Chapter 5
On Continuities. Migration and Institutional (Non-)Change

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5.1 Introduction

> [W]ith the fact that more than 70% of all foreigners have been living in the Federal Republic for more than 5 years and 50% for more than 10 years, this country has de facto become a country of immigration. (Stadt Sindelfingen, 1979, p. 1)[1]

Although it took German politicians until 2001 to officially recognise the fact that Germany is a country of immigration (Espahangizi, 2018, p. 36), the quote from the first foreigners' report of the city of Sindelfingen, an industrial town in the south of Germany, shows that the debates on this issue go back decades. The "discovery of immigration" in West German politics – that is, the long-term settlement and de facto immigration of "guest workers" – has been a regular topic of expert discussions and press coverage since the mid-1960s (Berlinghoff, 2016, p. 937). In the 1970s, addressing migration and related social tasks became a municipal policy field (Carstensen et al., 2022, p. 26). Today, the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the people who immigrated back then make up a large part of Sindelfingen's and other West German cities' diverse societies.

Cultural institutions, however, have not necessarily adapted to this reality, as we show in this chapter for two festivals in Sindelfingen and for the Thalia Theater, one of the most prestigious theatres in Hamburg. This non-change is not due to a lack of good examples. The most prominent of these is Shermin Langhoff's post-migrant

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[1] If not indicated otherwise, all translations were undertaken by the authors.

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theatre which, in the early 2000s, set out to represent the stories and narratives of the descendants of immigrants who were not (accordingly) represented in the theatre scene (Langhoff, 2018, p. 305). The adjective *postmigrantisch* (postmigrant) has since been used to describe the reality of today's German society in both research and also public debates (Foroutan et al., 2018, p. 9). *Postmigrant* here refers to societies structured by migration in different ways and experiences. It implies a break with the established migration discourse and "its categorical separation between 'migrant' and 'non-migrant', 'migration' and 'settledness'" (Yildiz & Berner, 2021, p. 247).

Since the early 2000s, migration has also become part of the wider debates on diversity and institutional change, which has increasingly established itself as a policy field. The non-representation of society's diversity, not only in theatre plays and museum exhibitions but also within the institutional structures themselves (e.g. as regards the diversity of the staff and those in leadership positions; Liepsch et al., 2018) is subject of numerous debates and programmes: museums and theatres discuss how to diversify staff and audiences; a programme of the German Federal Cultural Foundation (n.d.) gave funding for so-called "Agents for Diversity" in almost 40 major cultural institutions all over the country; and a growing number of institutions, also funded by public money, offer programmes for diversity-oriented organisational development processes. Yet, despite numerous and long-lasting debates about exclusions on the one hand and several grants and model projects on the other, structural change is still a minor phenomenon (Micossé-Aikins & Sengezer, 2021). Paradoxically, this non-change is also reflected in the number and intensity of debates and funding programmes designed to promote diversity in cultural institutions.

The departure point of this chapter is the perceived discrepancy or tension between the profound demographic and cultural transformations of society through migration and the lack of structural institutional responses to this in the cultural sector or, more specifically, in the institutionalised public part of that sector. Surprisingly little attention in public debates as well as in research is given to the issue of why, in general, these processes of change have been or tend to be so slow. In order to analyse change, in our view, it is important to understand why the broadly demanded institutional change does *not* happen.

We argue that important aspects of what we call *institutional inertia* lies (1) in the discursive framing and the narrations of how diversity, migration and culture are understood and produced in these settings and (2) how these narratives are interwoven with institutional structures. Therefore, we turn to continuities of narratives and structures and their relationship to each other. We look at the role of this relationship in reproducing structural non-change in cultural institutions – as well as when institutional change processes, often referred to as "opening up", are being implemented. In what follows, we first explain this approach and then turn to our two very different case studies – two festivals in Sindelfingen and a prominent theatre in Hamburg – to highlight that the discursive framing and narratives used are very similar in these two contexts.

5.2 Understanding Institutions and Culture(s): Some Conceptual Notes

Central to our analytical approach is the desire to understand cultural institutions (e.g. museums, theatres, festivals) in their different meanings and functions. They are organisational and administrative entities with personnel, buildings, exhibitions spaces, stages, etc.

At the same time, they can be regarded as institutionalised discourses and narratives that are embedded in broader historical, academic and social contexts. These broader understandings can but do not have to be connected to those entities. See, for example, the idea of *Institution Kunst* ("art as an institution") which Peter Bürger explains as follows: "The concept 'art as an institution' as used here refers to the productive and distributive apparatus and also to the ideas about art that prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works" (1984, p. 22). *Institution Kunst* refers not only to art works but also to a system of canonisations, discourses and narratives around them. These narratives are also being reproduced in institutional contexts beyond museums and theatres – in the work of the cultural administration, within the theatre group working with non-professional performers or in the selection process of a stage school.

This broader perspective makes it possible, firstly, to understand, as institutions, not only organisational forms like museums or theatres but also cultural festivals and the cultural work of local administrations and, secondly, to analyse cultural institutions in their broader environment (as in a stage school being part of the institution theatre).

The institutions which we analyse in our two case studies, could not be more different – a large state-funded theatre with permanent staff and budget in a big city seems to have little in common at first sight with two festivals in a much smaller city, one of which is organised mainly by volunteers. Even these two festivals, which we analyse in the first case study, refer to two different traditions: one can be understood as a so-called multicultural festival (Welz, 2007, pp. 224–225), while the other, the Sindelfingen Biennale, refers in its name to the first and still most famous world exhibition of fine arts. However, the case studies show that the discursive foundations of how they perceive migration are similar.

This has historical reasons. Cultural institutions like museums or theatres are closely connected with nation-building processes (Anderson, 2006; Bennett, 2013; Macdonald, 2003, 2013 for museums; Sievers, 2017 for theatre). Moreover, they have a historical tradition of exhibiting and representing *other cultures*. As Tony Bennett states:

> Museums invoked and exhibited others – and their art and artefacts – as signs of societies where the "logic of culture", and the independent, critical and individualising orientation it required, had either failed to operate or had gone into decline. (Bennett, 2017, p. 187)

Gisela Welz points out that multicultural festivals have problematic antecedents in the performances of traveling ensembles or even imported and displaced people

from distant lands at princely courts, world expositions, etc. (Welz, 2007, p. 227). As we show in our example, the rise of multicultural festivals with their representation of *cultures* as distinct national entities is also closely connected to nation-state narratives and political measures. The understanding of *culture* has thus a direct impact on the ways in which cultural institutions act, since they reproduce certain canons, bodies of knowledge and artistic traditions (Ray, 2001, pp. 3–4). In particular, the understanding of culture as a stable entity interwoven with the nation-state still lies in the history and imagination of cultural institutions. The festivals and their structures are very different from a museum or a theatre. Nevertheless, they follow the same logic of culture and represent the same structures and narratives.

5.3   Sindelfingen[2]

Sindelfingen is home to around 65,000 inhabitants and belongs to the metropolitan region around Stuttgart in the south of Germany. It is mainly known for hosting the world's largest production plant of the automobile manufacturer Daimler, which opened its first factory (for aircraft engines) in the city in 1915. For this reason, Sindelfingen has a long history of labour migration – in the beginning mainly regional and, from 1955 onwards, international labour migration from, principally, Mediterranean countries. The period between the 1950s and the 1970s was very formative for the development of the city in two regards: Sindelfingen's population not only saw a strong increase due to labour immigration[3] but the high wages earned in the automobile industry also brought a lot of prosperity to the city. Today, the third- and fourth-generation offspring of these labour-migrant families represent an important share of the city's younger generations (Schneider & Pott, 2019, p. 27). The history of labour migration is an important part of the city narrative but not the only story on migration that can be told. In fact, some of them are more visible in the city, others are not even considered or framed as migration – such as the history of the Danube Swabians arriving after the end of World War II or the presence of the US-American army forces. With official statistics describing 50 per cent of Sindelfingen's population as rooted in some form of migration, the city is one of the forerunners of the long-term demographic effects of diverse migration processes today.

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[2] The case studies were conducted independently and thus the respective parts of the chapter were written individually. Joanna Jurkiewicz is the author of the Sindelfingen section while the Hamburg part was written by Jens Schneider.

[3] According to local statistics, the population increased from 15,114 in the year 1954 to almost 55,000 inhabitants in 1980 (Stadt Sindelfingen, 1970, 1975, 1980).

5.3.1 International Street Festival Sindelfingen: Culture of Encounters

The long history of migration and current figures imply that Sindelfingen can be described as a post-migrant society, although this reality has not found its way into the narratives used to describe the city. Sindelfingen is proud of its "internationality": the immigrants and their descendants are valued as part of the city but primarily as representatives of *other nations* (i.e. not as Germans). In the welcome speech to a digital presentation of the new integration concept, which was adopted by the Municipal Council in December 2020, the mayor referred to the city's diversity with the following words: "127 nations live together peacefully here and the flagship of this coexistence is our great Street Festival, which has been here since the seventies" (Stadt Sindelfingen, 2020).[4] Sindelfingen's immigrants and their descendants are referred to as part of this "internationality" in terms of a "diversity of nations of origin". In line with this, the city's website calls the associations founded by migrants in Sindelfingen "international associations" (Stadt Sindelfingen, n.d.); the "International Committee" (originally founded as the "Foreigners Committee") of the Municipal Council deals with issues that relate to the migrant population; and the above-mentioned International Street Festival (ISF) is considered a representation of the city's migration-related diversity.

The ISF normally takes place during one weekend in June each year. The festival came into being in 1977 as part of the newly established municipal foreigners' work. It was organised by the city together with the "Association for International Encounters", which included different migrant organisations. The first municipal Commissioner for Foreigners (*Ausländerbeauftragter*), Friedrich Fausten, known as "the father of the street festival", commemorated the establishment of the event on its tenth anniversary with the following words:

> One of the aims of the Association for International Encounters was to bring together many people from different nations from the city and the surrounding area; these people were meant to get to know each other better by celebrating together. This was intended to reduce the prejudices that still exist between locals and foreigners. A wide range of food specialties were to make this easier. (Fausten, 1988, p. 65)

Following the idea of a "cultural encounter", the stage programme of the festival in the first years included German folk songs along with Italian, Greek, Turkish and Yugoslavian folk groups. Over the years, the ISF programme always featured not only folklore performances or food stalls but also numerous other entertainment offers that are typical of a street festival – like a programme for children or a flea market. Nevertheless, the festival came into being as a response to a specific historical constellation: in the 1970s, local political decision-makers understood that the labour migrants, who were meant to stay temporarily, would not return to their

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[4] In addition, the term "international" appears in yet another context of the Sindelfingen administration: partner cities.

countries of origin.[5] Their presence in the city, representing almost one fifth of the population, could no longer be ignored.

Local politics recognised the need to take action. The politicians began to create conditions for the durable "integration of foreign families into the social and societal life of our country and our city", as stated in the city's first report on "foreigners"[6] from 1979 (Stadt Sindelfingen, 1979, p. 2). This resulted in the establishment of the "Contact Office for Foreigners' Issues" in the Bureau for Social Services (Stadt Sindelfingen, 1979, p. 2). The integration measures were primarily directed at "the foreign workers with their family members from the typical recruiting countries, who make up 86% of the foreigners registered in Sindelfingen" (Stadt Sindelfingen, 1979, p. 2). They were the central target group of what the city later called "integration work" – i.e. the municipal structure of integration support measures. These structures also formed the starting point and basis of the local *narrative* on migration and diversity which is characterised above all by identifying migrant groups mainly according to nationalities. The first political representation of migrants living in the city, the "Foreigners' Committee" (*Ausländerausschuss*), had a quota for different immigrant groups, according to their percentage within the city's foreign population: "Turks (3 members), Yugoslavs (3), Italians (2), Greeks (2), Spaniards (1), Portuguese (1) and also one representative for the 'other nations'" (Stadt Sindelfingen, 1985, p. 332).[7] The integration measures included cultural activities and the ISF was originally just one of a series of events that Friedrich Fausten initiated with the objective of using "culture as a means of international understanding" (*Kultur als Mittel der Völkerverständigung*). For more than 10 years, the ISF was organised by the Bureau for Social Services and considered as part of the municipal "integration work". Thus, in addition to the establishment of a specific migration/integration narrative, cultural activities related to migration were defined as a *social*

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[5] Labour recruitment was halted after the "oil crisis" in 1973 which, however, did not mean that immigration automatically "stopped": "ironically, the decision by all Western European governments to end recruitment and adopt a restrictive immigration policy during the oil crisis of 1973 had rather adverse effects: most (former) guest workers decided to stay on, because leaving meant that it would become very difficult for them to reenter [...] and were joined by their partners (mostly women) and children." (Lucassen, 2005, p. 149). In 1977, Germany improved their residence status, granting many of them the unrestricted right to stay under certain circumstances (Alexopoulou, 2019, p. 54).

[6] It is important to emphasise here that the use of the term "foreigners" (*Ausländer*) in the context of immigration in Germany does not solely refer to the formal juridical status that derives from citizenship. Rather, as Maria Alexopoulou worked out, the discourses and practices around the binarity of "*Ausländer*" and "German" reproduce racial knowledge that has been transferred historically: "'Ausländer' and all of its substitutes are racialized concepts: they construct a distinct group with particular characteristics which are cast as Other to 'the Germans.' This process of Othering constitutes the binary and hierarchical relation" (Alexopoulou, 2019, p. 51).

[7] With this model, Sindelfingen was one of the first cities to enable the migrants themselves to participate in the municipal bodies that concern them, in contrast to most of the representative bodies for foreigners at that time in Germany (Alexopoulou, 2019; Hess & Lebuhn, 2014). For more details on the history of the "Councils of Foreigners" see Müller (2011).

task under the responsibility of the Commissioner for Foreigners and the Bureau for Social Services within the administration.

In 2023, the festival was organised for the 45th time. However, in 1993 an economic crisis forced the city to externalise the organisation of the event to a non-profit association founded for this purpose. Thus, the festival officially is no longer part of the city's "integration work", although it still receives financial support from the administration. Moreover, the official speeches and words of greeting in the programme still revolve around the two ideas which were determined as the driving forces behind the festival in the 1970s: *promoting integration* and *facilitating the encounter of cultures and nationalities*, as illustrated in the following quote from the 2019 programme booklet's editorial:

> Our vision is the peaceful togetherness of all nationalities; the entire ISF-team works for this vision, so that the idea of "experiencing together" can live on. We want to make it easier for new citizens to integrate and to promote and support a mutual cultural exchange. (Internationales Straßenfest Sindelfingen e.V., 2019, p. 6)

The ISF logo is a similarly telling symbol for this understanding of diversity (see Fig. 5.1): a globe – representing the "entire world" meeting during the festival – surrounded by four human figures holding hands. Each figure is presented in a different colour: yellow, black, white and red. This strict colour separation marks the principal difference between them – they are together but, at the same time, fundamentally different. The image not only reproduces the racist idea of the "human races" but also does not allow for any complexity in between the figures. While the imagery and conceptual framing of the festival emphasise the positive impact and value of different cultures and the interaction between them (Hage, 2000, pp. 138–139), they also consolidate these fundamental differences and thereby support "the idea that the world is divided into distinct, relatively autonomous 'cultures'" (Macdonald, 2013, p. 163). This understanding of cultures as ethno-national entities is often also supported by the migrant associations involved in the festival. A representative of an association with a decades-long tradition described the festival as "a flagship for the whole of Germany" in terms of "successful integration", meaning the peaceful coexistence of different immigrant groups in the city. A second interviewee, representative of another migrant association that has existed for more than 25 years and participated in the ISF every year, spoke of the festival as "the opportunity to introduce each other to different languages, cultures and traditions".

Fig. 5.1 Logo of the International Street Festival Sindelfingen

At the same time, the history of the festival can – and should – be told as an example for the engagement and agency of immigrants and their self-organisations. The ISF's success is based on decades of commitment and their self-chosen form of representation. Performing folk dances has been an important activity for many migrant associations, over and above the 3 days of the festival. It is a means of expressing and celebrating the identification with their members' origins abroad, along with language courses, sports or political work. As early as 1981, the festival's cultural programme mainly consisted of numerous local migrant folklore groups linked to associations partly still active today, such as the Portuguese Parents' Association (*Portugiesischer Elternverein*) or the Greek Congregation (*Griechische Gemeinde*).

Moreover, the festival was never the only expression of the city's cultural diversity nor the only form of migrant self-representation and participation. Another initiative is the remarkable "newspaper for foreigners and Germans", *Sindelfinger Palette*, which was published in seven languages and distributed free to all households in the city in the 1980s and early 1990s. The newspaper was an organ of ARGE (Working Group for Foreigners' Issues – *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Ausländerfragen*) and evolved, amongst others, from the engagement of immigrants. The ARGE and *Sindelfinger Palette* were actively involved in the trade-unions' fight for the 35-hour week (Riedner, 2022, pp. 203–204). Immigrants have also contributed to telling the history of immigration, as is visible in Sindelfingen through the work and commitment of Bernardino di Croce, who has written and edited several books on migration in the wider region (Di Croce, 2017; Di Croce & Verein Migration & Integration in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e.V., 2017/18; Di Croce et al., 2009).

However, these initiatives have not entered the official municipal narrations of migration primarily symbolised by the International Street Festival. This creates the story of the migrant as apolitical and whose engagement is reduced to a staged performance of *one true origin and cultural heritage*. However, for many immigrants, political work and participation in the festival went hand in hand.

Furthermore, the city narrative negates the changes that the festival has seen in its decades-long history. To give an example, the "Campinos do Ribatejo"-dance is regularly performed by one of the oldest folklore groups in Sindelfingen, the "Juvenis de Portugal" of the Portuguese Parents' Association. It has its origin in the Ribatejo region of Portugal and came to Sindelfingen in the 1970s with a person from this region. Today, however, there is no longer any connection of the group to this region. The dance now originates in Sindelfingen. It represents the tradition of the association rather than that of the region of origin. According to Stuart Hall, this shows that

> there can, therefore, be no simple "return" or "recovery" of the ancestral past which is not re-experienced through the categories of the present: no base for creative enunciation in a simple reproduction of traditional forms which are not transformed by the technologies and the identities of the present. (2021, p. 254)

What motivates most participants from migrant associations and the administration to keep the festival going is that it is considered an achievement of *integration* and a deeply rooted local tradition for almost everyone I spoke to – visitors, participants and people from the administration.

5.3.2 Biennale Sindelfingen: Opening up to "Other Nationalities"

Unlike the ISF, the Biennale Sindelfingen is a relatively new festival – it first took place in 2015. Moreover, it was not created as part of a social policy aiming to integrate migrants but merely as an arts festival. However, when migration became an issue, it was related to the same discourse of "internationality" used in the ISF context. The Biennale was initiated by the city in the wake of its 750th anniversary celebration in 2013 in order to "perpetuate the identity-forming spirit of [this event] and make it sustainably effective" (Biennale Sindelfingen, n.d.). As an official artistic event, the Biennale is part of Sindelfingen's *cultural* policy. The programme involves events planned by municipal cultural institutions and independent local culture actors as well as performances by professional artists and presentations of school and kindergarten projects. Spread over the entire city, the festival aims to bundle the city's cultural scene and create both a platform and additional funding structures for the many independent and voluntary cultural actors. The festival is centrally managed and coordinated by the city administration's Bureau of Culture. The Biennale is thus inscribed in the city's official decision-making structures, (in) transparencies, networks and narratives. The programme is not only coordinated by the Cultural Bureau – the office organises a major production for every Biennale and also intervenes in operational businesses.

The central narrative of the Biennale revolves around strengthening the identification of the citizens with the city and promoting the local cultural scene. Voluntary cultural activities are a central feature of the festival[8]– an aspect that the Biennale shares with the ISF. However, the Biennale only came to be linked to migration when the city adopted a new integration concept in 2020. In this context, the Cultural Bureau and the Bureau of Social Services developed ideas for joint projects, amongst others concerning the inclusion of migrant perspectives into the Biennale. When explaining how to put this into practice, our interviewee from the cultural administration used the same international frame for migration that we observed for the ISF:

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[8] "The unmistakable brand essence of the festival, which takes place every 2 years, is to develop individual formats with the predominantly voluntary local and regional cultural scene in interaction with professional forces and not simply to buy in ready-made events." (Biennale Sindelfingen, n.d.)

> We chose the theme "Fairytale Sindelfingen" for next year's Biennale. That naturally lends itself well to do something on international fairy tales, for example. And I'm also pinning my hopes to some extent on this tent that we've been talking about. It's conceived to be a meeting place. That means that, in my opinion, groups or people can simply book a timeslot and say, "Okay, I'll do a reading in this tent on Tuesday afternoons at 3.00 p.m. of, I don't know, Turkish fairy tales". […] The topic would actually lend itself to opening up a bit more to other nationalities.

The reflection on the integration concept inspired our interviewee to add "international fairy tales" to the Biennale programme. Again, the term "international" is used to refer to those of the city's resident population who are of immigrant origin. The spontaneous example of the "Turkish fairy tales" indicates that the predominant imagination of this "international population" are people of Turkish descent who represent one of the most prominent imaginations of *Others* in the German discourse on immigration (Lucassen, 2005; Schneider, 2001, 2002). Also, the "encounter" (between cultures) comes up again in the idea and imagining of the festival tent as a meeting place. Opening up to the diversity of the city is interpreted as taking into account *other nationalities* with their *specific cultures*. Engaging with diversity means including those *others* in the regular programme of the Biennale. Those responsible in the cultural office seem to be widely unaware of the large share of, in particular, young inhabitants born and bred in Sindelfingen with some kind of migrant history in the family. Their realities cannot be described in terms of discrete cultures and nationalities.

The "opening up" of the programme can be understood as a moment of change, since it puts new ideas into the existing programme. At the same time, it represents here a moment of non-change, since the way in which migrant perspectives are included reproduces the essentialising differentiation between nations and cultures and continues to construct the migrant as *Other* to the national *Self*. As Ghassan Hage stated in his research on multiculturalism in Australia, "Diversity simply does not affect the nature of the White 'we'" (2000, p. 139). Interestingly, the same holds true for the Thalia Theater in Hamburg.

5.4   The Thalia Theater

The Thalia Theater is one of two major municipal theatres (*Stadttheater)* in Hamburg, Germany's second largest city with 1.8 million inhabitants. Although the city's demography is less pronouncedly shaped by immigration than in Sindelfingen – the official statistical share of persons with a "migration background" is around 35 per cent – the dynamic of demographic change is similar. Moreover, the number "masks" a quite polarised picture of neighbourhoods with a highly diverse population on the one hand and a number of mainly upper-middle-class areas with quite low shares of migrant populations on the other (Körber-Stiftung, 2017, p. 5; Statistisches Amt für Hamburg und Schleswig-Holstein, 2021, p. 14).

The theatre itself is one of the most prestigious theatres in Germany. The total number of staff is almost 400, including a cast of 40 actors; its annual budget is

around 23 million euros, of which roughly 85 per cent are direct public funding (Deutscher Bühnenverein, 2020). Apart from its main building in the city centre, the Thalia Theater has a second venue in a former factory building. This venue offers several smaller stages (including a former truck garage) for more intimate and experimental productions and is also used for theatre workshops – particularly for young people and disabled persons as part of the pedagogical and outreach activities of the theatre. One of these activities is the "Embassy of Hope/Café International" that was started in 2015 to support refugees with language courses and legal advice and also to invite them to participate in artistic productions – such as, for example, the performance series "Voices from Exile" (Thalia Theater, n.d.).

The debate about how the Thalia Theater could and should respond to the changing demography in society and incorporate "more diversity" into its programme and personnel is not new. Over the past decade, the theatre has made various efforts to attract other than their usually predominantly white and middle-class audiences in the city population. This partly targeted the population of Turkish origin – imagined as the ultimate others in Germany, as explained above – by offering Turkish subtitles to plays – such as *Mutter Courage* by Berthold Brecht – and promoting it via Turkish community organisations. Another project, for several years, invited young people of migrant family background to become "Thalia Scouts", i.e. to learn more about the performances and how they are produced during the "Lessing Days", an annual international festival at the theatre. The "Thalia Scouts" were asked to write blogs about the plays and their experiences "from the perspective of their cultural roots" (Thalia Theater Blog, 2017) – a problematic term if we consider that most of them were born or at least grew up in Hamburg. Since 2018, the Thalia Theater has also participated in the "360°-programme" of the Federal Foundation for Culture (*Bundeskulturstiftung*) and has hosted so-called "Agents for Diversity" with the explicit aim of also giving impulses for more diversity within the institution itself (German Federal Cultural Foundation, n.d.). Finally, the theatre has a well-established educational department that, especially in their work with schools, deals with the high levels of diversity that characterise the city's youth population. Their educational work aims to contribute to the cultural education of children and youth regardless of their social and/or "ethnic"/migrant background and to raise their interest in the performing arts.

Despite increasing debates about the "democratisation" of established cultural institutions that go back to the late 1970s (Hoffmann, 1979), it was only in the early 2000s that projects which also reach out to audiences from the lower social classes and immigrant neighbourhoods were gaining momentum (Dogramaci, 2018). In 2012, the "4th Federal Congress for Professionals in Interculture" (Kulturbehörde der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg, 2014)[9] that took place in Hamburg featured a conversation between the Thalia Theater's general director, Joachim Lux, its leading dramaturg, Carl Hegemann and the German writer of Iranian background, Navid

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[9] The congress is organised approximately every 2 years in another city and brings together social institutions, diverse kinds of NGOs and migrant organisations, cultural administrations and researchers.

Kermani. In the documentation of the congress, Hegemann wrote a programmatic statement with the title "The internationalisation of the Thalia Theater" from which the following quote is taken:

> We explicitly try to win an intercultural and internationally interested audience and inspire cosmopolitan exchange. […]. However, more could be done: if more members of the ensemble have a migration background and theatre makers e.g. from Africa, America and the Middle and Far East are involved in international co-productions, our own productions will bring the multilingualism and interculturality of the society directly on stage. (Kulturbehörde der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg, 2014, p. 13)

Similar to what we saw in the discursive representations of migration-induced diversity around the two festivals in Sindelfingen, the statement continuously equates "intercultural" with "international". Bringing the diversity *of the city* on stage is exemplified by "more actors with a migration background", and with "theatre makers from Africa" and other continents. Native German cultural producers with a migrant family background – as perfectly represented by Navid Kermani, Hegemann's interlocutor at the congress – thus appear as "foreign" and "non-German", just like the invited international artists at the "Lessing Days". The discursive element thus represents local and "native-born" diversity as "Other" to the theatre's imagined mainstream "German Self".

Nine years later, when I asked another member of Thalia's artistic direction why there were almost no persons of colour or with a migrant background among their artistic staff, I received the following answer:

> A lot has certainly happened in the last few years. For the past two years, we have also consciously had an authority, officers for diversity, who focus on three aspects in their work: a different orientation in programme planning, a different orientation towards the audience – audience work – and a different orientation towards staff. This is reflected indirectly, I would say – *very* indirectly in the staff (laughs), a bit self-critically seen – that is, at least in the artistic staff, I mean the actors and actresses. The directorial teams are of course much more international. Mrs [Ewelina] Marciniak works here regularly with her team, a Polish theatre-maker. There are also co-operations with artistic institutions or individual artists […] where, in addition to our actors and actresses, there are also music and text performers (from other countries) on stage, so it is a mixed ensemble.

As in the previous quote, we find the same "discursive lapsus" of directly connecting again the "diverse" and the "international", although in a more defensive way. While, indeed, international co-operations introduce a variety of perspectives and artistic languages to the stage – this is the purpose of the festival and, actually, the foreign-language productions also bring a more diverse audience into the theatre[10] – the interviewee has to admit that the permanent staff of the theatre are still quite homogeneously "white and German".[11]

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[10] As could be observed during the "Lessing Days"-festival in 2019, the performance of a Russian theatre group brought quite a number of Russian native-speakers into the theatre and a similar effect was seen in a French-Vietnamese production with first- and second-generation Vietnamese in the audience.

[11] This is a very common formulation in public and social discourse which – although rarely admittedly – uses "German" as an ethnic categorisation.

Regarding migration-related diversity, there is in particular – as in the case of Sindelfingen – the "generational sedimentation" of immigration in the form of the native-born second- and third-generation offspring from immigrant families who are not adequately addressed via their "ethnic" background (Schneider et al., 2015). In most of the bigger cities in Germany, these native-born generations, with some family background rooted in immigration, today represent more than 50 per cent of the younger age cohorts in the population (Schneider, 2018). The discursive equation of "diversity" or "interculturality" with "international" and "migration" effectively makes this profound change in the urban demography almost *invisible*. This is also the case in the following quote from another member of the artistic management at the Thalia Theater:

Interviewer:	What is the share of staff members at Thalia with a migration background? Is that known?
Answer:	No idea, to be honest. But I would say that we have more than 20 different languages/nationalities. (…) A lot of Serbian, Croatian, Greek… quite a motley crew. We even have one Ethiopian in the house. So, that's a good mix. And in the ensemble we have a Polish background, a Croatian-Serbian background, a Belgian background. (…) I have just appointed an assistant director of Turkish background and she is fluent in Arabic. I am really excited. (…) One Algerian actor we have: [actor's name].
Interviewer:	Albanian, I think...
Answer:	Oh, right, exactly, Albanian!

The actor mentioned is a native-born German and, as he assured me in an interview, would not consider himself even a native speaker of the Albanian language. The quote completely omits the German birth and identity of this actor behind the enumeration of *foreign languages and nationalities* which, moreover, mostly refers to the *technical* and not the artistic staff. What is more, the one person of migrant background recently recruited for the artistic direction is especially applauded for her ability to speak Arabic. The discursive framing in this quote goes barely beyond the 1970s' "integration discourse", as described above for the case of Sindelfingen. In the case of the Thalia Theater, the element of "inertia" not only refers to the fact that the institution has not found ways and measures to achieve more diversity in its artistic staff but also to the lack of self-reflexivity of its institutional mechanisms (e.g. the recruitment strategies for new actors) and the wording or narratives used in addressing "diversity". The Thalia Theater, in our view, is a good demonstration of how the momentum of "inertia" is strengthened when there is little determination to actively pursue change and there are hardly any connections to networks that could facilitate access in both directions. In this regard, the Thalia Theater is, rather, following the rule than the exception in the German *Stadttheater* system: the observation of little diversity in most artistic directions and the acting ensembles is almost a common-place in the public debate and still applies to the large majority of public theatres.

Public theatre directors and actors have to go through a specific education and training in public theatre academies whose admission procedures are extremely competitive. Being accepted there as a young actor or future director and dramaturg

is almost a guarantee of landing a job in a public theatre. Several of our interlocutors at theatres blamed the lack of diversity in the student body of these academies as part of the problem when atempting to diversify their staff (Sharifi & Micossé-Aikins, 2019). When I asked a leading staff member at the theatre academy in Hamburg whether this lack of people of colour and with a migration background in their student body has to do with the established selection criteria, she responded:

> My problem is the access. On the one hand, this has to do with the fact that children and grandchildren [from immigrant families] […] try to get into a respected profession and not a profession that is per se more prone to a precarious life situation. (…) So, there are not many who decide for acting or directing but there are always some who do. What I don't quite understand: there are so many of them in the private stage-schools! And that is strange, because they have to pay heaps of money for an education of inferior quality. So, I wonder: are there hurdles, is there some fear of entering? (…) That is a question of selection criteria: If a guy speaks German at B2 level and has an extremely heavy accent but has many other talents – charisma, movability, voice volume, scenic fantasy, a sense for space – in other words, he fulfills all the criteria. Do I have the courage to say, "Okay, let's try to work away this accent, what he is doing on stage is simply great!"? In that respect, we have to revise our selection criteria.

The interviewee rightly identifies the second and third generation as an important, yet largely overlooked target group for the acting profession but shifts at least part of the reasoning on to their being *children of immigrants*: most would prefer more respected professions to honour their parents' expectations. This interpretation is not wrong, sociologically speaking, although it is also, at least partly, contradicted by her own observation that, in private stage-schools, there are a lot of students from different backgrounds. This leads the interviewee to ask about the selection criteria of the public academies. However, instead of reflecting about (upper-)middle-class attitudes and habitus reproduction, the focus shifts without further ado to *foreign-born non-German native-speakers* among the applicants. In our interpretation this is, at least partly, connected to the new experience of the many cultural institutions which, in the context of the so-called "welcome culture" towards refugees from Syria in the summer 2015 (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018) made attempts to open their doors to artists, actors and theatre-makers among the refugees. In this context, stage-schools experimented with accepting students who obviously did not have a perfect and "accent-free" knowledge of German and this is mixed up in the quote above. Of course, native-born children and grandchildren from immigrant families do not speak German at B2 level (i.e. advanced beginners of German as a second language) and they also do not generally have "extremely heavy accents". However, discussing the acceptance of an accent or not is, of course, a much easier task than tackling stereotypical and prejudiced perceptions of German students from immigrant backgrounds as part of the "bourgeois habitus" that is still widespread in selection committees (Sievers, 2017). So, like the references to "nationality", another important element in the discursive construction of "diversity = foreignness" can be language.

The field of public theatres in Germany is particularly interesting for the study of "institutional inertia", because it is probably the field within the established cultural institutions that claims the most to value open-mindedness and high sensitivity for

social processes and transformations. The system as such even involves a specific type of "intentional critical juncture" through the regular change of the directorate every 5–10 years – generally including the entire artistic direction and a large part of the ensemble. Potential successors are expected to present a concept that substantially differs from the previous period and, ideally, also reflects relevant societal and/or artistic transformations. However, this form of institutionalised change may be part of the problem, as the system may tend to be even more "self-centred" and resilient to influences from the outside (Boenisch, 2014). The case of the Thalia Theater shows that, within this discursive and political context, the different understandings of "culture" and "cultures" flow into each other and can be strategically applied to promote or avoid processes of change.

5.5 Conclusions

The starting point of this chapter is the discrepancy between demographic and cultural change in society on the one hand and the structural "armature" (Levitt, 2015) of cultural institutions on the other. As we discussed in the introduction, there is a broad reflection on societal change through migration. Recent debates and related funding programmes focus on *how* to change cultural institutions "towards" greater diversity, especially in the organisational structure. We argue that narratives and discourses also represent an important part of institutionalisation and through this, play a major role in understanding why the analysed institutional change through migration seems to be so difficult.

On the basis of our findings, we want to highlight two aspects which, in our view, can help to understand *non*-change:

The afterlife of narratives: On encounters, nationalities, diversity and the "migrant Other"

The constant confusion between "intercultural" and "international" in the theatre context, the invitation of the "other nations" to participate in the Biennale and the "internationality" of Sindelfingen, with its "plurality of nations of origin" – shows that the idea of migration being something external to German society continues to serve as an imagination of the diversity of an immigration society.

In Sindelfingen, the institutionalised *culture of encounter* became not only the dominant way of culturally representing migration; until today, it has also constituted the basis of the understanding of the cultural representation of immigrants and it is being "implemented", when *cultural institutions* or representatives of the city's *cultural* administration plan to either include migrant perspectives or/and target immigrant population. The case of Sindelfingen shows how closely today's migration or opening narratives are linked to the discourses of early work with foreigners and thus institutionalised.

What both case studies have shown us is that, even while engaging with migration, the measures can also reinforce problematic identities and labels on the migrant actors and – while actually "opening up" – reproduce the existing structures and

established problematic discourses on migration. The opening thus means "including others": languages, cultures, nationalities. This diversity, as Ghassan Hage analysed it for the multicultural discourse, is an add-on and not part of the "we" (Hage, 2000, p. 139).

On narratives, structures and non-change

Furthermore, this understanding of migration-related diversity is rooted in institutional structures which emerged in specific historical contexts. Both – narratives and structures – are connected and interwoven in such a way that they stabilise each other. Understanding this relationship also helps, in our view, to understand why – despite the many funding programmes and discussions – a more profound structural change is still the exception in cultural institutions.

This is particularly visible in the case of Sindelfingen – migration and diversity have already been consolidated within the framework of *integration work* and the "roles" and structures have been defined. These structures emerged from a specific historical constellation. The International Street Festival came into being in a power relationship that defined immigrants as those *in need of integration*. Today's narrative on migration in the context of *cultural institutions* has roots in these structures.

In our view, implementing longer-term structural change in cultural institutions is difficult for many reasons, some of which are related to organisational aspects – the institutions often explain their difficulties in implementing these corresponding measures by the lack of staff or funding (since diversity measures are perceived as an additional task). However, this is also a question of establishing a new discursive framework that uses less static and more situationally contextualised notions of socially relevant lines of differentiation – especially reflecting upon the demographic importance yet, at the same time, the "invisibility" of the younger generations in all their diversity and hybridity of backgrounds and cultural preferences.

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