Ivana Marjanović

QueerBEograd: Cabaret

A Shared Space between Queer, Anti-Facism and No Borders Politics
The clandestine festival QueerBeograd created spaces of critique and transformation in order to foster a politics of interconnectedness. Ivana Marjanović explores the festival’s transnational activist cabaret between 2006 and 2008, which was devised, directed and produced by Jet Moon, a founding member of the QueerBeograd collective. This pioneering study demonstrates how the process of staging QueerBeograd Cabaret created a shared space between queer, anti-fascism and No Borders politics, contributing to the advancement of the intersectionality perspective beyond identity. The study thus investigates historical genealogies of gender and political difference in the former and post-Yugoslav space, bringing these into relation with global social and art movements.

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Preface

The text that follows this Preface was completed in 2017 as a PhD dissertation with the title *Staging the Politics of Interconnectedness between Queer, Anti-fascism and No Borders Politics. The Case of QueerBeograd Cabaret*, and it is presented here with minor editorial changes¹. The original manuscript was submitted in fulfilment of requirements for my Doctor of Philosophy Degree at the Institute for Art Theory and Cultural Studies, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.

At the moment of finalizing the dissertation project, I was already working as the artistic and managing director of the Wienwoche Festival for Art and Activism in Vienna, with a strong focus on migration and leftist debates. Bringing the text to an end at that very busy moment in time was possible thanks to the generous support of my colleague and friend Nataša Mackuljak, with whom I shared the position of festival director. It was her who helped me create the space to focus on writing while we were doing a very challenging curatorial project, one that had already commenced in 2015 with our preparations for the Open Call for Projects and for the festival. Our first Wienwoche edition in 2016, titled *Forever Together. Politics of Connection, Love and Friendship*, was inspired by, among others, the research presented in this book. I was at that moment deeply immersed in writing on the art-activist practice of the QueerBeograd collective, the QueerBeograd festival, and more precisely, *QueerBeograd Cabaret*, which was the outcome of the artistic work of Jet Moon, a founding member of the QueerBeograd collective. Working with local and transnational activists between 2004 and 2008, Jet Moon produced and formulated the cabaret, its underlying ideas and political throughline, as it was Jet’s creative work of writing and co-writing, directing and curating that defined the compositional style and the dramaturgy of *QueerBeograd Cabaret*. Even though the contexts of Belgrade and Vienna, as well as the organizational and institutional forms of these two festivals, are not comparable, the energy of making a festival, the community-building processes, creating and sustaining networks of support, the very strong No Borders positioning, experimenting with cultural and artistic formats—all of this connected my Belgrade and Viennese experiences. Some years earlier in Vienna, Nataša and I had initiated an experimental, open collective performance project—"Pfusch Baustelle"—which, among

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¹ All references in the book, i.e., in the bibliography, are up until the year 2017.
other things, thematized working conditions and migration and was a basis for our later collaboration. I was researching and writing about performance and, at the same time, I decided to test the stage space myself.

After four intensive years of curating at the Wienwoche festival, in 2019, I moved to Innsbruck and took my Sabbatical leave with the plan to start looking for ways to publish this book. Soon, I started working a few hours a week at the AEP Women’s Library, where I had a chance to connect with the local (queer)feminist movement, which has been to a great degree intersectional, with many inspiring migrant women\footnote{Since the time of my writing this dissertation between 2012 and 2017, the language used to write and communicate gender politically and with care have changed. Hence, the “*” that refers to the non-essentialist definition of the category ‘woman’ and the “they/them” pronoun that refers to non-binary gender identity were not used in the text of this book and I apologize if I have misexpressed somebody’s gender identity.} being actively involved. At the same time, I became a member of the editorial board of the Migrazine, Online Magazine by Migrant Women\footnote{Since the time of my writing this dissertation between 2012 and 2017, the language used to write and communicate gender politically and with care have changed. Hence, the “*” that refers to the non-essentialist definition of the category ‘woman’ and the “they/them” pronoun that refers to non-binary gender identity were not used in the text of this book and I apologize if I have misexpressed somebody’s gender identity.} for Everyone, which has been an important way for me to stay connected with movements of migration and the struggles of “postmigrant practices” (including “postmigration artistic practices”) (Hill 2023; Yildiz & Rotter 2023). Half a year after I moved to Innsbruck, I applied for and gained a curatorial position as artistic and managing director of Kunstraum Innsbruck. Just several months later, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, and I was facing enormous challenges, which left me no free time or space for working on publishing this book. Finally, after all of that—a new city, a new job, a pandemic—has settled down, I am delighted to see the publication of the work that marked an important decade of transformations in my life: the beginnings of my commitment as a curator in Belgrade in 2006, which overlapped with the beginnings of the process of migration to Vienna and the finalization in 2017 of the dissertation you are about to read. It was a long path, but also rewarding. Looking back from where I am now, I can say that the topic of borders, or more precisely, of No Borders politics and the trans-border body, have been concepts and practices that have defined my life and my work throughout these years even up to today and have kept their central place in my curatorial practice wherever I have lived.

A lot has happened between the moment I saw QueerBeograd Cabaret for the first time in 2006 and this very moment. Some of the members of QueerBeograd left the country, some stayed in Serbia. Marion von Osten, my first supervisor (who is to thank for the idea to take QueerBeograd as the main topic of my research), is sadly no longer with us. She passed away in late 2020 soon after we started working on a new project on the solidarity between animals and humans in urban space titled “Co-Habitation”. The project exhibition that she initiated was realized in 2021 in Berlin posthumously as her last curatorial project and one to which I was honoured to contribute with a case-study research and exhibition at Kunstraum Innsbruck. Working with Marion was a tender process of teaching and learning, guiding and inspiring. She was a great intellectual and a very kind person, and I am happy that some of her soul resides also in this book, which I dedicate to her.
Abstract

The dissertation project explores the potentiality for social engagement beyond identity politics through the specific path that is demonstrated throughout the paper: the focus on transnational art-activist production that is engendered in an antagonistic relation with the local gender regulative structures and the processes of capitalist transition in the post-Yugoslav space, and in contestation of the EU border regime. The thesis demonstrates how knowledge and actors travel across both geographic and symbolic borders and boundaries, creating new perspectives that destabilise social and political divisions. More precisely, by tracing recent proposals for the politics of interconnectedness and exploring historical genealogies of gender and political difference, my PhD project investigates how these create spaces of critique and spaces of negotiations that are driven by the desire for transforming subjectivity and society.

The research departs from the entrance point of gender, thence pursuing an investigation into the topic of interconnectedness, i.e., from the translation of queer by the QueerBeograd collective as kvar [a malfunction] in power relations, setting the ground for a transversal enquiry. As the organiser of a clandestine festival in Belgrade between 2005 and 2008, QueerBeograd was an actor that contributed greatly to the introduction of the concept of queer into the local context in the 2000s as a concept of the politics of interconnectedness.

My dissertation focuses on the collective’s artistic-activist project QueerBeograd Cabaret between the years 2006 and 2008, and, specifically, on the question as to how the politics of interconnectedness was precisely formulated in the praxis of the cabaret. I develop the thesis that the cabaret enabled an elaboration in the articulation of the politics of interconnectedness through the process of staging. More precisely, staging the politics of interconnectedness, or, the practice of performance as political organising and artistic-activist practice, created a shared space between queer, anti-fascism and No Borders politics as a productive space of potentiality and tension, generating a path towards the horizon of a political imagination beyond capitalism.

The research project takes the multi-actor perspective, reflecting the multiple power relations in contemporary society. It is grounded in an interdisciplinary research design that is framed by contemporary, theoretically informed art history and art theory, including performance and theatre studies, combining knowledges and methods of other
academic disciplines, especially gender studies and studies of transnational social movements, as well as artistic-activist knowledge production. Empirical research constitutes the foundation for the text, which is grounded in building theoretical conclusions on the basis of close observation of the practice. The interpreting of primary documentary sources was enriched by the ethnographic research method of interview. In my search for theoretical tools and knowledges that would support my analysis, gender and queer studies that are attentive to intersections with other fields, post-colonial studies, post-Marxism and post-identity migration discussions were useful in reflecting about method and theory-building in the interpreting of the material. My thesis demonstrates how politically powerful transversal projects can exist in practice and how they can contribute to generating theory, in the case of this dissertation, to the advancement of the intersectionality perspective.
In 2006, in Belgrade, after graduating art history, I co-initiated (with Vida Knežević) a non-profit art space that we named Kontekst Gallery [Context Gallery] as we were interested in creating a place where the social context of art would also have a prominent space and where art would be discussed as a political field and not as autonomous from the rest of social life. In the process of creating this space, we connected not only with local artists and cultural producers, those from the post-Yugoslav space and abroad, but also with local activists involved in social movements on the Left and in creative practices. In the beginning of 2006, we got to know Milan Marković and Majda Puač through the Stani Pani Collective, the anarchist group they were a part of. We learned from them about the QueerBeograd festival as they were during the same time members of the QueerBeograd collective, a transnational informal group that organised the festival in the second half of the 2000s. This networking opened for us a whole new horizon of inspiring alternative worlds, knowledges and styles of living. What started as an idea of exchanging resources with the Stani Pani collective continued as involvement in political struggles for social justice and development of support networks, making us believe that we were doing both in the Kontekst Gallery and outside of it something meaningful for society and for art. However, we were working in a context that was (and still is) heavily charged with right-wing ideology. In the post-war period of capitalist transition, preoccupation with maintaining the “purity” of the nation (and as part of that, of gender) was creating violent responses to any politics that questioned it. The LGBT and queer-in-becoming commu-

1 By ‘we’, I refer to my colleague Vida Knežević and, later, Marko Miletić and the community that gathered around Konteskt Gallery.

2 I will be using the English acronym ‘LGBT’ that stands for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual” because it was locally mostly used in practice. I will add to it ‘queer community’ to point to the variety of actors involved in the discussions. As it will appear in this text, especially in quotes, the acronym will be sometimes extended, for instance “LGBTTIQ” (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queen). There is no consensus on this, and even terms such as ‘community’ are contested. Milan Đurić, who is an activist from Gayten and was active in QueerBeograd, pointed out that in the local context, the activist reality would be rather L and G, not even B, but the acronym is used because of the political reasons and that, in practice, there are many tensions between these categories (Đurić 2016).
nity was one of the main targets of this violence. In the situation where organising the Pride Parade in 2001 became a scenario of bloodshed, QueerBeograd came into being looking for alternative ways of activism, creating a clandestine festival space and time. I will never forget the first QueerBeograd Cabaret I saw at the opening of the festival in 2006, and especially the performance of Marija Savić in “Cigarette Girl” that made me instantly “fall in love” with her and with the cabaret. The cabaret, and the atmosphere it created, what it did with the people who were there and with the performers on stage, was so energizing, so powerful, free and beautiful with all its imperfections that one would not believe that there was a police car out front and that there might have been some neo-fascists waiting around the corner.

Not only did we at Kontekst Gallery host the QueerBeograd festival’s workshops program once and once create a performance program in the festival, but we also worked with some of the QueerBeograd activists on other projects as well. In 2007, we invited Marija Savić to work with us on the exhibition project Sex, Work and Society that we were doing at the invitation of Alkatraz Gallery and the queer feminist festival Rdeče Zore [Red Dawns] in Ljubljana (Knežević and Marjanović, eds., 2007; Knežević and Marjanović, eds., 2008). This exhibition was one of the outcomes of our networking efforts in the post-Yugoslav cultural space. Our interest beyond the borders of Serbia and in critical reflection about the state and history politics exposed us at Kontekst Gallery in 2008 to the radical neglecting of our work, which resulted in the demolition and prevention of an exhibition that we had co-organised that featured Albanian artists from Priština, Kosovo (Exception. Contemporary Art Scene from Priština) at a “problematic historical moment,” when Kosovo was about to declare its independence. Hundreds of nationalists and neo-fascists protested on the streets around our gallery and some of them inside it, destroying an artwork and occupying the space of the exhibition opening while police and, later, state institutions we addressed, did nothing substantial to intervene. The exhibition, which was closed under police pressure during its opening, never again opened (Knežević and Marjanović 2008; Knežević et al. 2013). In these difficult times, QueerBeograd activists were there with us, among many others, with Zoe Gudović from QueerBeograd giving us practical real-time advice as to how to deal with the right-wing violence. It was this, together with the support of many other colleagues, that indeed heartened us. We were very frightened, but we knew that we were neither isolated nor alone. In the same year, and also because of the Exception exhibition, my colleague Vida Knežević from Kontekst Gallery and I were invited by Bojana Pejić to work as her assistant curators at the show Artist Citizen, the 49th edition of the October Salon, the most renowned visual arts festival in the region initiated in the times of socialist Yugoslavia. We opened the festival with the visual arts show taking place in the Museum of Yugoslav History and with the performance Queer Cabaret, organised by Zoe Gudović (Oktobarski salon 2008, 216–217; Knežević and Marjanović 2008; Marjanović 2009). Also, as part of the festival, art works of some of the Exception artists were presented, as well as the documentary film that was made about the prevention of the exhibition. We wanted that such an institution as October Salon get involved with the hard, political cultural work and face conditions that art contexts are not usually exposed to, and Bojana Pejić, as a feminist Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav curator, was the right person to work with for that. Having us as assistant curators and QueerBeograd at the opening was a statement in support of the local political
struggles of that moment. Also, at that time, being part of the network of the Belgrade independent scene, Other Scene, we and some of the activists from QueerBeograd, among many others, as a reaction against the demolition of a Roma slum in Belgrade, organised protest actions before and during an international sporting event (Marjanović 2012d).

I tell this history of my involvement in the cultural scene in Belgrade in order to indicate that it was happening at the same time as my becoming involved with the main actors engaged in the events that now form the topic of my dissertation project. However, for purposes of methodological clarification, it is important to point out that at the time when I was attending the QueerBeograd festival, I wasn’t yet a researcher intending to write a dissertation about it. I was there as an actor involved in the cultural and artistic life of Belgrade, and one especially interested in the political and social aspects of arts. It was only in the years after the festival that I decided to take these events as the main topic for my dissertation, or more precisely, to focus on QueerBeograd’s formulation of the politics of interconnectedness through the artistic-activist practice of its cabaret.3

The reason to make this decision was not only because there was nothing being written about QueerBeograd Cabaret in the years when it was itself being established as an art-activist production of the collective (2006–2008), and it is definitely worth writing about, but also because QueerBeograd was different from many of the queer and LGBT projects I have gone on to experience since. The QueerBeograd festival created the major context wherein queer was translated locally, and this translation was performed as an intervention in the existing discourses, as queer was translated as kvar [a malfunction], pointing to a malfunction in hegemonic regimes, and queer politics as the politics of interconnectedness. This positioned queer beyond discussions about fluidity of queer identities and sexuality.

Only in the years since have I come understand why QueerBeograd, and especially its cabaret, was and has remained so appealing to me. It was, on the one hand, my queer education, the affective political work it did with me, transforming my desire, making me figure out how hetero-patriarchy had conditioned it. Even though I could not say I ever became a part of queer communities, queer became a familiar discourse to me and my knowledge about queer was conditioned by QueerBeograd’s approach to queer as a relational category and politics. Yet there was also another reason why it moved me personally. In the time of the festival, but especially in the period after it, when I was writing my dissertation as it’s shaped now (mostly between 2011 and the beginning of 2017, with a two-year break in between), the topic of the “European” border regime and migration was becoming a difficult part of my personal reality and an even more difficult condition in the lives of many people around me in Vienna, and QueerBeograd Cabaret had very

3 It was around this time that I decided I would work on my dissertation, which, however, in the beginning, had the much broader topic of local art and activism since the 1990s, institutional critique and ideology critique, where QueerBeograd would have been one of the examples of the intersection of art and politics. However, this was a too ambitious research design and difficult to cover for one dissertation project. After I decided to make QueerBeograd my main case study, I was still trying out a reduced version of the first idea, with the focus on transnational projects only; facing certain methodological problems as well as limited time, I gave the first idea up and decided to focus on QueerBeograd. To have complicated research paths, as I have read in dissertations of some colleagues of mine, is something a PhD student encounters.
clear political position on that: No Borders. When we were starting organising art and cultural events in Belgrade, it was the moment of the post-war situation and recovery from economic and social pauperisation that for an extended time kept us very isolated. We were just acquiring limited access to border crossing and travelling outside of the country. The art and cultural field provided a chance for some of us to gain mobility as it was easier to get Schengen visas for cultural exchange through institutional invitations, and to me personally, it opened a possibility to create a network of close friends and start my transnational life between Vienna and Belgrade. After some years, what had been a nomadic life for me became rather a migration, and thus soon very precarious. This condition required more separation from Belgrade, in order to “integrate”, but in my heart, I never completely left, and this text is one of the testimonies to that.

Acknowledgements

Even though academic work is considered a privilege (especially from an autonomous activist point of view, and surely it is not incorrect to state so), my experience with the production of this text was not uncomplicated. Becoming a migrant in an EU country during the process of research, in my experience, radically limited access to the support that “Western” academia offers to students with privileged citizenship or to “Eastern European” students coming from abroad (but usually not those “non-EU” researchers based here) in cases where their topic fits in with the what the EU’s or the given educational institution’s research interests are. Additionally, in art educational institutions, the possibilities are scarce, as are other resources of support in arts and culture. This text was produced with all the breaks caused by organising existential and work bases, learning the German language, taking care of my health, and all the other life issues that come in the way of writing in the experience of any writer doing a research project that takes an extended period of time. Mainly, it was my own wish to gain knowledge and my belief that it was important to research this topic, the struggle of multitasking back and forth between what most of the time were precarious cultural or educational jobs, and importantly, the support of my family and close friends who helped me to continue and complete this work and for that I am very thankful. Further, important for some phases of my work was the support of the fellowship program of the Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen in Innsbruck (which provided for the conditions that made possible my writing the first chapter) and the diverCITYLAB scholarship in Vienna that enabled organising more practice-orientated tools for this research. The sporadic and limited support I received from the Student Union and Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna encouraged me in some moments of this process. Also, my work was possible thanks to the support of the members of QueerBeograd, Zoe Gudović, Johanna Moser, Marija Savić, Majda Puča and additionally, that of Jet Moon, the artist who devised, directed, produced, wrote the majority of scripts for and performed in the cabaret. Jet Moon provided me with, among other things, the video documentary material related to the Belgrade events and I am also thankful for Jet’s critical inputs. Further, other cultural workers and activists that I interviewed enabled me to acquire a more complex picture of the topic, as well as researchers I had conversations with or consulted (for source literature), and I am very
thankful for their generosity, cooperation and support.\footnote{Some of them are Bojan Bilić, Jelisaveta Blagojević, Julia Edthofer, Marc Hill, Ana Hoffner, Marty Huber, Sanja Kajinić, Niki Kubaczek, Renate Lorenz, Fernanda Nogueira, Ivana Pražić, Johanna Schaffer, Ana Vujanović. I sincerely apologise if I overlooked mentioning anybody.} Finally, the support of my mentors Marion von Osten and, in the last two years, Jelena Petrović was crucial, and we kept an intensive and fruitful communication going as I was writing, chapter by chapter. I truly learned a great deal from them, and I am thankful for their kindness and patience in accompanying me throughout my process, where doing scientific research overlapped with complex life-work situations. I have to add that, in the first research phase, my second mentor was Marina Gržinić, and I was very impressed by her work and personality, but because of disagreements we had working on another project that was interfering with the mentoring process, I had to cease working with her. However, everything in life, and as well in academic work, has its own good reasons, and when learning and teaching relationships become too complicated, a productive outcome is not always possible. Still, I must acknowledge that I did learn a lot from her and from that experience. I need to thank my English language editor and proofreader Eric Dean Scott, who did great work to improve this text and transform my Eastern European English into a text better comprehensible to readers. Writing in English, academia’s hegemonic language, is an ambivalent task: not only did I have to first learn academic English, but also, as it is not my mother tongue, this affected the possibilities of my expressing myself. At the same time, this language offers the “universality” of access to the knowledge represented in this text. Finally, I would like to thank transcript Verlag for the publishing of this work as well as the Austrian Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport and the Cultural Department of the City of Innsbruck for co-financing the publishing.
In what follows, I will introduce the main concerns of the dissertation, the research question, namely, and the main argument that forms my thesis, proceeding from there to position the research material in terms of its relevance. Further, I will review the history of the research and draw upon the epistemological and methodological questions that occurred during that process. In the second part, I will present the methodology that I used, as well as theoretical frameworks and concepts that were crucial in the interpretation of the material and as well for the building of my argument. I will look at the actual literature on the subject, including on research topics that are close to mine. Afterwards, I will present the context, history and discussions about Pride Parade in Belgrade, because they conditioned QueerBeograd’s organising and work. Finally, I will close the Introduction with a short overview of the dissertation’s chapters, reflecting the structure of the text. I will conclude with some remarks on additional research topics and questions that came about during my writing that could be of interest for researchers to consider in future projects.

Throughout the dissertation, I was guided by searching for the answer as to how the premise of the politics of interconnectedness that QueerBeograd claimed as its politics was embodied and represented in QueerBeograd Cabaret; or more formally, my research question was this: what, precisely, was the politics of interconnectedness in the praxis of QueerBeograd Cabaret, and how was it articulated? My intention here was to find out what it was exactly that was being imagined would interconnect, what kinds of subjects would interconnect and with what kinds of politics, and importantly, using which kind of aesthetics. In the accounts of QueerBeograd, it was the “radical, inclusive [and] connecting all kinds of politics” (Puača 2007b, 23, [emphasis mine]) strategy that was exposed to contest “the interconnectedness of all forms of oppression in the society” (QueerBeograd 1

Politics of interconnectedness is a broad term and it can have different meanings in different contexts. In the context of queer activism, it could mean moving from a politics of separatism by way of networking and building alliances between actors within that specific field of struggles, for instance, within LGBT and queer struggles, or it could mean doing so between specific movements, for instance, between queer activism and the workers’ movement, or it might imply the broader, leftist, more general/universal concept of solidarity, going beyond the singular interests of a given identity or movement.
Yet even if this was the case for the festival, the cabaret had its own take on the politics of interconnectedness, one that was conditioned by its simultaneously local and transnational character. Looking closely at *QueerBeograd Cabaret* and analysing it, I developed the thesis that *the cabaret enabled an elaboration in the articulation of the politics of interconnectedness through the process of staging*. Thus, the cabaret didn't discuss “all kinds of politics”, but created a situated perspective closely associated with the political positions of its actors, who were involved in the social movements of queer, anti-fascism and No Borders. More precisely, my thesis is that the process of staging the politics of interconnectedness, the practice of performance as political organising and artistic-activist practice, engendered a shared space between queer, anti-fascism and No Borders politics as a productive space of potentiality and tension that created a path towards the horizon of a political imagination beyond capitalism.

Throughout the research and the writing process, I was convinced that finding answers to my research question would provide me with a better understanding of the contemporary political negotiations that take place at the intersection of activism and art, the political and cultural fields and across the borders of the “East” and “West” of Europe. Here, not only power structures, but also transnational social movements and their creative practices, take part in the ongoing struggles to define what we understand as social reality, or as the world. These movements create the temporal spaces of freedom where political discussions and negotiations take place and are presented to smaller or larger critical publics as a process of creating “counterpublicity” (Muñoz 1999, 169). Further, my research also reminds me that not all of what is sometimes mistakenly labelled as “identity politics” (for instance, feminism or queer) is limited by identity constraints. My thesis demonstrates how powerful politically transversal projects can be in practice and how they can contribute to advancements in generating theory, in the case of this dissertation, for instance, to the advancement of the perspective of intersectionality. Moreover, this text provides information about and interpretation of less visible projects, such as *QueerBeograd Cabaret*, which may offer an empowerment “injection” to the readership, hopefully encouraging future works in activism, arts and theory, disabling the solidifying of symbolic and spatial borders. My theoretical reflection speaks together with academic and activist reflections in contributing to future visions of “hope” and “critical utopianism” (Muñoz 2009, 4). In that sense, this academic work of mine is in alignment with my previous reflections on “spaces of new criticism” that “are also settings for affirmation, creativity and action”, contesting the political pessimism that can result from leftist critique focusing solely on analyses of ideology (even though that critique is also important) (Knežević and Marjanović 2015, 57).

My own experience in dealing with *QueerBeograd Cabaret* was a process of transformation, from becoming a cultural producer, a curator-activist taking part in and organising (artistic) projects and actions mainly in the context of social and political discussions to researching about artistic activism and, finally, to generating theoretical conclusions from it. In this process, I have encountered many epistemological and methodological dilemmas. Having a background in traditional art history studies that in the Balkan context are very focused on the most internationally recognised heritage of that space, medieval art, namely, and architecture (Byzantine cultural heritage), my education trajectory was quite complex. After once acquiring the theoretical foundations necessary to
start writing the dissertation, I was struggling in the beginning with the limits of queer studies, on the one hand, which could not offer the adequate framework necessary for interpreting this material that was not just queer, and on the other hand, I was also having difficulty with the generality of the concept of solidarity when trying to use it to communicate the very specific effects of QueerBeograd Cabaret and to get across what was really going on in that room, what was happening between the people there in that cabaret space, and the effects that had on what was happening in the larger space beyond and even over time. The process of reflecting on these two seemingly opposite problems brought me to focus on location and the political action of actors involved in the cabaret, that is to say, on the “politics and epistemologies of location, positioning and situating” (Haraway 1991, 195), which showed that this material cannot be understood properly from one location or one region (neither Belgrade nor the “East”), and it can’t be from only a queer perspective either.

Coming from Belgrade, I was very much informed by critical perspectives on the “West”. While I tended in the beginning to see QueerBeograd as something politically special because it was local (and not “Western”), this critical view of mine was limiting (at the risk of manipulating the interpretation) and thus logically difficult to prove, as QueerBeograd was not only local. Although I do think that the imperial effects of any “East”/”West” encounter are not minor and should not be ignored, this research brought me to insights that showed spots where the “East”/”West” encounter can be more than a binary, asymmetric power relation and can generate productive effects, even when still not unproblematic. This view was also enabled by the fact that I myself experienced the “West” as multiple through my own migration process and involvement in migration discussions in academia as well as my proximity to the social movements related to migration, including the Refugee Protest Camp in Vienna. Hence, the “West” became visible to me also as inhabited by many others from the “peripheries”, but also other “EUropeans” critical of “Western” centristm taking part in struggles from within that delegitimise it.

Further, another dilemma I faced was related to the time and geographical distances of the events I write about, which affected my relation to the research, and in this process, what was once very actual, became historical. Also, I became aware that through not being able to be involved any longer in Belgrade as I was before, I became a sort of an “outsider” simply by not being present that much. At the same time, the change in my location enabled me to gain a better understanding of other social movements in the EU, especially related to migration, the experience that was very important for me to fully understand the relevance of QueerBeograd Cabaret as a project that resonates not only local post-Yugoslav concerns but also some of the most important topics of contemporary Europe, the status of the borders and the question of European citizenship. The time-distance from the events actually had advantages as it helped a more distanced view on how what was once activism became the source of generating empirical and theoretical knowledge. What was at one time ephemeral practice, the performance, has transformed into a text, which performs its interpretation and creates its theory based on practice, enabling additional access to the secondary audiences, the readers of this text.

Maybe the most difficult dilemma was the one related to my role as a researcher. Not so much because of uneasiness or ambivalence toward the task of historising and theorising in a way that could be perceived as “objective”, generated by “authority” that cre-
states the “truth” of the “object” of research, because I am aware of the critical perspectives on this that have occurred in last decades. More precisely, this view on the role of researcher has been questioned in critical theories from feminist, post-colonial and many other studies and this has taught us about the relativity of such “truths” and their dependence on their standpoint and ideology. My position is that this text provides one of the possible interpretations, and mine is based on interdisciplinary research and analysis, performed from my perspective, with the aim of generating new theoretical perspectives, and it will surely not be identical with the interpretations by QueerBeograd activists. What preoccupied my self-reflection more was the question of appropriation, the “political correctness” of writing about queer when one is not “queer” (in the way queer is conventionally understood as gender and sexuality identity). At the same time, I am aware of the problematic essentialist implication of this question and the shortcomings of identity politics. Further, the questions raised here are exactly where queer begins. In any case, there is no “safe” path out of this dilemma, and both writing and not writing will be problematic, because writing risks appropriation while not writing risks erasing. Also, besides being aware of this ambivalence, which is not a new one (“who has the right to write about what?”), it seemed to me that my dilemma was even bigger because of the space where I was, Vienna, where I experienced that identity politics are more profoundly affecting social movements on the Left than is the case in the post-Yugoslav context. The reason for this might be the existence of socialist experience in the post-Yugoslav space and the interest of post-war generations of activist and cultural actors in the struggle for the continuity of some of the values created in it. This doesn't mean that identity politics struggles are wrong, or unimportant, it means they have effects that limit social action, reducing it to the interests of single social groups. However, in some of the last interviews I did, in 2016, with the QueerBeograd members involved in the cabaret, with Majda Puača, for instance, I realised that this dilemma of mine became less worrisome. Talking to her, I felt a strong sense of belonging to the community of people who are now dispersed around the world but are connected by memory and the importance of the political work we did in Belgrade in the 2000s. At the same time, the direction of my research results gave me more confidence because as I was writing it was becoming clearer and clearer to me that even though my entrance point to the topic of interconnectedness was queer (through QueerBeograd), and queer needed and needs its space, my political and epistemological interest was more than queer, and this is what QueerBeograd Cabaret articulated in practice and as a concept, offering the perspective on queer as kvar and as political solidarity. Hence, my main task was not to analyse or “define” specifically queer and queerness, even when this was sometimes necessary, which might, however, have resulted with interpretations that experts in queer studies, queer activists and artists might find insufficient; but in any case, academic work is performed in order to be advanced by academic and activist critical communities.

0.1 Methods of Research and Theoretical Frameworks

The research project takes the multi-actor perspective that insists on multiple power relations and the role of different actors in the society. It is not directed necessarily towards
the critique of hegemonic order through analysis of the manifestations of power relations (my earlier texts were focused on this aspect). Rather, the project tends towards the destabilisation of power dynamics through looking at the activities of other social actors and their interventionist work in art, cultural and political fields. As Foucault pointed out: “one does not have to work with power understood as domination, as mastery, as a fundamental given, a unique principle, explanation or irreducible law . . . One always has to think about it in such a way as to see how it is associated with a domain of possibility and consequently, of reversibility, of possible reversal” (Foucault 2007, 66). Hence, my intention is to contribute to the picture that features a number of other actors involved in evaluations of society, politics and economy who are creating alternative imaginations necessary for these spaces of reversibility.

The thesis is grounded in an interdisciplinary research design that is framed by contemporary theoretically informed art history and art theory standpoints combining knowledge and methods of other academic disciplines, but also artistic-activist knowledge production. Empirical research constitutes the fundament for the text, which is grounded in building theoretical conclusions on the basis of close observation of practice. That means I do not intend to impose theoretical frames onto cultural and artistic “objects” that would be material for the application of a certain theory, but that I work on establishing a productive relation of exchange between practice and theory (Secomb 2007, 5–6). From the field research as a point of departure, I look into theoretical discourses and work with them in order to reflect on how they influence practice, or what they can add to the understanding of practice—creating a dialogue, so to speak, between theory and practice—but also on how what is happening in practice can advance our theoretical knowledge and create inputs for the development of theoretical perspectives, that then again can inform the practice by contributing to the ongoing circulation of knowledge between practice and theory.

My thesis about QueerBeograd Cabaret is based on the interpretation of primary sources, the documentary material consisting of printed material published by the QueerBeograd collective, sources published online, such as interviews with members of the collective, and including the material from the QueerBeograd web blog (which is no longer active), my own memory/forgetting of the cabaret, other festival events and encounters with organisers, but, most importantly, video and image documentation. Where video material is missing, I have relied on published scripts of the cabaret performances and images. Although not necessarily common in social movements, QueerBeograd was invested in documentation of the cabarets because documenting the festival and publishing books was approached as part of the activist educational practice. Hence, the scripts of all cabaret performances, and transcripts of all panel discussions that happened during the festival were published. Secondary sources, the interpretation of the performance material between 2006 and 2008 doesn't exist. Further, my interpretation of QueerBeograd Cabaret was enriched by the ethnographic research method of interviewing actors involved in the production of the material I analyse (Halberstam 2003 [1998], 243–244; Hvala 2010, 11–13; Kajinić 2013, 82–83). I conducted interviews with all of the QueerBeograd members who were involved in the cabaret. These unpublished interviews, conducted for the research needs, were used to back up my main argument. I usually sent them my questions, but I first let the actors to
tell their stories about the cabaret and about QueerBeograd and for the most part didn't find these stories contradictory. In my questions, I was specifically interested in hearing about what the experience of the cabaret production looked like; what were their roles in the creative process as well as what was their understanding of the concept of politics of interconnectedness, or how the geo-political aspect influenced their work. I did not interview foreign guests that performed at the cabaret, even though their contribution was important, because my primary focus was to understand how QueerBeograd as a collective intervened through performance in social justice movements and in the queer discourses. Finally, I did not interview other members of QueerBeograd, even though they all played important roles, Ksenija Forca or Milan Marković, for instance, as founding members of the collective, because my focus was the cabaret, and they did not take part in it. To capture additional aspects of the collective and the festival would require producing another text.

As my research trajectory was transforming through the process of writing, I did not conduct all interviews in the same period of time. Covering such a time span as they do, some interviews draw more from immediacy and the actuality of activism (those from 2009 and 2011), while later interviews are more based on memory and share accounts conditioned by time, when the festival had become history. In the last round of interviews and conversations, the activists also started evaluating the festival, and this is when the conversations about conflicts also occurred, which was not the case before. This created an awareness about possible incongruities that can occur from interviewing actors of social movements and the general tendency that, in the actual time when activism is taking place, conflicts are rarely addressed openly (I myself have also experienced this in my own practice). This led me to reflect about interview material and its use as a “documentary” source. Bojan Bilić suggests the critical evaluation of such sources, which are certainly valuable as they do provide an additional dimension to the research, but he maintains that the interview information needs to be approached with a certain reserve, especially

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2 For instance, in 2009, I interviewed Zoe Gudović from QueerBeograd, along with a few other actors from the Belgrade and Novi Sad art-activist scenes. Although I later changed my research focus, these interviews were useful for a better understanding of the context and its history, as these people have been active in social movements and arts since the beginning of the 1990s. In Belgrade in 2009, I interviewed Ljiljana Radovanović from the activist organisation Žene u Crnom [Women in Black], Dragan Protić from the art-activist group Škart and, in Novi Sad, Ivan Pravdić and Zoran Pantelić. Earlier, I had interviewed the curator Branislav Dimitrijević.

In 2011, when I was about to start writing about QueerBeograd, I interviewed Jet Moon and Marija Savić in Innsbruck. In the last phase of writing, when I decided that I would not focus on other practices of transnational collaborations, in early 2016, I conducted additional interviews in Belgrade, with Milan Đurić and Saša Pokrajac, namely, and I had a conversation with Zoe Gudović. This talk was not recorded as it happened spontaneously while visiting Zoe. I tried to organise an interview on Skype afterwards, but it didn’t work out as she was very busy. However, I referred to some of the information from that conversation, as I saw it was very important for her to talk. She suggested that I should interview Johanna Moser, and I did so. During my stay in Belgrade, I conducted two more interviews with artists involved in another cabaret project from 2011 titled Cabaret – Behind the Mirror, Olga Dimitrijević and Vladimir Bjeličić, whom I mention later, but unfortunately there was no space and time to go into more details. Further, in 2016, I took a Skype interview with Majda Puača and, in early 2017, with Johanna Moser.
when the interviewers talk about experiences in which they were very emotionally engaged (Bilić 2012, 32–33). However, the interviews were not the only source for building my argument, and I also compared statements in order to gain a more complex picture. This, of course, in cases of conflicting opinions is not that simple, but the conflicts that were mentioned were not central for my argument. Still, I thought that it would not be correct to ignore them. However, I estimated that understanding them better would require an additional round of interviews and greater time-distance.

My experience of these interviews was for the most part pleasant and I sensed a feeling of trust and appreciation for the work that I was doing, but that depended also on how much contact I had with a given activist beforehand. In general, the conversations with local activists felt closer, even when we had not known each other before, simply because of our common language and context. It seems to me that the attitude they had towards my work depended also on what kind of relation they had towards academia and generating theoretical knowledge, and unsurprisingly, some were sceptical about it. Here there is also the question of the access to career opportunities that academic research provides, based on abstracting the work of others in practice. Without a doubt, education is a privilege (apart from being a desire), but with such precarity in the academic field, conditioned as it is by neoliberal effects, it is a question whether a dissertation project really offers a viable career. This dilemma is not uncommon in academic research on social movements (Bilić 2012, 30). In any case, some of the activists also stated that activism as well requires certain privileges and that they could do it because there were conditions for it. In general, all of the activists I met were very passionate in talking about QueerBeograd and were proud of their contributions to it. Some of them remembered that period as very beautiful, even the most beautiful period in their lives. Other documentary sources I used also share this energy. Quoting QueerBeograd activists from the interviews and other sources, besides presenting valuable information, implicates the political aspect of the method, the speaking with the practice I am writing about, giving space to the multiplicity of voices that actually take part in producing a text like this and hence acknowledging the multiple authorship behind every academic work, the agency of the “objects” of research, where the “objects” of knowledge are perceived as actors and agents and not as “resources” (Haraway 1991, 198). Having my research history and its entanglement with my curatorial practice, I tend to see my thesis resulting from the method of working with the artistic and cultural production I am writing about, in a way parallel to it and together with it. More precisely, my intention was not only to analyse specific aspects of the art and cultural production of the social movements, but to produce a text that would function as an academic activist work, similar to what Madina Tlostanova defines as studying with contesting movements and becoming an integral part of these movements and not studying the contesting movements from the outside (Tlostanova 2009). Thus, working with relates to the condition of entering the project not from the position of a researcher who studies the subject from a distant point of view, but as an actor who was or is participating in the field of the research (Knežević and Marjanović 2015). Even though the implication of this approach differs in texts that need years to

3 Parallel to the dissertation and in relation to it, I initiated two projects inviting actors whose work urged and inspired the writing of this text as guests of public events. These collaborations hap-
be produced from those that are resulting from and are characterised by immediacy, my perspective on social movements is that they are always in continuity, i.e., while some disappear, others develop from them, both locally and transnationally.

Writing about creative practice that is situated in social movements necessitates expanding the methodological tools of classical art analysis and drawing from other disciplines, in this case, especially gender studies and social movements studies. This represents the need for analysing not only artistic-activist practices today but also a great part of contemporary art that is created with a profound interest in politics. As Claire Bishop puts it: “[f]rom a disciplinary perspective, any art engaging with society and the people in it demands a methodological reading that is, at least in part, sociological” (Bishop 2012, 7). Yet Bishop also points out that art is not only a social activity but as well a symbolic one, “embedded in the world but also removed from it”, and hence “positivist” methods are not possible to apply on it; art analysis benefits also from political philosophy (Bishop 2012, 7).

While social studies and political philosophy along with cultural studies (to which gender studies belong) were necessary to understand and analyse the artistic-activist practice of QueerBeograd, on the other hand, so did the methodological tools of art history and theory that focus on forms of artistic expressions as well offer conceptual and analytical tools for this research project. Hence, art-activist production is analysed using the “methods of engaging in contextual analysis” (D’Alleva 2012, 46–87). As the text will show, aesthetic forms are entangled with political intentions and histories of creative practices.

The main field in which I situate my text is contemporary art historical (including activist art historical) and cultural analysis, but I relied also on insights from performance...
and theatre studies, as there I could find out more about cabaret history and its contemporary practices. The insights from gender studies, especially feminism and queer studies, were very important as a point of departure for the text, which deals with queer translation and intervention in the discourses of its translation. However, in my search for theoretical tools and knowledge that would support my analysis, this was insufficient because the practice of *QueerBeograd Cabaret* (and the QueerBeograd collective) wasn’t limited to gender and sexuality. Hence, gender and queer studies that are attentive to intersections with other fields, post-colonial studies and post-Marxism were useful in reflecting on method and theory-building in the interpreting of the material. In that sense, I didn’t ground the thesis in gender studies or in queer theory, but I interconnected them rather with inputs from sociology and political theory and created a productive dialogue from the arts perspective. Academic and activist knowledge from “Eastern” Europe, more precisely, the post-Yugoslav space, as well as from the “Western” world have offered not only important sources for reflection in this text but also the post-colonial knowledge that has transformed the Left in the “West” (including queer activism) and the academia both in the “West” and “East” of Europe. Post-identity migration discussions and their theorising have advanced these discussions.

In analysing *QueerBeograd Cabaret* and the translation of queer as *kvar*, i.e., queer as malfunction of hegemonic rule and queer politics as the politics of interconnectedness as the discursive framework of the cabaret, and also the cabaret as a platform for its articulation, analytical categories of queer and intersectionality were especially useful. It was necessary to look at the histories and backgrounds that enabled such practice, its local and trans-national urgencies, in order to understand the materiality of Queer-Beograd’s practice and the proposal of the politics it invested itself in. To find the answer, I needed first to look at how the politics of QueerBeograd was articulated in general in QueerBeograd’s work, as well as what the background discourses behind it were, and how this resonated in the cabaret itself. However, I do not provide a queer theory account, I looked rather at the histories and dynamics of feminist, LGBT and anti-war organising as the basis for the queer organising and the formulation of its politics that appears here as continuity. Yet I also looked at international and transnational discussions that indirectly also informed queer translation. The discussions on intersectionality were here central. They occurred within what was termed ‘dissident currents within feminisms’ and expanded later to ‘dissident currents within queer’. I maintain in Chapter 1 that dissident currents within queer are important for understanding queer, as these discourses that were a part of queer from the beginning, though often considered particular, show how queer has been (re)articulating itself and transforming in different contexts since its beginnings. I argue that even though dissident currents within queer are not directly related to QueerBeograd, there are still some similarities that need to be taken into consideration, especially in the approach to the analysis of power. When I was starting to write the dissertation in 2012 (when I wrote most of what is now Chapter 1), it seemed to me that the discussions on intersectionality that came from the decolonial context might offer analytical tools for my analysis of QueerBeograd’s politics, as I was finding influences of the knowledge produced in these discussions in general on how queer was being critically discussed, the anti-racist discourses, for instance, that one can find in accounts of some activists of QueerBeograd as well as in accounts of the transnational...
activist festival Queeruptation that resonated in QueerBeograd’s work. I claimed this to be a result of queer’s self-criticism effectuated through postcolonial and decolonial critique, the so-called radical queer (Lorenz 2012, 17; Eleftheriadis 2014, 150). I also pointed out the similarity between the discourse of intersectionality and the critical analytical work and solidarity perspectives that were coming out of the local post-Yugoslav feminist, gay and lesbian movements that became simultaneously anti-war movements recognising the multidimensionality of power and analysing power in such a way that gender and sexuality were viewed in relation to nation and ethnicity. Using this perspective, power systems were contested through formulating a radical critique of nation and ethnicity, their effects on what was produced as the “Other” and the analytical disentanglement of gender and sexuality from ethnicity and nation. Further, the maintenance of the continuity of the political values of Yugoslav communist anti-fascism and its universality, insisting on solidarity as the deepest value of existence, played a crucial role in revealing that no nationalist ideology could break the bonds between people who saw themselves as equal.4 However, the discourse of anti-anti-fascism that the new nationalist state(s) created in the process of the transition to capitalism was enabled through the production and hegemony of anti-communism and anti-socialism in all the former Yugoslav republics (and throughout former Eastern Europe), as a consequence of the Cold War, in which communism was equated with totalitarianism, which resulted in historical revisionism (Kuljić 2005; Marković 2011). Stevan Vuković, writing about this transformation, pointed out: “[t]he agenda for transforming Serbia into a liberal-democratic society, which defines freedom, efficiency, justice and affluence as core social values, also had as one of its transitory aims to destroy all the basic values, beliefs, and social norms of the former socialist state” (Vuković 2007). Further, being subjugated as ‘woman’, ‘gay’ ‘lesbian’ by the nationalist hetero-patriarchy additionally sensibilised the subjects of these movements to contest the exclusion and removal of all those who were being targeted by the nationalist militarist violence that spread throughout the region for an entire decade. Thus, the local gay and lesbian movement-in-the-making, articulated out of its resistance to the construction “sexual traitor” of the nation’s hetero-patriarchy, was at the same time the movement of resisting this destructive force, from its outside to its inside; but it was also exposed to a certain hierarchisation of discrimination that rendered this less visible (Mladenović 2012; Forca 2005, 79). Connecting the struggles of those produced as abject resonated in QueerBeograd’s approach, unsurprisingly, as some of its activists were also active in the feminist, gay and lesbian anti-war movement. Drawing from experience of the anti-war movement and the hierarchisation of suffering within it, as well as from the analysis of post-war transition to capitalism, from the alter-globalist movement perspective as well as from the critique of it, which questioned “newly” created hierarchisations of discrimination where the “worker” was being captured as the exclusive subject of politics, while homophobia was being completely ignored, QueerBeograd called for a new concept and

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4 The voices of the Yugoslav people in the moment when the successor states were re-inventing their nations in the beginning of the 1990s, were, as Pavle Levi pointed out, silenced not only by local nationalists in power but also by international interests and their representatives involved in the process of the disintegration of the socialist state in the context of the Cold War’s aftermath (Levi 2009, 12).
organised a new space for it. QueerBeograd’s approach was the conceptualisation of politics that would be able to “do something that [would] clearly connect all the struggles against repressions”, from those in the local post-Yugoslav space to those outside of it especially conditioned by neoliberal capitalism, its entanglement with nation-state and their systems of regulation of border regimes (Forca 2005, 79).

It comes as no surprise that, more or less at the same time as I was starting to write my thesis (I became aware of this only later), the intersectionality perspective was beginning to be employed in the post-Yugoslav space by other researchers in the field of gender and sexuality studies and studies of social movements, in the research on queer festivals in the post-Yugoslav space (Kajinić 2013); and it has recently gained more attention in the sociological analysis of LGBT movements in post-Yugoslav space (Bilić and Kajinić, eds., 2016). In the context of decolonial thinking and activism, both in feminism and queer, most of the discussions on intersectionality that I sketch out in the Chapter 1 point to intersections of different power systems in the interpellation of the subject that was/is a “black” or “of color” “man” or “woman” and/or, at the same time, “queer”. So here, the subject is analysed as being multiply targeted and constituted by workings of different power mechanisms (racism, heteronormativity, patriarchy, class), and therefore, subjects who have organised politically, becoming the subjects of political struggles, have articulated the need for a new politics that will not ignore these multiple effects of power systems, as their simultaneous oppressions have been seen as interlocking (Crenshaw 2015; The Combahee River Collective 1983 [1977]; Anzaldúa 2007 [1987]; Mohanty 1988; Carby 1996; Sandoval 2002; Johnson 2009 [2001]; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010). The perspective of decolonial feminism and, later, decolonial queer, which insisted that violent societal mechanisms are mutually constituting each other and therefore need to be analysed together (and not parallel to one another), tremendously influenced not only feminist but also queer theory, activism and art. Even though the intersectionality debate was predominantly theorised in the framework of feminist scholarship, discussions about its scarcity in queer theory as well as those on the underdevelopment of the sexuality perspective in the application of intersectionality have been leading to a new revisiting of the debate on intersectionality (Taylor, Hines and Casey 2010, 2–3). At the same time, the new rearticulation also generated critical reflections on the limits of the approach, especially related to the still-present hierarchisation of categories. Umut Erel, Jin Haritaworn, Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez and Christian Klesse, acknowledging the importance of the perspective, have also acknowledged a lack in studies of relations of power between different differently subjected or interpellated subjects: “intersectionality’ describes the system of interlocking power relations, but it does not necessarily conceptualise the production of hierarchies among the different relationships of power and domination in place. Thus, through the angle of ‘intersectionality’, we might grasp how a subject position is constituted by gender, ‘race’, sexuality and class; but how this subject position is related to other subject positions in a specific field of power and domination is not necessarily addressed” (Erel et al. 2010, 64).

As I mentioned, intersectionality as an analytical perspective has been recently employed in the analysis of LGBT and queer movements in the post-Yugoslav space, and the book Intersectionality and the LGBT Activist Politics. Multiple Others in Croatia and Serbia plays here an especially important role. The editors of the book use the analytical per-
perspective of “multiple others” to point to, as they state, the “interdependent and mutually constitutive aspects of our sexuality, gender, ethnicity, ability, or health,” which “sway our trajectories and determine our experiences” (Bilić and Kajinić 2016, 3). The aim of this translation in the local context is “to amalgamate currently disparate strands of activist engagement and reinvigorate the critical potential of intersectionality to generate the basis for non-oppressive coalitional politics” (Bilić and Kajinić 2016, 4). The volume focuses on the activist and theoretical de-legitimising of immensely strong canons of nationalism and hetero-normativity in these two countries and it points to the “intersectionality as lived experience” (Bilić and Kajinić 2016, 8, [emphasis mine]). Including an article on QueerBeograd and its investment beyond single-issue activism, the volume positions QueerBeograd as an example of intersectionality (Bilić and Dioli 2016). Finally, some accounts in the book look beyond the subject-oriented approach to intersectionality (“multiple others”) or beyond the multiple interpellation of the subject, searching for a perspective that allows discussion about strategies for the building of alliances beyond the experiences of “multiple others” (for instance, an alliance between the mainstream LGBT movement and the workers’ struggle), the discussion on LGBT activism and the Left, their hierarchies, exclusions and blind-spots, the approach that is of special interest in my thesis (Maljković 2016, 217–224).

Every process of translation creates tension, and thus a “worry” about the logic and legitimacy of such translation into new contexts that have nothing to do with the origin of the concept, in this case, intersectionality. An important epistemological political question appears here: which knowledge can be rendered “universal” and why does the translation of, for instance, queer theory from the US go “easier” than does, say, the translation of postcolonial and decolonial queer perspectives of intersectionality? The editors of the mentioned volume rightly approach critically the question of appropriateness, arguing in favour of translation as the act itself that questions the “universality” of “Western” concepts, while the concepts of postcolonial knowledge production are rendered specific and thus are often seen as useless in other contexts (Bilić and Kajinić, eds., 2016). Besides this argument, as I point out in Chapter 1, the Yugoslav socialist cultural and political context was informed, involved and influenced by decolonial struggles and knowledge produced in the context of decolonisation. More precisely, decolonial knowledge and perspectives were available in the former Yugoslavia in the moments of decolonisation struggles in Africa, and they informed generations of feminist, lesbian, gay and queer scholars and activists (Iveković 2006b, 44). Further, in the accounts of transnational activists from QueerBeograd who came to Belgrade from the “West”—Johanna Moser, for instance—the experience of feminist and at that moment queer-in-becoming activism in Belgrade appears very much conditioned by the intersectional perspective that had been translated earlier in the Yugoslav space and had become part of feminist grassroots knowledge and practice along with a very strong sense of international solidarity politics (Moser 2017). However, the context of the intersectionality debate in activism and theory still represents very different contexts than the (post)Yugoslav one. While in the “West” these discussions were informed strongly by decolonisation and struggles against the effects of colonialism on the lives of women and queers in post-colonies complicated by increased migration flows and the presence of migrants from the post-colonies in the “West”, in the post-Yugoslavian case, intersectionality as an analytical approach, in prac-
tice, can be recognised not only in the anti-war activism but also in the analysis of post-socialist gender and sexuality and class as complicated through post-war maintenance of the construction of the nation and the ethnic “Other”. However, in researching and writing about QueerBeograd’s practice, I came to the point of reflecting on the preciseness and sufficiency of translating intersectionality in this context, especially through the analysis of QueerBeograd Cabaret, and I developed an argument that the intersectionality perspective can only be applied partially. I argued that it needs to be theoretically advanced in the course of theorising the politics of interconnectedness, which I elaborate upon in the Conclusion.

During my research process and writing, queer studies and queer theory, especially the concept of gender performativity, was used as a theoretical framework in analysing queer gender and sexuality aspects of the cabaret. I have been using the term “queer performance” to describe QueerBeograd Cabaret, being aware, however, of the different meanings the term implicates. The way I referred to queer performance doesn’t necessarily imply what Judith Butler among others theorised in the discussions on gender performativity as the repetitive practice of performing gender in everyday life in such a way that it might disrupt the hegemonic gender representations (or reproduce them). This is commonly addressed in queer studies as producing “artificiality of all genders and all sexual orientations” (Halberstam 2003 [1998], 240). However, here it is necessary to expand what Judith Butler termed gender performativity, compulsory gendering and its failure as part of the subject’s interpellation as gendered and sexed subjects in the quotidian, where genders are socially produced (Butler 1990 [2007]; Butler 1993 [2011]). The focus of Butler’s analysis, which she explored through drag, was predominantly in the social, the performance of gender in the everyday, but she distanced her analysis from the field of theatre and performance (Müller 2011, 71). In the context of queer performativity discussions, some authors have pointed out the problem in Butler’s theorisations that distinguish in a very traditional manner “the fictive” from “the real” of the stage, as well as ignoring theatre theories that discuss the potentiality of failure of normative performativity of gender exactly in the theatre field (Čale Feldman 2001, 91–122; Petrović 2014, 274). However, performance studies at the intersection with queer studies, developed a number of ways to analyse performance art and theatre in relation to queer, and the field is growing, having recently acquired the necessary “international perspective” (Campbell and Farrier 2016). At the same time, this field has been demonstrating interest in analysing the blurring of boundaries between high and low art and cultural production, queer art and activism resulting from shifts of the border between “art” and “life” in the contexts of queer art, culture and activism, which has offered useful insights into practices that share some similarities with the art-activist practice of QueerBeograd, especially the DIY aesthetics and the aesthetics of trashy (Cvetkovich 1998; Halberstam 2003 [1998]; Halberstam 2005; Muñoz, 2009; Katz et al. 2011; Müller 2008b; Case 2009; Chalklin 2012; Cowan 2012a; Cowan 2012b; Cowan 2010; Vogel 2000; Farrier et al. 2010). However, this tendency is not characteristic only for the field of queer artistic and cultural production, but in general, in discussions on art engendered at the intersection of the social and political fields, such as participatory art, where terms such as “quality” or “professionalism” are contested and as Claire Bishop maintains, “more radical options
have tended to advocate a confusion of high/low boundaries or to prioritize other terms” (Bishop 2012, 7).

To not ignore the “real” of the character on stage is discussed in the course of research on “queer dramaturgies” that work with a different set of tools than the traditional mimetic realist theatre and these theories were useful for my reflection as Queer-Beograd Cabaret wasn’t entirely grounded in fiction (Campbell and Farrier 2016, 15). This counter-normative dramaturgy work of queer theatre and queer performance doesn’t try to simulate staged works where the performer disappears through the appearance of the character, but acknowledges both of these realities (ibid). What appears here as the rethinking of the mimetic theatre has a long history, and was also anticipated in historical avant-gardes. Bertolt Brecht criticised theatre’s falsification of “the real”, stating that the portrayed figures “are not matter for empathy, they are there to be understood,” and he consequently experimented with different forms of representation (Brecht and Willet 1964 [1926], 15). The radicalisation of not ignoring the “real” of the characters, developed by Brecht in his Lehrstücke (teaching plays), where people from the working class and not professional actors were meant to perform, and Brazilian theatre maker Augusto Boal developed this idea further into the concept and method of “forum” theatre, adopted in many contexts on a global scale, including feminist and queer activist performance practices (Malzacher 2015, 22; Boal 2015, 71–76). Importantly, feminist grassroots theatre and feminist performance art, and later queer, developed their own methods of staging the self and performing the subject using autobiography and autoethnography and the speech of the artist in the first person, blurring the border of art and “real” (Đurić 1995; Duhaček 2008, 292–293; Muñoz 1999, 81). In this field, the “continuities between being and performing” interlock in such way that is not possible completely to distinguish the two (Halberstam 2003 [1998], 246). In the context of queer performance, this appears as the practice of “undermining notions of authenticity and realness in favor of queer self-making practices,” and doing so in such way can be found in QueerBeograd Cabaret (Muñoz 1999, 139).

Researching about cabaret and especially contemporary feminist and queer cabaret, which appears in different international spaces both in the “Global North” and the “Global South,” I looked for accounts about contemporary queer cabaret culture. This kind of cabaret is staged mainly as a cultural and artistic practice of nightclubs as open stages for performing queer identity and queer politics; but cabaret events are also organised in art galleries and other art and cultural spaces that share some similarities as well as differences, as queer-feminist cabaret travels across cultures and contexts and becomes a globalised form. Further, it was necessary to also look at the historiography of cabaret, and more precisely, at the discussions on Weimar Cabaret, which by QueerBeograd’s accounts stands as one of its main references, and I elaborated on the implication of such a reference. In Chapter 3, I analyse the ways in which the formal and methodological devices of Weimar Cabaret are “adopted” in QueerBeograd Cabaret and I tried to make sense of QueerBeograd’s reference to Weimar Cabaret as anti-fascist sexually permissive cultural production, being, however, careful to take into account its specific context as well as time-distance. Hence, the global circulation of cabaret form within queer art and activist cultures and the cabaret’s hybridisation in this context brings a more complex picture about it. Also, I looked at how the local feminist and queer activist performance in
Belgrade, partly deriving from the feminist protest culture of the 1990s, was incorporated into *QueerBeograd Cabaret*, establishing its genealogy not only through the topics of feminist activism but also through feminist forms.

Further, in order to expand the analytical apparatus, I reflected upon *QueerBeograd Cabaret* in the wider context of performance art and discussions on the performative turn and in general discussions on art and politics from contemporary art history and theory and the field of intersection of art and activism. Performance art itself as an art practice has been part of European avant-garde art movements of the 20th century, even in times when art objects were the focus of art productions. Performance also played an important role in artistic movements that were immersed in the political, such as Futurism, Dada, Constructivism, Surrealism before performance art became a “separated” form of art, especially through the process of the dematerialisation of art in the 1960s and 1970s (Goldberg 2006 [1979], 7–9). Moreover, some of the historical avant-gardes in “visual arts” history, such as Expressionists and Dadaists, were using the form of cabaret, and it was also the subject of interest in theatre avant-gardes, for instance, in the early work of Bertolt Brecht. What is common for still different practices of performance art and queer and feminist cabaret is that in performance art, “[u]nlike theatre, the performer is the artist, seldom a character like an actor” (Goldberg 2006 [1979], 8, [emphasis in original]). This, however, is no longer a special characteristic of only performance art, or of cabaret, as conventional theatre has undergone a number of radical transformations and new forms of theatre emerging in the 1980s and 1990s through the influences of other art and social practices, also termed as post-dramatic theatre, devised theatre, performance theatre, verbatim theatre, involving the subject (of the performer) in a more direct way. These forms of theatre-making questioned the status of representation, as Florian Malzacher pointed out, “at the centre of the critique of dramatic theatre stood its use of however estranged mimetic representation, which was seen as discredited and was subsequently confronted with the notion of presence” (Malzacher 2015, 18–19). In the last decades, in the field of visual arts but also in philosophy, the “performative turn” as a paradigm change took place, bringing many visual arts practices closer to those of performance (Weibel 2015, 53). Performance art became the interest of study in different fields: philosophy, architecture, cultural studies (Goldberg 2006 [1979], 9). As part of this transformation, at the same time, a great many “visual artists” turned to performance, and performance further transformed, becoming a participatory practice in which audiences were not only asked to take part but became an integral part of the art work itself that, without their presence and activity, would not be possible (the origins of this transformation are found, for instance, in the performances *Cut Piece* by Yoko Ono (1964) or *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* by Allan Kaprow (1959). Hence, in these developments, we could no longer attest that “the performer is the artist”—wherein RoseLee Goldberg defined performance through its distinction from theatre—for now the public became the artist. This change is actually said to have been anticipated already in performance and theatre-orientated works of historical avant-gardes (Bishop 2012). Experimentation with participation in arts was the topic of one of the heated art debates in the 2000s and 2010s, especially since the publishing of *Relational Aesthetics* by Nicolas Bourriaud and the subsequent critique of not only depoliticised theorisation (which focuses only on aesthetics in the art world’s practices and not on politics) but also of the recently discussed failures
QueerBeograd Cabaret

and limits of participation in the context of the neoliberal institution of art (Bourriaud 2002; Bishop 2012; Rancière 2007; Weibel 2015; Milevska 2016). These transformations in participation and performance have been closely related as well to the discussions since the 1990s on the politicisation of art and its “social turn”, where artists turned to deconstructing the elitist and autonomous status of art, bringing art (again) into relation with the social and the political and, as part of that, aimed to democratise art and deconstruct the existing hierarchies of “high” and “low” art and culture, of “highbrow” and “lowbrow”, of professionals and non-professionals, and importantly, of art and activism, resulting in the acknowledgement of the fluid borders of these fields (Bishop 2012; Malzacher 2014; Milevska 2016; Weibel 2015). In this context, notions that have been in use for some time now occurred to define these practices as “community art”, “contextual art” or “socially engaged art” and even as “social practice” that leaves “art” out of the discussion (Arden 2007; Thompson, ed., 2012, 7; Bishop 2012, 1; Malzacher 2014, 17). In the course of these debates and reflections, art historians and theorists invested in research of histories and theories of art and the political in 20th-century Europe (Raunig 2006; Bishop 2012), but also new projects researching the intersection of the fields of activism and arts generated productive dialogues in events and research-based exhibitions, resulting in publications expanding the discussion to the global contexts.5 Some of these projects shift the focus from art to activism, or more precisely, look at the practices that enter the field of art from the social movement perspective, investing in the research of artistic activism and bringing more light to practices that have been present ever since the conjunction started being discussed from the art perspective but have had less visibility. The existing research and debates played an important role as the background discourses for my reflection on QueerBeograd Cabaret and its place, role and importance, and it is certainly necessary to situate QueerBeograd in these discussions. The topic of art and activism is discussed from two perspectives that cannot, however, always be clearly distinguished: the one that takes arts as the point of departure and is termed “artistic activism”, “art activism” or “activism in art” (Kastner 2014; Šuvaković 2010a; Sholette 2016); and the one that takes activism as the point of departure and invests in creative practices that become part of a social movement, i.e., “activist art” (Lippard 1984; Kester, ed., 1998; Sheikh 2009; Vilenica 2010a; Sholette 2003; Sholette 2016). In this context, theorisations of activism extended the discussion further and proposed the concept as a field of merging of art and activism, “overcoming” the divide between activism and arts in the course of discussions on social turn, performative turn, and participation (Milohnić 2005; Milohnić 2013, 131–145; Weibel 2015, 57). QueerBeograd Cabaret is briefly mentioned in the writings of local authors in the context of the conjunction art and activism, in general (Vilenica 2010a; Vilenica 2010b; Šuvaković 2010a), or more specifically, in the context of recent writing on the relation between queer activism and art (Sabo 2014). Adriana Sabo, not without

5 From exhibition projects such as “Losing Human Form. A Seismic Image of the 1980s in Latin America” in 2012–2013 at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (thanks to Fernanda Nogueira for her insights into this project) to globally orientated platforms such as the event “Truth is Concrete. A Marathon Camp for Artistic Strategies in Politics and Political Strategies in Art” at Steirischer Herbst Art Festival in Graz, 2012, or the exhibition ‘global aCtIVISm’ at the Centre for Art and Media Karlsruhe in 2013–2014, to name a few.
hesitation, defines two types of practices (whose difference in reality is not always clear) activist art (or activism in art) and artistic activism (Sabo 2014, 386). The differentiation is created depending on where the practice comes from and positions itself, in the art world(s) or in the field of cultural and political activism (which often distances itself from the field of art, seeing it as elitist), and Sabo maintains that both, as a consequence, have the politicization of art (Sabo 2014, 386).

QueerBeograd’s cabaret performance practice is to be placed on the map of new local queer performance (which I outline in the Chapter 3, tracing its genealogies in feminist performance) and global queer performance, such as spoken word and cabaret practices that operate between worlds of arts, activism and popular culture, as, for instance, in works of artists such as Vaginal Davis, Carmelita Tropicana, César Enríquez, Alexandra Tichelaar, David Hoyle, etc. Moreover, QueerBeograd’s performance as transversal practice not only gives space to solo acts of cabaret performers (as those mentioned just above) and not only to expressions of fluid queer identities but they also include subjects from leftist social movements who have not all previously been artists and may never be again. A similar approach can be found in projects that merge performance and political activism and are directly involved in social movements, such as the shared stage of the project Rebelodrom, organised in 2013 by queer theatre maker and activist Gin Müller in Vienna, that created a temporary No Borders zone through staging dissident migrant (and refugee) as well as queer art-activist practices, or the performative interventions by the maiz autonomous center for and by migrant women in Linz, to name a few. As part of this movement, QueerBeograd Cabaret contributes to “reformulating the world through the performance of politics” (Muñoz 1999, xiv, [emphasis in original]).

In my research design, a transnational perspective and insights from transnational studies offered additional analytical tools that were necessary, because QueerBeograd cannot be addressed only from a local perspective. The condition of QueerBeograd’s creation and its activism, which specifically QueerBeograd Cabaret demonstrates, were closely related to transnational social movements. So not only did artistic aspects imply a transnational circulation of ideas and knowledge, but also, transnational political movements conditioned QueerBeograd Cabaret in terms of its actors, narratives and intentions (political effects).

I depart from the position that nation is “an imagined political community” (Anderson 2006 [1983], 6). To write about queer as kvar and the politics of interconnectedness suggests to understand queer as relational and not as an identity category, and thus an approach that bounds queer to nation-state is inappropriate, as QueerBeograd, as well as the critical knowledge that it is grounded in, rejected the concept of nation. Even though

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Adriana Sabo maintains:

[Con]necting art and activism is usually considered as a transition from one sphere (political) into the other (artistic). Thanks to this, art in activism has as a task to arouse or enhance the emotional reaction of the audience and in this way establish specific contact with members of the society that are exposed to this practice. In this sense, an “artist-activist” can be anybody, no matter whether he or she has been educated as an artist. In cases where “amateurs” are dealing with artistic activism, it is usually insisted that their acting be freed from the rigidness of high art, so that their effect on society can be more direct and more powerful. (Sabo 2014, 387 [my translation])
to position QueerBeograd in a transnational perspective might seem logical, linking national space and art is often taken for granted in the field of contemporary art criticism and art history as well as in gender studies. As this approach risks the danger of reproducing the normalisation of nation-state (even when this is not intended), it is necessary here to look for other methodological apparatuses. The transnational perspective used in social sciences and humanities offers alternative views looking at practices that undermine borders (Appadurai 2008a; Anderson, Sharma, Wright 2009; Balibar 2004; Bojadžijev 2006; Bojadžijev and Karakayali 2010; Eleftheriadis 2014; Holmes 2008b; Khagram and Levitt 2008; Kriesberg 2008; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2007; Raunig 2006; Slapšak 2003). The transnational approach looks at processes that happen through interaction of actors beyond national borders and boundaries in both the geographical and symbolic senses, and beyond the state as regulatory agent of movement, representation and generating of narratives and images. More precisely, it looks at the fact that “[s]ocial life crosses, transcends and sometimes transforms borders and boundaries in many different ways” (Khagram and Levitt 2008, 1). A transnational perspective encourages reflection on how the categories of local, global and nation-state change “when we don’t assume that they are automatically linked to particular types of territory or space. It pushes us to confront how taken for granted categories, such as citizenship and identity, change

7 Applying a national geographic framework is common for academic research in social sciences, cultural studies and arts (as it is in other fields as well). Examples can be found in some of the titles at the conference Queering Central and Eastern Europe: National Features of Sexual Identities organised at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London in 2008; the book Queer in Europe (Downing and Gillett 2011), which problematically excludes former Eastern European countries that are not part of the European Union; Gender and Identity: Theories from and/or on Southeastern Europe (Blagoević, Kolozova and Slapšak 2006); Sexuality and Gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia (Štulhofer and Sandfort 2005); Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States (Ramet 1999). One of the most monumental projects in art history, which explored the topic of gender in Eastern Europe, was the exhibition Gender Check. Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe organised by Erste Foundation in Vienna in 2009 and 2010. This project was put together in large part through a distribution of research tasks to local researchers from selected nation-states. That logic of organisation of knowledge was repeated in the art history and theory publication Gender Check: A Reader—Art and Theory in Eastern Europe (Pejić, Erste Foundation and Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien 2010) produced as part of the Gender Check project. Although authors of these projects do not identify with nation-state ideology (and are often very critical of it), and while the national framework is usually taken as pragmatic for the organisation of research tasks, this approach risks contributing to the normalisation of the concept of nation and its borders.

Yet, these projects are very significant, as they provide visibility of actors, practices and theories and contribute to the decentring of the hegemonic axis of knowledge (as there is a great lack of inclusion of the research from the region in the international circuits of knowledge). Editors of the book De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives, Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielińska, point out that even though there is a new tendency in queer studies towards marginalised regions, South Eastern and Central Europe are still underrepresented: “[E]ven when considering the recent shift in queer studies towards embracing the margins and outskirts, de-centring the politics of geolocation, the growing amount of literature on non-Western cultures continues to concern mostly post-colonial ‘far-flung’ regions (Asia, Africa). There is still noticeably less work done about the West’s ‘neighbouring’ countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).” (Kulpa and Mizielińska 2011, 1)
when they are considered across space” (Khagram and Levitt 2008, 4). However, ‘transnational’ doesn’t necessarily imply productively transformative encounters and it is also an ambivalent term, as neoliberal capitalism is also transnational and through its transnationality takes advantage of the transnational condition, creating zones of differentiated governance where extreme forms of exploitation are enabled (Ong 2006), but it also generates imagination and social life that is increasingly deterritorialised, conditioned by global capitalism (Appadurai 2008b, 55). Further, transnational exchanges of knowledge also within academia, activism and social movements are not always symmetrical, and “Western” Centrism, and in the case of Europe, Eurocentrism, continue producing unbalanced exchanges (Binnie and Klesse 2011; Kulpa and Mizielińska 2011; Hacker 2009). These critical discussions accompany accounts on the relevance of leftist transnational social movements and their cultural practices, contributing to the creation of alternative visions of the world that they envision and demand. Transnational activist networks do create third, fourth, and so on, spaces where the state or market are not key actors and, as Arjun Appadurai maintained, “...altogether, they shape a third space in which markets and states are not only forced to accept their importance, but to also give more and more real political place to those voices and actors when global decisions about key issues are being made” (Appadurai 2008a, 149, [my translation]). Further, Homi K. Bhabha writes: “the actors and agents of these global initiatives of an international civil society in the making, whether they are NGOs, human rights organisations, international legal or educational bodies, or national and transnational popular movements, have done their best to resist the coercive cultures of univocal choice. Sometimes they succeed; often they fail; most likely they survive uncertainly between success and failure” (Bhabha 2004, xviii [emphasis in original]). Although here it is necessary to differentiate forms of organising and politics related to organisational models, what I also reflect upon, especially in Chapter 4, given QueerBeograd’s refusal to formalise itself as an NGO (the concept of civil society and culturalisation, the “NGO-isation” as part of it, is radically contested by the post-Yugoslav Left as a liberal enterprise installed in the context of the transition to capitalism). However, the perspectives on borders from transnational approaches are useful in placing QueerBeograd in a broader network of cross-border activism as well as in performing an analysis of the discursive transformations resulting from its activism. In that sense, the position of Sanjeev Khagram and Peggy Levitt, the editors of the book *The Transnational Studies Reader: Intersections and Innovations*, exposed in their introductory text where they review existing transnational intellectual foundations, is the position my research project takes: ‘by transnational, we propose an optic or gaze that begins with a world without borders, empirically examines the boundaries and borders that emerge at particular historical moments, and explores their relationship to unbounded arenas and processes. It does not take the existence of, or appropriateness of, the spatial unit of analysis for granted” (Khagram and Levitt 2008, 5, [emphasis mine]). Hence, QueerBeograd, with its transnational connections, members and networks, but also its contribution to No Borders politics, provides exciting material for the research into transnational encounters in between “East” and “West”. Using the transnational perspective politically, my interest was to break the national as well as supra-national narratives (such as the EU) through inserting or re-inserting in it factors that are delegitimising it, not only through their criticism of nation and nationalism, but also through their contribution to No Bor-
ders politics, creating thereby fluid localities through which different ideas and knowledge travel (from Belgrade to London, Zagreb, Barcelona, Berlin, Ljubljana, Vienna, etc., and back and forth in between).

Transnational encounters in arts, however, are not at all a new phenomenon. It is the case rather that they are not often zoomed in on but are mentioned as side stories of national art history narratives. It is no surprise that Sanjeev Khagram and Peggy Levitt point out that there is less work done on transnational art and culture (Khagram and Levitt 2008, 5). In any case, local historical avant-gardes as well as conceptual art, neo-avant-gardes, as well as other artistic movements of the 20th and 21st centuries, were greatly marked by cross-border and cross-boundary flows of actors, ideas and images. Yugoslavian avant-gardes, including actors of these movements in Belgrade, established close relationships across the borders of Europe.8 Also, later intensive transnational encounters took place in the course of the April Meetings in the Student Cultural Centre in Belgrade in the 1970s.9 In the context of the Student Cultural Centre's history, art historian Ješa Denegri stated in an interview: “...transnationality, multiculturality, multimediality—are perhaps not completely new phenomena (because they are actually foundational ideas of art, especially of avant-gardes), and there is no doubt that they are ideas that nowadays time and time again are worth fighting for” (Denegri n.d., [my translation]). Milena Dragićević Šešić writes in the subchapter titled “Transnationality of artistic alternative subcultures” of her book Umetnost i alternativa [Art and Alternative]: “Although the 1980s are in general characterised by nationalism, the revival of ‘regionalism’, and local traditions, it could still be said that the artistic alternative is characterised by transnationalism, respect for universal values and the future, and a mutual directedness of research” (Šešić 1992 [2013], 196, [my translation]).10 Further, Miško Šuvaković broadly defines transnational art in Pojmovnik suvremene umjetnosti [Vocabulary of Contemporary Art] (2005), stating that “transnational art is one of the terms for the art of the late-postmodern plural epoch of the 1980s and 1990s that is characterised by incomparable differences and divisions, as well as the transformation of art into culture,” and he differentiates it from the international art of modernism, art that was created as “art for the establishment of and rule of a single dominant and unique language of autonomous art” (Šuvaković 2005, 638, [my translation]).

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8 For instance, Ljubomir Micić, initiator of the avant-garde Zenitism movement was the editor of Zenit magazine, some of whose issues (nos. 17–18, 1922) were edited by Ilya Ehrenburg and El Lissitzky (El Lissitzky also designed the cover) (Levi 2013, 76). Other avant-garde artists, such as the surrealists were largely connected transnationally; Marko Ristić lived for a period in Paris, meeting André Breton and other French surrealists (Todić 2002).

9 In this context, not only was Joseph Beuys a guest, but, for instance, some artists, such as Lutz Becker, did work on Film Notes, i.e., filmic research and representation of the local art scene done in collaboration with the group of artists, curators and critics gathered around the Student Cultural Centre Belgrade.

10 One of her examples of informal transnational groups consisting of artists partly from the Yugoslavian cultural space is the collective Westeast that used mail art and zines as a method of working and communicating. The group was founded in Kranj in 1978 in the course of preparation of the Westeast book anthology and an exhibition (Šešić 1992 [2013], 198).
Some researchers from social sciences and cultural studies from the former “Eastern” Europe who work on gender do expand the analytical perspective to the transnational, which has offered useful insights for my research. Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielińska, editors of the book *De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*, structured the book in such a way that its first part (besides having other topics) is organised around the topic of “the transnational circulation of homosexualities and identities” (Kulpa and Mizielińska 2011, 3), even though some articles in this book are focused on national spaces. Moreover, Jon Binnie and Christian Klesse accomplished a joint research project on the topic of transnational activism around LGBTQ politics in Central and Eastern Europe (Binnie and Klesse 2011, 107–131). Younger generations of researchers, Bojan Bilić, Irene Dioli and Sanja Kajinić, research symbolic geographies of Queeroslavia produced in the context of queer (art) festivals and post-Yugoslav networking contributing to the perspective that destabilises concepts of nation-state (Kajinić 2012; Dioli 2009; Bilić and Dioli 2016), besides other works in the “West” that take a transnational perspective in critical investigation of queer organising across the borders of Europe (Lippert 2012; Hacker 2009). QueerBeograd is briefly mentioned in the research of Gavin Brown, one of the editors of the book *Geographies of Sexualities. Theory, Practices and Politics* and he interestingly touches upon “Eastern” (as well as others) nodes of social movements. Brown explores radical queer activism and autonomous initiatives through the insight into and reflection on the transnational Queeruption gatherings from the end of the 1990s on (this is relevant here as one of QueerBeograd’s founding members, Jet Moon, lives in London and was active in Queeruption, which established direct links to QueerBeograd). He draws attention to Queeruption’s “non-linear heritage, drawing on many strands of activism. Their precursors include ecological and post-anarchist movements such as Reclaim the Streets (Jordan 1998), Earth First! (Plows 1998) and the Zapatistas (Marcos 2001)” as well as other gender and queer initiatives (Brown 2009, 195). Also, Brown points to connections between Queeruption radical queer networks and “radical queer groups in Serbia (the organisers of the aborted Belgrade Pride)” that are “experimenting in their local contexts with different anti-capitalist means of living autonomous queer lives” (Brown 2009, 199). From my insight into this topic based on interviews with QueerBeograd members, it seems to me that Brown is referring here to QueerBeograd but is mistaking it for the organiser of the aborted Pride. Another researcher, Konstantinos Eleftheriadis, who looks at the queer movement in Europe through queer festivals, especially Queeruption, and transnational networking and solidarities in Europe, points out that “…queer politics in Europe developed mainly during alterglobalisation movements” (Eleftheriadis 2014, 151) and that in such contexts a “new form of Europeanness emerges; a ‘counter’-Europeanness that stands critically against institutionalized politics and attempts to create new forms of sociality and politics” (Eleftheriadis 2014, 147). This research was very useful in understanding the implications of networks of actors across Europe and beyond Europe, wherein QueerBeograd is positioned, but also in order to understand the conceptualisation of politics engendered not only from local but from global perspectives as well.