

# PRECARIZATION IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM

An ethnographic study of the working and living conditions of early non-institutional performing arts groups in Gothenburg

**Liliana Farcas**

---

Essay/Thesis:	30 hec
Program and/or course:	Master Programme Culture and Democracy: Master thesis
Level:	Second Cycle
Semester/year:	Spring/2021
Supervisor:	Helena Holgersson
Examiner:	Åsa Andersson

## Abstract

Essay/Thesis: 30 hec  
Program and/or course: Master Programme Culture and Democracy: Master thesis  
Level: Second Cycle  
Semester/year: Spring/2021  
Supervisor: Helena Holgersson  
Examiner: Åsa Andersson

Keywords: governmental precarization, freedom, non-institutional performing arts groups, public funding system, cultural policy, power, interdependency

---

In Swedish theatre history, the period 1965–2000 is seen as a time of emergency and establishment of the non-institutional performing arts field and is referred to as the “expansion period”. The performing arts’ field expanded due to the non-institutional performing arts groups, known as the “free groups”, which started to perform in new places, to experiment artistically, to meet new audiences and to raise social questions. This study examines the working and living conditions of the non-institutional performing arts groups’ members from Gothenburg during a main part of the expansion period in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s by focusing on the tension between the artists’ need of freedom and their need of public funding for their cultural productions. Based on interviews with nine members of non-institutional performing arts groups, complemented by archive material, newspaper articles and official documents, this study, through its interdisciplinary approach, creates a link between theatre studies and sociology. The theoretical framework used for analysing the material combines concepts of *power relation* (Foucault), *cultural field* (Bourdieu), *interdependency* (Butler) and *governmental precarization* (Lorey) in order to capture the complexity of the performing arts field. The results of the study point to the entanglements between the instruments of governing (e.g. the cultural policies), the precarious economic conditions of the non-institutional performing arts groups dependent on the public funding system and the ambivalence of the cultural producers expressed through self-exploitation and self-empowerment.

# Table of contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1 Research’s aim and questions</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1.2 Disposition</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2. BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>2.1 Cultural policies</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1.1 1974 cultural policy.....	6
2.1.2 1996/97 cultural policy.....	8
<b>2.2 The “Expansion and diversity” project</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>2.3 Previous research</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.3.1 Non-institutional performing arts groups in Sweden .....	11
2.3.2 Artists’ living and working conditions.....	13
2.3.3 Conclusion.....	14
<b>2.4 Institutions, organizations and use of terms</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>3. MATERIALS AND METHODS</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>3.1 Interviews</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>3.2 Archive material, newspaper articles and official documents</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>3.3 Ethnographic methods</b> .....	<b>23</b>
3.3.1 Challenges .....	25
<b>3.4 Ethical aspects and reflexivity</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>3.5 Conclusion</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>4.1 Freedom seen through the lens of power</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>4.2 Particularities of the field of cultural production</b> .....	<b>33</b>
4.2.1 Recent developments.....	35
<b>4.3 Governmental precarization in the process of normalization</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>4.4 Summary</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>5. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>5.1 Freedom and interdependency</b> .....	<b>41</b>
5.1.1 The term “free groups” in the official documents.....	42
5.1.2 Respondents description of a “free group” .....	45
5.1.3 The surges after 1968 .....	48
5.1.4 Freedom in relation to the cultural politics .....	51
5.1.5 Summary .....	55

<b>5.2 Negotiations and resistance .....</b>	<b>57</b>
5.2.1 Writing an application .....	59
5.2.2 Building half a bridge.....	61
5.2.3 Dealing with the case officers .....	63
5.2.4 When the public funding system creates inequalities .....	65
5.2.5 The A-team and the B-team .....	67
5.2.6 Conclusion.....	71
<b>5.3 Precarization and pride .....</b>	<b>72</b>
5.3.1 AMS and a-kassa.....	74
5.3.2 Performing arts for children and youth .....	77
5.3.3. Low costs of living and additional financial solutions.....	79
5.3.4 Survival .....	83
5.3.5 Summary .....	84
<b>6. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>6.1 Spiral mechanism and resistance.....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>6.2 Romantization and risks.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>6.3 Further research topics and final remarks .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b><i>REFERENCES .....</i></b>	<b><i>91</i></b>
<b><i>Appendix 1: List of the newspaper articles.....</i></b>	<b><i>95</i></b>
<b><i>Appendix 2: Interview guide .....</i></b>	<b><i>95</i></b>

# 1. Introduction

“[...] I have rarely worked less than 50 hours a week, on average, and we're not talking about holidays, then I've just worked harder. I work a lot and I have felt that I will not be able to do it longer; I will have to take some time off, to have a few weeks when I actually do nothing or to have a free Sunday and be able to lie in bed and just relax. And I have felt that more and more the last five years when I have worked like hell. When you run a free group, if someone drops out or becomes ill or something unplanned happens, it means so much more work. Suddenly you are faced with a completely different workload and new issues that you must take care of, or just shut down. It's always this choice so that... I have really pushed it and it also showed: I have become ill quite seriously two autumns in a row. [...] I feel somewhere that this is on the verge of not being humane, which I think is a bit shameful, if you understand what I mean. At the same time, it is a choice. I have chosen this but it's like a choice with some kind of knife somewhere (*she points to her neck*) that makes it not okay. So that...”

(Fia Adler Sandblad, personal communication 2020, February 28<sup>th</sup>)

In Swedish theatre history, the period 1965–2000 is seen as a time of emergency and establishment of the non-institutional performing arts field and is referred to as the *expansion period*. The field of performing arts expanded mainly due to the non-institutional performing arts groups, known as the *free groups*, which started to perform in new places, to experiment artistically, to meet new audiences and to raise social questions. These groups – whether they were theatre, dance or music groups – challenged the institutional scenes and managed to create various productions ranging from carnivals employing migrants, performances for children, student farces and queer events (see University of Gothenburg 2020).

In 1974, the first Swedish cultural policy was formulated and had the ambition to assure everyone's access to culture as part of the ideas of cultural equality. Many resources were invested in the national and regional cultural infrastructure. By the time the cultural policy was formulated, the non-institutional performing arts groups were making productions for more than a decade. The free groups were supported by the authorities and their important role in achieving the cultural policy's goals was acknowledged. And right from the beginning, the cultural policy signals the importance of maintaining the groups freedom and, at the same time, to improve their members' working conditions. The fact that the free groups could not finance their productions in the same way as the private theatres would, made them dependent, to various degrees, on the public funding system. Therefore, the question “how free are the free groups?” was raised already during the 1970s and persisted over the years and took different forms under the influence of neo-liberalism, individualism, and new public management during the 1980s and 1990s. The answer seems to lie in the tension between the groups' need for freedom and their dependency on public funds. This tension makes the subject of the present thesis.

The thesis is written within the frame of a larger project called “Expansion and Diversity”, which has the aim of mapping and analysing performing arts outside the institutions of Gothenburg, between 1965 and 2000. One of the main components of this project is the realization of an online database containing information about the non-institutional performing

arts groups in Gothenburg. Combining new information technologies with participatory approaches, urban sociology and humanistic research, the project creates inclusive ways of representing performing arts previously excluded from archives and history (von Rosen 2018b, p.4).

The thesis is also part of the master programme “Culture and Democracy”, Department of Cultural Sciences, University of Gothenburg. Writing this research within the cultural studies discipline and in the frame of a theatre study project, allowed me to have an interdisciplinary approach at the intersection between cultural studies, theatre studies, ethnography and work science. Usually, in the field of theatre studies, the research concerns mainly the artistic achievements of the groups rather than their members working and living conditions; while other sociological studies (Flisbäck & Lund 2010; Miscovic 2014; Lindström 2016) explore the artists’ living and working conditions nowadays. My contribution consists in an ethnographic study which intends to add a historical perspective to the artists’ living and working conditions in Gothenburg by analysing nine interviews with artists who were in the beginning of their careers in the 70s, 80s or early 90s. They were either newcomers in the cultural field (cf. Bourdieu 1993) or just decided to start a free group then. The artists interviewed are: Fia Adler Sandblad (ADAS musikaliska teater), Åsa Eek Engquist (Teater UNO), Robert Jakobsson (Eldteatern, Teater Albatross), Wiveka Warenfalk (Teaterkompaniet), Ulf Wideström (Teaterkompaniet), Rolf Sossna (Bizarr-teatret, En Annan Teater, Masthuggsteatern), Nasrin Barati (Teater Sesam), Gun Lund (Rubicon, E=mc<sup>2</sup> Danskonst) and Pita Skogsén (Eldteatern).

## 1.1 Research’s aim and questions

In this study I examine the working and living conditions of the non-institutional performing arts groups from Gothenburg during a main part of the “expansion period” in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. The aim is to study how the tension between the artists' need of freedom and their need of public funding for their productions, was managed during these years.

My research questions are:

1. How did the members of local non-institutional performing arts groups experience *freedom* in relation to the cultural policy?
2. Which were the specific circumstances created by the public funding system for the groups to carry out their artistic activity in Gothenburg?
3. Which complementary and/or alternative sources to the public funding system were used by the groups in order to support their artistic activity?

## 1.2 Disposition

The thesis contains six chapters which are disposed as it follows:

The introductory chapter – in which I have briefly presented the thesis' point of interest and addressed the three research's questions – has the role of familiarizing the reader with this

study's topic.

The second chapter provides a background for the study. Starting with the presentation of the cultural policies during 70s-90s and of the “Expansion and diversity” project, the chapter presents the main previous research from both theatre studies discipline and the field of sociology and work science. Information about the institutions, the organizations and the different terms used in this study is added in the last section.

The third chapter contains a description of the materials used in the thesis: interviews, archive material, newspaper articles and official documents. The ethnographic methods used in collecting and analysing the data are also presented here. This chapter ends with exposing the ethical implications of this research.

The fourth chapter, in which I describe the theoretical framework of the thesis, is built on concepts which are interconnected. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the theories presented are applicable for theatre studies (e.g. *cultural field*), cultural studies (e.g. *governmental precarization, power*), sociology and work science (e.g. *precarity, insecurity*).

The substantial chapter five, which contains the analysis of the data and the research's results, is divided in three main sub-chapters: *5.1 Freedom and interdependency*, *5.2 Negotiations and resistance* and *5.3 Precarization and pride*. Each sub-chapter is correlated to one of the three research's questions and provides answers to it.

The final chapter, in which I gather my conclusions, invites to a discussion based on the results of this thesis.

## 2. Background

In this chapter, I will start by describing the main Swedish cultural policies that represent the frame in which the non-institutional performing arts groups conducted their activities. After that, I will provide information about the “Expansion and diversity” project which influenced this present thesis. The section about previous research will contain both research from theatre studies and from the discipline of sociology. Finally, additional information about the institutions, the organization and the terms referred to in this study will be presented for easing the reading of the analysis.

### 2.1 Cultural policies

The national cultural policy plays an important role for understanding the living and working conditions of the non-institutional performing arts groups from Gothenburg. Through national and local cultural policies, specific goals regarding culture are being set and then, means for achieving these goals are allocated. The non-institutional performing arts groups can achieve certain cultural goals and for that they are supported with public funds. At the same time, certain non-institutional performing arts groups are not able to support themselves only through tickets, private financial support, sponsoring etcetera and therefore they are dependent on public funds. There are three main cultural policies important for understanding the dynamics of cultural life in Sweden since the 1960s and they were articulated in 1974, 1996 and 2009.

In this section I will present the main documents that lead to what became known as the *1974 cultural policy* [*1974 års kulturpolitik*] and the *1996/97 cultural policy* [*1996/97 års kulturpolitik*], the historical and social contexts in which they were created, and I will name few consequences that these documents brought for the non-institutional performing arts groups.

#### 2.1.1 1974 cultural policy

The starting point for what was going to be well-known in Sweden as the *1974 cultural policy* [*1974 års kulturpolitik*] was usually set during the 1960s when ideas about protecting culture from the market forces and supporting cultural events which address not only art forms favoured by an elitist audience, were intensively discussed (Larsson & Svenson 2001, pp.87-88). Internationally, 1968 was a year of worldwide protests that reverberated with each other: from the protests against the Vietnam War and against nuclear weapons in USA, to demonstrations, general strikes and occupation of universities and factories in France, to student protests against the government's investments into the infrastructure for the Olympic Games in Mexico etcetera. In Stockholm, leftist students occupied their Student Union Building in May 1968, inspired by the protests in France.

1968 was also the year when a parliamentary committee was appointed to make a general analysis of the cultural life in Sweden. The committee's work resulted in the first extensive official report [utredning] about the general situation of Swedish cultural life written in 1972, called *New cultural policy. Current situation and proposals* [*Ny kulturpolitik. Nuläge*



*och förslag*], SOU 1972:66. In this first national official report the main general goal of the cultural policy was set to “contribute to creating a better social environment and to contribute to equality” (1972:66, p.171). In order to achieve this goal it was required to: 1) decentralize the decision-taking functions, 2) coordinate the cultural policy measures with other areas and differentiate between the conditions and needs of different groups, 3) improve the communication between different groups in society and to provide more people with cultural activities, 4) protect the freedom of expression and create conditions for this freedom to be exercised, 5) create possibilities for artistic and cultural renewal, 6) take into account and promote the culture of older times and 7) to promote the diversity and the dissemination of culture and to reduce or hinder the negative impact that the market economy may entail, which was society's overall responsibility (*ibid.*).

Based on this official report from 1972, a governmental bill [proposition] was formulated and approved in parliamentary agreement in Maj 1974 called *The Royal Majesty's bill regarding state cultural policy* [*Kungl. Maj:ts proposition angående den statliga kulturpolitiken*], Prop. 1974:28. The essential difference between the official report from 1972 and the cultural bill from 1974 was that the cultural policy's main goal of creating a better social environment was not included in the governmental bill. Neither was the idea of coordinating the cultural policy's measures with society's efforts within other areas (Jacobsson 2014, p.51). Instead, in the governmental bill, the international perspective was added – and thus, becoming the eight major points in the bill – which is stressing the role of the cultural policy to promote the exchange of ideas and experiences in the cultural field across languages and national borders. But the most noticeable difference regarded the reformulation of the goal about the market economy – written above under number 7) – which was expressed in the cultural bill as it follows: “The cultural policy shall counteract the negative effects of commercialism in the cultural field” (Prop. 1974:28, p.295). What could have been interpreted, in the official report, as a general critique of the market economy became, in the governmental bill, a critique towards the negative effects of commercialism only in the cultural field (Jacobsson 2014, p.52).

Regardless of the differences, these documents are similar in the other points, and they share the same idea about culture which is “understood as a prerequisite for freedom of expression, for realizing the individual's potential for creative activities, for promoting artistic decentralization and innovation” (Larsson & Svenson 2001, p.88). Even with the 1973 oil crisis in the background, the 1974 cultural policy was created “at a time of great planning optimism” (Karlsson 2010, p.31) when there were high hopes that more people would take part in culture as a result of a raised level of education, extended holidays and shortened working hours. The historian of ideas and cultural writer David Karlsson describes Sweden's cultural policy from 1974 as “a great success”: many resources were invested, the regional cultural institutions (county theatres, county libraries and county music institutions) were built up, “the slogan was cultural equality” and everyone was supposed to have access to culture (2010, p.23). In order to reach a wider audience, investments in the free cultural life were done because there was an awareness that the goals could not be achieved without investments in cultural workers as they “create and pave the way for new views and forms of expression” which “is indispensable for cultural development and thus of great importance for the development of society as a whole.”

(Prop. 1975/76:135, p.200).

Concerning the cultural policy in Gothenburg, a program was formulated in 1969 known as KUB 69, with full name *Starting points and goals for a municipal cultural program for Gothenburg* [*Utgångspunkter och mål för ett kommunalt kulturprogram för Göteborg*], which was adopted in 1973. One of the main ideals, presented in the document, was that culture was helping to educate citizens able to participate in democratic debates. Culture and art were considered means by which citizens could develop skills for debating and means for the citizens to improve their lives. Broadly, the local cultural program underscored the main ideas expressed in the governmental bill.

As a general remark regarding this thesis, it can be said that these documents didn't start the expansion period in the performing arts field, but rather handled it. The 1974 cultural policy was reflecting the time period of the 1970s dominated by ideas of equality. This was reflected in the intentions to improve the living and working conditions of the cultural producers and to ensure that the culture produced in a better way could reach larger sections of the population.

### **2.1.2 1996/97 cultural policy**

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the cultural-political landscape in Sweden changed. The cultural policy from the 1970s was created for a society with strong economic expansion, which started to stagnate by the mid-80s. The concept of culture also changed so that the division into high and low culture, commercial and non-commercial culture, became less relevant. The spirit of the time is now characterized by the focus on the individual's development. In this new landscape, the cultural policy of the 1970s did not seem to provide any guidance. Therefore, a new national report was formulated in 1995, named *Twenty years of cultural policy* [*Tjugo års kulturpolitik*] 1974-1994, SOU 1995:85, that proposed several changes, among which: a reformulation of the objective regarding the old times culture (p.63), renouncing to the decentralization objective as this is already applied in the practice of cultural policy (p.65), replacing the appellation "disadvantaged groups" in society with "new groups" (ibid.), renouncing at the entire objective regarding the negative effects of commercialism on the base that it lost its actuality (p.66) and introducing the quality aspect regarding culture (p.67).

The cultural governmental bill that followed the report, was named *Cultural policy* [*Kulturpolitik*], Prop. 1996/97:3, and resumed the goals of the cultural policy in seven major points which are, even more "general" and "vague" as the ones from 1974 (Frenander 2011, p.27). The cultural policy objectives, according to the new bill, were: 1) to safeguard freedom of expression and create real conditions for everyone to use it; 2) to work to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in the cultural life and to have cultural experiences, as well as, to their own creation; 3) to promote cultural diversity, artistic renewal and quality, thereby counteracting the negative effects of commercialism; 4) to give culture the conditions to be a dynamic, challenging and independent force in society; 5) to preserve and use the cultural heritage; 6) to promote educational aspirations; 7) to promote international cultural exchange and meetings between different cultures within the country.

As it can be observed, the decentralization goal was excluded from the bill, as the report proposed, while "counteracting the negative effects of commercialism" was still present but its

importance was decreased and expressed as a side effect of the promoting cultural diversity, artistic renewal and quality (Frenander 2011, p.28). The objective regarding internationalization changed and was adapted in order to reflect the increasing rhythm of immigration which brought different cultures within Sweden. Even within this short review of the cultural objectives, it can be said that there were few differences between the two cultural policies although these differences are concerning mostly the actual changes in society than the reformulation of the cultural national goals.

When it comes to the municipal cultural policy, a new document was formulated in 1998 called *Cultural policy strategy, version 1.0* [*Kulturpolitisk strategi, version 1.0*]. In this strategy for Gothenburg municipality, the society of the 90s is considered an “experience society” where the individual can choose among a variety of cultural alternatives (p.6). This increase in alternatives implies more freedom but also more insecurity for the individual and the need to “find a foothold” in a complex and chaotic world (ibid). Therefore, the municipal cultural policy proposes a strategy which includes an interactive model (ibid., pp.9-10) with three main sectors: art policy (which implies a professional art life of high quality), cultural policy (which aims to develop the citizens’ cultural competence, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s theory on the cultural capital) and cultural planning (which should be based on the city’s resources). These sectors are interrelated with each other and with the art mediation [konstförmedling] section – the mediating link between artistic creation and the audience – which is central for this model.

Since the 90s, other cultural reports<sup>1</sup> have been written and another governmental bill regarding culture has been presented in 2009, called *Time for culture* [*Tid för kultur*] (Prop. 2009/10:3), but as my focus is mainly on the 1970s-90s period I will end this section here. One last mention – related to the relevance of this thesis for the nowadays Swedish context – regards the report presented by the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis [Myndigheten för kulturanalys] in 2021 which examines how, and to what extent, Swedish cultural policy governance influence, or can influence, artistic freedom and is named: *So free is art* [*Så fri är konsten*]. This review has focused on grant allocation at the state level and on operations management at the regional and municipal levels. One of the main focuses in the report is *the arm's length principle* which intends to create favourable conditions for artistic freedom by advocating for an organisational protection from political decisions about artistic content (Myndigheten för kulturanalys 2021, p.19). The overall conclusion of the report is that there have been identified several shortcomings and risks in Swedish cultural policy in its current form, in relation to the arm’s length principle (ibid., p.21).

## 2.2 The “Expansion and diversity” project

As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis is written within the frame of a larger project called “Expansion and Diversity: Digitally mapping and exploring independent performance in Gothenburg 1965–2000” [Expansion och mångfald: Digital kartläggning och analys av den utominstitutionella scenkonsten i Göteborg 1965–2000], referred in this thesis as the

---

<sup>1</sup> A relevant report concerning this thesis is *Artist – regardless of the conditions?* [*Konstnär – oavsett villkor?*], SOU 2018:23

“Expansion and diversity” project, taking place between 2019-2021. Own by the Department of Cultural Sciences, Department of Literature, History of Ideas, and Religion of the University of Gothenburg, the project aims to map and analyse performing arts outside the institutions in Gothenburg 1965-2000 and, thus, to “acknowledge a cultural heritage at risk of disappearing” (see University of Gothenburg 2020). Combining new information technologies with participatory approaches, urban sociology and humanistic research, the project creates inclusive ways of representing performing arts previously excluded from archives and history (ibid.). Some of the collaborative partners are: the National Library, the National Archives, the Gothenburg Museum as well as independent archives and cultural producers themselves.

Noticing that the traditional theatre historiography has highlighted only a few non-institutional performing arts groups from the multitude of groups that challenged the institutions during the expansion period 1965–2000, the project’s members claim that “it is urgent to account for the broad and diverse heritage of independent performance culture” (von Rosen 2018b, p. 4). The project draws on original research from two previous projects exploring independent performance in Gothenburg: “Gothenburg plays a part: Independent performing arts groups in Gothenburg 1960–2000” (2016–18, supported by the Ahrenberg foundation) and “Dance archives and digital participation” (2017-2018, supported by Vinnova, the Swedish Innovation Agency). Using archive research and interviews with key persons belonging to the local performing arts scene, these projects led to the “discovery of many unknown but significant groups and expressions, such as migrant performances, carnivals, queer independent musicals, student farces, female dance activism, children’s performances, and various cross-genre endeavours” which “far exceeded earlier meagre accounts of independent performance in the city” (von Rosen 2018b, p. 5).

One important part of the current project which took place during the project’s first year (2019), was the digitalization of the main Gothenburg's newspapers, held at the Swedish National Library (KB) in Stockholm. The digitized newspapers are: Göteborgs-Posten (GP), Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning, Arbetet Västsvenska Editionen, Arbetet Nyheterna and Göteborgs-Tidningen (GT). The digitalization enabled the researchers to scrutinize the newspapers for relevant information and allowed “extensive explorations of devalued source materials such as adverts, captions and photographs” (von Rosen 2018b, p. 4). Due to the digitalization, I could also access old articles, critics’ reviews and advertisements for the groups’ productions, which constitute additional research material for my thesis.

In a succeeding stage of the “Expansion and diversity” project, a complex online database was created by merging the empirical material gathered during the previous projects together with data collected from the digitized newspaper material and complementary archive studies and interviews. This database contains information about groups, people, locations (such as outdoor places and theatrical venues), productions (genre, style and content of the performance) and performance events, and how they are all interconnected. Connecting data collected from extensive searches in digitized newspapers with locations in an online database was methodologically employed in order “to make empirical findings accessible to critical historiographical exploration and public engagement. The motive behind including the location of the groups, their practices and their performances in the analysis is that culture is such an

important factor in contemporary urban development strategies (von Rosen 2018b, p.7). By choosing Gothenburg as a case study, the project also “counters the over-emphasis on source materials from Stockholm in previous theatre histories” (ibid., p.5). By combining historiographical and urban analysis with the new information technologies, the multiple purposes of the project are to: 1) re-conceptualize the ways in which performance culture is historically represented; 2) to help users explore the relationships between independent performance, urban space and digital history production; 3) to generate new research questions, digital methods and models; 4) to help include and make accessible a cultural heritage made by, and belonging to, a great variety of makers and participants (ibid., pp.4-7).

The main researchers involved in this project are: the project leader, Astrid von Rosen, responsible for developing and implementing the overarching historiographical dimension of the project; the co-leader, Cecilia Lindhé, responsible for the implementation of digital tools and methods; Mikael Strömberg, who draws on his historiographical expertise on popular independent performing genres; Helena Holgersson who explores performance cultures in relation to often downplayed or neglected urban spaces; the research engineer, Johan Åhlfeldt, who is specialized in online Geographic Information Systems (GIS); and, Ida Storm, who provides additional GIS expertise necessary for the project. Additionally, other collaborators are contributing with their competences to the project: Fia Adler Sandblad, Rolf Sossna and the intern Hannane Nabavi.

The implications for my research of writing the thesis in the framework of the project are various and I will be able to name only a few of the advantages I could benefit from taking part in the project. Beside the already mentioned possibility to access the digitised local newspapers, I participated in meetings and seminars which generated knowledge production and were a source of new ideas for me. During these meetings, I was receiving suggestions about interesting examples relevant for my study. I could also easily establish contact with the respondents for the interviews as many of them knew about the project. I participated in events related to the project which gave me a better understanding of the subject (e.g. the event at Konstspidemin). Even methodologically, I was inspired by the way the information collected from different sources are presented in the database by their source in the field called Notes [Anteckningar].

## **2.3 Previous research**

Being interested in the working and living conditions of non-institutional performing arts groups' members and, also, since I am doing an interdisciplinary approach, I will present previous research from both theatre studies discipline and the field of sociology with focus on work science.

### **2.3.1 Non-institutional performing arts groups in Sweden**

The existence of the “Expansion and diversity” project with its accessible and inclusive database is a consequence of the fact that the non-institutional performing arts groups were presented only occasionally and selectively in the Swedish performance history. Hence, the

historical understanding of independent performance contoured a rather meagre picture of the group's activity and delimited "a narrow idea" of the groups as "overtly political and reaching only small audiences" (von Rosen 2018b, p. 5).

There are several theatre anthologies where different non-institutional performing arts groups and their productions are mentioned, like: *Swedish Theatre Events [Svenska Teaterhändelser] 1946-1996* (Hammergren et al. 1996) and *Theatre in Sweden [Teater i Sverige]* (Hammergren et al. 2004). In these academic studies, the focus is mainly on the groups from Stockholm, while few groups from other parts of Sweden are mentioned – especially those considered representative and significant for the performing arts field. One important publication for Swedish theatre history is the three-volume anthology *New Swedish Theatre History [Ny svensk teaterhistoria]*, written by several researchers from the field and published in 2007. In the last volume, covering the 20th century, the authors use the theatrical institutions as a backdrop to provide a general overview of developments and tendencies in the expanding theatrical field, while, only occasionally, include examples of pioneering and celebrated independent performances, prominent directors, choreographers or known artists (von Rosen 2018b, p. 4). In the last chapter of the third volume, called "Institutions, free groups and theatre habits [Institutioner, fria grupper och teatervanor]", the theatre critic Tomas Forser writes a chronological history of the free groups where the perspective is rather following the developments in the performing arts institutions.

In a book from 1984, called *The serious playground: conditions and changes in Swedish theatre [Den allvarsamma lekplatsen: tillstånd och förändringar i svensk teater]*, the theatre critic and playwright Per Arne Tjäder is presenting a multifaceted picture of the independent groups which brings nuances and tensions in the free group movement. Even if he is following the theatrical institutions' main events and has references to articles published in different theatre magazines (e.g. Dialog, Nya Teatertidningen), he is suggesting that other groups can come as examples if one is changing the perspective from which the heterogeneous free groups movement can be looked at (Tjäder 1984, p.77). I found it interesting that the perspective adopted by Tjäder is repeated in other academic texts, including Forser's article mentioned earlier, and other perspectives and examples of groups have been ignored until recently.

There are several interesting individual studies regarding dance groups. One of them was written by Lena Hammergren in 2011 and regards "Dance and Democracy in Norden". In the section called "The tyranny of one-sidedness – Sweden", Hammergren describes the struggles of tradition and folklore dance companies when the Swedish Arts Council reduced and, from 1984 onward, completely withdraw the financial support for these groups with the motivation that they were not considered creative enough (2011, p.177). Astrid von Rosen has written several scientific articles about non-institutional performing dance groups from Gothenburg, among which: "The dance group Rubicon and the breakthrough of free dance in Gothenburg" [Dansgruppen Rubicon och den fria dansens genombrott i Göteborg] from 2018 and "About Claude Marchant: A Historiographical Contribution to Black Dance History in Sweden [Om Claude Marchant: Ett historiografiskt bidrag till Svart Danshistoria i Sverige] from 2021. Both these articles offer in-depth explorations of the lives and works of the members of Rubicon and, respectively, of Claude Marchant.

When it comes to the local performing arts artists, the works of Gunnar Bäck (1992; Bäck et al. 2005) and Sara Engström (2017) about Sören Larsson are relevant as he founded Larssons Teaterakademi and Larssons Teater – “both written with a small letter, but with big ambitions” (GP, 2020/10/27) – which were important non-institutional acting school and, respectively, performing arts group. The groups from Gothenburg write their history themselves, like in the case of Lars Jacob Jakobsson and Peter Wahlqvist who called their book from 2018 *The National Book: the only true tale about the National Theater* [*Nationalboken: den enda sanna skrönan om Nationalteatern*]. Other examples of non-academic books about non-institutional performing arts groups from Gothenburg and the region, are: *Atalante – in the middle of life: Thirty years of dance, music, art* [*Atalante – mitt i livet: Trettio år med dans, musik, konst*] (Strömberg et al. 2020) and *Theatre Albatross: Performances, travel, art and visions* [*Teater Albatross: Föreställningar, resor, konst och visioner*] (Scapoli 2020).

One recent anthology, from 2020, focuses on the performing arts scene in Gothenburg as the title announces: *On stage: Theatre, dance, song and music. One hundred years in Gothenburg* [*På scenen: Teater, dans, sång och musik. Hundra år i Göteborg*] (Hellström Sveningsson & Nyberg). The book’s article related to this thesis, called “Gothenburg’s free theaters” [*Göteborgs fria teatrar*] (pp.135-158), written by Johan Franzon, provides: a brief “theatrical-historical overview” of some groups, few paragraphs about the specific conditions for the performing arts in Gothenburg and, finally, sequences of interviews with five artists. The article reproduces the information from Forser’s article (2007), presents a handful of selected groups but is lacking methodical and theoretical references for this selection.

To conclude, I find it understandable that a linear theatre history cannot include the various and different independent groups, artistic expressions and relations that the early non-institutional performing arts groups developed. And still, the fact that there are only few examples of academic studies which refer to the non-institutional performing arts can indicate that “the broader independent performance heritage and its diverse forms of expression have been dismissed as aesthetically weak and of little cultural value” (von Rosen 2018b, p.4).

### **2.3.2 Artists’ living and working conditions**

Considering that in the previous section I limited the area of previous research to the theatre studies or publications from Sweden, and then, more specifically from Gothenburg, I considered that the academic texts regarding the living and working conditions of the artists to be restricted to those studies which dealt with the Swedish context. Although, the works of Isabell Lorey (2006) and Angela McRobbie (2001; 2016) – which are used in this study for their theoretical contribution – can be regarded as previous international research studies because the theories described there have as empirical material the working conditions of various cultural producers from Germany and, respectively, UK.

There are not many academic studies concerning the living and working conditions of the Swedish artists. One of the reasons for this scarcity is the fact that the number of artists in Sweden is low compared to the entire population, reaching 3% of the working force if we include, besides the artists, even the publicity branch, library, architecture and media (Flisbäck

2017, p.501). Therefore, the anthology of articles regarding the cultural producers' working conditions in different artistic spheres in Sweden, called *The arts and culture sector: a pioneering area for a working life in transformation?* [*Konst- och kultursektorn: ett pionjärområde för ett arbetsliv i omvandling?*] (Flisbäck & Lund 2010), gives an insight of the changes that occurred in the cultural field. In the introduction of this book, it is mentioned that, while the situation of writers and visual artists has been known as economically insecure for longer time, the performing arts artists face insecurity relatively recently as the permanent employment type [*tillsvidareanställningar*] has decreased the last 30 years (ibid., p.4).

Marita Flisbäck is one of the few researchers who has focused on artists' careers – especially visual artists – in relation to life choices, family life, identity and meaning-making processes. In an article from 2017, “Artistic work - entrepreneurs or precariat? [*Konstnärligt arbete – entreprenörer eller prekariat?*]”, Flisbäck points to the duality of the artists' situation: both in the centre and in the periphery of the labour market (p.509), both having insecure incomes and feeling an “inner reward” from their work (p.508), both precarious and passionate (pp.513-514).

In her dissertation based on interviews with visual artists who graduated from the Swedish Art Academy, *(Un)bearable freedom: exploring the becoming of the artist in education, work and family life*, Sofia Lindström makes a clear difference between the artists in her study and many others with precarious and insecure working conditions. The main difference is that the artists interviewed “love their work and activities, and they often have economic and emotional support, educational merits and stable middle-class backgrounds” (Lindström 2016, p.68). Lindström calls her dissertation “a study of what could be termed precarity of the privileged” (ibid.). Although I understand Lindström's argument, I have reservations regarding the terms used which will be discussed in the last chapter of the thesis.

Another research, which has several common points with the present study, is Danka Miscevic's dissertation, *Beyond the stage: a sociological study about the conditions of freelance actors* [*Bortom scenen - en sociologisk studie av frilansande skådespelares villkor*], from 2014. Miscevic investigates the experience of freelance and unemployment among actors based on interviews. The overall conclusion is that the actors' freelance experience implies competition, subordination and insecurity, but also creative desire, resistance and solidarity (Miscevic 2014). Another result coming from Miscevic thesis is that there are inequalities regarding gender, as female actors experience greater insecurity on the labour market and, generally, less recognition, than their male colleagues (ibid.).

### **2.3.3 Conclusion**

Written within the discipline of cultural studies, my thesis is making the connection between two disciplines (theatre studies and sociology) which are usually not intersecting. In the theatre studies tradition, the focus is on particular performing arts artists or groups, on their achievements, productions and their aesthetic contributions to the field. On the other side, the researchers within sociology and work sciences are rather interested in the living and working



conditions which affect most artists. This is reflected in the way the artists are anonymized in sociological studies. Therefore, my thesis, as a link between the disciplines, brings into the theatre studies' spotlight the living and working conditions of non-institutional performing arts groups' members, which have been depicted as difficult (von Rosen 2018a; Forser 2007) but have not been problematised in-depth. At the same time, it brings into the sociology discipline the artists' experiences of their living and working conditions narrated under their real identities.

## 2.4 Institutions, organizations and use of terms

In this section, I will briefly name and describe several institutions and organizations that played a role for the working and living conditions of the artists. Additionally, I will provide explanations of the specific terms used in the public funding system.

### **The Swedish Arts Council [Statens kulturråd/Kulturrådet] founded in 1974**

The important aspect for this study is that, as a result of the 1974 cultural policy, two of the most central authorities granting public funds for culture were constituted. The Swedish Arts Council [Statens kulturråd] was established in 1974 with responsibility for theatre, dance, music, film, literature, public libraries, art, museums and exhibition activities. Two years later, the Swedish Arts Grants Committee [Konstnärdsnämnden] was established, which was given the assignment to distribute both individual grants and scholarships to artists. These two institutions took over responsibility for grants that had previously been spread over different authorities, and both were given the responsibility to monitor developments in their respective areas. "In accordance with the arm's length principle, grants were now distributed to artists and cultural institutions with the support of expert groups consisting mainly of artists from the fields concerned" (SOU 2018:23, p.57). Statens kulturråd changed its name to Kulturrådet in 1988 (von Rosen 2018a, p.187).

The **local authorities**<sup>2</sup> responsible for public grants listed below, with their main tasks and responsibilities, are described in detail, by Helena Holgersson, in Swedish, in the database of the "Expansion and diversity" project:

**The Cultural Policy Delegation [Kulturpolitiska delegationen] 1977-1982.** The main task of this authority was to plan and coordinate the activities in the local cultural field. Initially, they were also responsible for ongoing matters, such as the applications for grants from free dance and theater groups. As this task took time from the overall planning attribution, the Cultural Support Board was established in 1980 to take over these matters.

**The Cultural Scholarship Committee [Kulturstipendienämnden] 1963-1980.** This authority dealt with cultural scholarships and exhibition grants in Gothenburg. In 1980, the Cultural Support Board was established, and took over even the responsibilities of the Cultural

---

<sup>2</sup> The translation to English of the authorities' Swedish names was based on a list available online: <https://www.hassleholm.se/download/18.1bdc6f9e14bb6dbe8804180> (Accessed 2021/09/19)

Scholarship Board.

**The Cultural Support Committee [Kulturstödsnämnden] 1980-1993.** Established in 1980, the Cultural Support Board was mainly responsible for the distribution of grants to the different cultural producers in Gothenburg, as well as for the cultural scholarships and exhibition grants.

**The Culture Committee [Kulturnämnden] founded in 1993.** When the Culture Committee was established in 1993, it was after decades of discussions and investigations around how the City of Gothenburg's work with cultural issues would be organized without too much bureaucratization. The Culture Committee is responsible for Gothenburg's cultural activities, as well as for the city museums' activities and most libraries. When it was established, it also took over the responsibility for distribution of financial support and scholarships to independent cultural producers.

### **KULF and KULIS**

KULF (Swedish abbreviation from "Culture in preschool" [Kultur i förskolan]) was founded in 1976 as a network between the childcare staff from different districts of Gothenburg in collaboration with the performing arts consultants hired by the Social Services Department [Socialförvaltningen] in order to help providing cultural activities for, with and by children in preschool (KULF 1979). KULF was an essential promoter of the non-institutional performing arts groups' touring performances in the preschool and their adjacent activities done by the groups with the children. With a budget growing constantly in the first years, from 200.000 SEK in 1976 to 662.000 SEK in 1983 (Göteborgs socialförvaltnings arkiv 1983), KULF's work was supported by the authorities and their cooperation with the groups was appreciated by the respondents who performed for children (e.g., Åsa Eek Engquist, Rolf Sossna, Gun Lund). In 1998, a network for promoting culture in primary school was created, which was named KULIS (Swedish abbreviation from "Culture in school" [Kultur i skolan]) and was assigned with the same goals as KULF had since the beginning.

### **Teatercentrum [Theatre Centre]**

When it was established in 1969, Teatercentrum was "a very open organization", started with financial support from the Theater Association [Teaterförbundet] and had the task of "coordinating and distributing outreach theater, performed by groups with implemented theater democracy" (Hoogland 2005, pp.63-65). Nowadays, with offices in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and Luleå, Teatercentrum's role is to provide information about the independent performing arts, to promote increased funding and improved conditions for their member theatres in all parts of Sweden and to offer support for members in developing their organizations (Teatercentrum 2021). Similar organizations for the non-institutional dance and music groups were established: Danscentrum and Musikcentrum.

### **AMS, a-kassa, Arbetförmedlingen**

From 1948 to 2007, the Swedish Labor Market Board [Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen], abbreviated

AMS, was the authority responsible for the various initiatives regarding the labor market. The main impact of this labor market board for the non-institutional performing arts groups' members was the fact that they could receive unemployment benefits from the unemployment insurance fund [arbetslöshetskassan], abbreviated a-kassa, while registered as unemployed and, simultaneously, working at new productions. Beside the unemployment benefits that the a-kassa was providing, AMS introduced several other measures, on-demand jobs [beredskapstjänster], to help the cultural producers on the labour market. During the Swedish economic housing crisis in the beginning of the 1990s, a new category of jobs was introduced only to be eliminated in the late 1990s. Among them, working life development [arbetslivsutveckling] (ALU) and workplace introduction [arbetsplats introduktion] (API) were the most relevant for cultural life. ALU and API implied that the unemployed people could train their ability to become employees on a working place while receiving unemployment benefits. The Swedish Public Employment Service [Arbetsförmedlingen] is responsible for the public employment service in Sweden and the implementation of labour market policies since 2008.

The **terms** used in this thesis are:

**Cultural producers** – the term includes the members of non-institutional performing arts groups, artists and different cultural workers. At the same time, I want to subscribe to the extended meaning given to the term by the group kleines postfordistisches Drama (kpD) which also implies “the practice of traveling across a variety of things: theory production, design, political and cultural self-organization, forms of collaboration, paid and unpaid jobs, informal and formal economies, temporary alliances, project related working and living” (Lorey 2006, online version, note 1).

**Free groups** – is the common popular term for the non-institutional performing arts groups. The term was used to refer to theatre, dance and music groups.

**Types of public financial support:**

- project based grant [projektsbidrag] – is a grant allocated to a non-institutional performing arts group for a specific production. This type of grant was distributed both by the state and Gothenburg's municipality.
- yearly based grant [verksamhetsbidrag] – is a grant which confers a constant income for the non-institutional performing arts groups during a year and, later, three years. This type of grant was distributed both by the state and Gothenburg's municipality.
- equalization grant [utjämningsbidrag] – was introduced in the late 1970s in Gothenburg, in order to provide equal terms for the groups to compete with the performing arts institutions for selling their performances to the schools and kindergartens (KUB 69, *Appendix C*).
- equipment support [utrustningsstöd] and development support [utvecklingsstöd] – as the names indicate, these grants were accessible for the non-institutional performing arts groups for purchasing technical equipment (e.g. light and sound) or to develop their activity.

### **3. Materials and methods**

“I see the ethnographic project as humanly situated, always filtered through human eyes and human perceptions, and bearing both the limitations and the strengths of human feelings.”  
(Laurel Richardson 2018, p.823)

In this chapter, I present the methods adopted for collecting and analysing the data used in this thesis along with the material on which this study is based on. Even if my research is not based on intensive fieldwork and participant observation which are important tools for the ethnographic studies, I do consider my study an ethnographic one due to the methods used for collecting and analysing the material as well as for the writing process of this thesis.

Before describing the methods and providing details about the material of this research, I want to enumerate them in order to present an overview regarding the content of this chapter. The main material of this research constitutes the transcriptions of the interviews with nine non-institutional performing arts groups' members, complemented by: newspaper articles, applications for grants sent by the groups to the municipality of Gothenburg and cultural policy valid during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The main methods used to collect the material were, as mentioned earlier, ethnographic: interviewing artists, recording and transcribing these interviews, observing and taking field notes during events involving non-institutional performing arts groups and photographing the archived material. The methods applied for analysing the material consisted mainly of thematic analysis combined with elements of narrative analysis, of text analysis with focus on meaning and interpretation.

The different sections of this chapter are broadly following my research process. Although the chronological order of the data collection is not necessarily accurate because the various archived material and the different newspaper articles were used, for different purposes, before, during and after the interviews. As I consider the interviews my main source of material for this study, I place them right in the beginning. The ethical aspects were also touched upon during the interviews but, as they were accompanied by reflexive thinking during the analysis of the material and the writing process, they are presented last.

#### **3.1 Interviews**

The main material for this thesis was provided by nine interviews conducted with members of early non-institutional performing arts groups, six women and three men. The major reason for my choice of carrying out interviews was the possibility of accessing experiences and information which are not attainable in the archives, nor in the newspaper articles, nor can be exposed in a museum. These experiences are contained by cultural producers who are still active, to different extents, in the cultural field and can be described in order to give a broader perspective about the living and working conditions of artists during the expansion period. By using interviews, my approach was to start from the “micro-level”, from the personal experiences narrated by each artist and to place them in a bigger context, to connect them to the “macro-level” (Lennartsson 2017, p.54) or, to use the American sociologist C. Wright Mills’

invitation, to “turn the personal troubles into public issues” (in Back 2007, p.22).

The general criterion for choosing the respondents was the fact that they were members of at least one non-institutional performing arts group in the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s. Therefore, the respondents are now between 61 and 78 years old. The first person to be interviewed was Fia Adler Sandblad with which I conducted a test-interview for establishing the relevant questions which were then included in the interview guide (see *Appendix 2*). Interviewing Fia Adler Sandblad was a convenient choice I made as she is part of the project “Expansion and diversity”. Through the previous project “Gothenburg plays a part – independent performing arts groups in Gothenburg 1960–2000” [Göteborg spelar roll – fria grupper scenkonst i Göteborg 1960-2000] she was involved in between 2016 and 2018, Fia Adler Sandblad was in contact with and provided useful information about, at least, 18 non-institutional performing arts groups from Gothenburg working in the physical theatre tradition. This test-interview was the only one where I could meet the respondent in person as it was conducted in Frölunda Kulturhus Café on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2020. Due to the recommendations determined by the spreading of the virus Covid-19 in Sweden since March 2020 and to the fact that most of the respondents are older (therefore, belonging to a risk group<sup>3</sup>), the rest of the interviews were conducted without social contact. Half of the interviews were conducted via Skype, while the other half were conducted via telephone, depending on the respondents’ preference.

The criteria for choosing the respondents were both strategic and based on accessibility. When it comes to the strategical choice, my intention was to interview artists who had experience with different genres and artistic expressions within the field of performing arts in the 1970s-90s – theatre, dance, puppetry, theatre for children, feminist theatre, physical theatre, street theatre etcetera. Regarding the accessibility, I contacted people who I met before due to other activities related to the “Expansion and diversity” project and I also used a “snowball effect” method by asking the respondents to give me suggestions of other artists which could answer my questions.

The result of all these selection methods and criteria was a group of “known” artists in the performing arts field in Gothenburg – who, during their careers, had accumulated *symbolic capital* and were recognized as important by other artists from the performing arts field (cf. Bourdieu 1993). Against this backdrop, the respondents are not anonymized. The artists were open to share their experiences and were interested in making their stories and their groups’ history known. The ethical implications of the respondent’s openness to share their experiences under their real names will be discussed in this chapter’ last section.

After completing the ninth interview I considered that the amount of material gathered from interviewing these various artists was enough for a complex qualitative analysis and therefore, I decided to cease the interview-phase of the research and proceed to the analysis. The interviews are between 52 minutes and 2 hours and 17 minutes. They were all recorded on my telephone and transcribed afterwards in order to be analyzed. The respondents received the interview guide in advance via their email addresses. Sending the questions in advance had

---

<sup>3</sup> In the *risk group* were included mainly individuals of 70 years old or older who might develop severe symptoms and additional health complications if they were infected with Covid-19.

three main purposes: 1) to stimulate the respondents' memory regarding the studied topic, specific events or personal experiences, 2) to avoid misunderstandings due to possible technical issues involved in using online technologies via Skype and 3) to eliminate eventual communication barriers caused by my language deficiency as a non-native Swedish speaker. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, and I translated the quotes used in the study. The quotes selected from the interviews will be referred to in this study only by the name of the artist who provided them, while the quotes extracted from other sources will include the name of the artist followed by information regarding that particular source.

In the next paragraphs I will, very briefly, present the artists I interviewed along with information about some of the groups they were part of, extracted mainly from the database created by the "Expansion and diversity" project. This is an attempt to provide a general view for the reader useful for the understanding of the present study. Additional information in Swedish about these artists and groups can be accessed through the mentioned database.

**Fia Adler Sandblad**, born in 1959, is an actress, artistic director, playwright, researcher and one of Gothenburg's central practitioners of physical theatre. She has worked in the physical theatre tradition since the mid-1980s and founded **ADAS musikaliska teater** in 1993, which works critically and often with a feminist perspective for creating socially engaged performances even nowadays. The test interview was conducted in Frölunda Kulturhus Café on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2020.

**Åsa Eek Engquist**, born in 1955, is an actress who started her acting career in 1983 in **Teater UNO** in Gothenburg and was active in this group until 2018 when the group was reorganized. Teater UNO was founded in 1977. The group played mainly for a children and youth audience, dealt with moral issues without moralizing and used humor to have conversations with the audiences about serious topics. The interview with Åsa Eek Engquist was conducted via Skype on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2020.

**Robert Jakobsson**, born in 1948, is one of the three members who built **Eldteatern**, in 1976, together with Pita Fridell and Ulf Skogsén. He founded with Nadia Scapoli **Teater Albatross** in Stockholm in 1984. Some years later, Teater Albatross bought Tokalynga and has had its base there since 1989. In the late 90's Robert Jakobsson also began, in parallel with the physical theater, to do storytelling (see Teater Albatross 2021). The interview with Robert Jakobsson was conducted via telephone on the 31<sup>st</sup> of Mars 2020.

**Wiveka Warenfalk**, born in 1942, is an actress, theatredirector and teacher. Wiveka Warenfalk has moved freely between the free groups, theatrical experiments, radio and TV theatre and theatre institutions. In 1983, she started **Teaterkompaniet** together with playwright Ulf Wideström and the actors Marika Nasiell and Jan Rådvik, which she ran until 1990. Teaterkompaniet's visions were to experiment with: the performing arts themselves, the design of the room and the audience's participation. The interview with Wiveka Warenfalk was conducted via telephone on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2020.

**Pita Skogsén**, born in 1954 (as Fridell), is an actress, educator, artistic director and visual artist. While her activities are long and varied, the art of theatre has always been her guiding star. Together with Robert Jakobsson and Ulf Skogsén, she founded **Eldteatern**, in

1976. The interview with Pita Skogsén was conducted via Skype on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2020.

**Gun Lund**, born in 1943, is a choreographer, dancer and artistic director. Gun Lund's many years of activity (e.g., in **Rubicon**, then in **E=mc<sup>2</sup> Danskonst**) form a cornerstone for Gothenburg's free dance life. Together with Lars Persson, she has also archived large parts of her and others' dance heritage. The interview with Gun Lund was conducted via telephone on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2020.

**Ulf Wideström**, born in 1943, was a playwright who, together with his then wife Wiveka Warenfalk, participated in several different theatre projects in the 60s-80s. He was one of those who founded **Teaterkompaniet** in 1983. The interview with Ulf Wideström was conducted via telephone on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2020.

**Rolf Sossna**, born in 1956, was drawn to the street theatre. From 1981 he and Åke Nilsson ran the **Bizarr-teatret**. In connection with theatre courses at Sprängkullen, he met Eldteatern and worked there as an actor during the mid-1980s. In 1988, he began collaborating with Sören Larsson in Larsson's teaterakademi. He and two of the students started **En Annan Teater** in 1992. The group changed its name to **Masthuggsteatern** in 2000 after they took over the stage on Masthuggsterrassen in 1997. As a director, Sossna combined the physical expressions with an oral narrative. The interview with Rolf Sossna was conducted via Skype on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2020.

**Nasrin Barati**, born in 1954, is a key person for the puppet theatre field. The group that is today called **Teater Sesam** has been, since its inception (which is estimated to have taken place in 1987), a professional group that systematically pursued puppet theatre in the form of dialogue between tradition and innovation. In 1994, Teater Sesam's scene was inaugurated and with this, Gothenburg's first permanent puppet theatre stage was established. The interview with Nasrin Barati was conducted via Skype on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2020.

## 3.2 Archive material, newspaper articles and official documents

As complements to the material provided by the interviews I have also analysed: different applications sent to the municipality by the early non-institutional performing arts groups in order to ask for public grants during 1970s, '80s and '90s; various articles and reviews published in the local newspapers regarding different groups; national and local cultural policies valid during the studied period.

The applications for public grants sent to the municipality by the non-institutional performing arts groups were stored and could be consulted in the Regional Archive [Regionarkivet] in Gothenburg, the largest regional archive institution in Sweden which contains documents from administrations, companies and foundations both from the Västra Götaland region and the City of Gothenburg. During my three visits to the Regional Archive and with guidance from its employees, I could find out which institutions were responsible for receiving and responding to the non-institutional performing arts groups' applications for

accessing public funds in different time periods as they were described in the previous chapter. One of my main discoveries represented the hundreds of applications gathered under the Cultural Support Committee's archive [Kulturstödsnämndens arkiv] between 1980 and 1993. As I did not have enough time to consult all this material, I strategically selected for reading, based on the protocol lists registered and archived, several applications sent during different years mainly by the groups I was studying. I photographed the material which I found relevant in order to study in detail later (a total of over 400 photos). Applications and additional documents belonging to other archives – like Cultural Politic Delegation's archive [Kulturpolitiska delegationens arkiv], Cultural Scholarship Committee's archive [Kulturstipendienämndens arkiv], the archive of the Gothenburg's Social Services Department [Göteborgs socialförvaltnings arkiv] – were also consulted.

The material provided by the applications was important as it was diverse and included self-presentations of the groups, descriptions of their cultural productions, motivations for applying for public funds, critics' reviews of the groups' productions published in the newspaper etcetera. Sometimes, the groups were adding other types of material to the applications, like brochures with their work, resumes of the group's members, posters, drawings sent to the group by children who have seen a certain performance, other financial contributors, calendars with booked performances etc. As each application received an answer from the municipality, these official responses were also considered as part of the material. The archive material was used: 1) to inform myself about the different non-institutional performing arts groups, their cultural productions and their members before the interviews, 2) to trigger the respondents' memory regarding the topic of public funding system during the interviews and 3) to have concrete examples of how the public funding system was functioning at a local level, while analysing the material.

For the same reasons, I also consulted different articles published in local and national newspapers, digitally available on the Swedish National Library [Kungliga Biblioteket], before and after every interview. Consulting the local newspapers digitally was possible due to the digitization of these main local newspapers as a first phase of the "Expansion and diversity" project. Without the digitization, selecting and reading these various newspaper articles at the local library would have been too time consuming and I would not have embarked on such a quest. In the national library's searching system, I searched for every group's name and artist's name. The material consulted for this thesis included reviews, advertisements, reportages etcetera. The list with complete information about the newspaper articles used in the thesis is provided in *Appendix 1*.

The official documents used in this study – especially the governmental bills Prop. 1974:28 and Prop. 1996/97:3, and the local cultural policies KUB 69 and *Cultural policy strategy, version 1.0* (Göteborgs Stad 1998) – were providing the general frame under which the non-institutional performing arts groups were creating cultural productions. These documents do not always present specific measures to be taken regarding the non-institutional performing arts groups and, therefore, my focus was mainly on the intentions of supporting the groups expressed in these documents and on the effects the implementation of the cultural policies had on the living and working conditions of the artists. I was also interested in the role



assigned implicitly by these documents to the non-institutional performing arts groups in order to achieve the goals of the cultural policy.

### 3.3 Ethnographic methods

This thesis is written within the field of cultural studies and this aspect conferred me more freedom in choosing the material and establishing the appropriate methods of analysing it then within other disciplines. I am referring to the fact that cultural studies, traditionally<sup>4</sup>, are characterized by a method pluralism so that “no one method is intrinsically superior to the rest, and each provides a more or less appropriate way of exploring some different aspect of cultural process” (Johnson et al. 2004, p.42). Using method pluralism often confer a reciprocal cross-fertilization as “methods are often most productive when their rules and conventions are transgressed or combined” (ibid.). In this thesis, the combination of textual analysis of archived material with the analysis of interviews taken nowadays proved to be a prolific and challenging mix of methods. Even if I was inspired by the *technique of bricolage* – “an eclectic form of generating meaning in qualitative research” (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015, p.267) – when mixing different materials and methods, I want to stress that I was driven in the research process by the idea of “always listening to the experiences of others, and, as part of that, being ready for theoretical and methodological change” (Coudry 2000, p.42).

The ethnographic methods used in this research are sometimes difficult to be separated and be ordered chronologically because the concept of ethnography denotes both the whole spectrum of methods and practices that the researchers do, and the product of these activities (Lennartsson 2017, p.45). Therefore, I could not follow a linear research process, from formulating the questions to writing the results, but rather an “integrated research process” (Aspers 2011, p.220) where I was alternating between collecting the material and analysing it, adding more data and reconsidering the themes for analysis, studying additional material and rewriting chapters of the thesis; until I refined my study.

I used **thematic analysis** in my thesis in order to identify, analyse and interpret the “patterns of shared meaning” within the collected data (Braun & Clarke 2019, p.593). In my work, I followed the outline guide for thematic analysis developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006, 2019). I chose their approach because they stress the researcher’s role in knowledge production and they consider the themes as being “analytic outputs” which are “not just waiting to be identified by the researcher” but they are “creative and interpretive stories about the data, produced at the intersection of the researcher’s theoretical assumptions, their analytic resources and skill, and the data themselves” (Braun & Clarke 2019, p.594).

In the first phase of the thematic analysis, I started by becoming familiar with the data provided by the recorded interviews. I transcribed these interviews, omitting only a few fragments where the conversation was deviating from the topic discussed. I also took notes during the interviews mainly for recording the respondents’ spontaneous reactions, my thoughts

---

<sup>4</sup> I refer here to the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (founded 1964) and the work of the scholars Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, and Raymond Williams.

and first impressions. These field-notes were used to complement the transcriptions. The transcription process was “a conscious analytical act” as the ethnologist Barbro Klein described it, in which I could try my hand and eventually, on good grounds, decide which factors I wanted to work with (Klein 1990, p.53). At this phase of the analysis, when I was listening, reading and re-reading the material, I could also pay attention to and become “sensitive to nuances and ambiguities” (Saukko 2003, p.105), while detecting “oddities, contradictions, marginalia, unexpected remarks, anything that might alter the preconceptions about the material – but also, of course, repetitions” (Johnson et al. 2004, p.236).

Not all the important aspects that happened during the interviews were easy to capture in the transcriptions. One of these aspects was the artists’ strong *presence* (Gumbrecht 2004; Brinkmann & Kvale 2015, p.247) which can be expressed in terms of energy, voice, gestural expressions etcetera. Some examples in this sense are: Fia Adler Sandblad stretching her palm few centimetres from my face when she was describing how she felt when receiving the appellation “feminist” from the critics; Robert Jakobsson raising his voice, while talking about climate change, at a level which was overwhelming for a moment; Nasrin Barati describing the quality and the details in her work not with many words but by moving her fingers in the air. Even if I tried to produce as “thick” descriptions (Geertz 1973) as possible, the respondents’ presence could not always be captured with words.

In order to “generate the initial codes in the data”, I systematically went through the entire data set (Braun & Clarke 2006, p.89): I printed all the transcriptions of the interviews, newspaper articles and archived material, and coded my data by using coloured pens and by writing notes on the texts to indicate potential patterns. At the end of this process, I copied the extracts of data from individual transcripts and collated each code together in separate computer files. Having the codes structured in files allowed me to sort them into potential themes and subthemes and join the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. I tested potential themes by questioning their relevance in relation to the entire data set and to the thesis’ questions, and, when necessary, re-combined the codes in order to determine the themes that best capture the story I wanted to tell about my data (ibid.). In the end, during the writing process, I was meticulous in choosing “particularly vivid examples or extracts” which captured the essence of the argument I was making (ibid.).

As mentioned before, I was taking notes during the interviews in order to capture my first insights of the interaction with the respondents. **Observation and field notes** were also part of the research process, at least in its’ starting phase, before the social distancing recommendations as a result of the pandemic, were applied from March 2020. Initially, my research plan was to interview the artists at their working place, or while exploring together their personal archives, depending on the case. However, the situation caused by covid-19 detoured my plan to such a degree that I was uncertain if I could even pursue the interviews. Nevertheless, the field notes I took during two events involving early non-institutional performing arts groups proved to be useful for my own understanding of the expansion period. Therefore, I decided to include them in the final paper, although only as ethnographic vignettes in the beginning of each chapter of the analysis. My decision was based on the intention of turning “a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account,

which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted” (Geertz 1973, p.19).

The analysis and the **writing** processes of this thesis started already while I was writing field notes during the first event involving non-institutional performing arts groups I attended in February 2020. To support this statement, it is important to acknowledge that “writing field notes is a process of analysis-in-description” on the grounds that “all descriptions are selective, purposed, angled, and voiced because they are authored” (Emerson et al. 2011, p.126). Several times during the research process I experienced that the analysis and writing were not separate cognitive activities but rather interconnected ways of thinking (ibid.). However, the important aspect that these activities have in common is the choices the researcher must make during these processes (Braun & Clarke 2006, p.81). Richardson also claims that “rhetorical decisions are constantly being made” as the researchers “choose how to write” and “those choices have poetic, rhetorical, ethical, and political implications” (1990, p.131). This thesis’ ethical implications will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

### 3.3.1 Challenges

One of the main challenges I faced while doing the fieldwork and during the writing process was how I could handle the *time* aspect. Firstly, I did not intend to reproduce the chronological development of the representative non-institutional performing arts groups from Sweden seen from the perspective of the theatre studies discipline as this has already been achieved (Tjäder 1984; Hammergren et al. 1996; Hammergren et al. 2004; Forser 2007). The non-institutional performing arts groups I was focusing on were local ones and the perspective was in accordance with the discipline of cultural studies. Secondly, I wanted to allow myself to pursue the thematic analysis of the material without the worries of mixing the respondents’ quotes taken from different time periods. Instead, I wanted to profit from the knowledge provided by joining data collected from different years and sources. At the same time, I was keeping in mind the social and historical contexts of those events in order to avoid the anachronistic interpretations (Jönsson & Nilsson 2017: 70). Finally, as my research concerns the experiences of non-institutional performing arts groups’ members, I noticed during the interviews that the respondents could freely recall, compare and make connections between events that happened in different time periods. I could understand my respondents’ way of relating to events which happened in different time periods with the help of the American sociologist Laurel Richardson who argues that “people do not experience time as a succession of instants, or a linking of points in space, but as extended awareness of the past and the future within the present” and therefore “sometimes, time is experienced as a concordant whole” while “other times, time is experienced as discordant” (1990, p.124). I chose to include in the study the respondents’ dynamic way of experiencing time while discussing the influence of the public funding system on their living and working conditions and therefore, I quote their references to the present situation.

Having all these considerations in mind, I decided to focus on specific situations that, following Per Arne Tjäder’s idea, can clarify the major contexts “better than the continuous writing of history that is easily lost in detail” (1984, p.16). But the situations I refer to were not chosen by concentrating on the changes arising in the performing arts institutions, nor on the

artistic currents, nor on the critics' opinions expressed in reviews or articles. I used instead the *turning points* in the lives of the people I interviewed, as they were perceived and mentioned by the artists themselves, in relation to the cultural policy. The turning points, as instruments of narrative analysis, are those events that in some respects have meant a change in the person's way of life (Johansson 2005, p.320; Marander-Eklund 2011, p.149) and, according to the ethnologist Alf Arvidsson can be distinguished in a story by comments like "so it was until..." or "all changed when..." (1998, p.61).

Although the events recalled by the respondents are stretching over several decades and, from that respect, the interviews resemble life story type of narrative, the fact that the interviews have as main topic the influence of the public funding system on the respondents living and working conditions allows the respondents to provide a "more loosely experience-based narrative" (Arvidsson 1998, p.61). The advantage of using these experienced-based narratives instead of asking the respondents for their life stories is the reduction of the evaluation of their lives as the respondents are doing when asked to tell their life stories (*ibid.*). Therefore, using the turning points, which are usually instruments of analysis of life stories, for analysing these experience-based narratives allow the opportunity to spot also the events which might be contradictory or dramatic and which appear spontaneous in the conversation without the self-evaluation filter.

The turning points were a rich source of information as the respondents could recall additional details regarding the context in which those important events in their lives took place. Therefore, the turning points were used as starting points for investigating the ways the events affecting one artist could affect other cultural producers too. My approach was inspired by what the American sociologist C. Wright Mills was doing in the 1950s, namely, to convert the private troubles into public issues or as the sociologist Les Back expressed it when referring to Mills' work: "to identify the larger social forces that furnish our most intimate private concerns, to translate the 'personal troubles' of biography into 'public issues' of history and society" (Back 2007, p.10). The idea expressed in the 1950s regarding the importance of the social studies is still valuable nowadays: "It is one great task of social studies today to describe the larger economic and political situation in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of the individual, and in doing this to take into account how the individual often becomes falsely conscious and blinded" (Mills 1951, p. xx).

Another issue related to the challenge raised by the time aspect was the relation between the "real-time" and "end-point" perspective while writing this study. The real time perspective implies that the writers seek to characterize events using only what they know moment by moment as the event unfolds (Emerson et al. 2011, p.105). On the other hand, "researchers might describe events from an end-point position by making full use of what they ultimately came to know and understand about them" (*ibid.*, p.106). I used mainly end-point perspective in presenting the analysis and results of the thesis, although my personal voyage during the research was a series of constant discoveries. I included real-time descriptions in the beginning of each section of the analysis chapter as, in terms of "methodological self-consciousness", these descriptions allowed me to identify and explicate my "own processes for discovering or attributing meaning" (*ibid.*, p.107).

The final issue regarding the time aspect was the additional question I raised while analysing the material resulted after the interviews conducted with non-institutional performing arts groups' members: to which extent did the experiences narrated by the respondents reflect the spirit of the studied period and to which extent did they reflect the spirit of the time we live in? This question was inspired by the folklorist Lena Marander-Eklund's article about the life of housewives in Finland in the 1950s narrated in the 1990s which shows that certain topics were discussed because they were relevant for the 90s context (2011). The question was also motivated by Richardson's idea that telling one's story "gives meaning to the past in order to give meaning to the present life of the person" (1990, p.126). Without the ambition of answering, the role of this question is to open the discussion about the living and working conditions in a non-institutional performing arts constellation nowadays, by acknowledging the lived experiences of the artists active in 1970s-90s, which enrich the historical perspective on the issue.

### **3.4 Ethical aspects and reflexivity**

This study has been guided by the ethical considerations that are formulated by the Swedish Research Council [Vetenskapsrådet] which concern informed consent, voluntary participation and usage of the empirical material in the study. In the beginning of each interview, the respondents were informed that their answers were to become the material of this study. One respondent expressed the wish to read in advance the quotes from the interview which I was intending to use in the thesis, and I agreed to do so.

Beside the general ethical guideline, the fact that I use the respondents' real identities in this study has implications both regarding the responsibility I have in writing about public persons and the "authority and privilege" I have as a researcher (Richardson 1990, p.130). While I was aware of the power I had in analysing the data collected from the interviews, in choosing the themes to be analysed and in the way I present the results (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015, pp. 245-246; Van Maanen 2011; Richardson 1990, p.130), I felt the pressure of writing right, of presenting the respondents' points of view in a just manner. Usually, in the field of social studies, the respondents' identities are anonymized while in the theatre studies tradition, the respondents' name is public as the emphasis is on their artistic contribution rather than personal aspects of their lives. The advantage of doing an interdisciplinary research study allowed me to write about working and living conditions of known artists in the cultural field. The fact that the respondents will receive the complete thesis for reading influenced me in the sense that I tried to be as transparent as possible during the entire research process and that I wrote in a manner that invites to a further dialogue. The pressure created by the ethics of representation required "a continual bending back" on myself when I was questioning the assumptions I was making in interpreting the data (Braun & Clarke 2019, p. 594). In order to find the balance between objectivity and subjectivity, I was inspired by Nick Couldry's idea that "every attempt to speak in one's own name is tied to an obligation to listen to the voices of others and every attempt to describe others must allow them the complexity of voice that one

requires to be acknowledged in oneself” (2000, pp.126–127).

During the interviews, I was conscious of the fact that my research “was not about informants being mined for information” but rather about “seeing the confinements contained in society’s blind field, or hearing the injustice buried by noise or hidden in silence and bringing it into public conversation” (Back et al. 2018, pp.183–184). At the same time, I was aware that the interviews will not reveal some core of the respondents’ experiences because these experiences were “filtered, processed, and already interpreted” by the respondents “in the way they tell them, in what they emphasized, and what they chose not to reveal” (Jackson & Mazzei 2012, p.3). For these reasons, Jackson and Mazzei consider that “data is partial, incomplete and always re-told and re-remembered” (ibid.). The responses could as well have been filtered as the respondents were answering the questions knowing that the information will be used in a study written in the frame of the “Expansion and diversity” project. As the respondents had knowledge about the project and, in some cases, even collaborated previously with the researchers involved in the project (e.g von Rosen 2018a; 2020), I was considering the influence this might have had on their answers during the interview situation when I was representing the project, or rather, representing the authority and the recognition the project has in the performing arts field (cf. Marander-Eklund 2011).

I experienced the duality of the researcher’s position of, on one side, asking the respondents to share their experiences and, on the other side, of being aware of the responses being filtered and re-told. Beside the ethical questions that this position implies, the task I assigned myself and practised during the interviews was the “active listening” which “challenges the listener's preconceptions and position while at the same time it engages critically with the content of what is being said and heard” (Back 2007: 23). Retrospectively, after listening to and watching again the recordings, I could notice that the last part of the task was not always achieved, as I enjoyed the conversations with my respondents, sometimes I was taking their side and therefore I had difficulties in being critical towards the content of the interviews. As I knew that “value positions and side-taking are always present in research” and my aim was not to eliminate them but rather to acknowledge them, I made them explicit for myself and for the reader (Johnson et al 2004: 241). At the same time, as a researcher, I made the commitment to “interpret accounts with as much sensitivity as I can muster” (ibid.) and therefore I used the process of transcribing the recorded material as a method of distancing myself from the data in order to be able to analyse it.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

To conclude this chapter, I want to stress the importance of using multiple data for this thesis: interviews, archive material and local newspaper articles. At the same time, I want to be clear that it was not a triangulation method that I used in this thesis; by triangulation understanding the validation of the information provided by the respondents during the interviews regarding their experiences with the information found in the archive and in the newspaper articles (cf. Richardson 2018, p.822). My purpose was not to confront the information provided by different

sources in order to find a general truth about the artists' living and working conditions. Instead, my idea was to allow the differences in the data to coexist and to use the material in order to learn as much as possible about a theme, a time period, a person, a group, a debate or a situation.

I also consider that it is interesting, from a researcher's perspective, to have access to archives and old newspaper articles which allow me to hear the voices of the interviewed artists when they were young. Therefore, mixing the material and, implicitly, comparing the past and present voices of the artists allow me to follow the changes that occur in the respondents' narratives, or to detect the aspects which become norms by being repeated over time, or to observe the way the stories are being told and re-told. Analysing the material together reveals also the complexity of the cultural field and of the connections between different actors involved in the public funding system. It also reveals the complexity of the artists' subjectivity in relation to their experiences and memories which are open to multiple and competing discourses in many realms (Richardson & Adams St. Pierre 2018, pp.818-838). Therefore, the existence of few inconsistencies and differences in the data was something that I expected. My task was to present the particular data with its source and allow these contradictions to exist as part of the research process. The inspiration about presenting the data in this way came from the method used by the researchers when filling in the information about the non-institutional performing arts groups in the database created by the "Expansion and diversity" project.

## 4. Theoretical framework

In order to be able to analyse the material and to understand the connections between the different types of data used in this thesis, I have composed a theoretical framework, which I refer to as a fishing net. I choose this metaphor as a visual tool because it serves two purposes: 1) it clearly marks that the lines of thinking of different theoreticians interconnect in more than just one point and 2) it helps explaining why some of the information provided by the respondents cannot be caught by this particular net thrown over the material.

In this chapter I will present the theories which constitute the threads of the net and the main concepts which have the role of the knots in the net. With the first thread, I explore the concepts of *power* and *freedom* as they were described by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in his articles “The Subject and Power” (1982) and “The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom” (1997). For looking closer at the non-institutional performing arts groups and for understanding the mechanisms which trigger certain differentiation strategies, I use Pierre Bourdieu’s description of the cultural field as it is presented in the book *The field of cultural production* (1993). To complement Bourdieu's view with a recent development within the cultural field under the influence of the neoliberal rationality, I add to this second thread the concepts of *exploitation* and *romantization* of the artists’ working and living conditions as they were expressed by the British sociologist Angela McRobbie in her book *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (2016). With the last thread of the net, I chose to focus on the concept of *precarization*, and especially in its form as *governmental precarization*, defined by Isabell Lorey in her book *State of Insecurity. Government of the Precarious* (2015), and on the concept of *interdependency* as it was described by Judith Butler in her book *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015).

### 4.1 Freedom seen through the lens of power

“[I]f there are relations of power in every social field, this is because there is freedom everywhere.”  
(Foucault 1997, p.292)

There are several reasons why I choose to use the concept of *power* in constructing my theoretical fishing net. The first reason derives from the specificity of the disciplinary field I subscribe my thesis to, namely the cultural studies, which addresses the links between culture and power as a central issue (Couldry 2000, p.4). The second reason is that the ideas regarding power, as they were crystallized by Foucault in his late works, allow a “cross-disciplinary approach” to the material I am studying (Laustsen et al. 2017, p.73). The third reason is the fact that the effects of power can be detected at different levels, from the individual level (in the form of self-government) to an entire population (in the form of biopolitics); this is helpful in my study as it allows me to shift and alternate the perspectives: from the micro-level of personal troubles to the macro-level of public issues. The last reason that I will mention here concerns the implication of connecting *power* with another concept, *freedom*, which adds a dynamic of



the analysis when thinking at the material with both concepts simultaneously. Connecting these concepts is also important in understanding the tension between having artistic freedom and depending on public funds for their artistic productions as the *free* groups were managing.

Foucault was not concerned with formulating a theory of power but rather suggested that *power* can be seen as a “toolkit”, an “instrument” to be used by researchers when reflecting upon the empirical material (Foucault 1980, p.145). Therefore, my focus for now is to delimit and clearly tune my instrument, or – to use the metaphor from the introduction – to define the thread and to mark the knots. When Foucault refers to power, he means exclusively *power relations*. He describes these relations as existing at different levels, as taking different forms, as not being fixed, being thus “mobile, reversible and unstable” (Foucault 1997, p.292). But the most important aspect is that the power relations are possible “only insofar as the subjects are free”, as none of them is completely at the other’s disposal, and there is “at least a certain degree of freedom on both sides” (ibid.). By free subjects, Foucault appoints to “individual or collective subjects who are faced with a *field of possibilities* in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized” (Foucault 1982, p.790, my italics). I point to the expression field of possibilities because it will be used later in the analysis to detect the effects of power on the non-institutional performing arts groups as I will investigate how their possibilities to work, live and perform are changing.

The fact that the power relations exist only between free subjects, being thus understood as “strategic games between liberties” (Foucault 1997, p.299), would imply that the subjects are occupying equal positions in this game. On the contrary, states of domination – economic, social, institutional, sexual etcetera – do exist and (this domination is usually misinterpreted as power) and “[i]n a great many cases, power relations are fixed in such a way that they are perpetually asymmetrical and allow an extremely limited margin of freedom” (Foucault 1997, p.292). At the same time, even considering the circumstances of extremely extended possibilities of freedom, there is still not the case of an essential freedom. What Foucault stresses about the power relation is the “agonism” that characterizes the relationship which is “at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle, less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation” (Foucault 1982, p.790).

The definition Foucault gives to the power relation is “a relation in which one person tries to control the conduct of the other” (Foucault 1997, p.292). He motivates that the duality of the word “conduct” – which in French has a double meaning: 1) “to lead” others or “to drive”, and 2) “to behave” or “to conduct oneself” – “is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations” (Foucault 1982, p.789). Using the term power relation in its duality is useful for my research both in detecting the relations between the national instances, the local authorities and the non-institutional performing arts groups and in observing the effects of power at the individual level. Following the ethnographic methodology, I focus first on this later manifestation of power, which Foucault refers to as *capillary power* and defines it as “the point where power reaches into the very grain of the individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (1980, p.39). Capillary power has an extremely effective way of implementing modes of conduct in the cultural producers as “it unleashes certain words and phrases”, it

circulates through different organizations and institutions, and it has the ability to “anticipat[e] opposition and even revolt which can, in turn, if interesting enough, be cynically plundered for insight and innovation for use by corporate culture” (McRobbie 2016, p.85). This is the reason for my focus in studying the personal troubles of non-institutional performing arts groups’ members and the way capillary power manifests, for example during the interviews or in the archived applications for public grants, which can lead to public issues when I manage to trace its way back through the organizations and institutions.

In working with the concept of power, the main purpose is not to locate the origin of power but rather to study the functions and the *effects of power*. According to Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa A. Mazzei’s reading of Foucault, power is “a repetitious and self-producing effect of mobile, strategic practices and relations within particular social networks” and therefore observing the manifestations of these *practices* – “where they arose, how they took shape, and their social effects (not their implicit meanings)” (2012, p. 59) – can be useful in mapping the power relations. One aspect raised by Jackson and Mazzei, which I consider important in my analysis of the official documents and of the practices of granting public funds for the non-institutional performing arts groups, is the relation between the intentions expressed there and the effects generated by those documents, respectively practices: “[w]hile practices may be planned and coordinated with aims and objectives, the overall effect may exceed any intention of the subject” (Jackson & Mazzei 2012, p.57). Consequently, the practices are not relevant for their “truth value or inherent meaning, but for the ways in which they disrupt or sustain relations of power” (ibid.).

Beside following the effects of power, another prolific strategy for using the concept of power as an analytical tool is to detect the forms of *resistance* against different forms of power. This idea was suggested by Foucault as an empirical way to establish the relation between theory and practice (1982, p.780). The examples of forms of resistance vary in range and intensity – “violence resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation” etc. – but the essential part is that the power relations are conditioned by the existence of possibility of resistance (Foucault 1997, p.292). Resistance, as a concept, is supposed to work as “a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used” (Foucault 1982, p.780).

The last concept I want to draw attention to, aligned with Foucault’s line of thinking about power, is *knowledge*. Although I do not regard this concept as an active component in my theoretical net, knowledge has its place here as a magnifying instrument used for reflecting upon the entire process of studying local non-institutional performing arts groups. The most important connection between power and knowledge is the fact that power is strong because it produces effects at the level of knowledge (Foucault 1980, p.59). Jackson and Mazzei point out that knowledge is “an activity that produces subjects and ways in which they interact within and against their social and material worlds” (2012, p.60). Foucault has been interested in what he named *subjugated knowledges*: “a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate”, “naive knowledges”, “local popular knowledges”, “historical contents that have been buried and disguised” (1980, pp.81-83). I consider that, to a substantial degree, the material which underlies the “Expansion and diversity” project is based on subjugated

knowledges.

## 4.2 Particularities of the field of cultural production

In his book from 1993, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu develops a theory regarding the *field of cultural production*. His theory implies that an analysis of artistic works should also include the social conditions of their production, circulation, and consumption (Bourdieu 1993, p.140). In the editor's introduction to the mentioned book, called *Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture*, Randal Johnson designates Bourdieu's "extremely demanding analytical method" as a "radical contextualization". According to Johnson, Bourdieu's theory takes into consideration: the analysis of the artistic work in a historical context; the producers of artistic works (e.g. writers, artists) in terms of their individualities, their strategies and their trajectories; the positions occupied within the field by the producers; the positions occupied by all the instances of consecration and legitimation (the public, publishers, critics, galleries, academies etc.) and the position of the cultural field within the broader field of power (1993, p.9). Considering that my research does not concern the analysis of a specific artistic production but rather the living and working conditions of the cultural producers involved with non-institutional performing arts, the context in which they developed certain productions and their relation with other instances of the field (institutions, public, critics etc.), I consider Bourdieu's theory useful precisely because it focuses on those aspects listed above. However, due to the complexity of the theory, I will concentrate only on those concepts which can illustrate the mechanisms of the performing arts field that, at their turn, can help me to expose the frictions within the field.

According to Bourdieu, the cultural field works like an "economic world reversed" based on the *heteronomous* and the *autonomous* principle of hierarchization which are in a constant struggle. At one side is the autonomous principle which implies that the field is governed only by its internal rules (like in the expression "art for the art's sake"), while at the other side is the heteronomous principle which implies that the cultural field is only governed by the laws of the market. There are also all the other possible positions in between these extremes. The corresponding positions for these two principles at their opposite poles would be the sub-field of the producers for producers (in this case the only audience aimed at is other cultural producers), respectively producers of large-scale cultural productions. In order to exemplify how the economical rules are reversed in the cultural field, the criteria governing the "most perfectly autonomous sector of the field of cultural production" – the sub-field of the producers for producers – are stated by Bourdieu as it follows:

[T]he economy of practices is based, as in a generalized game of 'loser wins', on a systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all ordinary economies: that of business (it excludes the pursuit of profit and does not guarantee any sort of correspondence between investments and monetary gains), that of power (it condemns honours and temporal greatness), and even that of institutional cultural authority (the absence of any academic training or consecration may be considered a virtue). (1993, p.39)

The disinterest in any economic profit, which seems to be an ideal for the producers in the cultural field, is based on those “inventions of Romanticism” which consists of “the representation of culture as a kind of superior reality, irreducible to the vulgar demands of economics, and the ideology of free, disinterested 'creation' founded on the spontaneity of innate inspiration” (Bourdieu 1993, p.114). Although having its origins in Romanticism, these disinterested attitudes toward financial matters are not just reactions to the explicit or diffuse “pressures of an anonymous market” but they are also meant to “distinguish the artist from other commoners” by placing the unique creations of the artist against “interchangeable products, utterly and completely reducible to their commodity value” (ibid.). Bourdieu claims that these refusals of the commercial alongside with “the most anti-economic behaviours” do have a specific form of economic rationality behind and that is the accumulation of *symbolic capital*. This form of capital is to be understood as “economic or political capital that is disavowed”, therefore “a 'credit' which, under certain conditions, and always on the long run, guaranties 'economic' profits” (ibid., p.75). The important part to be kept in mind here, related to the current thesis, is that the symbolic capital needs certain conditions and a long time in order to be converted into economic profit; these conditions in relation to time are to be examined in the analysis chapter.

The symbolic capital that cultural producers can accumulate is prestige, recognition, authority, and the way to achieve this consists in “making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name, a capital of consecration” (Bourdieu 1993, p.75). This process is rather complicated as it implies a differentiation from other cultural producers, as well as a struggle for recognition of the non-institutional performing arts group for example, by the public, the critics, the authorities etc. (ibid., p.106). Bourdieu stresses the idea of competition for control of the interests or the resources of the cultural field as a characteristic feature which gives dynamic to the field. He does that by presenting, in opposition, the different possible positions to be occupied within the field, for example: consecrated artist versus newcomers, artistic mediators – critics, theatre directors – versus cultural producers, the “genuine art” versus “commercial art” (ibid., p.82), “bourgeois theatre” in contrast with “avant-garde theatre” (ibid., p.84) etc. By following Bourdieu’s line of thinking and placing the competition factor as an essential mechanism in the cultural field, the structures, the hierarchies and the inequalities created within the field are efficiently made visible (Hoogland 2005, p.27). However, as these inequalities are not necessarily manifested in a confrontational way within the cultural field, I am considering avoiding presenting the frictions and the tensions from the field in a polarized way. Consequently, I will connect other concepts belonging to other threads in order to illustrate the field’s complexity, for example the concept of *interdependency* which will be developed in the last section of the theory chapter.

A last important aspect to be mentioned is that Bourdieu connects the field of cultural production to the field of power – which I connect to Foucault's ideas of power relations – by claiming that “the artistic field is contained within the field of power, while possessing a relative autonomy with respect to it, especially as regard its economic and political principles of hierarchization” (1993, p.37). Precisely this variation of autonomy in relation to the economic and political factors and the way this relative autonomy – referred to in this thesis as freedom

– was perceived by the people interviewed makes one of the subjects of this present study.

### 4.2.1 Recent developments

Bourdieu's theory about the cultural field is a base for explaining several mechanisms specific for the cultural field. Since the cultural field has developed under the influence of the neoliberal rationality during the last thirty decades and as, I suppose, these developments influence the way the respondents tell their story by giving meaning to the past from the point of view of the present (Richardson 1990, p.126), I need a couple of complementary theories and thoughts which bring another light on the data from the nowadays perspective. In this sense, I use two articles concerning the working conditions of cultural producers "Everyone is creative: artists as new economy pioneers?" (McRobbie 2001), respectively "Governmentality and Self-Precarization. On the normalization of cultural producers" (Lorey 2006) and McRobbie's book *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (2016) which explores the same topic. Partly, these can be considered previous international research studies regarding cultural producers as I mentioned earlier (see Previous research) but their main purpose for which I use them here is their theoretical contribution as they are aiming to draw connections between the field of cultural production and the field of cultural studies.

According to Lorey, the term *cultural producers* used in her article does not concern only the artists; it is re-conceptualised to refer to "the practice of travelling across a variety of things: theory production, design, political and cultural self-organization, forms of collaboration, paid and unpaid jobs, informal and formal economies, temporary alliances, project related working and living" (2006, note 1, online version). This is an important twist in using the term as it is extending to other working areas than just artistic activity. This is stressed also by McRobbie when referring to the fact that "the new patterns of freelance work and self-employment associated with being an artist has become a model for how economic growth is to be pursued" (2001).

Lorey describes the parameters of the cultural producers during the 2000s as pursuing temporary jobs, living from projects and "pursue contract work from several clients at the same time, one right after the other, usually without sick pay, paid vacations, or unemployment compensation, and without any job security, thus with no or only minimal social protection" (2006, p.132). Another common characteristic of the cultural producers' working conditions is that there are no limits between work and leisure so that the non-paid time and voluntary work are part of the working experience. At the same time, the "necessity of pursuing other, less creative, precarious jobs in order to finance one's own cultural production is accepted" (ibid., p.133). The basic problem of this situation is that the cultural producers are being *exploited* easily in the neoliberal context because "they seem to bear their living and working conditions eternally due to the belief in their own freedom and autonomy, due to self-realization fantasies" (ibid.). McRobbie also draws attention to the "impossible degrees of enthusiasm and willingness to self-exploit" (2001) that the cultural producers engage themselves in, in the name of self-realization through creative work. Apparently, the appealing part for the state for encouraging this project-based pattern of creative work in a competitive neoliberal context –

which is characterised by the withdrawing of the social support for the cultural producers and thus reinforcing their insecurity – is the establishing of ideal conditions for the state or the companies to use cultural workforce without having to actually employ the cultural producers. McRobbie highlights also the fact that the freelancers, part-timers, short-termers, and contract workers who are preoccupied in finding the next artistic project and forced to compete in this “ferocious economy” are having less time for thinking at their actual artistic work which is thus prejudiced (2001).

In her book published in 2016, McRobbie develops the main ideas drafted in the mentioned article by adding: a historical perspective; references to previous studies and interviews with different cultural producers mainly from the fashion industry, but not exclusively; a critique towards the “economization” of creativity and the support for this process from the educational system. She manages to critically assess the situation of the young, mainly female, cultural producers in UK. The first main point I focus on in my reading of McRobbie's book (2016) in relation to the cultural producers is the *romanticized* idea about work inspired from the “typical artist's life”. Taking in consideration that “work has become an important source for self-actualization, even freedom and independence” (ibid., p.19) – especially “passionate work” or “working like an artist” which sets an “expectation of happiness at work” (ibid., p.36) –, the ground for this romantic view is “the desire to escape a lifetime of routine work” and “the wish to lead a self-directed life with regard to work and career” (ibid., p.38). Having in mind Bourdieu's ideas regarding the disinterested attitudes of the artists toward financial gains which have their origin in Romanticism (1993, p.114), McRobbie continues this reasoning and affirms that the working rhythm of the artists provides “a model for how various jobs and careers shape up in the neoliberal era” (2016, p.70). She describes the “typical artist” as: “historically associated with sporadic or minimal earnings, with a poverty-line existence”, “with unpredictable 'human resources'” upon which the artist must draw; being “typically self-employed” and still, even nowadays, being under a “romantic ethos that surrounds their working lives” (ibid.). The typically precarious working conditions of the artists are fading away under the promise of creative and passionate work which reveals one's inner talent and gives the possibility of working independently. Consequently, there are major implications on different levels of this way of thinking in terms of creative work which I will summarize below.

First, according to McRobbie, creativity is used in the educational and labour reforms in UK as a way to “acclimatize” a key sector of the youthful population to “a different kind of existence from that associated with routine work” and implicitly more insecure by promoting a working life which implies “competition and labour discipline” (2016, pp.36-38). Secondly, the desire of self-expression at work “is nurtured as well as managed by the prevailing governmental discourse of business, entrepreneurship and self-organized work” across the cultural field and this entanglement creates difficulties for the labour struggle outside the conventional workplace (ibid., p.38). Thirdly, the ideas of creativity used as a governing instrument “compensate for and, to an extent obscure the shrinking realm of protection along with welfare and various entitlements” (ibid., p.45) by reducing the costs of the state or of the employer for the freelance cultural producers and making them the only responsible for their unemployment. Finally, the imperative of creativity and passionate work have an impact on the

subject formation by setting the norms under which the cultural producers have to present themselves in the competitive cultural field: “the cheerful, upbeat, passionate, entrepreneurial person who is constantly vigilant in regard to opportunities for projects or contracts must display a persona that mobilizes the need to be at all times one’s own press and publicity agent” and this results in “a flattening and homogenization of personhood” (ibid., p.74).

The social effect of the implications mentioned above along with the “emerging inequalities are swept aside” (McRobbie 2001) by the romanticized idea of working like an artist promoted under the creativity umbrella. Beside the inequalities based on gender and age, McRobbie points out to other types of inequalities which are overlooked, those based on location and personality. Those cultural producers not living in metropolitan centres do not have the same opportunities as the inhabitants of such metropolises; these centres are vital for the cultural producers because there they are supposed to maintain a network of relations which, at least theoretically, is providing them with working projects (McRobbie 2001). Those who do not have the confidence and the personality required for the constant self-presentation and self-promoting are also disadvantaged (McRobbie 2016, p.74).

### **4.3 Governmental precarization in the process of normalization**

“I am trying to underscore just how difficult it is to struggle for social and political forms that are committed to fostering a sustainable interdependency on egalitarian terms.”

(Butler 2015, p.120)

For the last thread of my theoretical fishing net, I will focus on the concepts: *governmental precarization* and *interdependency*. The concepts are presented together because they can be explained in relation to each other. Lorey (2015) builds her theory regarding *precarization* by starting from the references to the theory of the *precariousness* and *precarity* presented initially by Butler (2009, p.21) while Butler asserts that precarity exposes our interdependency (2015, p.119). This presentation of the concepts facilitates the understanding of their meaning, but it does not imply that the concepts will be used together in the analysis of the empirical material. I find it interesting, from an academic point of view, to study the points – the knots – where, for example, concepts of *power relations*, *freedom* and *interdependency* intersect. Additionally, the concepts of *governmentality*, *insecurity* and *normalization* will be clarified in the process of explaining the main concepts named above.

First, I want to make clear the definitions of the terms: *precariousness*, *precarity* and *precarization*. According to Butler “everyone is precarious” (2015, p.118) because “precariousness implies living socially” so that “one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other” and she exemplifies this by referring to an infant’s survival as dependent on “a social network of hands” (2009, p.14). Lorey subscribes to this reasoning and also stresses the social aspect of *precariousness* which “designates something that is essentially shared, an endangerment of bodies that is ineluctable and hence not to be secured, not only because they are mortal, but specifically because they are social” (2015, p.12).

On the other hand, *precarity* characterizes the “politically induced condition in which

certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death” (Butler 2009, p.25). Butler considers that, for example, “no one person suffers a lack of shelter without there being a social failure to organize shelter in such a way that it is accessible to each and every person” (ibid., p.20). She concludes by stating that “in some of our most vulnerable experiences of social and economic deprivation, what is revealed is not only our precariousness as individual persons – though that may well be revealed – but also the failures and inequalities of socioeconomic and political institutions” (ibid.). Instead of acknowledging this, within the neoliberal logic, precarity is seen as the individual's failure to make the right choices to not become homeless and therefore, the individual is the only one made responsible for being homeless. According to Lorey, precarity has yet another dimension: hierarchization in relation to inequality as precarity is “to be understood as a category of order, which designates the effects of different political, social and legal compensations of a general precariousness” (2015, p.12). Still, the term precarity does not imply “modes of subjectivation”, nor “the power of agency” of those positioned in precarity. In order to bring these aspects into discussion and to connect them with governmental actions, Lorey introduces the concept of *governmental precarization*, and she motivated this as it follows:

Understanding precarization as governmental makes it possible to problematize the complex interactions between an instrument of governing and the conditions of economic exploitation and the modes of subjectivation, in their ambivalence between subjugation and self-empowerment. (2015, p.13)

Lorey’s concept is useful for my research because it opens another direction of study, beside the cultural policies and the distribution of public funds as governmental instruments, namely the modes of subjectivation of the cultural producers. Having as a starting point Foucault's concept of *governmentality* Lorey stresses a double ambivalence in the concept of governmental precarization. Before describing further the double ambivalence, I want to clarify Foucault’s concept of governmentality that creates the first ambivalence as it covers “the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other” and “implies also the relationship of the self to the self” (1997, p.300). This corresponds to what Lorey calls “the ambivalence between being governed by others and self-government” (2015, p.4). With the help of governmentality, Foucault “designate[s] the structural entanglement between the government of a state and the techniques of self-government in modern Western societies” (Lorey 2015, p.23). Lorey detects yet another ambivalence in the self-government “between the servile making-governable and refusals that aim to be no longer governed in this way” (2015, p.4). If individuals were to govern themselves only in a servile way which could make them “amenable to social, political and economic steering and regulation” than there would be no possibility for “contradictions, social struggles, and potentials of resistance” (ibid., p.35). Detecting the ambivalence in self-governing opens the possibility of resistance but it does not ease the process of putting it into practice because: 1) “power and domination relationship are not easily perceived, because they frequently appear as sovereign, self-made, free decisions, or as personal insights” (ibid., p.30)



and 2) “precarization in neoliberalism is currently in a process of normalization, which enables governing through insecurity” (ibid., p.11).

In order to apprehend the modes of subjectivation appearing in the empirical material of this study and the way domination relations become invisible in the daily practices, I want to focus for a moment on the *normalization* concept. On the one hand, “subjects are constituted through *norms*” (Butler 2009, p.3). The norms are “archetypes of proper being” that, in a formal or informal disciplinary way through an ensemble of different knowledge forms, technologies and institutions, determine the individuals to reform themselves toward these ideals (Lorey 2006; Spade 2015, p.55). Normalization is not an external process because the subjects are the ones who guarantee it through submissive self-governing where control is internalized and largely invisible. Therefore, normalization is lived through everyday practices that are perceived as self-evident, natural and as a result of free decisions (ibid.). The perception of domination as autonomy has as main effect that “other freedoms are no longer imagined, thus blocking the view of a possible behaviour contesting the hegemonic function of precarization in the context of neoliberal governmentality” (Lorey 2006, p.136). This is the reason why I stated earlier that it is not easy to put into practice resistance. On the other hand, norms are not deterministic because “normative schemes are interrupted by one another” (Butler 2009, p.3) as individuals are challenging or negotiating their subject positions. To summarize, it is important to keep in mind that individuals are both constituted and constitute their own selves, as “subjects locked in a continual process of becoming, within a specific historical and discursive framework” (Laustsen et al. 2017, p.187).

One last idea concerning precarization before moving on to the topic of interdependency, is that “precarization is in the process of normalization” in the sense that “instead of freedom and security, freedom and *insecurity* now form the new couple in neoliberal governmentality” (Lorey 2015, p.64) and thereupon “short-term, insecure, and low-wage jobs, often named 'projects', are becoming normal for the bigger part of society” (Lorey quoted by Puar 2012, p.164). McRobbie captures the essence of Lorey’s concept of precarization at the individual level which is the paradox by which “the subject is promised freedom (to self-actualize) while also being subjugated to this normalization (and privatization) of risk and uncertainty” (McRobbie 2016, p.14). The connection between these developments and the cultural producers is that the cultural producers’ ways of living and working served as examples for normalizing precarization among larger sectors of population. This statement points to the fact that in neoliberalism, even the most dissident alternatives of working and living (supported by feminist, ecological, left-radical movements and even by cultural producers) are capitalized and discursively transformed to serve neoliberal purposes (McRobbie 2016, p.85; Lorey 2006; Boltanski & Chiapello 2005). Therefore, the question of critique is important as the opponents, the cultural producers, are usually defeated with their own weapons, passionate work and the need of freedom, in the game of power.

When it comes to *interdependency*, Butler affirms that “no human creature survives or persists without depending on a sustaining environment, social forms of relationality, and economic forms that presume and structure interdependency” (2015, p. 209). Like in the case of power – when the state of domination is just one of the forms that power can take but which

usually is mistaken as power – interdependency shall not to be defined by just one of its common forms which arise “under conditions of exploitative labour relations with the final or necessary meaning of dependency” (ibid.). It is not possible to “dissociate dependency from aggression once and for all” and there is an “unmanageability of dependency at the level of politics” which through “fear, panic, repulsion, violence, and domination” can lead to exploitative dependency (ibid., p.151). Still, Butler argues that “dependency always takes one social form or another” and “it remains something that can and does transfer among those forms, and so proves to be irreducible to any one of them”; therefore, she makes the claim that we should struggle for an “affirmation of interdependency” (ibid., p.120).

On the other hand, “we cannot presume that interdependency is some beautiful state of coexistence; it is not the same as social harmony” or “a happy or promising notion” (Butler 2015, p.120), and this is because “we rail against those on whom we are most dependent (or those who are most dependent on us)” (ibid., p.151). On the grounds that everyone is “dependent on social relations and enduring infrastructure” in order to live even if that dependency can take a subjugation form under certain conditions, “there is no getting rid” of interdependency (ibid., p.20). To make a reference to Butler's quote from the beginning of this section, the main question is not how to overcome interdependency or precariousness, the main struggle is to create conditions under which people can live in a mutual and equal dependency, “to produce the conditions under which vulnerability and interdependency become livable” (ibid., p.218).

The concept of interdependency serves also as a contra-balance to Bourdieu's strong emphasis on the competition as the main element which gives dynamic to the cultural field. I consider that the term interdependency opens the field for other relational possibilities among the cultural producers, for example collaborations and alliances. I also think that the concept, as it was described by Butler, is useful in understanding certain complex and non-confrontational relations between the cultural producers and other instances without losing the focus on the existent frictions between them.

## 4.4 Summary

The theoretical concepts presented in this chapter are interconnected at different levels. One of the reasons is that there is a continuity in developing new concepts (based on older ones) which can better capture the changes within the cultural field and in society in general. The most relevant example in this sense is the concept of *governmental precarization* which is defined by Lorey and has its fundamentals in the previous concepts: governmentality (Foucault) and precarity (Butler). Another reason for their interconnection is the flexible, reversible and unstable character of several concepts, like *power relations*, *freedom*, *norms*, *interdependency*. I chose these concepts particularly as I was studying different time periods and I needed flexible concepts which change their significance in different socio-historical contexts. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, I chose theories that are both applicable for theatre studies (e.g. *cultural field*), cultural studies (e.g. *governmental precarization*, *power*), sociology and work science (e.g. *precarity*, *insecurity*).

## 5. Analysis and results

“We have to blame ourselves for our existence. No one has asked us to start our theatre. At the same time, there is not a single municipality in this country that could realize its cultural plan if we did not exist.” (Ethel Andersson from Lilla Teatern, GP, 1989/11/11)

This chapter contains my analysis of the research material and the results of this analysis seen through the specific theoretical fishing net that I constructed to help me understand and interpret the living and working conditions of early non-institutional performing arts groups from Gothenburg. In the presentation of the analysis and the results of this study, I also answer the research's questions and therefore, as I mentioned in the introductory chapter, each sub-chapter of this substantial part of the thesis is correlated to one research question.

### 5.1 Freedom and interdependency

*A rainy Sunday afternoon in mid-February 2020. It is just before twilight and the weather is cold and gloomy. I arrive early at Ateljé 303, Konstepidemin – an artists' cluster in Gothenburg – for an event: a meeting with performing artists who worked within the physical theatre tradition under many decades in Gothenburg<sup>5</sup>. I was invited by Fia Adler Sandblad<sup>6</sup>, who I met only a few days earlier through the “Expansive and diversity” project, and who has been in touch with physical theatre practitioners for some years. This event was part of her research.*

*The door is still locked. A small sign on the door says: “Do not disturb! Repetition in progress”. There is light inside and I can hear people discussing and laughing loudly in there.*

*When the door is finally opened so that we, the audience, can go in, the warmth of the air is striking me. In an approximately 20 m<sup>2</sup> room I can count 19 people who are talking, greeting each other, hugging, taking a coffee or hanging pictures on the walls. All around the walls there are names of different groups along with the year when they were founded. The artists put pictures from different productions they have done on top of these names. It is a cosy and friendly atmosphere.*

*When the event is starting, everyone, including the people in the audience, is sitting on chairs in a circle, presenting themselves and sharing experiences, thoughts, reflections. I happen to sit between Robert Jakobsson, who I recognize from photos with Eldteatern's performances which I've seen in the newspaper articles from the late 1970s, and Tinna Ingelstam who introduces herself as a member of Teater Kolibri. During an hour and a half, while I am looking and listening to these people, I connect faces and voices to the performing arts groups which were for me just names and pictures from the archive. I take notes...it is so much to write! It is like the archive is suddenly coming to life.*

---

<sup>5</sup> Additional information in Swedish about the event described can be accessed through the following link: <https://konstepidemin.se/kalender/faltet-praktiken-och-pa-dam-del-1-utovarna/> (Accessed 2020/05/28)

<sup>6</sup> Additional information in Swedish about the artists and groups mentioned here can be accessed through the database created by the “Expansion and diversity” project's team: <https://expansion.dh.gu.se/>

*Two phrases that I hear, I underline several times with the pen in my notebook: “We were part of something special!” – said by Fia at the end of her presentation about the reason why we were all there – and “We were actually pioneers!” – said by Rolf Sossna as a conclusion to his thoughts about the free groups he was part of.*

*Those who pursued a pedagogical career, among them Svante Grogarn and Pita Skogsén, express their concern about the psychical well-being of their students. Bronja Novak, who I know is active in “Big Wind” – a music, theatre and dance group from Gothenburg – is talking about the friendly working attitude in the dance community in Gothenburg in comparison with the competitive dancing scene in Stockholm. Tinna Ingelstam mentions that, as a difference from nowadays, in the 1980s, they knew how to live with little money while sharing an apartment in Bersjön<sup>7</sup> and creating performances. When it is Robert Jakobsson's turn to speak he starts walking around in the room while gesticulating and talking loudly and engaged. Everyone starts applauding as it seems that some recognize his way of expressing himself and others (like me) appreciate his engagement. The next person, Michele Collins, starts doing step dance moves instead of talking as a shorter and different reply to Robert's speech. Everyone applauds again.*

*I leave the tiny room with a feeling that I have seen “something special”. Seldom before had these artists met in the same room and had the chance to talk about their past... and become aware of the fact that they were actually pioneers.*

(Observation and field notes, Konstepidemin, 2020/02/16)

The early non-institutional performing arts groups were called the “free groups”. Starting from this point, I will examine in this chapter the way the term was expressed in the national and municipal cultural policies and the groups’ members own understanding of the term. Several implications of the artists’ need for freedom of expression are explored in the last section, where freedom is discussed in relation to cultural policy. While developing the themes of freedom and interdependency, I will implicitly answer the first question of my research: **How did the members of local non-institutional performing arts groups experience freedom in relation to the cultural policy?**

### **5.1.1 The term “free groups” in the official documents**

The appellation “free groups” has not a definition either in the official report about the Swedish cultural life written in 1972 (SOU 1972:66), or in the governmental bill regarding the state cultural policy from 1974 (Prop. 1974:28), or in the municipal cultural program (KUB 69) implemented in 1973. Even if there is a lack of a clear definition of a “free group”, the mentioned documents refer to these groups as if there was a general understanding of what the free groups are and a common knowledge about their existence. This is because by the time when these documents were formulated the existence of the free groups was already a fact, as

---

<sup>7</sup> Bergsjön is a district in eastern Gothenburg.

this extract from the municipal cultural policy states: “during the last decade, on the cultural workers’ own initiative, a number of alternative movements have emerged – for example theatre and music groups [...] – which have had a significant innovative social and artistic significance” (KUB 69, p. 39). The missing definition can be explained by the fact that these policies come to support, organize or regulate an established and known existing phenomenon – existing for a decade before the conception of these documents – which was the beginning of the expansion period in the 1960s.

In the municipal cultural program, the groups are referred to as “free groups of different kinds”, “free theatre and music groups”, “non-institutional groups” and even as “free theatres” (KUB 69). The term “free theatres” is explained as those theatres “who do not regularly benefit from state support” (KUB 69, *Appendix C*). Their freedom is expressed here in terms of lacking continuous support from the state (the municipality's support is not mentioned). The state's support can be understood as financial although it is not explicit. Even without a definition, there are few local performing arts groups mentioned in the document, for example, the two groups consulted before formulating the goals of this municipal cultural program: Teater Fem and Göteborgs Teaterverkstad. Considering Michel Foucault's connection between *power* and *knowledge*, it can be said that lacking a deeper knowledge about the number, the activity and the needs of the local groups is reflected in the way Gothenburg's Cultural Policy Delegation, in the first years of implementing the municipal cultural program (between 1977 and 1980), repeatedly rejects certain applications for public grants. Often rejected were the applications for buying or repairing touring buses although the groups’ well appreciated touring ability is dependent on having a properly functioning bus in order to reach different and new audiences.

The description of the groups in the national cultural report from 1972 is more elaborated, with separate sections depicting the free theatre groups, dance groups (especially those groups doing dance as leisure) and the music groups (jazz groups, pop groups or folk groups). The national report is underlining the increasing number of free groups (theatre groups in particular), their flexible way of working and the importance of “free collective creation” done by these “professionally oriented free groups” in renewing the Swedish cultural life during the 1960s “despite the members’ insecure economic and social conditions and despite lacking often the production resources” (SOU 1972:66, p.366). These groups are presented in opposition to the institutions: they are praised for their “unpretentious forms of work”, for their interest in and ability for touring, for the topics approached and for contributing to the fact that many voices can be heard, that the public debate is broadened and that the risks of a one-sided cultural offer are reduced in regions with only one dominant cultural institution (SOU 1972:66, pp.365-368). The intention expressed in the report is to maintain the “freedom, openness and agility of the groups and, at the same time, give their members better working conditions and safer employment forms” (ibid.). But with the proposals comes the paradox because the main proposal is to connect the groups to the institutions and implicitly to institutions' resources [institutionsanknytningen] which is expected to become the common working form for the groups (SOU 1972:66, p.367). The fact that these groups were formed as an opposition to the institutions is ignored with this proposal and, as Rikard Hoogland observed, there is a “desire to discipline a politically and artistically challenging current” – the free groups movement – by

encouraging it to adapt to the institutional theatre form (2005, p.9). As Jackson and Mazzei write when reasoning about the effects of power, that the overall effects of power may exceed any initial intention (2012, p.57), I consider that the good intentions of maintaining the groups' freedom while, simultaneously, finding a way to finance their activity, are exceeded by a proposal which ignores precisely the groups' initial need of distancing themselves from the theatre institutions.

Fortunately, in the governmental bill concerning culture that follows the report, the proposal to affiliate the groups to the institutions and their resources is abandoned after receiving substantial critique (Prop.1974:28, p.314). Instead, a centralised form of financing the “smaller ensembles and free groups” [mindre ensembler och fria grupper], consisting of financial support from the state, was preferred (ibid.). The groups' autonomy is considered as important as the improvement of the economic conditions for those who work in such groups (ibid., p.313). One important criterion mentioned in the cultural bill – the only one explicit, while others can be interpreted more as recommendations – for granting a state financial support is the “groups' possibilities to reach culturally disadvantaged sections of the population [kulturellt underförsörjda delar av befolkningen]” (ibid., p.315). Another interesting aspect is the intention of making a clearer demarcation in the future between the professional and non-professional ensembles and groups (ibid., p.314). As a conclusion, even if the idea of affiliating the groups to institutions was abandoned, the desire to discipline and regulate the free groups movement persist, manifested in the intention to delimit the professional from non-professional groups, and in the financial support granted to those groups who reach new and diverse audience.

When it comes to the way the term “free groups” appears in the governmental bill regarding culture from 1996 (Prop.1996/97:3), there are still no definitions of the “free theatre groups” nor of the “free dance groups”. It might be expected that, by the 1990s, an accepted common definition should have been crystallized but, in more than 20 years between the conceptions of the two national cultural policies, the term “free group” had expanded its meaning as the groups themselves developed different understandings of the term. In this bill, the groups are presented in three sections: theatre groups, dance groups and music groups. It is mentioned that the free theatre groups are responsible for “more than half of the total supply of state-supported children's and youth theatre in the country” and “are also artistic alternatives to the theatre institutions” (Prop.1996/97:3, p.71). An interesting aspect in the bill is the reference to “the free dance life”, which is not directly defined, but it is considered an important part of the artistic development within dance. The main role of “the free dance life” is to provide innovation and includes both young and mature dancers and choreographers (ibid., p.77).

In the municipal cultural strategy from 1998, there is no reference to the free groups anymore. Instead, the appellation “the free cultural life” is preferred. Once again there is not a clear definition of what the “free cultural life” means and who is included in it but there is an emphasis on the difference between the strategy concerning the cultural policy and the strategy for the art policy.

### 5.1.2 Respondents description of a “free group”

When raising the question about the term “free group” and asking the respondents to reflect upon the meaning of the term and their experiences related to working in a free group, the descriptions are similar in many respects. A previous attempt to find a common definition for a free group has been done by the Theatre Centre [Teatercentrum] in the beginning of the 2000s, as Rolf Sossna recalls:

[W]hat is a free group? That is not easy to define. A while ago, in the early 2000s, the [Theatre Centre's] chairman went around and interviewed all the groups to hear how they work. It turned out that many had a picture of what a free group would be but many thought that: 'ah, we do not live up to that picture!'... In the end, he concluded that who determines whether you are a free group or not, is yourself. Those who say they are a free group, they are a free group. And then the admission criteria were changed so that everyone who thought they were free groups and who were professionals could become members [in the Theatre Centre]. And, at the same time, the political aspect also disappeared... There was a big change there.

The results of the discussions, between the Theatre Centre's chairman and the groups active in the 2000s, point out the discrepancy between the picture – I would say the ideal – of what a free group should be and the members' possibilities to reach that ideal. Therefore, the way the groups define themselves as free becomes interesting for my research but was less relevant for the Theatre Centre's selection criteria.

As I follow the description done by the respondents of the groups that they were part of, it appears that freedom is expressed in the way the groups worked artistically, in the way decisions were taken and/or in comparison to other groups. There are some common characteristics of a free group mentioned by several respondents and these regard the lack of a leader, the artistic freedom of expression and the creation of productions collectively. In this sense, Åsa Eek Engquist is resuming two of the non-institutional performing arts groups' main common points, the freedom of taking decisions as a group in a non-hierarchical way:

We never felt limited. We knew that we formed our group [Teater UNO] to play mainly youth theatre but we also played for adults and then we also did performances only for adults [...] And because we continued to be a free group without an artistic director or theatre director... So, the freedom was that we had full impact on and influence over everything we did. There was no one above us who decided.

Another way of describing the freedom in a group is by referring to the creative process under which a production is taking form. This process takes time, and it is not related to a previously determined schedule even if decisions to change the schedule can be taken fast. The importance of following the creative process' own rhythm and of deciding over how to use one's own time is essential for Robert Jakobsson and for the way Teater Albatross functions:

We, in this theatre, we work in process – as we call it – and that is the freedom: we work in process! That is something completely different [from how the institutions work]! We do not know when the new play about nature we are working on will be finished this year. [...] We do

not know from one day to another how we do and... We can very quickly decide that now we will play a certain number of performances in two weeks. The institutions decide such things years in advance. For us it was very important to have this human freedom.

Fia Adler Sandblad mentions also that they, in their theatre ADAS musikaliska teater, are also “working in process” and her description of their process complements the idea of what this implies. Even if they emphasize the importance of working in process this does not mean that both artists quoted here are working in the same style:

We often work in steps. First, we work for three weeks to see if we find a good sketch and we don't decide whether it will be a production. And then if we notice that 'here is a nice material! Fun!', we wait a bit, and let it lie and meanwhile we do something else. And then we go back and ask: 'okay, how are we going to take it further?'. You know, you really let it take time. You do not just shoot something out. You let the process take its time.

The feelings of security and *interdependency* (cf. Butler 2015) provided by working in a group whose members were sharing everything equally is underlined by the next respondent. Pita Skogsén highlights that the description of the free group she provides is her ideal image of how a free group should work and this archetype is based on her experience with Eldteatern in the late 1970s. The interdependency she describes at this point in the interview takes a form which resembles rather social harmony. Pita Skogsén adds the importance of personal freedom of expression in a group in connection to the other members with whom the creative possibilities she considered total:

[W]e were really a free group that together decided everything democratically. We shared everything: all food, all wages, all income and everything. [H]ow I think a free group should work?... So, it was the best work, the freest work I ever did because I did exactly what I wanted, and I was completely in tune with two other people. We could create and conquer the world; through us, we could create everything. I was completely safe with these two, Ulf and Robert and our Eldteatern.

Rolf Sossna also stresses the interdependency – the reciprocity, as he calls it – between the members of En Annan Teater in the early 1990s. He describes it as an agreement which implies that “if the members stand up for the theatre, then the theatre supports its members”. Translated in practice, this agreement required the members to work for the theatre while receiving unemployment benefits for the repetition period before a new production and to be paid by the theatre as soon as the production is performed. This is, of course, not the main implication of the reciprocity mentioned, but still an important interdependency regarding non-institutional cultural producers, the group they were part of and the unemployment benefits.

The interdependency is also a result of the collective way of working and living as the group would together create and do everything, according to Pita Skogsén. Gun Lund makes an interesting remark regarding the groups' way of working collectively which she considered was reflected in the names the dance groups had in 1970s-90s: “we were called Rubicon; we were not called Gun's company or so”.



In line with Angela McRobbie's idea that there is a romantic ethos that surrounds the artists working lives (2016, p.70), I can also observe that the responses above contain a certain degree of idealization of the free groups. At the same time, even if the main characteristics of a free group – lack of hierarchies, collective decisions, freedom of artistic expression – were mentioned by all the respondents, in one way or another, they also agreed that not all the free groups worked in the same way. Some of the groups, as Pita Skogsén remembers, had a “very hierarchical system” which was reflected even in the way the wages were distributed or in the fact that the members were “not working particularly well together”. My focus is not in determining the degree of freedom the groups experienced, but rather in assessing if a *romantization* of the free groups is done by the members themselves during the interviews and what role the eventual romantization plays for the respondents. Therefore, I am not denying the frictions between different non-institutional performing arts groups which are part of the dynamic of the cultural field, following Pierre Bourdieu's theory (1993). But I am rather interested in the frictions which could occur within a free group – frictions which can give other nuances to the idealized view of the free group. In this sense, I am noticing Rolf Sossna's comment regarding the fact that deciding everything together in a group is not necessarily an effective way of working:

When we built En Annan Teater [1992], it was important to get the people who worked with us to be members [of the theatre]. It was the members who decided what we would do, what performance we would put up [...]. So, all the decisions – financial, artistic and everything – were made by the group. This could lead to endless discussions, big meetings... There is a contradiction between efficiency and democracy.

There are few remarks of frictions within the group mentioned during the interviews. In accordance with Foucault's idea that “the freer people are with respect to each other, the more they want to control each other's conduct” (1997, p.300), I consider that tensions and contradictions are part of the process of working collectively. Gun Lund gives an insight on working together in the dance group Rubicon, under a longer period, which raises the tendency of limiting the other members' freedom:

[Y]ou asked: ‘how did it feel to be in a free group?’. So... it started well (*she laughs discreetly*) and then it became less and less free. The longer you work together, the more rules you create for each other and so on, so... (*she laughs a bit louder than the first time*). Then you must solve it: you create new freedoms.

By following the way the respondents are describing their free groups in general I do not want to lose the different connotations the term free group received in different time periods. Moreover, I am aware of the fact that the descriptions and the experiences narrated can reflect both the spirit of the 70s, 80s, 90s as well as the nowadays influences (cf. Marander-Eklund 2011). Therefore, additional information about the different social and historical contexts in which these groups were active is necessary.

### 5.1.3 The surges after 1968

One important socio-historical context in Gothenburg, under which more than half of my respondents began their careers in non-institutional performing arts groups, proved to be the mid-1970s. A *turning point* (see Challenges) in Wiveka Warenfalk's life, when she decided to quit her work as an employed actress in the Gothenburg City Theatre in the early 1970s in order to pursue a freelance career, was the starting point of my research regarding the 1970s. I noticed that many respondents had similar descriptions of those times even if none of them shared Wiveka Warenfalk's experience reproduced in the next quote:

[W]hen I started at Gothenburg City Theatre it was '67. Then came '68 and the Paris occupation, the Vietnam War. There were so many such great radical movements in society, and I was a part of it. I thought it was very interesting and I wanted to bring such issues of democracy into the theatre. And... ehm... I cannot say that it was impossible but... Gothenburg City Theatre was still a very large organization.

[...] Kent Andersson, Lennart Hjulström and Bengt Bratt had done a performance called *Flotten* at Gothenburg City Theatre and it was very, very radical. People who had subscriptions to the theatre cancelled their subscriptions. So, the bourgeoisie disappeared a lot from the theatre and a lot of students and especially young intellectuals came in (maybe others as well). A completely different audience came to the theatre. I was involved then in the next thing they did, *Sandlådan* [...]. It was great, but I thought that it was too rare that these things happened, it was too long in between, and there were so many employees at the Gothenburg City Theatre and sometimes you could not choose who to work with, and so on. So, I thought like this: 'I want to explore theatre in my own way'. So that was why I quit. [...] It was 1974.

Wiveka Warenfalk's experience in the Gothenburg City Theatre during that turbulent time, as she characterized it, is summarizing the sort of critique the institution was facing in relation to the public, the performances (which were not in tune with the social movements taking place then) and the whole organization with its hierarchy and role distribution. The same opposition to the theatre institutions was mentioned by other artists who were part of the non-institutional performing arts groups. In comparison with the theatre groups which were protesting against the institutions' way of working, the dance groups' struggle was a double one according to Gun Lund: in the first place, to be able to perform dance outside of an institution and not to be disregarded for that and, secondly, to do the type of dance one wished for. Therefore, in their struggle they were also trying to raise the status of dance as an art form, as Gun Lund recalls it:

Well, when it comes to the free groups, it was, above all, that we were non-institutional back then. So, I think the free theatres saw themselves partly as a protest movement against the institutions' way of working. The dance groups did not do it in the same way because we were not in the institutions at all because, back then, there was only ballet in the institutions. It took a while before... Free dance was called what we did before it was accepted as something that you could look at. So much disregard that we got from those who worked in institutions, we should just leave it, it is not worth talking about. But the thing was, partly to be able to do the dance we wanted but also to be able to do dance in general.

The influence of the social movements from the late 60s, which triggered the groups' search for new forms of expression and new relations with the audience in opposition to the way the theater institutions were working, were not limited only to that period. The reverberations of those movements were mentioned even by artists who formed groups later on (e.g. Eldteatern 1976, Rubicon 1978, Bizarr-teatret 1980). The "times created opportunities" for the groups to form and develop, as Pita Skogsén expressed it. Gun Lund provides also a reason for the emergence of many and different groups: there was "a new spirit in society" which implied that "you could dare things that you previously only dreamed of" like "starting a dance group, for example, or a theatre group, or walk away from the institutions and say: 'we want to decide ourselves!'" She also adds that this new spirit was marked "of course by the surges after '68 and everything that happened with the Vietnam War and the other movements". As Rolf Sossna remembers it, there was also a matter of building a new society:

In May 1977, I moved here in Gothenburg and then moved in Haga<sup>8</sup>. There it was some kind of hippie alternative. We would build a new society. We occupied houses – it was a matter of preventing them from demolishing Haga, which they wanted to do. So, it was very much... a struggle for another society, you could say that directly, collectively all up.

An important aspect in the 1970s that was favourable for the groups was that the living expenses were low, as Pita Skogsén affirms: "we lived on almost nothing", "we lived for the art, to create and that was the driving force; the money was not a driving force". Still, Pita Skogsén admits that "there were many, many tough economic situations" but that "we were young too" and that she considers being young as "an enormous force" which helped them to overcome the financial issues. The costs to produce a performance were also low and they consisted mainly of the groups' members time as they made everything themselves, like the example provided by Rolf Sossna regarding Bizarr-teatret illustrates:

And the theatre did not cost much... a floor and us. We had no major expenses; so, we did everything ourselves, we had no scenographer nor producer nor anything like that but [...] it was really like do-it-yourself, it's called DIY (*we both laugh*). That was what we did, huh? And it was very much a punk attitude indeed: 'no one would come to tell us what to do but we do it ourselves and we do our own thing'. So, the costs were quite low to do a production: the costs were our time and that we had plenty of.

Robert Jakobsson's story regarding his and Ulf Skogsén's experience as youth workers in Hammarkullen<sup>9</sup> in 1976, exemplifies the type of social impact the theatrical exercises they proposed had on the group of 12-15 local young people they worked with during a year:

We noticed that if you did these strong exercises that made people lose their awareness a little and become very tired, then something happened to these people like they talk a lot more honestly afterwards. [...] So when we tried to discuss with the young pupils in Hammarkullen their problems it did not turn out well. They had very big problems; many boys and girls who

---

<sup>8</sup> Haga is a central district in Gothenburg.

<sup>9</sup> Hammarkullen is a suburb located in north-eastern Gothenburg.

were making trouble in different ways, and had a lot of problems, but had a hard time talking about it. But, on the other hand, when we did the strong exercises, then we did not have to ask them, they told everything themselves. When we tried to attract them through smart conversations it was not as effective as when we had some kind of adventure together, in some kind of improvisation. [...] That's how we started with theatre. [...] It was the first thing we did, or among the first things we did in theatre. So, we have a great deal of gratitude to those young people in Hammarkullen.

Even if this experience was before Robert Jakobsson and Ulf Skogsén met Pita Skogsén with whom they later formed Eldteatern, they noticed the theatre's influence on the youth who participated in the ecstasy-exercises as Ulf Skogsén called them. This was probably the type of social impact that the cultural politics was expecting from the non-institutional performing groups to achieve when the groups were encouraged, even financially, to reach “culturally disadvantaged sections of the population” (Prop 1974:28, p.315). The story above shows also the type of interdependency characteristic for the performing arts, expressed in the story by the youths' openness to discuss sensitive issues after doing together an exercise related with performing arts and by the artist's gratitude toward the youths.

The opposition between the local performing arts institutions and the non-institutional performing arts groups is strengthened by their opposite political views. The “free group movement” was driven by the left-wing ideology (Tjäder 1984) while the institutions were dominated by the bourgeois ideology. Some of the respondents refer to their left-wing political views and to their performances as “means of expressing themselves in society in those times of struggle” as Åsa Eek Engquist expressed it. Ulf Wideström mentions that he was member in the communist party – Communist Party Marxist–Leninists (the revolutionaries) [Kommunistiska Partiet Marxist-Leninisterna (revolutionärerna)], abbreviated KPML(r) – until the late '70s where the members were called “the (r)s” [(r)-arna]. He states that “it was that politics that prevailed among most cultural people at that time”. Robert Jakobsson confirms this statement, but he is critical towards “the (r)s” as he condemns the “fanaticism” of those who followed “Stalinist or Maoist” ideology:

Liliana Farcas: Do you remember what you were most critical of at the time?

Robert Jakobsson: Yes, yes, it was very much... The whole cultural life was completely dominated by people who had extremely strict ideas. Among other things – it was not the worst thing but – they considered that homosexuals were sick; they could be part of the revolution but then they were not allowed to live as homosexuals [...]. It was like a sect and, in some idiotic way, theatres and cultural people in Gothenburg agreed to this like sheep, like a lot of obedient dogs following the leaders. It was silly and idiotic...

The point is that, even with an apparently political consensus when it comes to the free groups movement there were different opinions among the groups and these differences tend to fade away when the term free group is used. Beside the different political views, the groups also adopted different forms of artistic expression, different genres; they experimented in order to find their own way. At the same time, the general aspects that the groups had in common – their opposition to the institutions, having low costs for living and for creating productions, touring

and willing to meet and influence new audiences and that most of them were driven by a left-wing ideology, make them perfect instruments for reaching the cultural politics' objectives.

Considering Wiveka Warenfalk's story, described in the beginning of this section, from a *power relation* and *domination* perspective (Foucault 1982; 1997), it can be said that the state of domination of the bourgeois values in the Gothenburg City Theatre was challenged by the work of the group-theatre active there. The situation in the theatre was not reversed as the institution kept functioning under the same conditions (Tjäder 1984) although inevitably influenced by the group's activity. But what the groups managed to do was to have a dominant position in the cultural field outside the institutions in the 1970s. Therefore, the free groups movement is important for understanding the empowering feeling one gets by identifying with a movement that managed to destabilize a previous state of domination in the cultural field.

#### 5.1.4 Freedom in relation to the cultural politics

As a first reaction to the question about the relation between freedom and the eventual restrictions or adjustments necessary in order to receive public grants, several respondents are making statements which deny the influence of the public funding system on their work. Åsa Eek Engquist argues that they “never felt” they had to “adapt” their repertoire in order to receive public grants but rather that they decided what they wanted to do, applied for it and received funds for that. Ulf Wideström, Wiveka Warenfalk and Robert Jakobsson are also stressing the fact that the financial aspects were not the driving forces in their artistic work. During the interviews I was surprised by their fast reactions and responses and by the fact that Ulf Wideström thought about the subject since receiving my questions via e-mail.

Liliana Farcas: Were there some terms for receiving a grant?

Ulf Wideström: No, we set our own terms. [...] I remember (*he laughs*), one of your questions that I remember – I mentioned it to Wiveka [Warenfalk] – if our theater [Teaterkompaniet] made some kind of adjustment to get a grant. No, we did not adjust a single second. [...] We were just happy that we were appreciated and that we got money. We did not experience anything at all as if there were any demands or wishes or anything from the authorities, but we just got the money and we were happy about it. The control was zero.

\*

Liliana Farcas: And if we go into the subject of public funding system... (*I do not have the chance to ask the question*)

Wiveka Warenfalk: I can honestly say that it has never affected me. Never, actually! We have done what we wanted and that does not mean that... [...] We had to clean up ourselves and there were very late nights when we were on tours, we came home and unload the car and... Very heavy work in between, very heavy! We had to go far away and build the stage and then play and then pack up and come back. Well, that was heavy! But in terms of content, there were absolutely no... No, there was nothing that stopped me. Money. Never did.

\*

Liliana Farcas: With Teater Albatross, when you started it in Gothenburg [1984], you applied for a project grant or how did...? (*I do not have the chance to ask the question*)

Robert Jakobsson: Ha, ha, ha, ha! Dear you, our whole attitude was so... In the first place, I have never started from money [...] It was not the case that we made our plays in order to get money, rather we made the plays and because they were good, we got money for it. Making art independent of money has always been a motor. Although we needed money.

Taking into consideration Bourdieu's theory about the cultural field which is based on the inversion of the fundamental economic principles and by which, in its ideal form, the cultural producers reject the pursuit of profit, of power and even of education from an institutional cultural authority (1993, p.39), the responses above illustrate the respondents' disinterest in economic profit. This anti-economical attitude is one of the cultural field's specific mechanisms for the most autonomous sector of the cultural production which is the sub-field of productions-for-producers or the “art for the art's sake” (ibid.). Robert Jakobsson mentions even the fact that he did not pursue any theater education in a traditional performing arts school while Pita Skogsén confirms that, in their work as Eldteater, they had the ambition to always search their “own path and gain the needed knowledge along the way”. This is also in accordance with the ideal mentioned above about rejecting traditional educational forms. Following Bourdieu's reasoning – beside the fact that this positioning against the financial benefits of the creative work provides a *romanticized* idea about the artist (McRobbie 2016) – this attitude also is a way to distinguish the artist from other commoners (Bourdieu 1993, p.114).

At the same time, I am not contesting that the respondents wanted to make their position towards the financial aspects clear from the start of the interview. However, I noticed that during the interview, by approaching related subjects or giving examples or describing personal experiences, the same respondents that had first described themselves as completely independent later brought to light a nuanced and diverse, sometimes even contradictory, picture about the groups' relation to freedom, artistic expression and cultural politics. An example of this is Wiveka Warenfalk's reflection about Teaterkompaniet's ending where she is stressing the importance of regular financial resources and recognition for maintaining a group:

We worked for 7 years but then it [Teaterkompaniet] split in different ways: someone got a job; someone didn't want to continue; it simply got worn out. So, it's important to get this through the interview that because there is so little money, Teaterkompaniet, which was perhaps undervalued even if it really had seeds (not just seeds but it built up something), could not continue because it is not possible to live as a poor student a whole life. It's not possible.

Another aspect which I consider worth discussing is the way steering can be recognized as such when it is not in contradiction with the groups' preoccupations. My reasoning about this topic was activated by two of Ulf Wideström's statements: 1) that he did not experience any demands or wishes from the authorities, as quoted above and 2) the work Teaterkompaniet did with the play *Torsken* from 1986 based on interviews with prostitutes in collaboration with the Prostitution group affiliated to the Social Services Department [Socialförvaltningen] where “it

was a purely political message” that he considers they came up with:

It happened that the Social Services Department approached us and asked us if we wanted to do a show about prostitution. They offered to finance it, we got money, I wrote a budget for that production and so, we got that money from the Social Services Department to do that production which is one of the best we have done.

The fact that the interest of the Social Services Department went hand in hand with the interest of the group for social issues (Teaterkompaniet made previously a summer theatre project together with unemployed young people in 1984 called *Bland Syrsor och Myror*) did not mean that there was not at least “a demand or a wish” from the authority involved, especially when the Social Services Department provided the financial means for such a production. In nowadays terms, considering the arm’s length principle (Myndigheten för kulturanalys 2021, p.19), the relation between the group and the Social Services Department would be a problematic one, but at that point in time, was considered a collaborative one. And yet again, I am thinking of the groups’ possibilities of critique within the frame of such collaborations.

One of the topics which I consider important to be discussed while analysing the influence of the cultural politics upon the non-institutional performing arts groups is the artists’ self-censorship. The self-censorship is seen differently by the respondents. Robert Jakobsson considers it as something universal, something which should not be too extreme, a general consideration towards the audience. In the case of Rolf Sossna, the self-censorship is perceived as “a great danger” as “you start doing things because you think that someone else wants it to be in a particular way” like “a company that does market research and asks the public what they want and do exactly that”. Rolf Sossna considers that artistic productions should reflect something that is important for the artist to tell or something that the artist wants to investigate.

Nasrin Barati disclosed another reason behind the self-censorship, which is the need to sell the productions: “[a]nd very often when I’m done with all the ideas and so on, then I start censoring myself. Here no one censors you, not visibly, but you, as an artist, do it only to be able to sell. If one was not dependent on money, then one...”. She also tells me that it has happened before that she made productions which were not successful because the audience was not able to understand the artistic language she was proposing. Of course, Nasrin Barati’s explanation stresses, on one hand, the basic *interdependency* of the performing arts, as a form of art, between the artists and the audience and, on the other hand, the inner conflict of the cultural producer who is, at the same time, creator and promoter. In his theory about the cultural field, Bourdieu describes the relation between the artists and the artistic mediators – publishers, theatre managers, art dealers who exercise explicit or diffuse pressure upon the artists by reminding them of the sales figures – as a conflictual one (1993, p.114). In the case of the non-institutional performing arts groups, the members were, right from the beginning, at the same time, artists and artistic mediators, besides being actors, dancers, puppeteers, musicians, play writers, directors, costume creators, drivers, cleaners, etcetera. Thus, the conflict mentioned by Bourdieu becomes an internal one. Therefore, I connect Rolf Sossna’s and Nasrin Barati’s description of self-censorship with Isabell Lorey’s concept of *self-government* as their understanding of self-censorship depict the ambivalence between making productions which

are driven only by the artistic vision and adjusting the productions to the laws of the market (cf. Lorey 2015, p. 4). It should be also taken into consideration that the means of promoting, selling, advertising cultural productions have changed over the years and thus the inner conflict increased accordingly, becoming a “simultaneity of compulsion and freedom” (Lorey 2006, p.127) especially for those of the respondents who are still active in the performing arts field.

During the interview, Åsa Eek Engquist makes a remark which summarize the *interdependency* between the groups and the cultural politics:

But because we had chosen to form a group ourselves, one could hear sometimes: 'Ah yes, yes, you can blame yourself if you do not have more money, there is no one who has asked you to exist as a group'. But society was, at the same time, dependent for its cultural policy on the free groups' existence...

Even more than 30 years apart, Åsa Eek Engquist's words resemble almost completely to the quote written right in the beginning of this chapter, belonging to Ethel Andersson, member of Lilla Teatern in Gothenburg. The groups' responsibility of caring for themselves in the case of financial difficulties was based on the idea that they had the freedom to form a group, they chose that path and therefore they were the ones to blame in the case of financial failure (even if it was known that the groups were not being able to support themselves without public financing like in the case of the private theatres). But as McRobbie points out “[s]elf-blame where social structures are increasingly illegible or opaque serves the interests of the new capitalism well, ensuring the absence of social critique” (2016, p.23).

Allowing myself to make a jump in time into today's context – as the respondents often did during the interviews – in order to follow the theme of freedom in relation to cultural politics and discuss the changes that occurred, I will refer to Gun Lund's insights into the topic. In alignment with Åsa Eek Engquist's and Ethel Andersson's statements, Gun Lund is also stressing the idea that the groups were formed by their own initiative and free will. But she continues slightly different from them as she makes no clear reference to the *interdependency* between the groups and the cultural politics but rather to the struggle of the group to be seen as “necessary” for the authorities:

But the freedom was that it [the dance group Rubicon] was free from the institution's demands and that no one had asked us to form it. Nobody is asking us today either. The so-called free non-institutional groups, the state has not asked for it, but you have to, so to speak, motivate the state and say: 'It cannot be without them! We are important for this cultural political goal. We can fulfill some of the goals'. But we can never say that we have an absolute right to exist. [...] It's up to some to fight and say: 'we want this, and we want to give society this and we think we are important. Can't you think so too?' (*she laughs*). It's a bit like that, I think.

Gun Lund mentions the fight to prove one's right to existence as a group and the importance of the group for the society. It is not only about what the group wants artistically (this can also depend on the current artistic trends), it is also about working to justify its own existence. The groups' importance is not something taken for granted, not even a relation of *interdependency*, but rather a fight of the group for “recognizability, a public insistence on existing and mattering”



(Butler 2015, p.37). In comparison with how she describes the relation with the Swedish Arts Council in the late 1970s – “we met our case officer [handledare] on an equal level, and we had the feeling that we were jointly interested in promoting art” – nowadays, it seems that what is expected from the cultural producers involves a humble entrepreneurial attitude as Gun Lund puts it: “today we have to find our place in a completely different way. We must be humble. It does not feel good for such an old '68 as I am (*she laughs*) to be humble”. Even if she feels like the cultural producers became tiles in the game, in the battle, between the municipality, the region and the state and they fall between these big institutions, Gun Lund also says: “we do not give up! [...] It's our life so we cross, and we fix, and we arrange; but it could have been a little easier”. Just minutes later during the interview she states that:

If someone wants to remove us completely and say 'no, we are not interested' then we do not have much to say (*she laughs shortly*) more than that: 'we have put our lives on this, can we, at least, end it nicely? You have received things from us that you have chosen to take, can we finish it nicely?' in that case, but... (3 seconds pause) Freedom to create, that is perhaps the most important thing.

I was surprised about this statement, as I was expecting more of a fighting mode than a resignation. First, I was thinking that the giving up reaction to a fictional cut of public grants accepted as an unchangeable fact where nothing else is even demanded – beside the wish to finish it nicely – is based on the fact that, nowadays, the conditions of the non-institutional performing arts groups' existence are constantly foreseen and co-produced in anticipatory obedience” as Lorey described it (2006, pp.132-133). Then I thought of examples of groups and theatres which protested but had to close the activity anyway because they could not continue without the public financial support<sup>10</sup>. Another thought was that Gun Lund is not in the beginning of her career where she must build a *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu 1993) and win prestige and recognition; she is an established artist with decades of artistic activity behind and, therefore, a nice ending of a career would not be a devastating thing which, otherwise can give a fighting motivation. I also thought of the *self-government* concept which involves this constant ambivalence between compulsion and freedom (Lorey 2006, p.127). Finally, I could not avoid the thought that even established groups or theatres are not spared the risks – risks of dissolving; of having financial difficulties; of experiencing insecurity and *precarization* for the promise of freedom (cf. Lorey 2015); of having their field of possibilities reduced by the asymmetrical relation of power where the authorities are dominating by the way they distribute the financial resources (cf. Foucault 1997), or of experiencing the “feeling of being disposable” (Butler 2015, p.25) in a cultural field governed by the market rules.

### 5.1.5 Summary

My question addressed to the respondents, related to the way they experienced freedom as a

---

<sup>10</sup> In this sense, Teater Bhopa is a conclusive example which will be discussed in the next chapter of the analysis.

group in relation to the cultural policy, reveals the difference between the ideal of creating independently of financial means and the reality the members had to face in order to realise their cultural productions. In a way, my attempt is bringing into the light similar differences as the example with the Theatre Centre's investigation which revealed that the groups had an ideal image about what a free group is, but that, in reality, no group could live up to that ideal. Usually, the more we advanced into the interviews, the more interdependencies, connections and examples – which I didn't think about before doing the interviews – came to light.

As a general remark, the respondents had a tendency of romanticizing their beginnings in a non-institutional performing arts group and, accordingly, to emphasize the better aspects of their groups: the lack of hierarchies, collective decisions, freedom of artistic expression, working independently of economic profits. At the same time, they acknowledged their interdependency on the cultural policy as they applied for public funds for their productions while the municipality and the state granted them financial support in order to achieve the goals of the cultural policy. But the responsibility of caring for the groups in the case of financial difficulties was gradually placed on the groups' shoulders on the basis that they had the freedom to form the group and therefore they were the only ones to blame if they failed.

The romanticizing process has a double intention: on one side, *self-empowerment* and, on the other side, *compulsion*. When it comes to self-empowerment, the idea that one was part of the generation '68, part of the free group movement which managed to destabilize the domination of the institutional performing arts in the 1970s, and one has a long history of resistance and social involvement behind, confers strength and enlarges the field of possibilities, which gives a sense of freedom. Compulsion, though, makes the cultural producers “amenable to social, political and economic steering and regulation” (Lorey 2015: 35) which result in self-censoring, resignation or adaptation to the rules of the market. This continuous movement between self-empowerment and compulsion, this ambivalent situation which characterizes the conditions of the artistic professions (Flisbäck 2017, p. 508), makes the cultural producers subjects of *governmental precarization* (Lorey 2015, p.13).

## 5.2 Negotiations and resistance

*It is the third time now that I am in the Regional Archive in Gothenburg. During a previous visit, I required to consult additional documents in my hope to find applications for grants sent by the non-institutional performing arts groups to the municipality. I am excited looking at the cart full of folders while I put on the gloves. As I slowly open an unwieldy folder packed with files I notice that the rubbers holding the files are falling into pieces. My enthusiasm grows at the thought that I am the first person to read these files since they were packed. With the gloves on, the camera ready to photograph and the feeling of opening a treasure, I surprised myself thinking: “Now I finally understand how it is to feel like a detective while researching in the archive as Rebecka Lennartsson<sup>11</sup> described it”.*

*One of the first application I find is written by Anna Pia Åhslund from BamBa-teatern at a typing machine, with some corrections done by applying the letter “x” over the unwanted words, and addressed to the Cultural Scholarship Committee [Kulturstipendietsnämnden] in 1978 asking for 15 000 SEK for a new production:*

BamBa-teatern has for almost two years worked under very scarce financial conditions. Therefore, the group's members were often forced to have two jobs. Despite this, we have managed to produce three plays for children [...] Earlier this year, BamBa-teatern applied for a so-called project grant from the municipal board but was rejected.

*In another application written by hand, addressed to the Cultural Policy Delegation [Kulturpolitiska delegationen] in 1979, Gritt Mellgren from Extrateatern is asking only for an indispensable financial support:*

We have lousy finances, and we want help with a project grant for our two new plays which will have premiere this spring. We know that you are also having a hard time financially and therefore we do not apply for the amount we really need but reduce it sharply and apply only for the very, very necessary. We are therefore applying for a paltry 12,000 (A better secondhand bus would cost us 20,000 SEK – but that is not something to even think of).

*The response from the Cultural Policy Delegation, signed by Eva Olsson and Georg Svantesson, regarding the last part of the application is negative: “Free theater groups have on various occasions applied for grants that, among other things, were intended to cover the purchase of equipment. These have been rejected by the Municipal Executive Committee [Kommunstyrelsen]” (1979/01/22). This general tendency of rejecting the groups application is confirmed in another official response: “The Municipal Executive Committee and the Cultural Policy Delegation have been very restrictive with subsidies to the free theater groups”. This was signed by Eva Smith and Georg Svantesson from the Cultural Policy Delegation in 1979 as a negative response to Eldteatern’s request for covering their “large” debts of 17 000 SEK caused by the fact that “in a short time we improved our lighting systems, bought musical*

---

<sup>11</sup> “There are moments when I feel like a real researcher. Or, like a researcher for real. The way you imagined the research work before you were expected to do it yourself: like a detector, a discovery, a Eureka!” (Lennartsson 2017, p. 41)

instruments, changed the diesel engine of our bus and paid the artists who help us with our scenography” as Robert Jakobsson wrote on the application (Cultural Policy Delegation’s archive, 1979/08/10).

*The more I read, the more my enthusiasm is fading. The energy, time, creativity, hope invested into these applications are rarely rewarded with the required sums. In some of the cases, for example Freja-gruppen’s application for a yearly based grant in 1980, I know that the negative response to the applications which I just hold in my hands might have been the main cause for the group’s dissolution.*

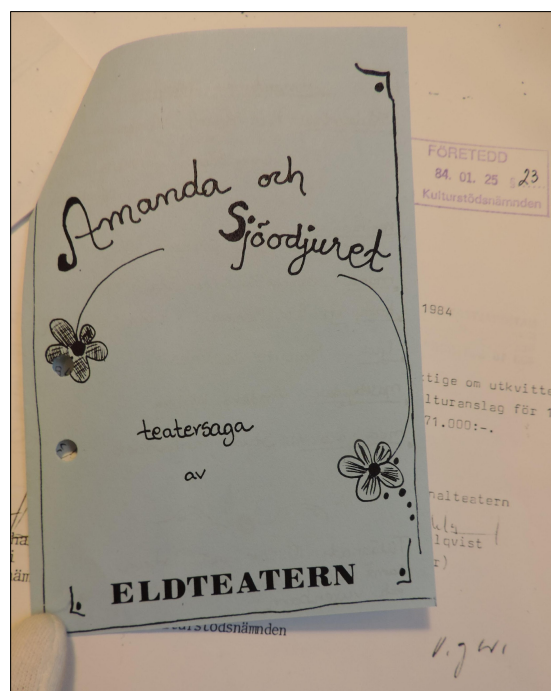
*In one application file, I find a brochure drawn by Pita Skogsén together with Ulf Skogsén’s justification for requesting a municipal yearly based grant from the Cultural Support Committee [Kulturstödsnämnden]:*

During these almost 8 years that Eldteatern existed as a theater group in Gothenburg, we have gratefully received some grants for equipment from the municipality of Gothenburg.<sup>12</sup>

We believe that it is extremely important even with the existence of smaller theater groups. A small theater group can more easily retain its flexibility and the pursuit of artistic renewal. We now hope that the municipality of Gothenburg can give us its support. We believe that we are needed here in Gothenburg. This is where we want to work and try to create a thriving alternative theater life.

Eldteatern is the theater group in Gothenburg that has existed the longest without a municipal yearly based grant.

*(Cultural Support Committee’s Archive 1984/01/25)*



*Figure 1: Brochure by Pita Skogsén  
(Photo: Liliana Farcas 2020/03/23)*

*From the municipality’s response to the application, I find out that Eldteatern received only 15.000 for their production from the requested 71.000 SEK and no yearly based grant.*

*(Field notes, Regional Archive, Gothenburg 2020/03/23)*

In order to be able to study the effects of the public funding system on the early non-institutional performing arts groups from Gothenburg, I will zoom in and focus on the *practices* that “constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies” used by the municipality of Gothenburg in the process of allocating funds for the groups (Foucault 1997, p.300). The time

<sup>12</sup> Eldteatern received municipal grants only 3 times during a period of 8 years: 12.000 SEK in 1979, 15.000 SEK in 1981 and 15.000 SEK in 1982. For season 1981/82 and 1982/83, Eldsteatern also received development grants from the Swedish Arts Council.

reference is set, in large lines, by the applications for receiving public grants archived in the Regional Archive in Gothenburg, dated between 1976 and 1993. Additionally, I will answer the second question of my research: **Which were the specific circumstances created by the public funding system for the groups to carry out their artistic activity in Gothenburg?**

### 5.2.1 Writing an application

In general terms, the process of being granted municipal public funds implied sending an application to the municipal authority responsible for the cultural issues in that particular time period (see Background), receiving the positive answer from the case officer and, later on, writing a rapport or giving an account for the use of the funds. From the applications consulted in the Regional Archive in Gothenburg, I can notice that, generally, the application file contains an application form (the Cultural Scholarship Committee [Kulturstipendienämnden] provided a standardized form) or just a description of the future project and the groups' motivation of doing it, a presentation of the group and its previous productions, occasionally a brochure, sometimes resumes of the group's members, posters and, almost always, critics' reviews published in the newspapers. The importance of the reviews is revealed by their presence in high numbers as attachments to the applications and confirmed by several respondents. Ulf Wideström considered the reviews as being the most important part of the application for grants and Robert Jakobsson's description of his reaction when suddenly, receiving a bad review after years of getting only good ones, gives an idea of how "extremely important" that was: "I was completely devastated and could barely go out, wondering if the neighbours have read it (*he laughs*). I was completely paranoid but now I have relaxed, I have no problem with it now". There is no surprise that the critics benefit from such attention from the groups as they can validate the groups and help them to accumulate *symbolic capital* and to make a name for themselves, to become known (Bourdieu 1993, p.75). The role of the critics as key persons who attest the value of the groups is also confirmed by Fia Adler Sandblad:

[In the 90s, i]f you had like five critics who looked at your play and wrote about it or talked about it, it would be like a receipt that you were someone. But today there are many who perform without a single critic. Then it's tough! Then how can you prove that you are someone? Social media maybe. Maybe there is something else that can replace them. [...] And it's much better to get a bad review than to get nothing. Because then they have at least gotten there. They had an expectation.

The critics' reviews were also important for the evaluation of the applications sent to the Gothenburg municipality. The Swedish Arts Council had a reference group that could appraise the groups' productions and respond to the groups' applications. In Gothenburg, between 1980 and 1993, there was only one case officer, Svenning Leander, who had the responsibility of assessing all the applications sent to the Cultural Support Committee by different associations, groups, initiators who required funds for all kinds of cultural activities organized in the city or its vicinity. From the responses formulated by the case officer to the groups' requirements in the applications which contain references to the critics' reviews, it seems that these reviews

played a crucial role in the evaluation of the applications.

The experience of writing an application was different depending on the period, the personal skills of the writer(s), the requirements needed to be fulfilled etc. Robert Jakobsson makes a comparison between how the application process used to be during the late 1970s and the 1980s and how he experiences it nowadays:

At that time, it was very easy to apply for money; one could send in a handwritten paper at any time and just say: 'we need money' and then maybe someone said: 'we cannot pay it right away but you will get it a little later'. [...] You did not have to fill in a special form. Not at all! Instead, you could write exactly as you wanted. And it was absolutely amazing!

[...] These damn public funding systems have become such that – it is also a big difference from before – nowadays there is very little grant you can get, you can keep on sitting and filling in different applications. And then you have no time to do anything wise or do any art. So, it has become more and more that you can survive with different subsidies but then, then it is... partly the application has become more difficult to fill in, longer time to do and report. And then it is often not so much money. Then one wonders if it is worth it. So, many times, we do not apply for certain grants because it is not worth all the work.

One of the main changes in the process of applying for public funds, as it was also expressed in the quote above, is the fact that it takes more time nowadays to apply for public funds and to write reports in order to give an account of how the funds received were used. Robert Jakobsson raises the question of shifting the attention of the cultural producers from the creative process towards the search of financial means which demands more and more time. In accordance with McRobbie, it is not just the question of cultural value of the productions which might be affected by the mentioned shift of attention but rather a “process of creative compromise” as the balance of power tilts from a “social milieu of innovation” to “a world of projects” (McRobbie 2016, p. 28). Although not everyone experienced equally the change in the amount of time used for applying for public funds. Gun Lund states that she spends as much time nowadays as she did back in the 1980s, but this can be a result of the fact that she became, along the years, very good at organizing, writing applications and reporting as she herself admitted. I also noticed during the interview her organizational capacity when she systematically, with a pen in her hand, answered all the questions I had sent to her, being very careful to clarify the concepts and to incorporate the words from the questions into her answers.

Liliana Farcas: How much time did it take to apply for a grant?

Gun Lund: (*she laughs loudly*) Ah! Most of the time, I would say. So, I take care of it myself: all applications, all accounts, right from the beginning, I have handled all finances myself, alone. [...] I sat every night with finances and with those reports and I still do it. It takes about 70% of my time today as well. Sometimes it's 60% but most of the time it's more. Describe and describe and describe... (*she laughs*).

Following Foucault's advice, I am focusing on the effects of power which can be detected by noticing the kind of *resistance* (1982) the groups were showing towards the public funding system in the 70s-90s. An example, related to the application process itself, brings to light,

beside the “punk attitude” towards the authorities as Rolf Sossna defined it, a difficulty in translating a street performance into economic terms – like estimated number of spectators –, difficulty specific for the cultural field characterized as an “economic world reversed” (Bourdieu 1993). Rolf Sossna describes a gesture of opposition to the way the application form was formulated and elucidates the mystery of the peculiar application I've seen in the archive:

Rolf Sossna: [W]hen we were going to write the application, one would fill in the forms and number of performances and audience, and this, and that. We could not fill in that, the number of audiences and stuff. When you perform in the street you never know how it will go. So, I took that form and then I put it across the type-machine and then I wrote across the lines like that and (*he shows with his hands*) ... explain. So, we got no money then (*he laughs. I also laugh*).

Liliana Farcas: What was the reason? That you wrote across the form or that the street theatre was nothing to invest money in? Or?...

Rolf Sossna: No, I think the combination of those.

I did not understand when I saw the application in the archive that it was a protest. This was a way of showing that the questions addressed in that application could not be answered by a group which performs street theatre; it was a mild form of resistance.

As the reader probably observed, the respondents had a tendency of describing the application process by comparing how the situation was in the past and how it is nowadays. The respondents who had this tendency are mostly those who are still active in a non-institutional performing arts constellation. And as the reader also probably observed, the situation nowadays was generally described in negative terms compared with the past.

## 5.2.2 Building half a bridge

The part of the application process in which the respondents were not involved at all, regarded the amount of money received from the municipality. Usually, the sum granted was lower than the amount needed. The documents consulted in the Regional Archive in Gothenburg which belonged to the Cultural Policy Delegation and the Cultural Support Committee, dated between 1976 and 1993, show that granting less money than the groups applied for was common (if the groups were granted money at all). Just to give an example, I can refer to the list with all the applications registered at the Cultural Support Committee during the year 1980 which shows that from the total sum of 2.078.000 SEK applied for by different groups, associations, initiators etc., only 332.400 SEK were granted.

During the interview, Rolf Sossna points out this aspect of receiving less money than the required amount: “So, when you applied for money, you got a sum and often you got maybe half of what you applied for and like: how do you build half a bridge?”. This was a recurrent dilemma for the groups and the ways they managed to “build the bridge” will be explored in the last sub-chapter of the analysis. For now, it is important to mention that the groups were building the whole bridge, as their reaction, when not receiving enough funds, was to create productions and perform them anyway, as Robert Jakobsson confirms: “if we had no money,

we worked without money”. The ambition to work even without receiving the grants was aligned to the idea that the financial aspects should not be the driving force in the creative process as Robert Jakobsson mentioned and supported by the fact that the groups' members were young new-comers into the cultural field (Bourdieu 1993) who had their youth with the “unstoppable energy” as sources for their creativity as Pita Skogsén put it. In the same time, working in these conditions is a form of self-exploitation (cf. McRobbie 2001; Lorey 2006).

Rolf Sossna states that “the authorities knew somewhere” that the groups would produce the shows even without the needed amount of money. Granting less than the required sum was mentioned officially, first in relation to the financial support allocated for the non-institutional dance groups in the governmental bill regarding culture from 1996: “In many cases, only a small part of the amount applied for is granted. This makes it difficult for the groups to carry out the projects as they were originally intended” (Prop. 1996/97:3, p.76). The practice had effects at an individual level as well. There, the exploitation is invisible until its “normative schemes are interrupted by other norms” (Butler 2009, p.3), like in the example mentioned by Pita Skogsén:

I started there in 2002 [as a theatre teacher in high school] and in 2003 in the summer it was the first time I got a salary in the summer, and I did not understand... I thought 'this must be something wrong in some way'. So, you can think that I was so outside the normal society so that for me the abnormal became normal. For me it was abnormal that I, as a person doing theatre, get a salary without working in the summer. It was strange! (*she laughs*).

Considering that the practices are not relevant for their inherent value, but for their capability of maintaining or contradicting the relations of power (Jackson & Mazzei 2012, p.57), I can see that there is a spiral mechanism in the application process which, actually, sustain the power relations normalized by the practice of giving less funds than required. This repeated practice has a logic: the groups ask for an amount of money, they receive less but they still manage to make performances with good results; the good results are emphasized by the groups themselves in the application for the next grant; which means that they managed even with less resources than they apply for; which makes this a legitimate and normative practice. I want to stress the fact that this practice sets the groups' members in a constant position of admitting that it works to make productions without the required amount of money, thus reducing their possibilities of resistance.

Following the signs of *resistance* of the groups towards the public funding system's strategies, the example of Teater Bhopa is relevant for understanding the actual possibilities of resistance. Teater Bhopa tried to break the practice of receiving less money than applied for from the authorities. When they did not receive the amounts requested in 2005, they refused to produce the shows described in the applications. According to the theatre's producer Linda Isaksson, Teater Bhopa could not continue with a reduced financial support from both the state and the municipality in a total of 350.000 SEK because: “We cannot compromise on our demands for high artistic quality and the employees' working conditions” (SD, 2005/12/14). Despite the fact that Teater Bhopa had been one of the major groups in Gothenburg at that time, the result of their resistance was that they closed down. During the interview Rolf Sossna refers



to this event as unusual and describes how it provoked a sensation at that point:

[...] Teater Bhopa were the ones who had the most money in the late 90s. Bhopa received a lot of money from both the state and the municipality. They did great shows, but they closed in early 2005 or something, because they felt that they were getting too little money: 'it's not possible! We cannot do the shows that we get money for when we do not get the money we need'. So that was a bit of a sensation, because they had most [funds] in the whole city.

To conclude, I want to stress the connection between the practice of granting the groups less funds than required and the groups' reaction to that, with the concept of *governmental precarization*. As mentioned in the previous chapter of the analysis, non-institutional performing arts groups existed and functioned a decade before the municipal cultural policy was formulated. Using the existing groups for achieving cultural-political goals can be interpreted as a first step of a governmental precarization of the groups. This precarization reveals the “complex interactions between an instrument of governing” (the cultural policies), “the conditions of economic exploitation” (the public funding system) and “modes of subjectivation, in their ambivalence” (Lorey 2015, p.13). Even if the intentions expressed in the policies aimed at supporting the cultural producers, the effects of the practice, repeated over decades, of granting less funds to the groups on the basis that the groups would make productions despite the reduced financial support, became a form of *exploitation*. Additionally, this practice, because of its repetition, became a *norm*, which is perceived as self-evident (Lorey 2006; Spade 2015).

### 5.2.3 Dealing with the case officers

One of the aspects which is not present in the archive but was mentioned by the respondents, is the power relation between the groups and their case officers who analysed their applications for grants. Occasionally, this relation can be spotted in the newspaper articles, but it is more official and, when it is presented, it is polarized in a journalistic style. I am interested in this relation because I consider that the attitudes of the case officers towards the groups – as it was perceived by the respondents – is a clear example of *capillary power* (Foucault 1980, p.39). The respondents provided a whole range of examples, from positive to negative, of their relation with the people who represented the authorities.

In the interview Nasrin Barati considers the case officers great and, in return, she has always been grateful and thanks them: “When she's sitting there, my case officer, she's also a person who has children and life and... she also needs appreciation”. Nasrin Barati remarks that there are more women than men who work with organizational issues in the cultural field: “it is women who do the work, it is they who fight, it is they who try to bring culture into all parts of society. [...] Very rarely do I see men in such meetings or contexts, when you sit and talk about culture and try to share and bring culture into society”. Gun Lund remembers the care for their group that the case officer from the Swedish Arts Council showed in the beginning of Rubicon's career:

But then the case officer from the Swedish Arts Council actually went down to Gothenburg [...] and said: ‘You have to take care of your group. You just have to make sure you do it!’ ‘Aha!’ And then we got a small grant from the municipality and have had that since. So that happened in 1979. It was very... a little cute... a little... it was like... yes... you could say it was very nice in a way.

Robert Jakobsson suggests that the case officers working for the Swedish Arts Council nowadays want to be “neutral in some way” but that “they are so neutral” that they become “machines” and therefore a discussion with them “becomes kind of absurd”. He adds that “they seem totally uninterested in what we do and they have their own ideas of what we should do” and that they are setting their “own agenda” in relation with the cultural producers. As he admits that his collaboration with the Swedish Arts Council has ceased, it can be interpreted that his views are influenced by this aspect. Although, he is not the only one having that opinion; his perspective resembles an example Gun Lund gave regarding the dance consultants who are working nowadays for the region:

[W]e actually worked to get dance consultants in Västra Götaland. Once we had them, we thought they would work for us. They do not! They try to direct us. So, everything has been turned around. Those who were our consultants and, in the beginning, were working very hard to get the dance out in the region, today, are replaced with new ones, who tell us how we should behave so they can imagine (*inaudible words*) us in the region. So, it's a completely reversed way of looking at art today.

When it comes to the relation between the groups and the only case officer whose signature I encountered on all the responses to the applications for grants sent to the Cultural Support Committee in Gothenburg between 1980 and 1993, the few remarks of the respondents point to an equitable balance of power. Robert Jakobsson remembers Svenning Leander as a good and just person:

He was such an ordinary man who tried to feel where the wind was blowing, and what was good, and what people thought was good, and so on... He was a good man. He was very just. I thought he was great. I think everyone (*he pauses*) ... We respected him. And then whether you got money or not... Svenning Leander, that's his name! (*he laughs as he could remember the name*) Svenning Leander... We certainly got money! I think.

With the next examples I intend to make the connection with the next point of interest in this study: the inequality created by the public funding system. I chose the examples below in order to show the inequality based on gender that the members of ADAS musikaliska teater experienced which was reflected in the way the case officers from Gothenburg's Culture Committee treated the group. Fia Adler Sandblad describes the attitude of the officers as “contemptuous and diminishing”: “Until 2000s, it was very explicit... (*with a deeper patronizing voice*) 'Oh, but it's the girls from Adas! Ah, but what do you want then? Do you want some money to play theatre?'”. She says that nowadays, even if it is not expressed as pronounced and direct, that attitude still remains. She gives an example of how this attitude was reflected in a practical case, an application for parking permit, handled by another municipal

department:

Someone wrote an acronym 'ADAS mus teater' instead of 'ADAS musikaliska teater'. We had applied for a parking permit, and they had shortened it that way. It was a joke of course<sup>13</sup>, or both, but the attitude towards us became very clear. We were not treated seriously there by many of the municipal case officers. It was like (*the same deep voice, like an adult talking to a child in an accentuated patronizing way*): 'Oh cuties! Yeah, they play basement theatre.'

One of the reasons for this attitude was the fact that the group was interested in approaching “difficult issues” (prostitution for example), many times from a feminist perspective and their way of investigating and elaborating topics was “very close to something that could be dismissed as social work” as Fia Adler Sandblad explained. Beside undervaluing their work, the patronizing tone reveal a view on the group and its female members as incapable of taking care of themselves and thus in need of protection (cf. Butler 2015, pp.144-145). Like in the case of Rubicon (a group consisting initially of four female dancers and choreographers) where the care shown by the Swedish Arts Council's supervisor can be experienced as “cute” and “very nice in a way”, in another way, this protection can be seen as a paternalistic attitude (Butler 2015, p.141) which, in its gesture, is reinforcing the domination and, thus, denying the group's agency and ability to challenge these power positions (cf. Foucault 1997).

Even if I didn't focus specifically on the inequalities based on gender, similar examples as the one above will be pointed out at the end of this chapter. I want to be clear about the fact that my intention, with the examples I use, is not to criticize certain people for their attitudes but rather to show that the relation between the case officers and these female groups' members is a manifestation of capillary power. It is a reflection at the micro-level of the power relation between the public funding system and certain groups. It is also a reflection of the attitude that existed in society, in different time contexts, towards these groups.

#### **5.2.4 When the public funding system creates inequalities**

While in the previous section, I was focusing on the practices used by the municipality of Gothenburg in the process of allocating funds for the groups, in this part, I will analyse the circumstances under which the non-institutional performing arts groups were creating and performing productions, from a broader perspective which involves the national cultural policy and the funds provided by the Swedish Arts Council.

The starting point of this investigation is represented by a *turning point* in Gun Lund's life, generated by the Swedish Arts Council's decision to grant only those dance groups which had their own scene. The result of this decision was that Rubicon got a stage, Unga Atalante, in 1987 and thus could also keep its subsidies. Even though the condition imposed by the Swedish Arts Council coincided with the group's need to have a place of their own where they could practice and create – “otherwise we would have stopped because it was too hard to just

---

<sup>13</sup> In Swedish “mus” means “mouse” and it is sometimes used as a nickname for female genitalia.

tour” – taking care of a scene was not at all easy. Gun Lund recalls that: “at the same moment when we got the stage, we had to go to the Swedish Public Employment Agency” to receive unemployment benefits. During the first years of the group's existence, between 1978 and 1987, the members of Rubicon were supporting themselves via regular jobs, or “bread jobs”, as Gun Lund called them, while creating performances and touring (e.g Gun Lund was a dance teacher for children in a public school, Eva Ingemarsson worked in a bakery for a while). When they had the scene, the work for maintaining the place functioning demanded more of their time and therefore they could not keep those regular jobs. At the same time, the grants received for their activity and for maintaining their scene were so low that they had to receive financial help from the Swedish Public Employment Agency. The crucial role of this agency will be studied in the final chapter of the analysis as, for now, I want to continue exploring the influence of the Swedish Arts Council on the groups. Gun Lund recalls that:

[I]n the 80s, '85 or '86 (I am a little unsure about the year), the council suddenly threw out everyone who worked with ethnic dance. Viva Mexico was the name of such a group... All those who were engaged in, I must say, folkloric dance but which was not Swedish dance but came from other parts of the world – what is today in Gothenburg at Oceanen – all those groups, that had received a grant from the beginning, were expelled from the Swedish Arts Council in the mid-80s. They cleaned... 'Now we will invest in quality' and... It started with those groups and then some more. So, there were no more than 5-6 dance groups left in Sweden who received [yearly based] grants then.

The decision to condition the granting of the national subsidies on the dance groups having a performing scene of their own might seem like a method to help the groups, but it was also a strategy used by the Swedish Arts Council to professionalize a few groups (like in the case of Rubicon's members who had to engage in taking care of the scene 100%) and to eliminate the semi-professional ones (like in the case of Viva Mexico). This is the result of a process which started already in the 70s with the intention written in the governmental bill to make clear distinctions between professional and non-professional groups (Prop. 1974:28, p.314), even if “how professionalism was to be defined was not addressed” (Hoogland 2005, p.73).

But why is this decision of the council to eliminate the semi-professional groups taken after the mid-80s? How are the non-institutional performing arts groups perceived after a decade of cultural-political guidance and public funding support? Researchers agree that by the mid-80s, the non-institutional performing arts groups were established as permanent players in the performing arts field (von Rosen 2018, p. 195; Forser 2007). At the same time, the field had changed compared to the 1970s and, already in 1983, Guy Ehrling, the chairman of the Swedish Arts Council for theatre, dance and music writes:

From the Cultural Council's side, we try to be attentive to the restructuring that has taken place within the free groups, where a larger number of groups today do not differ significantly from the institutions in working methods and anchoring. Other groups have chosen to work mainly as touring groups. A third category seeks to combine local anchoring and be a kind of experimental theatre. The term 'free group' is today an ambiguous concept. (GT 1983/07/18)

What Guy Ehrling is not mentioning is that the restructuring of the groups did not change by itself but rather was a combination of factors including socio-economical changes, political views, international artistic influences and, of course, the public funding system's incentives for specific groups and activities. Besides that, the fact that the national cultural policy was trying to organize and regulate the free groups movement had resulted in an increased number of groups that resemble the institutions. Therefore, the problem seems to be that the groups did not develop in the expected or wanted direction, as the main supervisor from the Swedish Arts Council, Mats Sylwan, states: "Today, the free groups are far from the experimental theatre that legitimized them when they started. I think many have lost their boldness and their profile. Aesthetically, they have approached the institutional theatres" (GP 1989/11/11).

When it comes to the changed political views and the way these are integrate into the non-institutional performing arts groups' productions, there seems to be a shift from a political affiliation to a party (e.g Ulf Wideström who left the communist party by the end of 1970s) towards a broader perspective regarding politics, art and life during the 1980s. Ulf Wideström explains how the political aspect was integrated in their group:

Everyone in our theatre [Teaterkompaniet] was spontaneously political people, completely political. But not party political and so on, we were in some kind of prog<sup>14</sup>. We were part of a political movement. But we did art, we did not... So, *Pa-dam*<sup>15</sup> and other things we did were not political propaganda but, it was life itself. For us, politics was life itself: that you care about things, that you... yeah.

As the optimism from the 1970s was fading because the number of people participating in cultural events was not growing as expected while the number of the groups that requested public funds was constantly increasing, the authorities had to decide which groups would receive the public funds. Due to the fact that the groups' situation in the 80s is changing, a series of measures and decisions were taken, which proved to create more inequalities among the non-institutional performing arts groups and increase the competition between them. Several of these inequalities will be mentioned in the next section of this chapter.

### **5.2.5 The A-team and the B-team**

In 1988, the Swedish Arts Council decided to grant more money to fewer non-institutional performing arts groups. The result of this decision is the separation of the groups in two teams: an A-team consisting of groups which receive yearly based grants from the state (there were 18 groups<sup>16</sup> from all over Sweden in this category in the season 1988/89) and a B-team consisting of all the other groups who received project-based grants from the state (those were 120

---

<sup>14</sup> Progg was a left-wing and anti-commercial, mainly musical, movement in Sweden in the 70s.

<sup>15</sup> A well-known production of Teaterkompaniet from 1986.

<sup>16</sup> The groups from Gothenburg which received yearly based grants from the state in 1988/89 were: Nationalteatern 1.000.000 SEK, Teater Uno 300.000 SEK, Rubicon/Unga Atalante 400.000 SEK (Statens kulturråd 1988)

groups<sup>17</sup> in the season 1988/89). The hierarchy created between the groups who received yearly grants and those who had sporadically financial support is motivated by the main case officer from the Swedish Arts Council, Mats Sylwan as it follows: “Not all groups are equally artistically interesting, I'm not ashamed to say that” (GP, 1989/11/11). In the same article, he states that the yearly based grants will “provide greater continuity” for the groups as they will “not risk having their subsidies reduced (apart from 'exceptional cases')”.

In an article called “The state and the free groups”, presented in the Swedish Arts Council's regular publication in 1988, Mats Sylwan criticizes the fact that “cultural policy has become dependent on the free groups”. He writes that the non-institutional performing arts groups produce “55% of all children's theatre” and “30% of all performances in the country” and he declares that there was, basically, “no other choice than a reform of the public funding system with fewer recipients and an overall reduced theatre repertoire as a likely consequence” (Sylwan 1988). Dependency is criticized by Sylwan and is seen as negative and therefore the decision to choose certain groups able to reach the cultural-political objectives is the opposite of what Butler would call an “affirmation of interdependency” (2015, p.218), which would have implied a struggle to create conditions under which the groups could create and perform in a mutual and equal dependency on the public funding system.

The criterion for choosing the A-team was based on the idea of “giving to those who already have. [...] We have therefore chosen to prioritize the groups that already receive municipal grants” as Mats Sylwan declares (GP, 1988/03/10). In this way, the council was encouraging the municipalities to grant more public funds to the groups. But, from the perspective of Gothenburg's municipality, as the state had more resources to assess the groups' work, the funds granted by the state were “considered a quality guarantee” (GT, 1984/10/12). The strategy of the Swedish Arts Council to transfer at least a part of the responsibility of financing the local groups to the municipality is just the beginning of the battle between the state and the municipality (and later on, the region) or the “fight between the big brother and the little sister”, as Gun Lund named it, where, she explains, the big brother is Stockholm (or the state) and the little sister is Gothenburg (the municipality).

As the case of Rubicon illustrates, having their own dance scene *Atalante*, being part of “the A-team” and receiving yearly subsidies both from the state and from the municipality, were still not enough to provide a decent income so that the group's members needed unemployment benefits as well. The yearly based grants were very important for the groups “both financially and in terms of status” as Rolf Sossna told me. The yearly grants, distributed under the new conditions, were contributing, on one side, to the accumulation of *symbolic capital* by the groups, of recognition, prestige and authority in the cultural field (Bourdieu 1993, p.75). But on the other side, those certain conditions, under which the symbolic capital is transformed into economic profits (*ibid.*), are not accomplished in regard to the non-institutional performing arts groups. The reason for the unachievable conditions were embedded in the

---

<sup>17</sup> The groups from Gothenburg which received project-based grants from the state in 1988/89 were: Albatross Teater 100.000 SEK, Atelierteatern 500.000 SEK, Lilla Teatern 200.000 SEK, Teaterkompaniet 200.000 SEK, Utomjordiska teatern 100.000 SEK (Statens kulturråd 1988)

“locked system” as Fia Adler Sandblad puts it. Rolf Sossna describes a general process (there were variations and exceptions in the system too) by which a non-institutional performing arts group could climb the stairs of the public funding system:

It was often like this (it's not like that now): you had to start applying for grants as soon as possible and then you had to apply for a few years and then you had to continue and do good performances – of course reviews played a role – and if you had continued to do good performances, you received an yearly based grant. And at the same time, there was a limited amount of money... It was... those who had it [yearly based grant] they continued to get it and it almost took a group to disappear for another group to get it.

The need for one group to disappear in order to release the public funds and allow a new-comer to enter the field, creates tensions and competition between the groups. At the same time, the public funding system allows the established groups to make mistakes as Fia Adler Sandblad points out: “But it's a balancing act, because you have to be allowed to have your bad years, I think, years where you fail at a few things, only to come back and do better.” At the same time, she raises the question: “should it be the case that some groups have the security and have those supports, while other groups do not even receive support for a project? It does not feel reasonable”. The situation also raises the question of how the public funding system encourages and supports the quality of the groups' work if there are no funds for new-comers who prove to be good. In 1990, the Gothenburg' municipality did not have enough funds to give a yearly based grant to a new appreciated group, as the case officer, Svenning Leander, explained: “We do not have place for a new permanent group. Grants for equipment can be distributed; larssons teater received 20.000 SEK for this purpose this year. The group has received glowing reviews for its production *Medea från Mbongo* and is highlighted as an example of innovation and should get a chance” (GP, 1990/12/9).

When it comes to the *governmental precarization*, the national and local decisions, policies and measures regarding the non-institutional performing arts groups combined with the insufficient financial resources available in the cultural field, intensified the competition between the groups for public funds, created clear hierarchies between different groups and also had an impact on the way the cultural producers were seeing themselves (cf. Lorey 2015). In an increasing competitive market, the dual role that a cultural producer must assume, both as creator and as promoter, is reflected in the way the artists had to adapt to the new conditions created by the cultural policy from 1996/1997. A *turning point* in Fia Adler Sandblad's life determined her artistic path of creating small scale productions. It was the result of parallel changes in the cultural policy and in her personal life in the late 90s.

[T]he cultural policy took a path that disadvantaged what I did or wanted to do. Because it became so much clearer that what was wanted was production after production after... many productions, but also focus on theatre for children and youth which was very strong [incentive] with 96/97 cultural policy, which made it more difficult to get support to do what I wanted. [...] That was just when I had a child – '97 I had my son – and felt that I cannot work 18 hours a day, but I must be able to work 8 hours and then go home. [...] I was in charge of big productions for several years and then I had a child and started doing smaller productions.

[...] So it was really an adaptation to reality what I made: 'we have to go down in format. If we are going to have small performances, we will be able to sell them'. So that's why we did this mini-theatre and it was an artistic choice, you could say, with the in-depths we made... It was an artistic slash economic choice. Because it is not certain that we would have done it if we had more money.

For Fia Adler Sandblad, the changes in the cultural politics from 1997 concurred with an important moment in her life – becoming a mother and reconsidering the relation between work and personal life. But she also considered that the state's financial support for her group, besides being granted in specific conditions, was uncertain, in the sense that it was welcomed when it came but “you never know from year to year! Suddenly there is no money...”. Therefore, the artistic decision to create minimalist productions was a way of reducing the dependency on the public funds and increasing the “degree of self-sufficiency” [självförsörjningsgrad] which, Fia Adler Sandblad explained to me during the interview, is formed of the income gained by a group from selling tickets or selling their productions to different organizers. At the same time, she also points at the general influences in the society that, in the '90s, meant to “follow your voice and do what you wanted” generated by the individualism wave. Rolf Sossna summarizes, in general terms, the changes in the society occurred during the 1990s:

So when the 80's came, it was neoliberalism and the market forces. But I remember that we were a kind of opposition to that, a counterforce to that, we had the ideals of solidarity and collective against imperialist times. And at the same time, we did... but it was later, in the 90's. A lot of the performances from En Annan Teater were about the individual's right to be different, to deviate from norms or the collective or what was required. That one would take responsibility for one's own life. So, it was a counter-force as well... It has been a lot about alternatives.

What Rolf Sossna points out is also their opposition to the mainstream which is, in itself, a way of resistance. This resistance has its roots in the artists' care about what is happening in society, about the weak and vulnerable people in society and in the interest to bring into discussion difficult themes (e.g. mental illness; death and war in the productions for children). According to Fia Adler Sandblad, this is due to the fact that “life and theatre go very much together in our activity; so, we do theatre about vulnerability and we are vulnerable”. I consider that the respondents involved in this study are “socially engaged artists” (McRobbie 2016, p.80). In explaining this term, Angela McRobbie refers to an article based on interviews with fine artists in the UK, 10 years after graduating. The artists interviewed tend to look for teaching jobs or for work in community settings, they are concerned with matters of socio-political importance (such as the environment, sexuality and gender), they seek to be part of a wider dialogue about cultural politics, and they tend to emphasize cooperation and solidarity rather than competition (Taylor & Littleton 2013 in McRobbie 2016, pp.80-81). All these aspects match, in various proportions, the artists involved in this study.

As a last example, which relates to both vulnerability and inequality, I will refer to Gun Lund's experience with the group Rubicon. She brings into discussion the gender perspective and the inequalities which happened from the mid-1980s onward when the male dancers



managed to influence the public funding system and raise the status of dance as an art form because their artistic form of expression was more physical and therefore more appreciated:

Now I'm going to... okay (*she hesitates but decides to talk anyway*). When the guys came in then it really happened! This modern dance has been a female art form and we, as a collective, wanted guys to come in too, and when they came, they climbed on us and then it became real. Then the dance was real! [...] So, some of them are fantastic, they are our friends, right? But... It is not the person one thinks of, but of that, suddenly, the grants system changed. [...] There was a division between the equally fantastic women and men, purely in terms of subsidies. And it's the same today. So that the guys get significantly bigger subsidies today and they get more attention, it is, of course, because their dance art is more physical and that is rewarded.

Even in 1978 when they were part of Kropp och själ, a non-institutional dance group consisting only on female dancers, Gun Lund and Gunilla Witt along with all the other members of the group were described in a diminishing way as “girls” [tjejer] who look much like girls do in general” and not like ballet dancers “with ideal measurements and perfect long legs” (GT, 1978/10/31). By the end of the article the female dancers are called “little girls” [flickor] who claim to have as much right to exist as a group as the free theatres. Just one year later, when they were presenting their newly formed group Rubicon, Gun Lund had to mention: “But we are not exactly 16-year-olds and we see that as a strength as we have a long-life experience” (GP, 1979/06/12). These examples give an understanding of the condescending attitude and the preconceptions the female dancers had to face. The fact that the inequalities started to be manifested also at the financial level starting from the late 1980s can be seen as a consequence of the view about the status of the dance performances produced by female dancers.

## 5.2.6 Conclusion

The financial circumstances created by the public funding system under which the local non-institutional performing arts groups were carrying out their activity created a spiral mechanism where the cultural producers were constantly set in the position of admitting that it works to make productions without enough money. The fact that the authorities know that the groups would produce their shows regardless of the municipal grant means that this closed system was a form of governmental precarization.

The public funding system's way of distributing grants was very important for the groups, both economically and in terms of status. Therefore, the grants were contributing to the accumulation of *symbolic capital* by the groups, of recognition and prestige in the cultural field (cf. Bourdieu 1993: 75). But this also created inequalities, intensified the competition between the groups for public funds, created clear hierarchies between different groups and also had an impact on the way the cultural producers were seeing themselves (cf. Lorey 2015). The possibilities of resistance at the economical level were reduced due to the groups being dependent on the public funding system to a great extent.

### 5.3 Precarization and pride

*It is a Saturday afternoon, May 2020. I am at Gothenburg City Museum to see the newest exposition called Letting Loose [Frispel<sup>18</sup>] about “the performing arts in transition 1960–2000” as I can read at the entrance. The welcoming message continues with information about the exposition which “tells the story of the changes that occurred when the traditional theatre scene in Gothenburg expanded into a contemporary performing arts scene with mixed genres and forms of expression”. At this point I am curious about how this story is told and I am ready to “step into a turbulent time” as the entrance message describes it.*

*The first thing I notice is that there are only three people inside including me. Two persons are standing in front of an enlarged black and white photo which shows a group of exuberant circus/street artists. As I get closer, I can see that the photo was taken in Gothenburg, because I recognize the statue of Gustav II Adolf behind the group. I find it funny how the king is pointing at them... The two persons are also pointing at the photo now, while two other visitors are approaching and pointing too at the same photo. They all recognize themselves in the picture and they start talking with each other. I grasp only a few words and I would like to talk to them, but I don't dare to get closer because of the social distancing recommendation during the ongoing pandemic. The visitors also keep a distance between them. They leave soon and I go closer to the photo hoping to find more about it. To my surprise, there are no names of the people in the photo! With other photos is the same: only names of performances, of groups, of institutions... One of the first thoughts that pop into my mind is Ulf Wideström's presentation of himself when I interviewed him: “I am known as 'a grey eminence' in the theatre world even though I was so extremely active”.*

*On my way out I met Robert Jakobsson. He is only in underwear, with a bandage around his head, waving a big red flag and uttering repeatedly in a megaphone just one word: hallå [hello]. I can't stop laughing even if I know he is playing a role. His appearance is a paradox for me: both unexpected and in consonance with how I perceived the exposition – a sort of amnesia about the past and a joy to see that the story of the free groups come to life through people...*



Figure 2: *Styltorkestern, Larssons teater, 1989*  
(Photo of photo: Liliana Farcas 2020/05/16)

(Observation and field notes, 2020/05/16)

<sup>18</sup> Additional information in Swedish about the exposition can be accessed through the Gothenburg City Museum's homepage: <https://goteborgsstadsmuseum.se/en/exhibitions/letting-loose> (Accessed 2020/05/18)

In this chapter I will explore the alternative and/or complementary financial sources to the public funding system as they were mentioned by the performing arts groups' members. The results will provide an answer to the last question launched in the beginning of this thesis: **Which complementary and/or alternative sources to the public funding system were used by the groups in order to support their artistic activity?** By answering this question, I will contribute with additional information about the living and working conditions of the non-institutional performing arts groups' members from Gothenburg during the 70s, 80s and early 90s, which is the general purpose of this study.

First, I want to mention that the public grants were never the only financial resource for a non-institutional performing arts group. This was because, at least in the beginning, the groups did not often receive such funds and then, later, the grants received were alone not enough to provide decent living and working conditions for the groups' members. Then how were the groups' members managing to create, perform and live without enough public funds?

During the telephone interview with Robert Jakobsson, while discussing about the financial resources necessary for producing the performances, even if he mentioned that these were important, he gave the impression that the situations when they required funds were not acute, that there was always a solution to the financial hinders: "I'm 71 years old and I've actually always done the art and theatre I've wanted and, in some weird way, it has always worked out financially". The interview was conducted after one of my first visits at the Regional Archive in Gothenburg, where I came across Eldteatern's application sent to the municipality in 1979 asking for funds to cover their debts caused by equipment improvements. Robert Jakobsson writes, in the end of the application, that: "We are not in a catastrophic situation. Of course, we can pay ourselves. It only means that we have to interrupt our theatre work for a while to raise money in another way" (Cultural Policy Delegation's archive, 1979/08/10). After the interview, I understood that talking about a financial situation which was acute 40 years ago does not raise the same thrills after all these years especially when we both knew how it turned out. Still, beside the time, which can blur the past struggles when one has managed to overcome them, and the youth, which gives the energy to surpass the difficulties as Pita Skogsén suggested, I was wondering if there was something more that stopped the situation from becoming "catastrophic".

Soon after the interview with Robert Jakobsson I read an article about Eldteatern, published in Dagens Nyheter 1979, where the journalist listed all the income Eldteatern managed to gather and the ways its members were living: a study circle grant provided a basic salary of approximately 500 SEK per month (approximately 2700 SEK in 2020<sup>19</sup>); performances that brought a certain income which usually was equivalent to the production costs; short and intensive work periods with other professions (Robert Jakobsson and Ulf Skogsén worked in the port and Pita Skogsén in a hospital); personal loans; sometimes gifts and, most important, living as cheaply as possible (DN 1979/06/16). At the end of the article,

---

<sup>19</sup> According to the calculation implying the inflation rate from the Official Statistics of Sweden, SCB: <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/sverige-i-siffror/prisomraknaren/> (Accessed 2020/09/22)

Robert Jakobsson says that “one only needs to have a child for all of it to burst”. His comment reveals the tension and the vulnerability the group was facing when changes in their lives occurred. I consider that the different possibilities available for the artists to assure their financial needs enumerated in the article also give a hint of the socioeconomic context which impacted the working and living conditions of the artists. Additionally, having in mind Foucault's reference to the *field of possibilities* as ways of behaving, of making possible several reactions and diverse comportment (Foucault 1982, p.790), the artists' alternatives and complementary modes of financing can give an idea about different forms of *resistance* they adopted. Therefore, I decided to describe these financial alternatives of the groups starting from the responses gathered during the interviews. My list is not an exhaustive one as the purpose was mainly to spot more general applicable alternatives that had a major impact on several artists or groups.

### 5.3.1 AMS and a-kassa

During the interviews, the respondents mentioned the importance of the AMS, what nowadays is called the Swedish Public Employment Service [Arbetsförmedlingen] for their living and working conditions in the 1970s-90s but also, in some cases, as a financier for their productions. AMS had a major impact for the non-institutional performing arts groups' members because they could receive unemployment benefits from a-kassa, while registered as unemployed and, simultaneously, working at new productions. These types of benefits are not available anymore since 2006.

There is a consensus among the respondents that the unemployment benefits were one of the main financial sources for the non-institutional performing arts groups' members during the 80s, 90s and even in the early 2000s, requested mainly during the summer, or when the artists were not performing, or having other jobs, as Wiveka Warenfalk, Åsa Eek Engquist and Pita Skogsén mentioned. And still, there are differences in the respondents' stories about it. Rolf Sossna calls the practice of receiving financial support from the a-kassa while rehearsing for a new production “an official secret”:

[T]here was an agreement like this, I do not know if it was true or not, but it was like an official secret – one did not talk about it, but it was so. Someone had said at some point in Stockholm that it was okay to rehearse until, if it was two weeks before the premiere or something like that and be registered as unemployed so that it could count as a job-creating benefit [...]. And then you were not allowed to play and be registered as unemployed at the same time. Everyone knew that, but no one said it out loud.

The fact that this practice was known by everyone but was still considered a topic that was not discussed publicly is expressed by Gun Lund in an article from 1989: “Actually, it may not be said in public, but everyone knows it, and everyone knows that it is the only possibility for many artists to survive” (GP, 1989/11/11) but she is adding the fact that being registered as unemployed was a “sensitive” issue. According to both Fia Adler Sandblad and Åsa Eek

Engquist, the AMS employees did know about this practice and agreed to financially support the artists knowing that the groups usually resume their performances after the summer. Fia Adler Sandblad recalls that: “[I]f you said: 'Now I have a great project that I can work with!'. 'Ah, that's good!' they said then. And so you were allowed to work with the project and got such a benefit...”. Åsa Eek Engquist stresses the AMS employees' experience with this type of practice: “they knew it because they had experience: 'Ah, yes, yes, you start in August!'. It worked that way”.

For Wiveka Warenfalk, the pride of doing something good by creating performing arts productions was the dominant feeling and therefore she considers the periods with unemployment benefits “a pure survival thing”.

Wiveka Warenfalk: [I]n the summer you could apply for unemployment benefit [...]. You could not receive it all the time, but you could still have it when it became difficult. And that is probably a very big difference [from nowadays].

Liliana Farcas: Did you feel bad going there and ...?

Wiveka Warenfalk: Not at all! No, not at all! I do not think so at all. It was like a pure survival thing. We thought we were doing good things. No... no, it was nothing shameful at all.

Liliana Farcas: This may be my experience of the contact with the Swedish Public Employment Service...

Wiveka Warenfalk: Yes, I understand. But what I answer is based on that... what we were doing, the work with the theatre... we thought we were doing something that was good; so that we went in between to a-kassa was for something good. It is a great difference if you are expelled from society, have no job, no connections but you must find a job... it is clear that it is a completely different feeling. I really understand that and, as I told you, my sister-in-law thought it was terribly difficult to go to these compulsory courses and the humiliating treatment and so on... so that... But we were not in that situation at all. We just thought that we did something good (*she laughs out loud*). We thought it was right. It was right, just simply! (*she laughs again*). It's funny!

The fragment from the interview transcribed above reveals also the difference between two ways of perceiving the relation to the Swedish Public Employment Service: one based on the perspective from the 1980s and the other one from a nowadays perspective. Additionally, this fragment brings into light my personal experience in relation to the Swedish Public Employment Service from the 2010s which is dominated by the feeling of “shame” as Wiveka Warenfalk rightly put it in words. Apart from the fact that the transparency of my assumption based on my personal experience provided an answer from the respondent which helped me avoid the anachronistic interpretations (Jönsson & Nilsson 2017, p.70), this dialogue was a signal for me to be aware of the preconceptions I brought in the research process and to become more attentive to those situations which challenged these preconceptions.

Beside the unemployment benefits that the a-kassa was providing, AMS introduced several measures which helped the cultural producers on the labour market. During the 1980s, the on-demand jobs [beredskapstjänster], which implied that the unemployed people could receive a temporary job in a working place in need of working personnel, while receiving

unemployment benefits, “saved the whole cultural life” as Gun Lund assessed. She argues that the “entire cultural life was built on on-demand jobs from AMS; so, they were our great friends in this”. The crucial help for the cultural producers provided by AMS is also mentioned in a newspaper article from 1989: “The on-demand jobs are the salvation for many groups. Each worker is worth, for the theatres, approximately 60.000 SEK” (GP, 1989/11/11). In the article, it is also exemplified that these measures were used by the local groups to employ musicians, dancers and extra actors for their productions.

During the Swedish economic housing crisis in the beginning of the 1990s, ALU and API jobs were introduced only to be eliminated in the late 1990s (see Institutions, organizations and use of terms). The way these measures were used is described by Gun Lund when talking about her biggest production *The roof of the world* [*Världens tak*], from 1993, involving 80 participants among which a choir, an orchestra and vocal soloists:

[...] So, I got all those services from AMS because we had that crisis in between, the housing bubble, otherwise I would have done the show '91. [...] I got lots of unemployed people from the Swedish Public Employment Service. So, I had four seamstresses that we got for free because they had been dismissed due to the crisis [...]. I got most of the dancers that way too and that maybe meant that I... I think I went in with 30% of the salaries and got the other 70% out of the Swedish Public Employment Service, approximately these numbers. But I can say that the Swedish Public Employment Service Culture played a crucial role during most of the '90s so that culture could do things that cannot be done today in the same way.

The support provided by the AMS was, in many ways, vital for the groups. Even if the measures applied by the AMS were meant to help the cultural producers – as Sture Lind, an employee from the Swedish Public Employment Service from Gothenburg, declared in 1989: “We do not really help the theatres, but support the cultural producers” (GP, 1989/11/11) – they were implicitly helping the groups and the production of new performances.

And still, the ambivalence experienced by the respondents about the unofficial practice of receiving unemployment benefits while rehearsing varied between the feeling of doing something right and of doing something wrong. This persisted over the years and was reflected during the interviews. However, I argue that just like the practice of granting less funds to the groups on the basis that the groups would make productions in spite of the reduced financial support, the practice of working to make new productions while receiving unemployment benefits is also a form of *governmental precarization*. But with the unemployment situation, the effects of this practice repeated over the years, which became a *norm* for financing the cultural field, are mainly visible at the individual level as this practice affects the way the artists' work is “mattering” (Butler 2015, p. 37). What this practice implied was to be registered as unemployed, in order to be able to go to the unemployment insurance fund, and “secretly, in one's spare time, rehearse, build decor or sew costumes which, “in the long run has devastating consequences” as Hasse Carlsson, playwright at Teater Bhopa, wrote it in an article from 1997:

All artists need self-confidence to be able to develop. To beg bitter, incomprehensible intermediaries for ALU or API services, to pretend to be unemployed while in fact working the hedge of oneself in a free group, to pretend that what one does, does not exist, is soul-killing for

any human being. In the long run, this does not increase respect for one's own work, and every time one does so, it becomes easier to begin to believe the market economists who say that the artist who cannot be paid for his work also has no right to be an artist. (GT 1997/10/22)

Hasse Carlsson's last phrase is reminiscent of the idea that the artists are supposed to assume a self-blame for not being able to support themselves financially from the type of art they produce, mentioned by Åsa Eek Engquist in the previous section of the analysis. This self-blame is included in the neoliberal discourse concerning increasing the responsibility of the artists for their financial situation which is a strategy used to justify and obscure the shrinking protection of the welfare state (cf. McRobbie 2016, p.45) which started in the end of the 1980s and was accelerating during the 1990s. Carlsson's words also indicate that the precarious working conditions of the cultural producers are the reason for holding back criticism regarding these conditions (cf. Miscevic 2014, p.198).

The cultural producers were creating performances while receiving unemployment benefits for their work instead of salaries as it should have been the case. As Pita Skogsén stated: “So due to the unemployment benefits, one could survive, and it was seen as normal. But getting a salary without the a-kassa is a privilege in theatre”. This practice, strengthened by the fact that it was unofficial but known in the cultural field, was actually sustaining the relation of power (cf. Jackson & Mazzei 2012, p.57) where the cultural producers' possibility of resistance and critique regarding their working and living conditions was limited by the fact that they were officially doing their work in their spare time. At the same time, it is necessary to stress the importance of the benefits received from a-kassa and of the measures created by the AMS for the groups' financial situation during the 1980s and 1990s.

### **5.3.2 Performing arts for children and youth**

Doing performing arts for children is an ample topic which I do not intend to explore in its plenitude but rather focus on the points relevant for the financial aspects of the non-institutional performing arts groups. This is an interesting topic to study due to the fact that some of the artists I interviewed were members in groups that produced mainly performances for children and youth (e.g Teater Sesam, Teater UNO), while others did it occasionally (e.g Teaterkompaniet) or just for a period of time (e.g Rubicon).

In a newspaper article from 1984 it is mentioned that there were several groups in Gothenburg which are performing for children and youth, and how “this gives them a reasonably secure income, because the kindergartens and the schools buy their performances” (GT, 1984/10/12). Having a relatively assured income by producing performances for children and youth was indeed a common practice among the groups. This practice has its financial base on the support provided by the local authorities in the form of an equalization grant [utjämningsbidrag] introduced in the late 1970s (KUB 69, *Appendix C*). Rolf Sossna explains how this grant functioned by allowing the groups to sell their performances at the same price as the institutions did (e.g. Backa teater) which meant that “you could sell the performances quite cheaply” and then receive the rest of the money from the municipality. The equalization

grant is still functioning nowadays and is described by Nasrin Barati as it follows:

Tickets cost now 140 SEK. 40 SEK is paid by the pupils and then we have to send the entire list of how many children have been and seen the performance to the [local] Culture Committee [Kulturnämnden]. It must be approved in order to receive a grant for our tickets and then we get the remaining money from the city of Gothenburg.

The groups were encouraged to create productions for children and youth by the incentives initiated locally, among which there were the already mentioned equalization grants, and also the activities sustained financially by the municipal Social Services Department [Socialförvaltningen] through KULF and KULIS.

All these circumstances created locally made it favourable to produce performing arts for children and youth, but there were of course difficulties implied in the process, such as the intensive working pace which characterizes the touring that performing in schools entailed. In the case of Teater UNO it was even more intensive as the group had the ambition to invite the audience to a conversation after the performance. In the 1980s this was, however, not necessarily seen as an acceptable way of interacting with a young audience anymore, as Åsa Eek Engquist told me:

During all these years, we have had after-work and talked [with the audience after the performances]. It was during a period that it was considered that one should not disturb the young people's artistic experience by talking about it afterwards but... but we have never thought that! [...] We thought you could talk about what you've seen and then, of course, you should not force someone to say something one does not want to say, but if you wanted to talk about something or process an experience, we have always thought that it was our responsibility.

Åsa Eek Engquist's example illustrates the tension between, on the one hand, the artists' ideas about the topics, the artistic expression of their productions and their way of interacting with young audiences and, on the other hand, other adults' ideas about what is appropriate for children and young people to be exposed to. Nasrin Barati considers the adults involved in the children's education, from teachers to employees in the cultural department and parents, a kind of barrier that stops certain topics, such as “war” and “death”, from being presented to and discussed with children. Nasrin Barati considers these as important themes to be discussed as they affect many children and have multiple implications in their lives. They can, she argues, be presented in an artistic way for the young audience that opens for discussion, “the kids are so open; they take it, they understand it, they discuss it”, she says. The reason why Nasrin Barati is interested in exploring these topics in productions for children is based on her view of children as capable of understanding the topics without the filter applied by the protective adults. Her aim is not to entertain the children but rather to raise questions:

I never do productions for children to make it look like 'hello all children!' (*she applauds and has an exaggerated smile on her face and moves a bit as if she is dancing; she speaks with an extra happy and high pitched voice*). No, the child is an adult in a smaller format (*she shows with her hands in the air approximately 50 cm*). They understand it exactly, we do not need to...



For me there is no theatre for children, there is only good theatre. That's it! What do we mean by theatre for children? What are we going to say with that? If it is good theatre, everyone can understand it, everyone can take part in it.

En Annan Teater had a similar relation to their young audience as they “took the children very seriously” without “playing condescendingly and clapping their heads” but rather performing according to the expression “to play at the eye level”, Rolf Sossna says. He also remembers that, with En Annan Teater, they played both theatre for children and youth and theatre for adults right from the beginning of the group's existence in the early 1990s. He recalls that the productions for children were “quite small” so that they were suitable for touring, while the productions for adults were “bigger and fixed” and in this way, he concludes that the “productions for children were financing the ones for adults”. However, ten years later, he says that it was the other way around. One of the explanations for this turn was the effect of the national cultural policy from 1996/97 which encouraged the production of performing arts for children and youth.

Another aspect concerning performing arts for children is related to differentiate themselves from other groups and to make a recognized and appreciated name for oneself (Bourdieu 1993, p.75). In the case of the non-institutional performing arts groups, this might imply focusing on a specific audience, or having a recognizable form of artistic expression, or addressing certain topics which are important for that particular group to tell or to investigate as Rolf Sossna expressed it. With Bourdieu's analysis in mind, Ulf Widesröm's statement that they, with Teaterkompaniet, “never did theatre for children” even if, occasionally, they had performances for children, can be interpreted as a lack of memory about those particular productions, but, in the same time, I can see that he is not considering theatre for children as specific for their group, as something that the group would be recognized for, and therefore these productions are easy to forget over time. A newspaper article published in 1989, informs that Teaterkompaniet is “a group that only momentarily plays theatre for children, despite that their ambition is, and always has been, to play for adults” (GP, 1989/11/11). Wiveka Warenfalk is quoted in the same article explaining that “[i]f we play theatre for children, there is at least a small possibility that the activity will go on”. By “go on”, Wiveka Warenfalk means that playing for children and youth enabled Teaterkompaniet to continue as a group.

Regardless of if doing performing arts for children and youth was a temporary solution for the economic problems, like for some non-institutional groups, or a full-time activity, like for others, the amount of money provided by the productions for children and young people was indeed a guarantee of a “reasonably secure income”, to confirm the statement expressed in the beginning of this section (GT, 1984/10/12). But still, as I want to underline here, this was an unreasonably low income.

### **5.3.3. Low costs of living and additional financial solutions**

Having low costs of living should, I argue, both be considered part of the circumstances under which the non-institutional performing arts groups proceeded their activities and an alternative or complementary way of managing their financial situation. In the 1970s and 80s a family

could afford to live in Haga cheaply as Pita Skogsén recalls: “you cannot live centrally for 175 SEK as we did in Haga. We had a large apartment of 80 square meters with both a working fireplace and a gas stove... That does not exist now; now such an apartment costs maybe between 10.000 and 15.000 SEK” (175 SEK is equivalent to approximately 700 SEK in 2020<sup>20</sup>). At the same time, having an anti-consumerism attitude in the everyday life and reducing the living costs to the minimum can be considered a complementary way of managing the financial situation: “we lived on a very cheap diet, vegetarian diet; all clothes that I bought were second hand and so... sewed some... we had almost no money, but we created a lot anyway”, Pita Skogsén told me.

One aspect which cannot be neglected when discussing the low costs of living is the young age of the groups' members when they were starting their careers in the non-institutional performing arts field. One turning point in Fia Adler Sandblad's life was when she became a mother and, as a consequence, felt that she “could not work 18 hours a day” as she used to, but had to reduce the time to 8 hours a day in order to be able to spend time with her family, and her experience correspond with those of other respondents. The time spent working with performing arts is not the only aspect affected when becoming a parent. As the cultural producers grew older and, in many cases, had children they “needed to have a slightly more stable economy”, Wiveka Warenfalk states. As families, they needed better living conditions than as “poor students” that most of them were when they started. Rolf Sossna says:

Then it also played a role – my God! – if you are young and healthy and strong and have no children! You can live in an apartment for almost nothing, with cold water and a toilet in the backyard, there is no problem. And then you get older and have a family and children and then it becomes very awkward if you do not have a shower (*we both laugh*). My life has kind of followed this... development as well. During the first pioneer years, I was also young.

The turning point in Fia Adler Sandblad's life also stresses the fact that the cultural producers are investing a lot of time working without being paid. This is a common way of managing the lack of financial support, but rather than an alternative or complementary financial resource I would consider it a self-precarization based on self-exploitation, grounded in the idea that voluntary, unpaid or low paying jobs are accepted as part of the conditions of being an artist (cf Lorey 2006, p.7; Flisbäck 2017). Nasrin Barati's experience of intensive work during the years is not made by choice:

I work 15 hours a day, 7 days a week without getting extra money for those hours. Never took and will never take because we do not have that money. But I must work like this. For 8 hours I must sit here, and work on paperwork; I must sit in the workshop and work there; I must run to the stage and direct, with everything... it's not possible. So, then I need about 8 more hours to be able to handle this. [...] Everyone who has worked with me knows that. And it's not something I want or it's my choice or... it's kind of a must.

---

<sup>20</sup>According to the calculation implying the inflation rate from the Official Statistics of Sweden, SCB: <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/sverige-i-siffror/prisomraknaren/> (Accessed 2020/09/22)

The alarming fact is that working extremely intensive without being paid for all the hours is not just characterizing the first years of artistic activity but is extended to later periods of the career as McRobbie noticed: “If it were just a matter of almost self-flagellating patterns of ‘new sweated labour’ in the name of creativity, we might imagine short bursts of activity in the early years, followed by retreat into something more sustainable” (2016, p.35). McRobbie claims that “retreat is not really an available option” for the cultural producers, in these “times of austerity and high unemployment” (ibid.). The pattern of self-precarization is maintained, on different levels of intensity, by the several respondents who are still active in a non-institutional performing arts constellation nowadays, such as Fia Adler Sandblad, Gun Lund and Nasrin Barati, because the actual choices are to continue in this matter or to give up the artistic career all together.

A circumstance which was favourable for the financial situation of new-comer groups in the 1970s and 1980s was the existence of free or low-cost spaces for performing or rehearsals. One example is Sprängkullen<sup>21</sup>: “we had the opportunity then, through the centre of Sprängkullen, to rehearse for very little money; we organized big support parties with friends, musicians, artists and did a lot of happenings to get money for rents and so on” as Pita Skogsén recalls it. Another place, mentioned by Ulf Wideström and Rolf Sossna, used for performing arts by groups such as Teaterkompaniet, En Annan Teater and Teater UNO was Masthuggsteatern. These are just two examples among many as the focus is not in mapping the places used by the groups but rather on the attitude of the municipality's officials towards the groups as Åsa Eek Engquist mentioned: “there was such an atmosphere in the city that the Cultural Support Committee was interested in the groups being able to exist in different places”.

The current situation in Gothenburg regarding the disappearance of affordable premises for cultural activities, mainly due to the current major development of the city of Gothenburg under the project name River City [Älvstaden], is known among both cultural producers and officials. In an ethnographic study regarding Gothenburg's municipality's work to enable cheap buildings, studios, scenes, rehearsal spaces etcetera for local artists, Ida Kjellberg examines the civil servants' ambivalence between considering culture as a mean to create value to the city through gentrification processes and seeing culture as providing a democratic cultural infrastructure (2019). In this light, Åsa Eek Engquist's account that they, Teater UNO, were simply asked by an official from the City Planning Office in 1990, “interested in the free groups' wishes for theatre premises”, if they would like a venue on Stampgatan, is surprising. She also tells me how they, after accepting the offer, received “enormous support from the municipality” to adapt the premise to the group's needs for performing arts, which seems incredible to me. At that point, the group was no longer a new-comer in the cultural field – with 15 years of existence as a group and 10 years of touring and working full-time with performing arts for children and youth behind them – but the support received from the municipality is essential to be mentioned in this context.

Another circumstance which was economically favourable for the non-institutional

---

<sup>21</sup>Sprängkullen was a centre for cultural activities situated in Haga, Sprängkullsgatan 19A, functioning between 1974 and 1986.

performing arts groups', was affordable advertising in the newspaper, which was their main marketing strategy for reaching out to the audience. Gun Lund recounts:

What we do not have the money for and do not have time for is what would be the most important and that is marketing. We cannot afford to say that we exist. [...] So the whole 90's, we advertised every time we had a show, really small ads in GP [Göteborgs-Posten]. It was small, short ads but it was every day that we had performances. Then we could afford a small advertisement and it was also, at certain times, an agreement with GP. We had in common for theatre and dance – for the free groups – we had a small contract like this so we could advertise. [...] And somewhere it just disappeared... was removed. I do not remember when but... in any case, at least from the 2000s we have not been able to afford it.

These types of ads used by different cultural producers to promote their performances were not just an important instrument for attracting audiences, but they turned out to be an important source of information for both the researchers in the “Expansion and diversity” project and for me. It shows the productions, the performances, the locations and venues, the groups’ flexibility and how they adapted to different audiences and their intersections with other groups which performed in the same places. All this information gives an extensive and complex image of the performing arts field in Gothenburg during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

To sum this section up, there are also several other alternative and complementary sources that the non-institutional performing arts used to provide their financial needs which I will just enumerate since the particularity of each group or of their members limits the possibility of generalization. *Studying and living on student grants* while creating productions and performing was one temporary option especially in the early years of the interviewees' careers, as Robert Jakobsson, Rolf Sossna and Åsa Eek Engquist mentioned. *Income from international tours* was another option for those who could tour internationally (e.g. in Norway as Rolf Sossna remembers). Pita Skogsén recalls the tours in Germany and Poland which could assure the living expenses for half a year afterwards. *To organize and lead study circles* with focus on performing arts was a financial alternative “in between for the groups which did not receive many grants from the state or from the municipality” as Åsa Eek Engquist mentioned. She also recalls that the idea of attracting *sponsors* for the production of the performances was completely excluded by the groups which were members in the Theatre Centre during the 1970s but was reconsidered during the 1980s although not accomplished in spite of some efforts that Robert Jakobsson recalls making. There were also several *illegal solutions* – as they were named by the respondents – which some of the groups adopted in order to solve their financial issues and this illegality is mainly related to the defying punk attitude of the groups' members toward the authorities, as Rolf Sossna expressed it, or to the groups' disobedience as a first step of their resistance (Lorey 2015, p.105). These were not serious crimes as the examples mentioned during the interviews are showing: selling alcohol in the theatre, remarked by Ulf Wideström, which is a common practice nowadays; performing street theatre without authorization as Rolf Sossna remembered; getting money for the study circles even if the group was not consisting of five members all the time as the rule demands, mentioned by Robert Jakobsson.

### 5.3.4 Survival

A surprising element which I could notice after listening repeatedly to the interviews was the frequency of the word “survive” mentioned by the respondents. Even if my focus was not on following the quantitative approach when analysing the material, I consider it important to raise the discussion about the recurrence of the survival reference because: 1) it was a repetition I could not ignore with my sensitivity as a researcher (Johnson et al, 2004, p.236) and 2) I found it related to the themes of precarization and pride explored in this chapter. In the following paragraphs I will provide several examples in which the word “survive”, or its derivations, appeared in the material in order to stress its various connections to the themes.

On one hand, the public funding system is providing a survival base for some of the non-institutional performing arts constellations. To the question regarding the extent to which Teater Sesam is being dependent on public grants, Nasrin Barati answers: “Ah, exactly, that question... (*she exhales*). That's a lot! Very much! We can, I think, we cannot survive without it. It's not possible! [...] Without it I cannot manage the finances and *present a theatre at the level I do*, with the employees and all the artists who work here with different types of jobs: musician, composer, set designer, costume designer...” (my italics). She explains that the capacity of the theatre is of maximum 60-65 persons and the price of the ticket is 140 SEK – 40 SEK paid by each pupil and the rest comes via the equalization grant – and that this income is enough to pay the rent for the place while almost all the other grants they receive goes to salaries. The aspects mentioned by Nasrin Barati are common for many non-institutional performing arts groups: renting affordable premises with little audience capacity, up to 100 persons; striving for a certain quality of their productions which contributes to their artistic pride, but it implies extra work, time and financial resources; prioritizing the salaries of the artists in the budget planning. All these aspects cannot be achieved on a survival level without the public funding system.

On the other hand, some of the non-institutional performing arts groups used alternative financial solutions in order to survive. In this sense, Pita Skogsén gives as examples the possibility to tour in Germany and “get so much money to survive half a year” and the reduction of living expenses to minimum: “we had to survive and so we lived on almost nothing”. Robert Jakobsson mentioned Teater Albatross's surviving strategy which consisted in owning a house/theatre in the countryside since the 1990s where they do not need to pay a rent:

We have been able to survive thanks to the fact that we have had our own house which was very cheap [when it was bought in the early 1990s] and which we have been able to work in all these years and also make money by renting it out. Without it, we could not have made it. Plus, we have been able to make large street plays and huge productions, [...] large constructions that we have left in the garden over the winter. In the city you would need a garage and it would have been very difficult.

To a certain extent, the surviving situation appears to be experienced subjectively as it can be connected to the cultural producers' personal endurance and limits as the following interview extract with Wiveka Warenfalk can show. The extract reveals also a certain reservation in

talking about the past financial issues when these issues were not perceived as critical, a dignity and a pride of not complaining about the difficulties although admitting them:

Wiveka Warenfalk: [U]p to that limit when you feel that 'I cannot do this, I do not survive', until then you are free.

Liliana Farcas: Have you experienced such a limit?

Wiveka Warenfalk: No! I have not (*muffled voice, short pause*). But for a while it was like... we were very, very poor, so that... back then I thought ... 'Do I have money for the tram ticket?' and so (*she laughs*). Things like that. But it was a short period... I've never experienced it as a crisis or... No.

Accepting that the survival capacity of the artists implies a certain degree of subjectivity, it can be also argued that, in general, the struggle of the non-institutional performing arts groups was mainly one of survival rather than one of “a good life, a livable life” (Butler 2015, p.208). This survival aspect was mentioned in a paragraph of the governmental bill from 1997 referring to the situation of the non-institutional theatre groups, right after acknowledging the outcomes produced by the groups in relation to the grants invested in their work:

The free groups also serve as artistic alternatives to the theatre institutions. Society receives a lot of theatre in relation to the grants that are paid out. An increase and concentration of government grants provide better survival and development opportunities for the free theatre groups. (Prop.1996/97: 3, p.71)

This paragraph is interesting also because it reveals the market-oriented type of logic regarding the cultural activities in terms of the amount of outcomes achieved by a minimum of investment realised through the public funding system. This logic is a result of the New Public Management ideas implemented during the 1990s in the public institutions. Additionally, with all the subjectivity implied in assessing their own situation, living and creating productions with a wage below the average was an objective fact repeatedly signalled as alarming over the years (Rynell & Åberg 1977, p.13; Fridell 1984, p.10; SOU 1997:190<sup>22</sup>, p.8) but accepted as normal in the cultural field.

### 5.3.5 Summary

The members of non-institutional performing arts groups were often using their creativity in order to make productions but also to find solutions for managing their precarious financial situation. Certain circumstances were favourable for the groups' working and living possibilities – just to name some examples: low living costs, low rents for hiring premises or living spaces, affordable promoting ads, incentives from KULF and KULIS etcetera. A factor which played an essential role in sustaining the artists living and working conditions was the benefits received

---

<sup>22</sup> “The survey of the artists' financial conditions shows that the average gross income for 1995 was 142,000 SEK. For the general population, the corresponding average gross income was 172,000 SEK. The income level was 17 percent lower than for the entire population aged 20–64” (SOU 1997:190, p. 8)

from the unemployment insurance fund.

The alternative and/or complementary modes of financing that the non-institutional performing arts groups were using are, to a certain extent, a form of *resistance* against forms of domination manifested as disobedience towards the authorities (e.g. adopting illegal solutions to the financial needs). At the same time, other alternatives – like creating productions flexible for touring, working without being paid and self-exploitation – are adopted because they allow the artists to decide what they want to work and with whom, they allow freedom, autonomy and the ability to organize one's own time. However, it is precisely these alternative living and working conditions that give the sense of freedom which have increased in recent years because “they favour the flexibility that the labour market demands” (Lorey 2006). These alternatives and dissident practices are “a part of the transformation toward a neoliberal form of governmentality” (ibid.) even if the artists' intention can be rather inscribed in their survival strategies. As Margit Mayer mentioned, the overlapping points between the neoliberal ideas and the demands of the social movements from 1968, especially the ideals of freedom and autonomy (although invested with different meanings) facilitated the adaptation to the neoliberal rationality and to the entrepreneurial attitude (Sohn et al. 2011, p.269).

## 6. Conclusions and discussion

In this chapter, my focus will be in highlighting this research's findings and in drawing the conclusions of this study while looking at what the joint results from the three research questions can say about the working and living conditions of the early non-institutional performing arts groups from Gothenburg. While doing this, I will also bring into discussion this study's connection to the previous research regarding non-institutional performing arts groups and its relation to recent developments in the cultural field. In the end, I will make suggestions regarding further research and write my final remarks.

### 6.1 Spiral mechanism and resistance

With the risk of repeating myself, I want to stress one main result of this study, namely that the financial circumstances created by the public funding system under which the local non-institutional performing arts groups were carrying out their activity created a spiral mechanism where the cultural producers were constantly set in the position of admitting that it works to make productions without the amount of money needed. They were making full productions, by adopting complementary ways of assuring those productions' costs. The fact that the authorities knew that the groups would create their productions regardless of the amount of public grants, and on many occasions despite lacking public funds all together, is one of the reasons for considering this closed system as a crucial element of *governmental precarization*. Another element of this form of precarization was gradually placing the responsibility of caring for the groups in the case of financial difficulties on the groups' shoulders on the basis that they had the freedom to form the group and therefore they were the only ones to blame if they failed.

In general, the subject of public funding for the non-institutional performing arts groups is not approached in academic texts. It is rather a matter of journalistic investigation (this is also a reason why I choose to include newspaper articles in my study). The artists themselves are rather preferring to talk about their artistic work than their struggle of financing their productions, which can be interpreted as a reminiscence of Bourdieu's principle of economic world reversed (1993). That is why this study is important (as, even, Wiveka Warenfalk mentioned during the interview) because it brings into discussion the artists' living and working conditions, in-depth, with a historical perspective, at an academic level.

Therefore, I intentionally stress the fact that the artists repeatedly failed to resist when they were pressed financially and their working or living conditions were worsening. But while doing this, I do not deny the fact that my respondents were part of the free groups movement and that they are bearers of the free groups movement's ideas: of deciding democratically the matters related to their productions, of equality, of being close to the audience both physical – e.g. by performing everywhere, without curtains between them and the audience as Willmar Sauter described it (Hammergren et al. 1996, p.170) – and ideological (e.g. by adopting subjects that were close to their audience), of solidarity, of protest against established performing arts institutions and of revolt against macrostructures.



The artists' way of resistance was manifesting mainly artistically and ideologically. They didn't consider the economic aspects as important as the artistic and ideological ones. And, as I have showed in this study, precisely this conditioned distribution of the public funds has proven to be successful in incorporating the initial oppositional forces and reshape them in order to serve the neoliberal system. This being said, I do think that the non-institutional performing arts groups' members still have the power to resist even economically through the possibilities of alliances that they pointed out themselves.

From a *power relation* and *domination* perspective (Foucault 1982; 1997), what the non-institutional performing arts groups managed to do was to have a dominant position in the cultural field outside the performing arts institutions in the 1970s. As Sauter remarked, performing arts managed even to play a powerful role in the ideological and political discourse during the 60s-70s (Hammergren et al. 1996, p.177). Therefore, the free groups movement is important for understanding the empowering feeling one gets by identifying with a movement that managed to destabilize a previous state of domination in the cultural field.

## 6.2 Romantization and risks

The overall results of this thesis show that the respondents have often an ambivalent attitude between providing a romanticized picture of “a free group” based on the free groups movement's ideology of resistance and social justice (e.g. the identification with the generation '68) and an adaptation to the current neoliberal modes of subjectivation and to the laws of the market which implies surviving, selling their productions and being entrepreneurs.

*Romantization* is not necessarily a negative process if it is used to empower the artists, to give them the awareness of their own history (as being part of a movement that managed to destabilize a state of domination in the performing arts field) and of their influence upon the cultural field during the expansion period, as I have seen happening during their gathering at Konstspidemin. The self-empowerment, especially when it contributes to a collective story, like it was the situation at Konstspidemin, opens the possibility for alliances which can lead to social change for the cultural producers themselves and for other precarious workers. I consider that the extension of the possibility of alliance with members from other sectors of the working labour is conceivable especially because the artists I've met are “socially engaged” (McRobbie 2016, p.80) and are concerned with matters of socio-political importance.

On the other hand, the romantization of the “free group” can have negative effects if the cultural producers strive to the same ideal of a “typical artist” (McRobbie 2016, p.70), which guided them in the early years of their careers, but which can lead to self-exploitation especially because the socio-historical circumstances had changed since then. As Marita Flisbäck noticed, in alignment with McRobbie's reasoning, the artists' creativity, their flexible and independent way of working and their entrepreneurial spirit have constituted a “prototype” for the skills and conditions demanded even in other working areas than the cultural field (2017, p.515). The main problem with the reiteration of the typical artist ideal and with the spreading of the living and working conditions of the artists over larger segments of the working population is that

they restrain the possibilities of resistance. Similar to the conclusions of this study, are the results of Danka Miscevic's dissertation which point to the fact that “conditions like precarious employment, widespread mobility and intense competition regarding employment opportunities put limits to acts of resistance and thereby social change” (2014, p.198). And despite this tendency, Miscevic remarks that acts of resistance are visible among the cultural producers and are expressed in the affinity to a collective, like in the present study, and also in the “readiness to defend an artistic occupational identity” (ibid.).

Another surprising outcome of this study is the number of references to the different survival strategies applied by the cultural producers. The reason why it was surprising to notice the amount of these references done by the respondents during the interviews is because I was considering, in alignment with Butler, that “survival is surely a precondition for all other claims we make” but that survival itself “proves insufficient” since “we survive precisely in order to live, and life, as much as it requires survival, must be more than survival in order to be livable. One can survive without being able to live one’s life. [...] So, an overarching demand must be precisely for a livable life” (2015: 208-209). When referring to the members of the non-institutional performing arts groups, one can argue that they did more than just to survive as they worked with what they were passionate about and compensate the financial issues with the joy and meaning brought by their productions, as several of the respondents mentioned, for instance Ulf Wideström, Pita Skogsén and Fia Adler Sandblad (cf. Linström 2016). One risk in accepting this argument of passionate work as a compensation for the economical struggles is accepting the passionate work to justify and, to some extent, obscure the precarization process among the cultural producers (McRobbie 2016). Another risk of this acceptance is that this leads to a differentiation between the cultural producers and other precarious social groups. To reveal the problem with such a differentiation, Lorey refers to an article of the French sociologist Robert Castel<sup>23</sup> who is making a difference between precarity of the lower classes and the “higher” form of precarity which includes “the so-called *intermittents du spectacle* in France – those discontinuously employed in the field of theatre, film and media” (Lorey 2015, p.55). Although Lorey agrees that hierarchizations and differences among the precarious need to be reflected upon, she mentions that by making such a separation “he [Castel] also makes the intense engagements and struggles of the intermittents invisible” (ibid.). Lorey's main point is that precarity is not affecting only the marginalized but that we assist to “the normalization of precarization throughout the whole society” (2015, p. 60).

Taking into consideration the risks implied when accepting the argument that the passionate work justifies the precarious living and working of cultural producers, I argue that using the term “precarity of the privileged” (Lindström 2016, p.68) when referring to the visual artists and, to a certain extent, to cultural producers, is not suitable. Even if in the case of the visual artists interviewed by Sofia Lindström, the term seemed to be appropriate, I consider that, the economic and emotional support that these artists receive from their families is exactly what it is expected within the neoliberal rationality when withdrawing the social support for the

---

<sup>23</sup> Castel, Robert. "Die Wiederkehr der sozialen Unsicherheit" published in Castel, Robert and Dörre, Klaus (2009). *Prekarität, Abstieg, Ausgrenzung: die soziale Frage am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag. pp. 21-34

cultural producers and thus reinforcing their insecurity. At the same time, I agree that there is a difference between the cultural producers and other precarized workers in terms of level of education and “inner reward” from their work which place them in the centre of the labour market (Flisbäck 2017, pp.508-509). I also hesitated in using the term precarious when referring to my respondents, especially that I talked to successful artists from the performing arts field. Therefore, I consider the term *governmental precarization* a better option for problematizing the entanglements between the instruments of governing, the precarious economic conditions and the modes of subjectivation of the cultural producers (Lorey 2015, p.13).

### **6.3 Further research topics and final remarks**

First, I want to suggest further possible research topics. Based on my selective reading of the applications for public grants sent by the non-institutional performing arts groups to the municipality and archived in the Regional Archive [Regionarkivet] in Gothenburg, I think that the material provided by these applications can constitute substantial data for studying and analysing. Another contribution to complement the history of the non-institutional performing arts groups from Gothenburg should regard the experiences of the artists who did not continue in the performing arts field. I did encounter such examples in the database of the “Expansion and diversity” project and I, unfortunately, did not have the time to contact and interview these people. As I was upset by the lack of names for the people portrayed in the photos exhibited at the Gothenburg City Museum, adding the names of the people involved in non-institutional performing arts groups but who followed another career path could be an inclusive and thankful research gesture.

As a final remark of this thesis, I will refer to the fact that the living and working conditions for the non-institutional performing arts groups during the studied period were assessed, by most of the respondents, as better than the conditions nowadays. In this assessment, a major role was played not by a better public funding system but rather due to the other instances which influenced their living and working conditions: the unemployment benefits (a-kassa), a supportive welfare state, affordable local premises for rehearsal, cheaper living possibilities (low costs for hiring apartments or for food), just to name some examples. At the same time, the respondents were also young during the expansion period and therefore they had other perspectives on their living and working conditions. Due to these factors, it is difficult to categorically claim that those conditions were objectively better during the 70s-90s. Still, considering the level of insecurity (cf. Lorey 2016) experienced by the respondents and their worries (expressed by several cultural producers who participated at the meeting at Konstepidemin) regarding the psychological health of the young generation of cultural producers, it can be said that these working and living conditions became worse. One sure fact is that the increased number of freelance performing artists due to the decreasing of the permanent employment positions in the institutional scenes during the last 30 years (Flisbäck & Lund 2010, p.4), increased the competition for jobs within the performing arts field and contributed to a higher level of insecurity.

As I've already mentioned in the second chapter, this thesis, written within the discipline of cultural studies, is creating a link between two disciplines (theatre studies and sociology) which share the interest in performing arts, but their research studies are seldom intersecting. My contribution with this thesis is to bring real identities, historical perspective and a complex theoretical concept borrowed from cultural studies (e.g. governmental precarization) to sociology in order to offer another perspective on the living and working conditions of cultural producers. At the same time, I hope to contribute to the discipline of theatre studies by including the struggles, resistance and interdependencies of the non-institutional performing arts groups' members in relation to their economic situation. I do consider that the cultural producers' experiences related to the public funding system is a complement to their artistic achievements and can provide a better understanding of their productions. Additionally, I think that this thesis is relevant for the discussion regarding the cultural policy governance's influence on artistic freedom by bringing a historical perspective regarding the impact of the different aspects of the public funding system upon the artists.

## References

- Arvidsson, Alf (1998). *Livet som berättelse: Studier i levnadshistoriska intervjuer*. Serie Etnologiska Skrifter, 10. Lund: Studentlitteratur
- Aspers, Patrick (2011). *Etnografiska metoder: Att förstå och förklara samtiden*. 2.[uppdaterade och utökade] uppl. Malmö: Liber.
- Back, Les (2007). *The art of listening*. Oxford: Berg
- Back, L., Sinha S., Charlyne B., Baraku, V., & Yembi, M. (2018). *Migrant City*. 1st ed. Florence: Routledge.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). "Using thematic analysis in psychology" in *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), pp.77–101.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). "Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis" in *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), pp. 589–597.
- Brinkmann, Svend & Kvale, Steinar (2015). *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Ed 3.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Boltanski, Luc, & Chiapello, Eve (2005). "The New Spirit of Capitalism" in *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 18.3/4: 161–188.
- Butler, Judith (2015). *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press
- Butler, Judith (2009). *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London: Verso.
- Bäck, G. (1992). *Ord och kött: Till teaterns fenomenologi med Larssons och Kyrklunds Medea*. Diss. Göteborg: Universitet
- Bäck, G., Larsson, S., Lönnblom, T., & Adler Sandblad, F. (2005). *Kroppens poesi: En bok om Sören Larssons arbete med skådespelarens uttryck* (2., [rev.] uppl. / redigerad av Sören Larsson och Fia Adler Sandblad ed.). Skara: Pegasus.
- Couldry, Nick (2000). *Inside culture: re-imagining the method of cultural studies*. London: Sage
- Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2nd ed., Chicago guides to writing, editing, and publishing). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Engström, Sara (2017). *I utkanten av teatern: Om Sören Larsson* (Andra upplagan ed.). Göteborg: Bokförlaget Korpen.
- Flisbäck, Marita & Lund, Anna (eds.) (2010). *Konst- och kultursektorn: ett pionjärområde för ett arbetsliv i omvandling* (1. uppl. ed., Arbetsliv i omvandling, 2010:4). Växjö: Linnéuniversitetet, Institutionen för samhällsvetenskaper.
- Flisbäck, Marita (2017). "Konstnärligt arbete – entreprenörer eller prekariat?" in Bengtsson, M., & Berglund, T. (eds.) (2017). *Arbetslivet*. Tredje Upp. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Fridell, Lena (1984). "Betrakta barn som människor" in Almerud, Peter & Madeleine Hjort (red.) (1984). *Barnteater i verkligheten*. Stockholm: Liber Förlag och Statens kulturråd. Skriftserie: Barnkultur i praktiken.
- Forser, Tomas & Heed, Sven Åke (bandred.) (2007). *Ny Svensk Teaterhistoria*. Vol 3: 1900-

- talets Teater*. Hedemora: Gidlund
- Forser, Tomas (2007). "Institutioner, fria grupper och teatervanor" in Forser, Tomas & Heed, Sven Åke (bandred.) (2007). *Ny Svensk Teaterhistoria*. Vol 3: 1900-talets Teater. Hedemora: Gidlund. Pp. 425–504.
- Foucault, Michel & (Ed.) Gordon, C. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, Michel (1982). "The Subject and Power" in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer, 1982), pp. 777–795
- Foucault, Michel (1997). *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault: 1954–1984. Vol. 1, Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. London: Allen Lane.
- Frenander, Anders (2011). *Arkitekter på armlängds avstånd? Att studera kulturpolitik*. Borås: Institutionen Biblioteks- och informationsvetenskap, Högskolan i Borås: Valfrid.
- Geertz, Clifford (1973). "Thick description" in Geertz, C. (1993). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (New ed.). London: Fontana.pp. 3–30.
- Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich (2004). *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press
- Göteborgs Socialförvaltnings arkiv (1983). *Liten historik om Kulf*
- Göteborgs Stad (1998). *Kulturpolitisk strategi, version 1.0 [Cultural policy strategy, version 1.0]*
- Hammergren, Lena, Helander, Karin, & Sauter, Willmar (Red.) (1996). *Svenska Teaterhändelser 1946–1996*. Stockholm: Natur och Kultur
- Hammergren, Lena, Helander, Karin, Rosenberg, Tiina, & Sauter, Willmar (2004). *Teater i Sverige*. Hedemora: Gidlund.
- Hammergren, Lena (2011). "Dance and Democracy in Norden" in Vedel, Karen (2011). *Dance and the Formation of Norden: Emergences and Struggles*. Trondheim: Tapir Academic.
- Hellström Sveningson, L., & Nyberg, G.(eds.) (2020). *På scenen: Teater, dans, sång och musik. Hundra år i Göteborg*. Stockholm: Carlssons
- Hoogland, Rikard (2005). *Spelet om teaterpolitiken. Det svenska regionteatersystemet: Från statligt initiativ till lokal realitet*. Stockholms universitet. Institutionen För Musik- Och Teatervetenskap, & Teatertidningen.
- Jackson, Alecia Youngblood, & Mazzei, Lisa A. (2012). *Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research: Viewing Data across Multiple Perspectives*. 1.st ed. New York: Routledge
- Jacobsson, Bengt (2014). *Kulturpolitik: styrning på avstånd*. Lund: Studentlitteratur
- Jacobsson, L., & Wahlqvist, P. (2018). *Nationalboken: Den enda sanna skrönan om Nationalteatern*. Första upplagan. Stockholm: Vulkan
- Johansson, Anna (2005). *Narrativ teori och metod: med livsberättelsen i fokus*. Lund: Studentlitteratur
- Johnson, R., Chambers, D., Raghuram, P., & Tincknell, E. (2004). *The Practice of Cultural Studies*. London: Sage
- Jönsson, Lars-Erik & Nilsson, Fredrik (red.) (2017) *Kulturhistoria. En etnologisk metodbok*. Lund: Lund Studies in Arts and Cultural Sciences.
- Karlsson, David (2010). *En kulturutredning: Pengar, konst och politik*. 1 Upp, serie Glänta

- hardcore; 1). Göteborg: Glänta produktion.
- Kjellberg, Ida (2019). *Med kulturen som (värdeskapande) hyresgäst. En etnografisk studie om Göteborgs stads arbete med kultur, lokaler och stadsplanering*. [Masteruppsats, Göteborgs universitet].
- Klein, Barbro (1990). "Transkribering är en analytisk akt" in *Rig – Kulturhistorisk tidskrift*, vol. 73, nr. 2, pp.41–66.
- KUB 69 (1973). *Utgångspunkter och mål för ett kommunalt kulturprogram för Göteborg* [Starting points and goals for a municipal cultural program for Gothenburg]. Göteborg.
- KULF (1979). *Att forma en människa* [To shape a human being].
- Larsson, T., & Svenson, P. (2001). "Cultural Policy in Sweden" in *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*. 31(1), pp.79–96.
- Laustsen, Carsten Bagge, Lars Thorup Larsen, Mathias Wullum Nielsen, Tine Ravn, & Mads Peter Sørensen (2017). *Social Theory: A Textbook*. London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Lennartsson, Rebecka (2017). "Mamsell Bohmans biljetter. Arkivetnografi i 1700-talets Stockholm: Ingångar, villospår och utvägar" in Jönsson, L., & Nilsson, F. (2017). *Kulturhistoria. En etnologisk metodbok*. Serie: Lund Studies in Arts and Cultural Sciences, 13. Lund: Institutionen för kulturvetenskaper, Lunds universitet.
- Lindström, Sofia (2016). *(Un)bearable freedom: exploring the becoming of the artist in education, work and family life* (Linköping studies in arts and science, 692). [Dissertation]. Norrköping: Linköping University, Department for Studies of Social Change and Culture.
- Lorey, Isabell (2006). "Governmentality and Self-Precarization. On the normalization of cultural producers" in Simon Sheikh (Ed.) (2006). *CAPITAL (It Fails Us Now)*. Berlin: b\_books, pp. 117–139.
- The online version of the article, translated by Lisa Rosenblatt and Dagmar Fink, published in *transversal: 'Machines and Subjectivation'*:  
<https://transversal.at/transversal/1106/lorey/en> (Accessed 2020/04/16; 2021/08/04)
- Lorey, Isabell (2015). *State of Insecurity. Government of the Precarious*. London, New York: Verso
- Marander-Eklund, Lena (2011). "Livet som hemmafru" in Marander-Eklund, L. & Östman, A. (red.) (2011). *Biografiska betydelser: norm och erfarenhet i levnadsberättelser*. Möklinta: Gidlund. Pp. 133–156.
- McRobbie, Angela (2001). *Everyone is creative: artists as new economy pioneers?* Article published online: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/652/> (Accessed 2020/05/07).
- McRobbie, Angela (2016). *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Mills, C. Wright (1951). *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*. New York: Oxford U.P.
- Miscevic, Danka (2014). *Bortom scenen - en sociologisk studie av frilansande skådespelares villkor* (Göteborg studies in sociology, 57). [Dissertation]. Department of Sociology and Work Science, University of Gothenburg].

- Myndigheten för kulturanalys (2021). *Så fri är konsten: Den kulturpolitiska styrningens påverkan på den konstnärliga friheten* [So free is art: The impact of cultural policy governance on artistic freedom]. Rapport 2021:1.
- Prop. 1974:28. *Kungl. Maj:ts proposition angående den statliga kulturpolitiken* [The Royal Majesty's bill regarding state cultural policy]
- Prop.1975/76:135. *Proposition om den statliga kulturpolitiken 3.*
- Prop. 1996/97:3. *Kulturpolitik* [Cultural policy].
- Prop. 2009/10:3. *Tid för kultur* [Time for culture].
- Puar, Jasbir (2012). "Precarity Talk: A Virtual Roundtable with Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Bojana Cvejić, Isabell Lorey, Jasbir Puar, and Ana Vujanović" in *TDR/The Drama Review* Vol.56(4), pp.163–177
- Richardson, Laurel (1990). "Narrative and Sociology" in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 19(1), pp. 116–135
- Richardson, Laurel & Adams St. Pierre, Elizabeth (2018). "Writing: A Method of Inquiry" in Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (red.) (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Fifth edition. Los Angeles: Sage. Pp.818–838
- von Rosen, Astrid (2018a). "Dansgruppen Rubicon och den fria dansens genombrott i Göteborg" in *Arche*. Iss. 64–65, Pp. 186–197.
- von Rosen, Astrid (2018b, May 22). *Projektbidrag Digitalisering och tillgängliggörande av kulturarvsamlingar 2018 (Humaniora och samhällsvetenskap)*. [Ansökan till Vetenskapsrådet för projektet "Expansion och mångfald: Digital kartläggning och analys av den utominstitutionella scenkonsten i Göteborg 1965–2000]. Application sent to Swedish Research Council.
- von Rosen, Astrid (2021). "Om Claude Marchant: Ett Historiografiskt Bidrag till Svart Danshistoria i Sverige" in *Nordic Journal of Dance - Practice, Education and Research*, Vol. 12, Iss. 1, Pp. 4–20.
- Rynell, Erik & Åberg, Lars (eds.) (1977). *Spela för livet: Fria kulturgrupper inför 80-talet*. Stockholm: LiberFörlag.
- Saukko, Paula (2003). *Doing research in cultural studies. An introduction to classical and new methodological approaches*. London: Sage.
- Scapoli, N. (2020) *Teater Albatross. Föreställningar, resor, konst och visioner*
- Spade, Dean (2015). *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of law* (Revised and expanded ed.). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Sohn, H., Robles-Duran, M., & Kaminer, T. (2011). "Nyliberal urbanisering och motståndets politik. Intervju med Margit Mayer" in Holgersson, H. & Thörn, C. (2014). *Gentrifiering*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- SOU 1972:66. *Ny kulturpolitik. Nuläge och förslag* [New cultural policy. Current situation and proposals].
- SOU 1995:85. *Tjugo års kulturpolitik 1974-1994* [Twenty years of cultural policy 1974-1994]
- SOU 1997:190. *Kartläggning av konstnärernas verksamhetsinriktning och ekonomiska förhållanden*
- SOU 2018:23. *Konstnär – oavsett villkor?* [Artist – regardless of the conditions?].



- Statens kulturråd (1988). *Kulturrådet: Statens Kulturråd Informerar*. Nr. 2
- Strömberg, H., Ingemarsson, E., & Rydén, N. (2020). *Atalante - mitt i livet: Trettio år med dans, musik, konst*. Göteborg: Bokförlaget Korpen
- Sylwan, Mats (1988). "Staten och de fria grupperna" in Statens kulturråd (1988). *Kulturrådet: Statens kulturråd Informerar*. Nr 2.
- Teater Albatross (2021). Robert Jakobsson. <https://teateralbatross.se/medarbetare/robert-jakobsson/> (Accessed 2021/08/18)
- Teatercentrum (2021). *About us*. <https://www.teatercentrum.se/english/> (Accessed 2021/08/19)
- Tjäder, Per Arne (1984). *Den allvarsamma lekplatsen: tillstånd och förändringar i svensk teater*. 1. Uppl. Serie: Mottryck, 4. Stockholm: Arbetarkultur.
- University of Gothenburg (2020, 16 September). *Expansion and Diversity: Digitally mapping and exploring independent performance in Gothenburg 1965-2000*. <https://www.gu.se/en/research/expansion-and-diversity-digitally-mapping-and-exploring-independent-performance-in-gothenburg-1965-2000> (Accessed 2021/08/18)
- Van Maanen, John (2011). *Tales of the field: on writing ethnography*. 2. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### ***Appendix 1: List of the newspaper articles***

- GP[Göteborgsposten], 1979/06/12, *Trygghets tema i Rubicons barnbalett – Vi försöker förmedla känslor*, by Jonas Almqvist
- GP, 1988/03/10, *Svårt för bidragsspelets förlorare*, by Bengt Sonden
- GP, 1989/11/11, *Det fria teaterlivet – slittjobb för svältlön*, by Ylva M. Andersson
- GP, 1990/12/9, *De fria grupperna faller som käglor*, by Lis Hellström-Sveningson
- GP, 2020/10/27, *Minnesord: Sören Larsson skapade kroppens poesi*, by Lis Hellström Sveningson
- GT[Göteborgs-Tidningen], 1978/10/31, *Stans enda fria dansgrupp: Ring så dansar vi*, by Lasse Råde
- GT, 1983/07/18, *Vart tog debatten om de fria gruppernas pengar vägen?* by Guy Ehrling
- GT, 1984/10/12, *Göteborgs Off-Broadway*, by Marga Schindelar & Michael Falk
- GT, 1997/10/22, *Så dyr är fri kultur!*, by Hasse Carlsson
- SD [Svenska Dagbladet], 2005/12/14, *Ridå för Teater Bhopa*, by Margareta Artsman

### ***Appendix 2: Interview guide***

Tell me a little about yourself:

1. When did you start doing performing arts? In which context?
2. Can you describe that context a little more generally?
3. What do you do now?

Experience and examples related to the public funding system that existed for non-institutional performing arts in Gothenburg between 1965 and 2000:

4. Have you noticed any changes regarding municipal/state funding during the period 1965–2000 that affected you/your work? Can these years be divided into different periods? Are there any significant events?
5. How do you connect these changes with social changes in general?
6. To what extent were you/your group dependent on municipal/state funding?
7. How did you (as a group) finance various performing arts projects/performances? Can you give some concrete examples?
8. How difficult/easy was it to get a grant? What could this be due to?
9. Was there any occasion when you needed to adapt/change/remove something in a cultural production/project just to get a grant? Can you give a concrete example in case this has happened?

Reflections:

10. How has the public grant system affected your artistic work? Can you think of a specific project?
11. How has the public grant system affected your life in general?
12. The non-institutional performing arts groups active between 1965 and 2000 are most often referred to as the “free groups”. How do you think about that? What is freedom for you? How does/did it feel to be in a free group?
13. What was/is your role in society as a performing arts practitioner?
14. How are the conditions for young performing arts practitioners nowadays?