

**8B - 13:15 - 14:15**

**Dance and Politics / How organizing cultural events can influence the politics of a region.**

### Introduction

**Participant 1:** opens the introduction. Participant 1 is an artist and producer. He manages since eight years a performing arts festival in Ticino. The festival is interdisciplinary conceived. They invite a broad range of artists, dancers, musicians and performing artists to work with them. They want to give them the possibility of an open space to experiment and conceive new pieces. He is interested in opinions and perspectives about working with politics and art and how to reach out to more people interested in art.

**Participant 2:** comes from Burkina Faso. He works in the field of dance theater. He is concerned about how to make “theater” in Africa within an extreme political context. He searches for strategies. He describes that in Burkina Faso the decisions about subventions and funding are asked and thought around basic priorities, education, health care and food providing. “How can you do art work in this conditions?” His answer was to start working with politically engaged questions. In Africa dance is like any other form of human expression, but it is not seen as an art expression that should be specially treated and cared for.

***“Within the context of Africa to dance and being a performer is already a political act.”***

**Participant 3:** He works along with his wife who is a former dancer and performer. Both manage a dance company in Bonn, Germany. Along with the company they have built a residency place and are interested to exchange with other artists, and to give them also the opportunity for research. They’ve created two festivals, which they also curate. For him the highest aim of arts is to discover another way of thinking and acting. However he is resistant to including politics within the context of art.

### Discussion

**Participant 3:** from his point of view political practices will remain political practices. Arts and politics shouldn’t be mixed, because they take two oppositional points of view. Art and politics are like black and white. His concern is that his work shouldn’t look like a political practice. Politics is about interest, and interest is „dirty“.

**Participant 1:** has an opposite opinion about politics in dance. In his eyes every production is a political manifesto. A production comes out from your vision of the world, from artist’s own point of view. An aesthetic expression, as any piece of art, is always linked to a distinct community. Consequently a community produces art for their own community. In Ticino the main political wheel is very conservative and they seek to prevail their conservative culture, but he produces openly and seeks to include different people, different artists, and to work in different spaces in order that interchange with society can take place. He finds resistance because of his proposal of art works is against tradition.

***“The topic is very rich. But important is to be aware of where we stand as artists.”***

**Participant 2:** exposes that a possible strategy to break with the resistance against art from politician’s side is coming back to society, to people. In democracy politicians are elected by people. Therefore going back to people can be a solution. He proposes to look at the process of

democratic election as a wheel where the different levels of society and politics are connected. An example is set with his experience in Burkina Faso. After the past political turn where artist encouraged society to political changes by expressing their concerns through art they found themselves for the first time to be considered a moving force within society and were granted for the first time financial support. The impact of artists' speech in the real live of a political movement in Burkina Faso made that society look at art as part of the movement. He stated that "being African and artist" is not only in Africa, but also in Europe, already a political statement. Therefore he, as an artist of different background, has to be careful of how he communicates and works around political topics depending on the place he is invited to present his work.

***"Politic is present and absent at the same time.  
You are always in a context."***

**Participant 3:** denotes that funding is in direct reliance of the kind of political statements he, as an art director, makes. His company is well supported, because they aren't radical, in the sense of taking political positions. His urge is to find a way to provoke without loosing funding. Yet in his opinion being politically active means risking the funding. You can be provocative but not politically oriented.

***"We are all working within a political context,  
we need to be aware of it and the challenges  
of it."***

## **Conclusion**

The participants were aware of the magnitude of the topic, also about the importance of sharing experiences around the topic of politics and dance. For participant 1 was important to share his standpoint with others and discuss whether other producers and/or dance managers have found a strategy to balance politics without compromising the artistic outcome of their projects.