A R T I C L E S   A N D   E S S A Y S

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HYBRID FESTIVALS:
CHALLENGES FACING CRACOW'S FESTIVAL SCENE DURING THE PANDEMIC

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Cracow (a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network) is a city boasting a dynamic cultural life, with nearly 100 festivals organised annually, many of them international. The Covid-19 pandemic seriously affected Cracow's cultural sector in general, and its music festival scene in particular. The organisers were forced to redefine the design of their events, as well as look for new ways of communicating with audiences and maintaining a sense of festival community. Major outdoor events were replaced by much smaller studio concerts with limited audiences, all under a strict public health regime, that were simultaneously livestreamed through different channels (YouTube, Facebook, Discord, and others). One of the strategies the organisers employed was to enrich the festival program with recordings from previous years, not only to "keep the festival alive" but also to recall some of the positive atmosphere from past events. Some, switching to virtual mode, also made major changes to the program and content itself. Others, as an experiment, moved the whole event online but with a new program.

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The current pandemic has shown that the concept of "hybrid events" is going to persist and dominate the future. However, it can be argued that this is not a new phenomenon at all. Aside from the fact that large, international corporations were already using this approach for their artistic events, examples of hybridity can be found in areas as diverse as sport tournaments and religious services. What is new, however, is that before the year 2020 it was mainly large, international corporations or organisations relying on a belief in spiritual connectivity that made use of this technology. Now they have become necessary to keep even minor festivals from falling apart during the pandemic. At the same time, this experience has proven to be far from completely negative for the festival organisers. As Julius Solaris points out in his article on EventManagerBlog, "62% of event planners say that the future of events is hybrid", a statement backed by their survey (Solaris 2020). Probably the main benefit of this form of event, apart from its usefulness during the recent public health emergency, is the fact that they reach a far wider audience than a regular live event and permit people with reduced mobility to participate. According to Taggbox.com, "a recent study showed that 96% of virtual attendees polled at a recent event, were never intending to attend the live event in person" (Hybrid… 2020). On a more scientific level, Femke Vanderberg, Michaël Berghman & Julian Schaap have already done research on the maintaining of ritual connection considered characteristic of music festivals in the Netherlands. The results showed that while this experience was nowhere near as powerful as during live events, it was nonetheless present and showing potential for further development (Vandenberg et al. 2020). If hybrid events are indeed here to stay, it seems important to study how they are experienced by all participants of the festival community, namely artists, organisers, and last but not least, the audience.

The main goal of this article is to show the hybrid strategies of dealing with the circumstances brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic chosen by three of the city's festivals: EtnoKrakow/Crossroads, Sacrum Profanum, and Unsound. Emerging from their diverse approaches is a new festival formula, which brings with it brand new challenges, opportunities and obstacles. The secondary objective is to also show how Cracow's festivals have coped during the pandemic, in particular in regard to sustaining ideas such as intercultural contact and openness. Despite restrictions, changes, and limits being imposed, can they act as a space for intercultural exchange and a place connecting different groups of people? And what role in this process is to be played by new media?

THE INITIAL RESEARCH PROJECT AND ITS CHANGES
DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Before moving on to the actual theoretical and empirical analysis, some remarks regarding the research itself have to be made. The pandemic circumstances proved difficult to people in many different professions, including academic researchers. Hopefully our own experiences will prove useful for other scholars focusing on cultural activities, as well as the people working in this sector.

First of all, the research is a part of a project bringing together researchers from different European countries. The initial focus of the project comprised the ways in which music festivals help promote connections between diverse cultural groups, be they national, ethnic, or of any other social composition (e.g. sexual identity or financial status). This affected the selection of the Polish festivals that were researched by the authors. Essentially, EtnoKrakow/Crossroads, Unsound and Sacrum Profanum were chosen not so much because of the interest in their immediate reactions to the Covid-19 pandemic, as for their focus on diversity in music and musicians. It must be noted, however, that the focus on Cracow's festivals was, partly, an effect of the expected problems with travelling across the country during the pandemic, as in the initial research project other festivals had also been taken into account. This does not alter the fact that they are some of the most prominent events of their kind in Poland, or that their ways of dealing with the unique situation can be considered exemplary of innovative approaches.

The project started in May 2019, but field research was due to begin only in 2020. Hence, when public health restrictions began to be implemented across all the participating countries around March 2020, the participants' initial reaction was to wait and see how they would develop. Most of the festivals take place in the summer, so it was hoped that by that time things would get back to normal. Within the next month or two, however, it became apparent that the restrictions were likely to last much longer (even until the end of the project), so it was decided that it would be better to incorporate the ways in which the studied festivals dealt with them, alongside the initial goals of researching examples of diversity. The research team quite quickly pointed out that the new situation, due to the events being moved to the internet, may create new relations of diversity, exclusion and inclusion, for example making music events more accessible to people with physical disabilities or limited financial resources. The following part of this paper will be devoted to describing

how the developments of the pandemic affected the tools and methods of research, as well as presenting the methodology that emerged as a result of the new circumstances.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In terms of the applied methodology, our analysis is based on existing data (press articles, reports, social media and website contents) as well as on semi-structured interviews with artistic directors, managers and producers of the three selected festivals, along with observations of the 2020 festivals that took place (both in a live and online format).[1] The 13 interviews were all conducted in 2020 and 2021, in the period between the end of February 2020 (shortly before the pandemic was officially announced) and the beginning of January 2021. The interview questions were first developed before the pandemic became an important issue for the organisation of 2020 events, with the main goal being research of intercultural relations as played out at the festivals, and as such they covered many different topics. These included the general character of each festival, its mottos, ideology, content, target audiences and various forms of diversity as understood by the organisers. Later, we added questions referring more directly to the reactions towards the pandemic itself and accompanying restrictions in the relevant field of culture. These mainly concerned the strategies of survival and recovery, such as new organisational ideas, major challenges, and new formats of a particular event, but also the organisers' expectations for future events and how the pandemic would change the sector in the long term. It should also be noted that many of the questions were created with all of the participant countries taken into account, with local specificities being considered by research sub-groups. Still, the interview scripts were thought of as semi-structured from the start, and as such they were viewed mainly as aids for open discussions. What is also important is that most of the interviews were nevertheless conducted after the pandemic started, and in the one case where the research started before the new situation (this being the organisers of EtnoKrakow), there were additional meetings, aimed at discussing the pandemic circumstances specifically. Interestingly, for some of them it proved difficult to arrange an interview, since they were either too uncertain about their future to answer our questions, or too preoccupied with the stressful situation to even respond.

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[1] The EtnoKraków/Crossroads festival: 18–22 August 2020; The Unsound festival: 4––11 October 2020; the Sacrum Profanum festival: 28 October–6 December 2020.

An important technical change that emerged as a result of the pandemic is that the research itself became somewhat hybrid: many of the interviews were conducted via audio-visual communication tools (mainly Skype), with one interviewee answering all the way from Australia. This in its own right can be considered a valuable finding in regards to the way in which research is conducted. When formerly it was always planned for interviewer and interviewee to meet face-to-face, now this online way of conducting research became more normalised. Methodologically, it should be pointed out that online video communication tools usually provide the option of recording the meetings (with the participants' consent), which means that the body language became something the researcher could always return to rather than only note down if it appeared important.

Apart from the interviews, we also conducted offline and online participatory observations of the festivals being researched. A field observation, aided through photos and written commentaries, was only possible in one case, that of EtnoKrakow, which was the only one presented here that had a non-virtual dimension. Because of this, it focused on public health regime restrictions and their impact on audiences' behaviour, interactions between artists and the public, and the spatial organisation and management of the event. The online aspect of field research was conducted within a netnographic framework. As such, it was based on observations of the events in their online form, especially by watching their broadcasts, but also following and collecting (mainly through screenshots) their posts, as well as their corresponding hashtags on social media, such as Instagram. It was also important to see how the discussions in the comments sections were evolving, which included not only reading them but also taking note of the non-linguistic reactions. In general, the netnographic aspect of research fits into what Robert Kozinets (2020) described as immersion. Immersive netnography can be described as an online version of participatory observation. Since social media allow forms of interaction that are not possible offline (a typical example being "liking" a comment), the author introduced the concept of immersion as a way of unobtrusive, but also not completely passive, participation in an online event. Apart from the netnographic aspect, the internet also served as a source of data already existing, in which regard the festival's official websites were particularly helpful.

An interesting netnographic observation — and perhaps also a warning for both event organisers and online researchers — emerged as a result of the differences in the way the festivals utilised social media for their online or hybrid editions. Specifically, Sacrum Profanum chose a rather unique way of organising an event on Facebook: 2020's festival was one Facebook

event divided into separate days (1 to 29 November), each with its own permalink. For comparison, Unsound's 2020 edition was a single event, marked as lasting continuously from 1 to 9 October, with additional events created for specific concerts and debates. Sacrum Profanum's approach had some surprising consequences, the most methodologically interesting of which was that a simple search for "Sacrum Profanum 2020" on Facebook only revealed data for the last day of the event. As such, before consultation with the organisers, it was believed that interest in the entire event was declared by only 17 people, as opposed to over 600 on the first day. From this situation, two pieces of advice emerge. The organisers should keep in mind that such a subdivided form of online event may result in misunderstanding among the audience: it appears that Sacrum Profanum's followers thought that by declaring interest for the first day they were declaring it for the entire event. Researchers, on the other hand, should remember that while Facebook offers a lot of event affordances, many of which are useful, they may also prove difficult to anticipate while planning netnographic observation.

For the purposes of this article we refer only to a portion of the empirical material gathered during field research, as much of it covers topics unrelated to the pandemic. This is especially significant in the case of EtnoKrakow, as some of the interviews with organisers referred to in this article were conducted before a state of pandemic was officially announced in Poland. Thus there were few reflections on the topic coming from the interviewees.[2]

As a last methodological note, it should be underlined that our field research was finished in the autumn of 2021. Much changed between that time and the completion of this article. Most importantly, many of the music festivals, including those studied by us, have been reintroduced in a normal, live form. The long-lasting results of the Covid-19 pandemic are still visible, though. The festivals' organisers are much more active on social media than they used to be, with some of them still maintaining some form of transmission online.

THE CONCEPT OF HYBRIDITY

This part of our analysis will be devoted to outlining some examples of how hybridity is defined and used within current social sciences. The very

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[2] Another interview with the artistic director of the EtnoKraków/Crossroads Festival was conducted on 11 August, 2021.

fact of how many different researchers have used it in their works, applying it in dimensions as far apart as postcolonialism, new media, and even posthumanism, emphasises its importance. Following this elaboration, a more direct connection between hybridity and live music events will be presented.

Some of the most general descriptions and visions of the hybrid age can be found in a study by Ayesh and Parag Khanna, entitled *Hybrid Reality: Thriving in the Emerging Human-Technology Civilization*. A succinct definition provided there goes as follows: "The Hybrid Age is a new sociotechnical era that is unfolding as technologies merge with each other and humans merge with technology — both at the same time." The authors further develop the concept in the following passage:

> In the Information Age, real-world objects acquired a digital "shadow", but as the Information Age sunsets into the Hybrid Age, the shadow becomes a life form of its own. We increasingly control our own evolution, but do we control the technologies that have given us that power? The Hybrid Age is the transition period between the Information Age and the moment of Singularity (when machines surpass human intelligence) that inventor Ray Kurzweil, author of The Singularity Is Near, estimates we may reach by 2040 (perhaps sooner). The Hybrid Age is a liminal phase in which we cross the threshold toward a new mode of arranging global society. (Khanna, Khanna 2012)

The general idea that can be gained from this description is that of hybridity as an "in between" phenomenon, with emphasis being placed on the process. Although hybridity may itself be a static state, Khannas seem to view it as a step in a larger process of interaction between people and technology: the most important lesson from all science fiction is to prepare for a world in which we need to switch from either/or thinking to an acceptance of both/and reality (Khanna, Khanna 2012).

Hybridity is unquestionably a result of an increasingly media-oriented and globalising world, a "palimpsestic model of cultural globalization" (Joseph 1999: 16). What seems particularly relevant in the context of hybrid festivals is that the ideas of interruption, innovation and transference are strongly linked to hybridisation (cf. Joseph 1999: 20). Another useful definition of hybridity can be provided in the context of the mass and interactive media. According to this approach, the term "hybrid" refers to a complex intermedia dynamic between mainstream news media and social media, as well as the complex circulations between messages and actors, along with the reconfiguration of media on a variety of platforms (Sumiala et al. 2016). Vaccari, Chadwick and O'Loughlin

(2015) describe hybrid media events as "media events whose significance for media professionals, politicians, and non-elites is being reconfigured by the growth of social media."

Among the more interesting conceptualisations of hybridity, that introduced by Anthony Giddens (1991), the concept of "time-space distanciation" deserves attention. The advances in communication technologies have caused the stretching of social relations and made remote interactions a significant feature of everyday life. As a consequence, the interconnectivity and interdependencies have increased, as can be seen from the example of the online festival communities, connecting people from many corners of the globe. Giddens's thirty-year-old hypothesis can be seen as almost prophetic when viewed from the perspective of the pandemic reality in the year 2021, at a time when time-space distanciation had become less a sphere of the elite, and more an everyday necessity. As will be elaborated on later, one of the most interesting aspects of the changes in live events may be the move from the unity of space to the unity of time.

Hybrid festival spaces may be described as spaces where different types of festival experience can occur simultaneously: live/real and virtual; collective/shared and individual; public and private/intimate, all happening in real time and at different times managed by the audience itself. The issue of hybrid spaces as a domain of intercultural relations had already been studied before the Covid-19 emergency changed the understanding of participation in culture and cultural exchange. As Leszek Korporowicz claims, "Hybrid space — in the reality of intensified processes of mobility, deterritorialization, developments in information and communication technologies, and the development of virtual space — poses a great practical and theoretical challenge in the system of modern cultural studies" (Korporowicz 2017: 28). Hybrid music festivals can therefore be understood as intercultural spaces "in the context of globalization, cultural diversification and mediatisation of the contemporary universe of symbolic culture" (Korporowicz 2016: 18). The author further points out that hybrid spaces are areas of constant transgressions and creative potential, especially if they also allow for different cultures to interact. Moreover, this transgressive potential is also linked to the technological characteristics underlying the virtual-/cyber-
-space, which in turn influence the mental and social states of their users. Most importantly, they are spaces where "physical distances lose their importance in favour of semiotic 'distances'". As a result, the very understanding of space — especially in its symbolic and informational

aspects — changes, becoming increasingly "contextual, hybrid and multi--dimensional" (Korporowicz 2016: 19). Korporowicz suggests that all of these characteristics not only allow for the broadening of the borders of cultural spaces, but have also made them very easy to cross. "They are full of 'holes' or 'gateways,' and, in equal measure, overlays and synergies that shift in the world of global information flow, and consequently of a new configuration of communities defined by their participation in the network society" (Korporowicz 2016: 20). Thus, do music festivals, especially those taking place in hybrid spaces, constitute such gateways?

A theoretical perspective that is not linked strictly to hybridity, but is nevertheless useful for the analysis of events in consideration is Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance. In the words of the author,

> Resonance is a kind of relationship to the world, formed through af←fect and e→motion, intrinsic interest, and perceived self-efficacy, in which subject and world are mutually affected and transformed. Resonance is not an echo, but a responsive relationship, requiring that both sides speak with their own voice. This is only possible where strong evaluations are affected. Resonance implies an aspect of constitutive inaccessibility. Resonant relationships require that both subject and world be sufficiently "closed" or self-consistent so as to each speak in their own voice, while also remaining open enough to be affected or reached by each other. Resonance is not an emotional state, but a mode of relation that is neutral with respect to emotional content. This is why we can love sad stories. (Rosa 2019, loc. 4715)

The author considers this concept to be the opposite of alienation, understood as lack of positive emotional relation to the Other (which can be a person, activity, or object, etc.). Rosa's attitude towards technology can be viewed as rather sceptical as far as its potential for creating a resonant space is concerned. At the same time, he points out that such spaces can develop even in the least expected circumstances. Additionally, he puts much emphasis on the dialectic relationship between alienation and resonance: it is precisely in the face of alienation, of "the Other", that people are inclined to develop new resonances, through a dialectic relationship:

> A dialectic of resonance and alienation thus means that, on the one hand, resonance is only possible against the backdrop of a mute and unfamiliar Other, while, conversely, what is yet mute can only be "affected" or adaptively transformed on the basis of a prior or deep-seated, dispositional faith in resonance that feeds one's hopes and expectations of being able to make some segment of world speak. (Rosa 2019, loc. 5117)

In a way, the Covid-19 pandemic can be viewed as a very alienating experience, with people often being denied face-to-face contact with others. Perhaps it may be the case that this alienating situation serves the creation of new resonant relations, forced by this alienation. From this viewpoint, one could speculate that our relationship with technology has to change, to form resonances in this space facilitated by being continuously embedded in the real reality, which is exactly what the hybrid form of a festival is supposed to be. Perhaps, due to the alienating circumstances, a new relation of resonance is being created before our very eyes.

Moving away from hybridity itself, a very useful framework for analysing hybrid festival communities proves to be that of interaction ritual chains, as developed by Randall Collins at the beginning of 21st century (Collins 2004). This expands on older ritual and interaction theories, particularly those developed by Durkheim and Goffman, by pointing out the importance of repetition for maintaining a sense of community. Although Collins himself posited that presence in the same environment was crucial for rituals to have such an effect, Ilja Simons (2019) asserts that it does not necessarily have to be so. While studying festivals (including those focusing on music), she noticed that many of the elements creating an event community could be successfully transposed into the online environment. The most valuable insight from her work, however, appears to be providing a way to distinguish a hybrid community from that remaining offline and only extended into the online sphere. According to her, the crucial element is that of shared symbols carrying abstract meanings between reality and virtuality: if such symbols — sayings, repeated behaviours, characteristic outfits — emerge offline, with the internet serving only as a transmitter, the event community is not hybrid. If, on the other hand, symbolic elements are created both offline and online, the community can be viewed as one that is hybrid (Simons 2019). The pandemic situation researched here alters these statements, by way of reformulating the meaning of online and hybrid festivals during the pandemic generally. Thus, are they to be only a way of putting as much offline experience as possible into the internet, or is it an opportunity to develop qualitatively new forms of expression?

"GOING HYBRID". CRACOW'S FESTIVALS' STRATEGIES OF DEALING WITH THE PANDEMIC IN 2020

Although the first lockdown in Poland was announced on 15 March, at the time it was still believed that the critical situation would not last

long, thus leaving festival organisers in a state of uncertainty as to how they should proceed with the events planned for 2020. During the first few months, practically all cultural events were suspended, people were obliged to wear masks in all public spaces, and were generally discouraged from leaving home unless it was necessary. However, during the summer the restrictions were largely loosened. Events could take place provided the required public health conditions were met: in enclosed spaces, only half of the usual number of tickets could be sold, members of the audience were obliged to wear masks, and every other seat had to be kept free (members of the same household could sit next to each other). Although restrictions for open air concerts were a bit more lenient, the recommended distance of two meters had to be maintained (Koronawirus: informacje i zalecenia, n.d.). The largest summer events were in a particularly difficult situation, as most of them were already in an advanced state of preparation, with artists and venues booked and tickets presold. In some cases (e.g. Unsound) the decision to make the festival online or hybrid was taken very quickly, giving the organisers enough time to introduce any necessary changes without incurring significant financial losses, a factor that was a serious threat to the entire event industry and those closely linked to and dependent upon it.

It was only in late July that proper aid from the government started to appear, under the influence of a newly created Council of Meeting and Event Industries [Rada Przemysłu Spotkań i Wydarzeń], which included representatives of over 500 Polish entrepreneurs. Concerns regarding the administrative aid for cultural institutions were also expressed by the authors of *Alert Kultura*. Their most important conclusions included that the government made a mistake in trying to place most of the responsibility for the cultural sector's problems on local administrative centres, and the recommendation that more effort be put into creating networks between cultural institutions, which would ensure more stable employment during the pandemic, but also in general (Czyżewski et al. 2020).

An important factor that influenced the situation of Cracow's festivals specifically was a visible reduction of Cracow City Hall's annual subsidy for 2020. The local authorities' decision was to cut back on live events, such as festivals, that could not be organised in their traditional form that year, and save this money in order to help artists directly and the creative sector in other ways. Cracow City Hall's response to the crisis was, then, "based on solidarity, locality, and sharing resources" (interview, KBF/ management).

The three selected festivals responded to the Covid-19 emergency situation in different ways, each developing their own strategies for dealing with it.

ETNOKRAKOW/CROSSROADS — "ONEARTH — ONAIR — ONLINE"

Initially, the organisers of the EtnoKrakow festival attempted to save the 2020 event, waiting until the last moment for the City Council's approval, postponing it from June until 18–22 August. The timing of the festival, despite fitting into the short summertime period of relaxed restrictions, was unfortunate, as it coincided with a sharp increase in the number of infections in the vicinity of Cracow. Perhaps for this reason the City Council did not give permission for the event to be organised in any of Cracow's central squares. In the end, the final concert was held on an open-air stage of the Forty Kleparz music club, while other events (chamber concerts, workshops) took place at the Strefa music club, which belonged to the organisers. The chamber concerts had a limited audience of up to 30 people, while only 10 people could attend the workshops. The festival took place in what could be called a classic hybrid form. Live concerts adhering to the public health restrictions were combined with radio broadcasts and online streaming via Facebook and EtnoKraków's own website. Moreover, after the festival there were radio broadcasts of concerts from previous years, something that happened for the first time in its history. Before the festival started there was also an additional accompanying online event — an International Poster Competition "EtnoKraków/Crossroads: Dialogue — Openness — Tolerance" organised by the Crossroads of Cultures and Traditions Association. Its results were published on the festival's Facebook fan page.[3] A very interesting instance of hybridity during this event occurred due to the fact that the artistic director, Jan Słowiński, was at the time diagnosed with a viral infection and monitored the event via virtual channels. For the same reason his wife, the singer Joanna Słowińska, took part in the live performance of the Sokół Orchestra by singing over an online connection, though for the audience it was unclear whether her vocals had been pre-recorded and then played during the concert, or she was singing in real time.

Apart from the restrictions applying to all open-air situations, the organisers of the EtnoKrakow festival also implemented certain regulations of their own. These included filling out health declarations at the entrance, signing consent forms to comply with the public health regulations, the disinfection of tables, and, finally, supervision by the police and

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[3] See the description of the competition: International_Poster_Competition_EtnoKrakow-Crossroads and the exhibition of the virtual poster gallery: EtnoKrakw — Zdjęcia (facebook.com).

public health inspectors. There were also squares of 2 by 2 metres marked out on the ground, helping to maintain the required distance between people, with one square hosting one household or people living together on a daily basis. However, those attending were fed up with the restrictions, and many removed their masks some 15–20 minutes after the beginning of the event. Some of them would buy drinks or food, which they wouldn't consume but instead use as an excuse to keep their faces uncovered. At the same time, the artists would make jokes from the stage, for example "if the police ask you why you stay in the same 'square' please say that you all sleep together". It should however be noted that the audience was significantly less spontaneous than usual in front of the stage, and some would try to dance only within the squares, avoiding direct contact with other people. Quite tellingly, the organisers asked us not to take pictures of the audience, so as not to distribute images of people not wearing masks (because of possible violation of public health regulations). Generally speaking, the behaviour of the audience during this live event was characterised by a certain contradiction between sticking to the public health rules and observing required distances on the one hand, and enjoying physical, sensual spontaneity as a response to the music on the other.

On the whole, the organisers of EtnoKrakow tried to maintain a positive outlook despite the pandemic conditions, with Jan Słowiński declaring:

> The theme of the festival's 22nd event is dialogue. A musical dialogue with tradition, an intercultural dialogue, and social dialogue. At the time of limitations imposed by a global pandemic the deficit of direct relationship, conversations, meetings, and listening to the words, music, and one another is paradoxically aggravating despite the near-infinite access to technical communication we have. We will listen to artists who find dialogue a natural starting point for artistic pursuits, people whose activity is the act of creation of new values, a realistic sign of carrying messages between worlds that are distant in more than just geographic terms. (Introduction to the printed program of the 2020 edition)

UNSOUND — "INTERMISSION"

Unsound's 2020 event faced the most direct negative consequences of the pandemic in that it suffered a significant cut in financial support from Cracow City Hall. The organisers commented on this as follows:

> We found out very quickly that our subsidy had been cut, so we were able to quickly recalculate what we could afford, and then (around the

> end of April) we decided that we would go online and do a program of debates… this decision was made because we all think streaming isn't exactly what people want. People want to experience a live concert. (interview, Unsound/ Production)

At first the organisers considered cancelling the whole event, but then opted for a new format and different content, proclaiming "Less music, more talk", which was made possible thanks to a very successful crowdfunding campaign. At the same time, they admitted that their situation as an autumn event was much better than that of large summer festivals:

> We weren't doing anything serious, weren't booking artists or flights, etc., so we were in a comfortable kind of situation and, when the whole world went into lockdown, we didn't have any economic commitments, we hadn't properly announced the festival or the dates, so essentially we had a wide range of action and freedom, […] we didn't have to cancel or postpone anything. This is a lot of work, because if a festival is already prepared and suddenly you have to put everything off to next year without changing much, it requires many hours and days of work. Fortunately, we didn't have to do this, so our first reaction was "let's wait", then the second was "let's see what the city says", the city is our main sponsor, so really the decision in what form we would organise the festival depended on the funds we would get. (interview, Unsound/ Production)

The theme of the 2020 event was "Intermission", referring to the break caused by the pandemic, "a period starkly separating before from after". In an interview for TVN, Małgorzata Płysa elaborated:

> We need to use this moment of slowing down and think about its causes. There came the moment of excess. We used to function in the reality of excessive travelling, gathering, the opportunities of cultural consumption. […] Perhaps the time of pandemic is a good occasion for going deeper inside oneself, for analysing whether we shouldn't slow down a bit, look at the world a bit more locally. This is what this year's festival will also be about: how to slow down, how to find a creative solution to this problem. (Wrona 2020)

Unsound's organisers expected that their 2020 festival would be

> "a festival where the sound of music largely gives way to the sound of speaking and listening. […] [T]here is much to urgently discuss — they said — not just about music and sound, but about their place and function in the new world that is rapidly taking shape". (Unsound, webpage)

The event, which took place on 1–11 October, involved presentations, performative lectures, interviews and discussions, and was streamed live,

as well as partly archived online. At the beginning the organisers declared a hesitant approach towards the inclusion of music, stating that they were still deciding how and where to include it, depending on the unfolding situation and what might work online. In the end, Unsound released a music album and a book, both of which were available for purchase on their website.

In the spring of 2020, Unsound's executive director Małgorzata Płysa believed that the pandemic restrictions would not prove very harmful to their festival, though she pointed out this was mainly thanks to its specific format and not relying solely on ticket revenue. "One needs to get additional creative resources working," she stated. On the other hand, the festival's artistic director Mat Schulz mentioned a less apparent drawback of online festivals, namely how tiring they prove for the organisers:

> I wouldn't like to repeat an event which is only online, cause I find it quite challenging in terms of the fact that when you put on a live event, like a live festival, you're really online all the time, you're working online, e-mailing, writing budgets, plotting programs and when the festival happens it's just a manifestation of all the stuff that you've been doing online, you know everyone's in the room and the music is in the room, the performance is in the room and it's very kind of liberating, kind of euphoric moment. When you organize an online event, it's like you get to the event and then you're more online, like deeper in your computer and it's very weird in that sense, […] on the one hand it's fulfilling, but on the other hand it doesn't give this full satisfaction, even though you can potentially reach more people in terms of numbers, it's obviously much more difficult to retain their attention online, because people are not very focused online, including myself, it's like you look at lots of different things at once, and that's not the case if you go to a festival, you're at a concert, you're watching this thing and you're giving absolute focus to it, it's very different. (interview, Unsound/ Artistic Director)

This can be viewed as an example of digital fatigue, a problem very common during pandemic lockdowns, in the realm of festivals and artistic activities at large.

The Unsound festival's organisers appeared to be initially sceptical as to whether it was possible to make a proper music event in an online environment, which was the main reason behind making the 2020 event more debate focused:

> We decided that we would move online and do a debate program, which was due to the fact that we all think that streaming isn't really what people want, people want to experience going to a concert, and streaming, this is my personal opinion, I only watch streamed workshops, debates,

panels, so things that I can listen to while doing something else and still get something from them. So this is the path we followed. (interview, Unsound/Production)

Nevertheless, they made a direct reference to hybrid realities by including the theme of hybridity in one of the debates during the Unsound Lab, a special workshop for people wanting to start a career in music management. The discussion "Online/offline — hybrid possibilities" dealt with the immaterial future of music and the role of streamed music events. They also conducted an experiment with the participation of the audience. They invited people to place multiple online devices around their apartments and listen in parallel to the same performance. The idea was to produce a completely new sonic effect, a "Corona--style multichannel-audio experience", thus embodying the "both/and" character of hybrid reality as envisioned by the Khannas.

SACRUM PROFANUM — "YOUTH"

The organisers of the Sacrum Profanum festival, as part of the experiment, moved the whole event to a virtual space, but with a brand new cycle of live concerts recorded previously in different festival locations specially for their 2020 event with artists and sound technicians present on the spot, but without an audience. The 2020 event was held at a new, slower rhythm, its duration prolonged from one week to a month. Along with concerts, there were also other forms of interaction with the public: Cracow's soundwalks for children, DIY digital workshops on making musical instruments, or an interactive composition with alternative variations to be chosen or voted on by the audience during the event. As the organisers stated a few months before the festival started:

> The situation caused by the pandemic remains highly unstable, and as the year goes on, it's hard to find things to feel optimistic about. November is still some way off, but we certainly aren't considering the Internet as a lesser option — in fact we quickly started to see these new circumstances as an opportunity. It has been exciting to work on an online version of the festival, and we are thrilled about the incredible potential of the medium while being aware of the challenges it poses. The situation may never be repeated again, which means that we can join forces to test a brand--new format of culture. (Sacrum Profanum, webpage)

Moreover, they announced: "You can expect far more than just live streams of concerts — we are playing with the medium and with conventions!". Additionally, they stated in one of our interviews:

> We didn't want to propose an alternative, just because we couldn't hold a festival. I have the impression that this situation made us feel that we could simply propose a different version of the festival. Neither better nor worse. Just different. (interview, Sacrum Profanum/ Production)

In 2020 the Sacrum Profanum festival entered its adulthood (after running for 18 years) in a very difficult, diseased reality. Although the conditions for celebration and revelling in being young were very difficult, the organisers decided to turn this into a creative solution and take the situation as an opportunity to redefine what a festival could be. The goal was to get closer to the new medium, and to make the most of its technological and artistic capabilities. Since this was its first festival run entirely on the internet (music recordings, video projects, performances), there was no previous model to draw inspiration from. The organisers emphasised that the 2020 was not a "typical" hybrid formula (in the sense of broadcasting live concerts with a small audience through digital channels), but a completely different, experimental solution, one which proved to be a satisfying experience both for them and the invited artists:

> I was actually feeling a kind of gratitude, because Sacrum Profanum was the only festival organised by the KBF (Cracow Festival Office) that actually took place this year, not by using archived materials or offering a single concert only to mark the festival's presence, to remind one that it exists […] only this festival truly took place and the way it was held was not so far from… all the conditions that appear in a traditional festival also had to be fulfilled, because those musicians had to arrive, sleep, rehearse. The instruments had to be rented and so forth. So I rather feel gratitude that we managed to organise this in such a fun format. Perhaps there is that absence of contact with the audience, direct contact, but […] it gave me a lot of happiness, this feeling that we made something new, something fun. […] We are getting feedback from artists and media that [the festival] did indeed achieve its goal, […] that it wasn't only this basic, usual streaming and the artists were happy that they could try something new… so I feel primarily a lot of gratitude […] that we could do this, despite the pandemic, despite the restrictions and a certain amount of fear (of the coronavirus, quarantine). (interview, Sacrum Profanum/ Production)

Looking back on their experiences with creating an online festival, the organisers viewed this favourably:

> We possessed this enthusiasm, because we decided to do something else. If we had approached this as a situation that needed to be survived, waited through, or we needed to do something to maintain the continuity of the festival, we probably wouldn't have found this enthusiasm within ourselves. Possibly this was our major strength while talking about the

festival, be it to the media or to partners […], that we would infect them with this enthusiasm and this proactive, positive attitude, which was truly rare back then. (interview, Sacrum Profanum/ Artistic Director)

Thanks to technology, music was illustrated with unique images and architecture. The concerts were recorded in unusual outdoor and interior locations of Cracow, which until then had not been used in this way. There was praise for the extended duration of the festival, and for the way it took a slow path that gave the audience space to experience the concerts more freely. The organisers and artists managed to create a space for improvisation and intimacy. The only element missing was direct interaction with the audience, because the Play Kraków platform (Poland's first VOD platform "abounding with urban culture") did not provide the option of expressing reactions or making comments. This lack of real-time interaction with the audience may make one wonder how Sacrum Profanum's 2020 event even fits into the hybrid model. In response to this charge, it could be said that — apart from the "material nature" of the live concerts performed by musicians and supported by the festival technicians, all gathered in the same physical space — the "real" part of the hybrid form came also from the environment: the audience had the opportunity to see places usually locked away from them, yet tangible, in that they were ones they might be passing on a daily basis, yet inaccessible in the "real reality".

GENERAL FINDINGS

The analysis of the selected festivals, along with the general overview of the conditions in the festival sector during the pandemic, allow one to enumerate the following Covid-19 challenges and opportunities that the organisers were, and still are, dealing with:

• *Reorganisation of the festival space*: appearance of cyber-spaces, "time-space distanciation", and the blurring of the private/public sphere(s). The audience participates in the festival from their own/their friends' houses, which means that an activity that was usually public now gets very close to invading their privacy. While this may have some advantages, most of the changes seem to be detrimental to the festival experience. Participants have to consider the activities of other household members, the necessity to control the volume, and the strength and reliability of their internet connection, and so on. On a more theoretical level, it can be said that in hybrid and virtual events all or a part of the role usually fulfilled by space

is taken over by time: rather than by meeting in the same place, any sense of community is created by mass communication at the same time.

• *New models of interaction, between organisers, artists and audiences*: the festival experience is turned into a "mediated experience". The artists and debate participants had limited or no ability to interact with the audience or gauge their reactions, especially in the case of pre-recorded performances at the Sacrum Profanum festival. In perhaps the clearest example of hybrid performance we observed — Joanna Słowińska singing during EtnoKrakow — the musicians had to rely on and coordinate their playing with the mediating technologies. It has to be said, though, that they managed this flawlessly.

• *A new understanding of openness/exclusion*: although online events are accessible to a theoretically limitless public, in practice participation is impeded by users' technological proficiency and resources. Among those who have what's required, new patterns of usage can be observed: virtual/hybrid concerts are accessible to people who would normally be excluded from attending the traditional live format (especially people with disabilities and those who cannot afford to travel to the festival venue). Additionally, there may be increased participation among people who would usually be undecided on whether they want to go to a given event, as monetary and time costs are much lower in virtual attendance. An important caveat here is the fact that one cannot see how online- -only audience would enjoy the extended festival experience, especially the unmediated behaviour of the rest of the audience.

• *Rethinking active/passive participation*: while the intrusion of festivals into private homes has disadvantages that are described above, it may also pose an opportunity for the audience to take a more active part in the event. The most striking example of this is the case of Unsound being crowdfunded by its fans. Whereas some prosumptive behaviours — in the sense of consuming and experiencing the concert through the audience's own creations and activities — are possible in traditional, live concert circumstances, they become the only widely available way to engage (or at least feel engaged) with the artists and other attendees in the hybrid format. Whether it is posting a comment under the broadcast, or a handmade painting on the theme of the festival, real-time online audience activities become much more important for maintaining the festival atmosphere.

• *New opportunities for (virtual) cultural exchange*: the example of the Unsound festival audience showed that its online campaigns — on Facebook and Discord — were aimed at maintaining the sense of

community. Since public and semi-public forums make it difficult to stay in one's own circle of friends, more frequent contacts occur between people from different cultures. While such contacts may be initially superficial, their expressions are more lasting than the majority of exchanges occurring during live events. Live commentators are eager to share where they come from and non-Polish speakers are usually welcomed by local participants, often offering help in "moving around" the virtual stages. This can be seen as a realisation of Manuel Castells' (2010) network society, with the festival itself serving as the central "node" of communication, surrounded by many multidirectional exchanges between participants from different cultures.

• *Creation of new resonant spaces*: the pandemic may have facilitated turning the internet into a resonant space. This extends to many different areas of human activity, but music festivals can serve as a very good example. It is possible that, due to social distancing, people — especially the younger generation — have grown to feel more at home online, while the internet has become a more resonant space for them. It must also be pointed out that the web itself has changed as a result of the pandemic, both in terms of technology and the so-called "netiquette", that is proper behaviour online. Whereas before 2020 the usual mode of online communication was text, by now video conferences — even very short ones — have become normalised. Whereas before the pandemic it was practically unthinkable to chat or send emoticons to one's supervisors, by now it has become an accepted substitute for face-to-face interaction. And whereas beforehand listening to live music online may have only been a way to relive a past experience, by now the organisers, streaming providers, and the audience have learned to create a proper ambience and tune their devices until the music sounds good. One could argue that it is precisely thanks to the development of online and hybrid festivals that the web can become a resonant space.

• *A new understanding of "liveness"*: probably the most profound change that has emerged in the festival world due to the emergence of the hybrid format is modification of the very meaning of "liveness". A festival can be a "live" event even in a virtual space, where the interactions within the festival community and real-time reactions of the public occur through digital channels. At the same time, this is only made possible by the shift in the role of space and time mentioned earlier on, in the context of Giddens' time-space distanciation. While in the classic understanding of a live event both time and space are crucial — people meet at the same place and at the same time — it appears that in the hybrid and virtual space the weight

shifts from the place to the time. Whereas in a standard live event one can claim to have attended if they phisically were at the venue, no matter how long they stayed, in the case of an online live event it is signing on at the scheduled time, giving those attending a sense of community, that defines a live event. Referring to both Collins' and Simon's treatment of ritual chains and the importance of shared symbols for creating a sense of unity, it can be argued that the schedule itself becomes a symbol of sorts. In the context of the situation brought about by the pandemic, listening to the same music and watching the same performances constitutes a symbol of shared longing for reunification.

CONCLUSIONS

"Technology today is a constituent of our biggest problems and our grandest solutions" (Khanna, Khanna 2012); rarely has the truth of those words been more apparent than during the ongoing coronavirus crisis. Hybrid festivals, emerging during the pandemic as "alternative solutions", can be analysed through the perspective of creativity in the management of events. The Polish cases selected for analysis here have demonstrated that what worked for the 2020 events was a combination of creativity and pragmatism, innovation and familiarity, imagination and experience. Caroline Jackson, James Morgan and Chantal Laws (2018), in their study conducted before the pandemic, analysed the phenomenon of creativity in organising outdoor events relating it to a few core elements, namely: fluency, originality, imagination, elaboration, environment and complexity. The authors claimed, in recapitulating the opinions of their respondents, that events in general are inherently creative and this creativity has to be seen as a collective effort in a holistic perspective (Jackson, Morgan, Laws 2018: 11). What is also important is the fluency related to the process of the event, as "the power of creativity is dependent upon the experience gained over time" (Jackson, Morgan, Laws 2018: 12).

The festival examples analysed here show that in an extreme situation the experience and trustworthy relationships within the organising team were what allowed for risk and experimentation. Another aspect of creativity is originality, understood as adaptation to changing conditions and trying to do things differently in order to "ensure that an event is different each time" (Jackson, Morgan, Laws 2018: 11). In the circumstances created by the pandemic this attitude was imposed by external conditions. The authors stress the importance of a balance between flexible and restrictive practices. In the case of Cracow's festivals

in 2020 the restrictions concerned various organisational aspects, such as diminished funds (and the necessity of searching for different ways of financing the event) or space limitations (the public health regime at a festival location, managing a hybrid (online/offline) event or moving entirely to a virtual space).

As Paweł Potoroczyn — an EFA member and cultural manager — stated, "festivals are ideas in work, not brands."[4] An emergency situation and atypical conditions often make space for new (bold) ideas, experiments, and "extravagance", as was manifested during the pandemic restrictions. New hybrid formats of Cracow's music events were all evidence of the "transformative potential" (Koefoed, Neergaard, Simonsen 2020: 3) ascribed to festival experiences. The current difficult times remind us that the concept of "liminality" is inscribed into the phenomenon of (music) festivals, and especially festival communities. Victor Turner's (1991) works on ritual have long been applied to music festivals. Moreover, the framework of ritualistic social drama has also been used in analysis of critical situations, with a crisis serving as a forced liminal stage, during which people have to come up with new ways of dealing with the reality (Visacovsky 2017). There is little denying that the Covid-19 pandemic has been one of the greatest global crises of the last few years. As such, 2020's hybrid festivals manifested different "liminalities": that of a live event, that of an online community, and that brought about by a crisis. And indeed, just as Turner's theory predicts, this unique situation proved to be fertile ground for creative ways of keeping in touch and recreating a festival atmosphere.

The new festival formats that appeared as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic are unquestionably a manifestation of the organisational potential. The organisers managed to create new immersive experiences through virtual channels, reaching a new understanding of festival diversity. Even out of a "physical" space the events were re--materialised in new dimensions allowing the festival encounters to be "instant and synaesthetic" (Koefoed, Neergaard, Simonsen 2020: 4), engaging — to some extent — different senses. However, for some researchers and specialists in the festival sector, such as Robert Piaskowski, nothing can replace the real, material (physical) event and

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[4] A speech during the UNESCO ResiliArt & Festival Cities Network debate "International Festivals and Policy in light of COVID-19" held online on July, 28 2020. See also: UNESCO ResiliArt — webinar o przyszłości sektora festiwali — Magiczny Kraków (www.krakow.pl).

the "emotion that spreads in the crowd and not only on the internet".[5] As the anthropologist Joanna Dziadowiec-Greganić says: "'festum' means meeting up together, celebrating a ritual, socialising. It cannot happen at a distance."[6] In certain pandemic circumstances, however, this may prove the most promising way to let the festivals survive — and, who knows, perhaps serve as an important introduction into the new experience of liveness in general.

As a closing remark, it must be clearly stated that our research was largely introductory, at least as far as researching the long-lasting changes in the hybrid form of art festivals and the creation of new resonant spaces is concerned. As has been pointed out, it was by mere coincidence that our general research concerning music festivals coincided and was affected by the major global event that the Covid-19 pandemic constituted. We can only hope that the empirical data we collected, the theoretical conclusions we drew and the methodological advice that emerged as a result of our analysis will prove useful to future studies of music festivals, or any recurring artistic events.

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[5] Interview conducted for the purpose of the project. Robert Piaskowski is a cultural manager and organizer. Currently the Plenipotentiary for Culture of the Mayor of the City of Krakow.

[6] Interview in Folk.TV, chapter 4: "Festiwale folklorystyczne i ich odzwierciedlenie" [Folkloric festivals and their image], 8 November 2020 (available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTh1sFLMfPU).

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Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to show the strategies of dealing with the pandemic circumstances chosen by three of the city's festivals: EtnoKraków/Crossroads, Sacrum Profanum, and Unsound. Emerging from their diverse approaches is a new hybrid festival formula, which brings with it brand new challenges. These include: new models of interaction between organisers, artists, and audiences; reorganisation of festival space; new patterns of audience accessibility and new forms of exclusion/openness; opportunities and barriers for (virtual) cultural exchange; and finally, a recalibration and blurring of the public and private dimensions brought about by the new types of festival experience. Indeed, it could even be argued that the live event sector is facing significant change in the very concept of "liveness". The analysis is based both on existing data concerning processes of music festival production and consumption (press articles, reviews, and reports) and semi-structured interviews with artistic directors, managers and producers of the selected festivals, held in 2020/2021.

key words: Cracow, music festivals, hybridisation, pandemic

słowa kluczowe: Kraków, festiwale muzyczne, hybrydyzacja, pandemia