibid.:7).

His insider outlook gives an insight into that “special rhythm“ that happens only sometimes but which festival people repeatedly seek out. He searches around for terms to describe this “strange form“ and its particular strangeness for all of its actors – viewers, artists, organisers. In the end, he talks both in terms of rhythm, and through visual metaphors: festival is a strange form of cultural event that burns up the energy and expectations set throughout a year of its organisation in a short period of one week. Festival space and time explodes, goes up in flames, only to get “deflated“. Self-critically as an experienced organiser, he condenses the search for the formula of a successful festival: sometimes an amazing

festival springs up in front of your eyes, while at other times despite all organisational efforts, it does not happen – you just have many shows happening one after another and the festival stays flat.

This section brought us closer to how the *Queer Zagreb Festival* people in their diverse positions may experience the time and space of “festival queerness“. Queer festival chronotopes are experienced by many of my interviewees as magical time-space that stand out from the rest of the year and open up possibilities of envisioning and living different sociabilities. I am not saying this is characteristic of queer chronotopes only but my interest here is in how the queer festival chronotopes of post-Yugoslavia are experienced by their participants as events of rupturing ordinary time and bringing queer people together.

7.3 Queer Art according to My Interviewees

Post-Yugoslav queer festivals, as Section 7.2 has shown, provide the time-space of openness and possibility of questioning the norms where the renegotiations of queerness in local and regional context can take place. An important part of these negotiations revolve around the meanings of queerness in relation to the art-works themselves. While I was primarily interested in if and how my interviewees experienced and translated into their lives the anti-normative impulses of the queer art at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, I was also fascinated by their approaches to understanding queer art and culture in general, and its meanings in the post-Yugoslav region. While “queer art” remains a contested term as much in theory as in the analysis that follows, I find the production of “emic theory” (Boellstorff 2010, 218) – the focus on my interlocutors’ meaning-making around queerness in arts in our interviews - to be one of the most important contributions of this research project.

One of the most persistent dilemmas of my research – both a stumbling block and a constant motivation to move on – is the question of what “queerness” is in the post-Yugoslav context of Croatia and then, in the same local and intensively networked context, what would “queer art” mean. During the interviews I felt that most of my interlocutors hesitated to venture into explaining or defining something as fluid and complex as queerness or queer art, but most of them, luckily for my research, entered this messy terrain and attempted to depict it from their point of view. Out of twenty interviewees, there was only one voice that laughed outright and refused to be taken in the “queer art” debate out of principle. It was Karla’s: “No, forgive me! (Laughter) Sorry, *kvisko*! No, seriously! It is something so impossible to define that I do not even want to get into it without having twenty pages of paper in front of me! Simply, I am not that kind of person that would put something into a three-word definition (laughter)!” (Karla 2010, 9).

My laughter at Karla’s direct refusal to reflect on the dilemma is both complicity in recognizing the shared awareness of the complexity of concretizing “queerness” in general and in the local context, and a sheer enjoyment of seeing somebody use the *kvisko*⁵⁶ option – a queer option not to have to define a vital term, an option not open to me as a researcher. Despite seeing the subversive relief of Karla’s *kvisko* queer outlook, I was grateful to other informants for affronting the queer art dilemma, however frustrating. As Jelena, himself a queer researcher jokes: “That queer is super cool (Sic.), the only thing is you cannot get around explaining it” (Jelena 2010, 9). He continues:

Queer is some kind of a move away, some resistance, everything that is different, not mainstream. It is often mentioned in the context of sexuality and genderedness. I think it is much more than that – it is connected also to the body, to perception of the world. It is somehow fluid, it depends on the society and time and space where it acts, so probably what is queer now at the moment is not queer at some other point. (Ibid.)

⁵⁶ In the famous Yugoslav '80s TV quiz show *Kviskoteka*, using the *kvisko* was an option that enabled the contestant to skip the turn in answering questions.

Although finding queerness hard to define, Jelena still navigates its relations to non-normative sexualities, gender-expressions and embodiment, and its oppositionality to the mainstream. When it comes to thinking about queer art, it gets even more difficult to respond; although Jelena is a frequent visitor of queer festivals, activist and artist events, still it seems like a new territory for him: “Queer art might be something that is created by people who identify as queer in some way. I can even imagine that they might create something that seems very mainstream or very traditional, but that at the same time, by the very fact that they have created it – that this perspective where they come from - makes it queer” (Ibid.).

Here Jelena is venturing in the complicated definitional territory that the discussions of queer art cannot avoid. The contemporary discussions about queer art still chart the main questions that Jelena is talking about. The questions of whether queer art refers in certain degree to sexual and gender non-normativity of its creators, to formal elements of the art work, to its reception, or to the framing of its exhibition – have not been resolved (Benshoff and Griffin 2004; Meecham and Sheldon 2004; Sullivan 2003; Waugh and Straayer 2007). Jelena engages this debate:

I can imagine queer persons creating art that is not queer. Now I’m contradicting myself, but for me queer art would be moving the boundaries of reality and the world in which we live. It would introduce us into some new moment or try to transform it or surpass it or depict the reality as it is much more than it is currently done in some stale scenarios. (Ibid.)

One exciting aspect of my field-work consisted in talking with the artists present at the Zagreb Festival. I asked them about their impressions of the post-Yugoslav queer festivals, and their understanding of queer art in relation to their own art and to the art of other artists. Dominic Johnson, a British queer performance artist and academic, for instance, offered an insightful analysis of the differences between British queer festivals and the *Queer Zagreb Festival*.

I've seen four shows so far, including my own - but (the Zagreb festival) has a really open view about what queer might signify. In the UK, there are gay festivals - Glasgow in Scotland, and Queer Up North. They're quite restricted to a kind of camp, drag, sort of gay men's theater. What is fantastic about this event is that it's taking a really broad view - if you just look at Raimund (Hoghe), maybe my show, and the show we just saw ("Paquerette") - there's something really open about thinking how queerness might be about sexuality, but also about thinking more sensitively about the ways in which you can challenge assumptions about the body and normativity. (Johnson 2009, 1)

In our interview, he also gave an overview of his reactions to the work of his colleagues performing at the *Queer Zagreb Festival* in 2009. What is especially interesting in his engagement with the work of other artists at the 2009 Festival is the subtle approach to understanding of queerness in art:

What was curious about the "Paquerette" show which I absolutely loved is that it actually managed to think about male-female sexual relations in a fairly progressive way. What is really exciting is to try to think about it as a queer perspective - how can it be that a man and a woman, or men and women, can come together without reiterating a kind of conventional traditional dynamic of power (...) It's a really long-winded answer, but what is interesting is how queerness might not just be about gay male sexuality, but about thinking different subject positions which allow you to critique assumptions about heterosexual male monogamous, depoliticized ideas about the body. (Ibid.)

In interviewing four artists in my data of those who had participated at the Zagreb Festival, it was interesting to observe how their openness to questioning their own art and being exposed to the work of other artists make them reformulate their opinions on the projects and process they are engaged in and that could be termed "queer art". Dominic Johnson was an especially fascinating participant in that, as both theorist and a queer artist, he spoke of his method of theorizing queer art through practice of both art and theory. He approached thinking about queer art through analyzing the *Queer Zagreb Festival* and the artworks he has encountered there, which became one of methodological beacons for my research. Based on this approach, focused on a particular festival, queer art, for him, is not overwhelmingly concerned with "sexual identity" but rather it is moved by particular interests and positions that he terms "queer criticality".

Julia (Bardsley) coming last year (in 2008) is not a queer artist as such, but actually her work starts to ask questions about queerness and about queer positions - kind of queer criticality in really interesting ways. It's not actually very graphic; it's not really even about sexual identity. What's really exciting is trying to position that sort of work in the context of discourse on queer culture, queer identity, and queer politics. (Ibid.)

For Raimund Hoghe, another artist among my interviewees, it was also important to distinguish between the more commercial gay festivals and the queer art festivals like the *Queer Zagreb* that are not devoted to what he calls “entertainment” but to “diversity” that is one of the main motivators of his own work as well. Raimund Hoghe is a contemporary German dancer and choreographer and he is a frequent guest artist at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. Here he explains his understanding of queer art as a mode of “look(ing) to the world”:

In dance, gay artists don't present that they are gay - they hide it very much, and they do this heterosexual love story. The Swan Lake that I presented three years ago, if you think about Tchaikovsky - it was not possible to express this in his time, so this was for me something very important to express. For younger people to see not only the cliché of gay artists - the young muscled body – but that it can be something different. For me, it is how you look to the world. (Hoghe 2009, 1–2)

When it comes to how my other non-artist informants understand queer art at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, and in general, the perspectives of the viewers and the organizers are every bit as complex as that of the artists. Gabe, a Festival viewer and an organizer of a festival of feminist art, notices the difficulty in defining what queer art or for that matter, what art is, and how connected that definition is with commercialization and art institutions, or in her reading, with class issues.

We again have the question of what is art at all. That is completely connected to class. If some professor of art history says that something is great, than it is all of a sudden worth so much more. But these artists who belong to the community and do their art – they are the most valuable ones to me. So for me, (Ana) Opalić is so valuable because

she does her artistic things, she is completely here and cooperates on any project needed for the community. (Gabe 2010, 14)

Asked to explain what she means by “queer art”, Gabe continues: “Actually, the nicest definition would be – a certain distance from the norm that concerns identity. For me, art like that would be queer art. That could be extreme or minimal or an artist does not have to be queer at all! What I consider queer has to deal with identities and distancing from the norm” (Ibid.:16–17). In a similar way, Ines, who is a viewer and a journalist, expands the ways of talking about lesbian art and queer art by questioning the process of defining art in itself. She finds it impossible and absurd to define “lesbian art” in terms of sexuality of the author or the themes, and considers a novel or for that matter, any work of art, “too complex a structure” (Ines 2010, 5) to be appreciated only through one segment or one framework. She draws a parallel with queer art, talking about queerness itself as “a very unstable category” (Ibid.), and insists on “openness” as its main defining feature: “I am refuting that very possibility of definition (for lesbian art) – the same as with queer art. It’s the same thing. I believe that queer art should be open toward the new media and new modes of expression - so that it can absorb some things that at first glance seem as if they do not belong in the same basket” (Ibid.).

Similar to Ines’s “openness”, Ivo, who is a Festival volunteer, talks about queer art as determined by some characteristics which are difficult to define because intrinsic to art in general, but can be said to be more persistent features of art concerned with sexual and gender non-normativity, such as certain “strange(ness)” pervading the works at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*: “I think that definitely (queer art) is not done by queer artists! What would that be in fact at all – queer artists? (Laughter) It is simply an art work that has queer features. Something that would question the norms or for what we would say that it looks ‘queer’ (Sic.), strange” (Ivo 2010, 4).

I constantly asked my interlocutors about their view of what makes art queer: whether, for example, showing a piece of art within the frame of a queer festival would make it "queer". Gabe answered in the affirmative. For her, queer art does not necessarily have to deal with the LGBTQ issues at all, but for art to be "queer", it has to "force the brain to move outside the box" of normativity:

What is important for me is that the festival is a rounded whole, taking into consideration different modalities of queerness. Otherwise, I would put it under quotation marks. At the Queer Zagreb, you can find some art which is really like that – a step away from the norm: it is so strange that it is queer. And maybe it does not have anything to do with the LGBT issues. That's fine for me, that's great. I love it when somebody forces the brain to move outside the box, to expand, to rearrange. (Gabe 2010, 17)

Reflecting on queer in terms of this capacity of art to question and dissolve various kinds of norms, often leads to a related question about the nature of art in general. For Gabe, it means arriving at a conclusion that all true art should involve this "expand(ing)" and "rearrange(ing)" of societal norms, or as she puts it - "all art should be queer": "In principle, when you think about it, all art should be queer. Art should be doing that – shifting you a bit, changing your reality or expanding it. So I think that art in itself should have this queer moment" (Ibid.).

Most of my interviewees who see themselves to take part in queer festival community even if they are not themselves artists or cultural professionals, are passionately involved with art. Ivana had been volunteering for the Zagreb Festival for its last 6 years. She was also studying art history, volunteered at and attended many other art festivals in Zagreb. She starts with a concrete definition of queer art that clarifies its groundedness in non-normative sexuality, and then complicates the definition by showing the "interconnectedness" at work in it:

At first glance, queer art is anything connected with sexual minorities – let's not kid ourselves – queerness as the widest possible framework. Queer art is the art of homosexual, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual artists. On the other hand, it does not have to be that at all since queer art is all that moves away from the norms. But, also the Eurokaz performances step away from the norm. The same with the performances at the Festival of New Circus! So it is all terribly interconnected – somebody may be a queer artist, and somebody may be doing queer art without being queer. But again – how can you separate an artist from what he is doing? So, a person does not have to be gay to be queer, for example. And I think that some performances also do not have to be queer at all to be queer, to put it like that (laughter). (Ivana 2010, 6)

For those of my informants who are themselves artists, thinking about what queer art means involved more practical but still quite nuanced responses to what would be queer in art in general, and what would queer mean in their own art work. Helena explains laughingly:

For me, queer art is two women kissing. Whenever I think I want to do something new, I always think only about the number of women that will be on the painting (laughter). As I go on, there are more and more women. At the moment, I have nine on one painting. When it comes to queer, something has to happen (in the painting) that is queer. It doesn't have to be explicitly sexual, but a woman dressed as a man or a man dressed as a woman, or anything that crosses those boundaries of normativity. I realized that I am quite old-fashioned when it comes to that. Queer represents something 'beyond my imagination' (Sic.). I am still holding on to two women kissing, and that is so old-school already. (Helena 2010, 6)

Helena jokingly dismisses the seriousness involved in defining queer art, similar to many other of my interlocutors who are deeply involved with its politics and practices. She distills the complicated provocativeness of her paintings to her interest in showing desire between women. The explicitness of lesbian desire in Helena Janečić's "Love in the countryside" paintings or playing with gender non-normativity in her "Lezzbe" series in collaboration with Ana Opalić challenged heteronormativity of the Croatian art. However, she still makes a distinction between her "old-fashioned" insistence on the presence of women's bodies and lesbian desire in her paintings, and a certain queer approach that is "beyond (her) imagination". She does see her work as queer art, with certain qualifications to make:

Maybe my queer is a bit less queer than that of Queer Zagreb that put the poster of a naked man in high heels with a trombone on his head. But still it is just that my queer

is different from theirs. Maybe I will not shock so much with my motives, but something that was maybe happening in thoughts of many lesbians but never came out (will be visible). My queer is very much about soft erotic. I think we don't have enough of that so I am still remaining at that. (Ibid.)

In addition to artists, the group that is deeply involved with queer art and its meanings in the local context is the festival organizers⁵⁷. Through programming, Zvonimir, the program director of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, had in a way brought “queer art” to Croatia by framing it as through a queer festival since 2003. He also actively conceptualized its local variations through programming, writing about “post-socialist queer” and post-Yugoslav queer. When talking about queer art, he links the art with its geographies: “somehow I think this term depends on geography. So, something that is queer here is not queer somewhere else. That's simply how it is. That's why it seems to me that context creates queer or takes it apart” (Zvonimir 2010, 7). He goes on to argue that the Festival specificity consists in some “different visuality” beyond the stereotypical:

What is somehow always imagined as queer art is some kind of different visuality. This is most easily done through visual arts – photography and films that often treat queer on a most primitive level. I don't like that much since it simply causes inflation and a stereotyping of queer identity. I'm talking about that playing around with various identities, which has become common-place. I prefer something more subtle, especially when it comes to theater. As when you are reading a book and some little change happens in your head. You are reading a book which maybe is not even so queer but it has this moment, this feeling inside. (Ibid.)

The example Zvonimir mentions as his preferred form of queer art is the dance pieces directed by Raimund Hoghe. Raimund Hoghe had returned four times with different performances to the Zagreb Festival, and his work is recognized on the Zagreb queer scene as epitomizing the *Queer Zagreb* version of queer art – admired by some spectators, and

⁵⁷ I had interviewed four members of the larger organizational team behind the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. Tomislav was in charge of practical organizational tasks for the Festival; Karla was the Festival entertainment program coordinator; while Zvonimir was the program director of the Festival. Because of my interest in programming choices, I often focus either on Karla's or on Zvonimir's interview. I also interviewed Andre, the Festival poster designer and curator, in 2012.

criticized by others. Zvonimir explains his interest and choice of Raimund Hoghe's work as representing his understanding of queer art:

His (Hoghe's) "Bolero": he came here with this show in which he took apart the classical male-female dance. You don't have a woman and a man dancing together at any point on the stage. You don't have two man dancing together either. Simply, this deconstruction is very queer. This is how I see queer, and how the Queer Zagreb has tried to – some kind of subtle (queerness). I think that art must be something more than the pure literal transfer of information. (Ibid.)

This distinction between the more obvious artistic play with gender and sexual non-normativity, and Zvonimir's "preferred queer" which leans more toward avant-garde and "subtle" approach to non-normativity in art constitute a constant dilemma for post-Yugoslav queer festivals. Its importance is in reflecting the state of Gamson's "queer dilemma" as played out in the LGBT communities of this region – in informing us on what kind of queerness is read as artistically and politically meaningful for queer artists, viewers and festival organizers. The programming and political choices that change from festival to festival testify to different approaches to visibility politics and queer visibility within the region. Zvonimir gives an interesting insight into the process of choosing between his "preferred" kind of queer art, and a certain responsibility toward the Zagreb queer community that involves also making programming choices that satisfy sensibilities of a larger number of people who may prefer a different approach to queerness than the high art contemporary queer sensibility. This is the reason that Zvonimir as the programming director of the Zagreb Festival often opts for art works that, as he puts it, "builds up this queer identity" – these "projects are not as dear to my heart personally" because they "play the first ball of visibility" (Ibid.:8) but they attract the viewers from the queer community.

In this section we have seen the emic understandings of queerness in art in the Zagreb Festival community. From critical voices that see queer art as elitist to enthusiastic perception of both seriousness and playfulness in queer art at the Festival, the intensity of negotiations

emerges as the most important feature of my interlocutors' explanations. The complexity of my interviewees' understandings of "queer art" exposes the contested meaning of the local and regional contributions to queerness in arts. It also relates in profound ways to theoretical discussions of how art does and should question normativity in relation to sexuality and genderedness. While neither art theory nor the Festival participants manage to agree upon exact meanings of queer art, they provide us with an insight into the processes of negotiating the boundaries and mutual implications of art and life. According to my interviewees, queer art is to transgress the norms and must challenge the stereotypical perceptions in the fields of gender and sexuality. The artists expressed in interviews critical awareness of the ways in which their own works and those of other participating artists engage in the negotiations of the meanings of sexual and gender subversiveness in art. It is apparent that the Festival viewers have not found this quality in each art work at the Festival while the organizers turned out to be aware of negotiating programmatic compromises. Nevertheless, the *Queer Zagreb Festival* had opened cultural space for queer art in Croatia and its negotiations are to go on.

CONCLUSIONS

A major debate in the field of queer theory is concerned with the reworking of the “anti-social turn” (Halberstam 2011, 110) in the last decade. While queerness, according to Lee Edelman (2004), is necessarily turning away from some hopeful future, there is a recent counter-tendency to reinvest into imagining possible queer futurities, or as Donald E. Hall (2009) put it “desirably queer futures” (Ibid.:38). This debate makes a difference for my project as it enables queer re-conceptualizations of time and space. On the basis of my research, I suggest, considering the viewers’ uses of queer visibility may help us imagine a possible future of escape from normativity.

Post-Yugoslav queer festivals can be argued to create the *figuration* of visibility as an escape. Creating “speculative figurations” refers to the processes of imagining alternative figures that “resist representation” but at the same time “erupt in powerful new tropes, new figures of speech, new turns of historical possibility” (Haraway in Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008, 66). This fascination with the political effects of visual images brings forth a multiplicity of strategies that both engage with and refute visibility politics.

Regardless their differential disposition, both the move toward positive representation through visibility politics and the strategy of queering visibility that enables “imperceptible politics” encounter attempts at control and closure along the way. The workings of capture of “escaping subjectivities” have been conceptualized as “optic trajectories” of control (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008, 135). These mechanisms of bringing the “deviant” trajectories back into line, in alignment with normativity, recall what Sara Ahmed (2006) has termed “straightening devices” (Ibid.:23).

One of the major optic trajectories or *straightening devices* is ironically created around the very discourses and institutions of belonging to a nation the visual strategies seem to mobilize (See also Imre 2008; Moss 2004). The queering of nationalism has been noticed widely in post-socialist countries as a strategy chosen by queer communities for queering belonging (Imre 2008; Renkin 2009). My research shows that queer festival people (activists, artists, community members) themselves use intersectional terms and tactics to relate and rework the complicated categories of belonging at work in negotiating post-Yugoslav queerness. Their “manifestos” and programs speak of queerness in relation to ethnic and religious identities, militarization, Balkan masculinities, the context of transition and post-conflict world making.

In recent years the protestors of the Occupy movements have reshaped the limits of “territory“, according to Saskia Sassen (2012), and materialized a subversive community practices in public spaces of their societies. Queer festivals do not occupy the cities they take place in for more than the duration of the festival week. However, here I pursued the parallel with the territory-making practices of contemporary protestors in the Occupy movement to the extent that I looked at how the viewing and community-making practices of festival communities queer the territory of post-Yugoslav cities at the time of their duration and beyond. The “new” mode of queer visibility at the post-Yugoslav queer festivals draws new maps of artistic and political routes escaping heterosexism. The strategies of queer festivals engage in queering the identity dilemma as well as representation through negotiating the spaces in between political activism and the domains of art and culture. They seem to be looking for escape through Papandopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos’ (2008) “imperceptible politics”, and engage in negotiating the terms of hegemonic visibility and imagining new configurations of the “seeable” in the post-Yugoslav space. Taking the fluidity of queerness into consideration, the queerness of art is therefore not seen as the inherent property of the

artist or the formal characteristic of the art work, nor that of the audience but, if it happens, it occurs at the interstices of sites of production, exhibition/performance and perception.

In terms of regional queerness, the key concept of this project, I argued that each of the different symbolic geographies of individual post-Yugoslav queer festivals is involved in complex processes of cultural negotiation of escape from (hetero)normativity that drives along trajectories across national borders. “Queeroslavia”, the concept constructed around the *Queer Belgrade Festival*, reinvented the socialist utopia of a common country for queers. The dream of a metropolitan multi-cultural city of Sarajevo as desired by the first *Queer Sarajevo Festival* flared up and went down with the Festival’s closure, but continued to incite imagination. The *Queer Square Skopje*, briefly but significantly, questioned the in/visibility of queerness in Macedonia. What is common to the strategies of each of these festivals is the anchoring of queerness in local circumstances, and the strategy of testing the limits of displaying queer art in the public space.

In this dissertation, I analyzed different post-Yugoslav queer festivals with a focus on the art works and festival chronotopes of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. The theoretical approaches tested the feasibility of queering the geographical concept of the region, more specifically, the region of the Western Balkans or South Eastern Europe itself. I argued for theorizing the time-space of the regional queerness of post-Yugoslav queer cultural festivals as open to sites of situated subversion and non-normativity. The particular heterotopia of the Zagreb Festival at the center of this research was explored to probe the political potential of experiencing the queer festival space and time as an invitation to participate in the pleasures of the carnivalesque.

The post-Yugoslav queer festivals, despite their significant differences in artistic and political goals, are all engaged in the practices of claiming the space of their cities, countries and beyond, for public display of art works that question sexual and gender normativity. The

opening up of festival chronotopes to non-normative visibility simultaneously creates temporary free festival spaces of queer sociability. I have argued that the practices of festival organizers and other actors oscillate between the strategies of queering belonging and visibility, and the strategies of creating queer identifications and visual representation. The constant shifting in between three conceptual understandings of time-space has allowed me to bring out particular nuances of each concept-practice combination: symbolic geographies – of the organizers’ aspirations in positioning their festival in a particular way; chronotopes – of inseparability of time-space in festival experience, and heterotopia – of the relation of the festival to the rest of social time-space. The discussions in the field of visual studies suggest that queer visibility can be said to sometimes ask for rights and representation, and, at other times, subversion of heteronormative representation. Accordingly, I analyzed two approaches to queer visual politics: LGBT visibility politics, and queering visibility. The latter I associated with the practices of the queer festivals, and analyzed its implementation in relation to artistic and curatorial strategies.

The ethnography of the *Queer Zagreb Festival* has offered a view into this particular festival time and space in use by its actors. The challenge of the particular analytical chapters has consisted in weaving the ethnographic insights together with theoretical questions. The analysis of the ten years of the Zagreb festival “manifestos” provided an outline of the workings of the festival organizers’ strategies in constructing festival’s textual self-presentation. I argued that the principle “manifesto” strategy is twofold. On the one hand, the manifestos locate the local and regional “queerness” at the intersection of multiple forms of discriminatory practices at work in the contemporary post-Yugoslav reality. Croatian and regional “queerness” and “queer art” are defined in these manifestos in opposition to the patriarchal and nationalistic dynamics of the post-war, transitional machoist society. On the other hand, these manifestos engage in the paradoxical albeit creative task of unearthing the

local queerness that was allegedly already there while importing and transporting it from elsewhere, nurturing its production and assembling its audiences.

In the analysis of the programming strategies of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, I identified the commitment to the politics of queer infection of the mainstream; the creation of a subversive visuality, and the spatial conquest of central mainstream cultural venues. I have focused on three organizational strategies as most characteristic of the Festival's politics. First is the *Queer Zagreb Festival* organizers' innovative choice of programming prestigious contemporary art as queer art; second is the functioning of the Festival as the "border-exchange" space of a multitude of art forms from diverse contexts, and the third is the strategy of simultaneously "cultivating" one's audience while relying on it for support and legitimization. Together, these strategies have provided an insight into complex processes of translating Festival mission into an artistic program in a dynamic field of "regional queer" of the last ten years: its daring strategies of queering both the mainstream and the LGBT art and culture turned the Queer Zagreb into the hub of regional queerness in this period.

The visual analysis of the ten posters corresponding to each of the ten *Queer Zagreb Festivals* testified to a variety of strategies that went into creating the Festival's visuality, as well as to a gradual path this visuality traversed from the symbolic toward a more provocative and more explicitly visually queer image. While the Queer Zagreb poster images were "seeable" to its audiences but not immediately intelligible to the wider public in its initial three years, later on the social recognition of queer art and visuality had changed. In six of the remaining seven years of the Festival, the same poster designer created images for the posters promoting the event that represented the non-normativity in art through the queering of the poster image as well. The strategies through which this queering was approached were many: from deconstruction of sexual and gender normativity, visual disidentification, aesthetization of a queer body and radical sexual and artistic practices, to homoerotic refiguration of

Christian art, symbolic play with embodied queerness, and finally, signifying the Festival's ends and beginnings. However, the richness and political relevance of the *Queer Zagreb Festival's* visuality needs to be read in its social context and through the eyes and uses of its viewers in order to fully appreciate its relevance for post-Yugoslav queer politics.

The analysis of the interviews with my twenty Zagreb interlocutors – organizers, artists, viewers and Festival volunteers – has given insight into the “festival people's” emic understanding of queer art and culture at the *Queer Zagreb Festival*. My interviewees gave expression to various nuanced strategies of defining what queer art may be and what they perceived queer in the art-works shown at the Zagreb Festival. The artists mostly talked about the differences between the artistic works dedicated to diversity as opposed to commercialized approaches to queer art as entertainment. The organizers problematized the strategic dilemma facing them daily in programming: negotiating the need for “direct(ly) queer” art and visuality preferred by most of the local queer community (Zvonimir 2010, 8–9), or opting for more complex queer art content. Some of my interlocutors also postulated an opposition between what they perceived as somehow authentic and real queer art, and what Karla, a Festival organizer, called “big Q art” (Karla 2010, 10) that looks for easy prestige through fashionable labeling.

In this dissertation, I argued that the post-Yugoslav queer festivals function as potentially subversive chronotopes where the meanings of queerness are renegotiated on the terms of local and regional queer community in dialogue with the broader international queer festival circuit. One part of these negotiations concerns the meanings and effects of queerness in arts at these festivals. The most interesting finding of my research to me is the clarity of the process through which all of my interlocutors, particularly artists and festival viewers, approached defining and understanding queer art on the basis of concrete art works they have seen at the Zagreb and other (not only post-Yugoslav) queer art festivals. The emerging

definitions of queer art as resistant and subversive artistic practice are tightly bound to particular queer art works they witnessed as well as to the festival time and space within which they encountered those works. Moreover, what emerges from these emic negotiations of queer art is the importance not of what queer art represents, but what it is perceived to do: that is, providing complex ways of sociability, questioning normativity while emerging as escape around particular art works at and beyond the queer festivals.

Finally, what in 2007 when I started this research seemed as a full-blown wave of post-Yugoslav queer art festivals – with festivals in Sarajevo, Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana - was indeed a peak. Now in 2014, the wave is ebbing – all of the arts festivals have either been peremptorily closed such as the festivals in Sarajevo and Belgrade, or have reached the end of its organizational cycle, as is the case with the Zagreb Festival. The festivals that remain are the film festivals – the *Merlinka International Queer Film Festival* in Belgrade, and the longstanding *Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film* in Ljubljana. The only LGBT arts festival that continues to be organized occasionally is the low-budget, grassroots festival of lesbian culture and art *L'art Pour l'Action* in Novi Sad, Serbia. Retrospectively, it seems clear that the organizational politics of post-Yugoslav festivals, even when premised on artistic ambitiousness and well-funded as in the case of the *Queer Zagreb Festival*, were never invested in becoming a traditional event of long duration. What they had done, however, has left some traces of imperceptible acts of escape on the walls and in memories of the queer festival people involved and in their sense of belonging.

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