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**Contemporary art curators as cultural
intermediaries: German and Russian
experience**

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Introduction

Contemporary art has always drawn great interest from the public and triggered heated discussions, and currently the process of performing and presenting contemporary art makes it the focus of sociological investigations more frequently than in previous years. Consequently, in recent decades, researchers have started to examine curatorial practices from different perspectives, contributing to the study of the professional artistic field in general, as well as to the analysis of the specific professional cluster of curators (Acord, 2010). Contemporary art curators play an important role in the artistic scene due to the growing importance of mediating between artistic representation, operating on the art market as an economic structure, facing bureaucratic challenges, dealing with the media, and the increasingly significant educational functions of artistic institutions. In this paper, contemporary art curators will be analyzed from different theoretical perspectives in two national contexts – the Russian one and the German one – for several reasons.

Firstly, I assume that curators operate as intermediaries between artists, museums and galleries, government, the media, the publics and other actors in the field. Secondly, curating, being a relatively new professional field, plays a significant role in the processes of cultural production and consumption and thus becomes an important subject of inquiry for sociologists. Curators perform a set of professional and communicative functions in the field by realizing different communication practices, as well as applying professional skills which will be investigated in this research. Finally, I am going to compare the experience of curating in Russia and Germany as examples of national artistic scenes by taking the cases of curatorship in St. Petersburg and Hamburg into particular focus, as I see this comparative perspective as rather novel and insightful for the better understanding of the tracks the professional development of curators can take in different national and local contexts.

In order to clarify the logic of this research, it is important to provide the working definitions of the major analytical concepts which are used in this paper. First of all, it is necessary to define curating practices. Those are understood here as the processes of the creation of meanings and contribution to public dialogues about the ideas and art strategies which address the world in its complexity, consisting of daily activities based on professional actions within a set routine. Curating can be also seen as the process of creating opportunities for artists, based on the traditional role of research and collections development within art institutions, and the organization of exhibitions. The study of this process focuses on contemporary art. Contemporary art in this context is understood as a complex of art practices that has been shaped in the second half of the 20th century and that aims to develop new forms of artistic expression by using unconventional tools (e.g. new materials, technologies, forms of interaction with the audience).

According to governmental statistics, the number of contemporary art exhibitions organized in St. Petersburg has amazingly increased over the last two years. In 2014, there were 1076 contemporary art exhibitions, while in 2013 – only 773 exhibitions. Interestingly, in 2011 the number of exhibitions amounted to 652, and in 2012 this number remained stable as there were 677 exhibitions on display. St. Petersburg, being the universally recognized “cultural capital” of Russia, can also be seen as the center of the formation and institutionalization of new curatorial practices, evidence to this being the growing number of different art projects, art spaces and exhibition halls in the city. Another important piece of evidence is the recent art event that took place in St. Petersburg in 2014 – the large-scale international project Manifesta.10- which became the most discussed and complex exhibition that year.

The institutionalization of curatorship as a profession in Russia is partly expressed in the development of specific educational programs. A growing number of private courses for those who are willing to become professional curators have been established in St. Petersburg. For example, a curator school founded at Pushkinskaya 10 Art Centre is enjoying increased popularity. Furthermore, the professional field of curatorship also has a growing number of representatives earning their degrees at the city’s largest university: in 2005, a formal educational program called “Art Criticism” was launched at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, St. Petersburg State University, in cooperation with Bard College. In 2014 an even more specified MA program called “Curatorial Studies” was introduced there.

Interestingly, sociological studies of curators and curatorship are still lacking in Russia, even though there are some articles reflecting this issue, and in Russia the analysis of curatorial practices is largely performed by curators themselves. Meanwhile, it is essential to understand the specificity and structure of curatorial practices constituting public tastes, opinions and perceptions in the field of contemporary art, which is becoming a powerful tool for the public in gaining knowledge and information.

At this point, the analysis of curatorial practices existing in a more stable form than in St. Petersburg and Russia in general becomes relevant. In my eyes, the experience of German curators might provide this research with valuable insights due to the fact that curators have occupied a legitimate position in the German artistic scene for a much longer period of time than in Russia. The artistic scene of Hamburg is full of various art events and is represented by numerous artistic institutions recognized by citizens, the urban artistic community, the city administration and numerous tourists to the city. For example, the Hamburg Metropolitan Region has over 300 museums and more than 50 art galleries. Moreover, the public art scene is also quite well-developed in Hamburg: starting in the 1980s, there has been a special state program for artists and curators aimed at revitalizing the city through art. Consequently, the artistic institutions of the city have been functioning actively in Hamburg for a

longer period of time and on a larger scale than in St. Petersburg, and numerous projects have been organized and managed by curators thanks to this systematic support.

The main research question of this paper is formulated as follows: *What are the professional practices and strategies of curators in two national and city contexts (St. Petersburg and Hamburg) shaping the process of cultural production and consumption and mediating between artists, museums, galleries, governments, publics, etc., to create and promote exhibitions or art projects?*

In order to provide a full picture of curatorship practices, the following working research questions have been developed:

- Which position do curators occupy in the field of cultural production?
- How do curatorial studies reflect on curatorial practices when compared from the perspective of social sciences?
- What are the biographical trajectories of joining the professional community of curators in Germany and Russia?
- What is the level of institutionalization of the profession of curator in Germany and Russia?
- Who are the major actors involved in curatorial communication in two national contexts?
- Which channels of communication are used by the curators under study and how?
- What kind of functions and responsibilities are performed by these curators?
- What are their strategies of communication and cooperation in cultural mediation?
- What are the specific features of the local artistic scenes of St. Petersburg and Hamburg and what is their influence on curating?

The comparative perspective of this research is aimed to provide a deeper analysis of the situation within the specific professional field of curatorship by exploring the personal experiences of different types of curators. Qualitative methodology, which includes semi-structured interviews with curators, allows us to collect unique material covering the personal experience of creative professionals working in different types of art institution. The typological sample includes, firstly, curators working at state museums such as the Hermitage; secondly, curators of exhibitions at private museums such as Deichtorhallen; thirdly, curators of public art projects; and, finally, representatives of private art galleries.

The paper uses the cultural production paradigm (Peterson, Becker, Bourdieu) chosen as the main theoretical framework of this research. The concept of cultural production allows to reflect the practices performed in the artistic scene, seeing the artists not as the only – and predominant – actors, but also

considering other actors and their strategies as equally important. Specifically, contemporary art curators are thus seen as essential figures in the processes of art creation and presentation.

This paper is divided into two chapters: the first chapter provides an overview of theoretical approaches applied in the research, namely, the concepts of cultural production suggested by Richard Peterson, Howard S. Becker, and Pierre Bourdieu; an analysis of curatorial practices from the perspective of sociology of professions and creative economy; and an overview of existing studies on curatorship conducted by sociologists and curators themselves. The second chapter includes a description of applied methodology and analysis, and covers the major findings and conclusion drawn over the course of fieldwork.

Finally, the main insights are explained in the detailed conclusion and some research limitations are also discussed. The appendices present the methodological tools applied in the research such as the interview guide, as well as two examples of interviews conducted from German and Russian contexts.

Chapter 1. Theoretical approaches to the investigation of curatorial practices

Sociology of art has quite a long theoretical tradition, and since contemporary art curators are also analyzed as important actors of the art scene, I would like to start with an overview of sociological traditions investigating the artistic scenes in different historical and social contexts, complementing each other in their analyses of the relations within and beyond these scenes and thus constituting the theoretical frame of my research. Due to the fact that curators do not produce art themselves, but rather present artworks and their creators to the public, I shall stick to sociological theories describing the process of cultural production as a complex and heterogeneous social phenomenon. The first paragraph of this chapter will describe the analytical notions reflecting the collective character of artistic production introduced in works by Richard Peterson and Howard S. Becker. The second paragraph analyzes the notions essential to the understanding of curators as cultural intermediaries; here, I resort to the theory of cultural production by Pierre Bourdieu. Both paragraphs also include some criticism addressed to the theoretical approaches under discussion.

The position of curators on the labor market and the specific features of curatorship as a professional occupation are discussed in the third paragraph of this chapter. Here, I attempt to develop a synthesis of several analytical approaches which tend to overlap with each other, as well as with the theoretical notions described in the previous paragraphs. Moreover, continuing the line of analysis of curatorial practices as inherently collective, I describe curators as representing a group of creative professionals.

Finally, the last paragraph of the theoretical chapter provides an overview of existing research on curatorial practices including the insider perspective (self-reflection of curators) and the outsider perspective – sociological research of curatorship.

1.1. The production of culture perspective: Richard Peterson's approach

Richard Peterson can be considered as the founding father of the cultural production tradition in social science, since he was the first scholar to focus on the symbolic notions produced by the cultural field and the first to reflect various forms related to cultural production such as science, art, religion, etc. (Farkhatdinov, 2008) First of all, it should be mentioned that cultural production can be understood in two ways: in the broader sense, cultural production refers to the production of any forms of meaning in the process of social interactions; whereas in the narrower sense, cultural production is related to the production of various goods and services having specific meaning and organized around creative practices. It should be emphasized that the concept of cultural

production significantly differs from other theoretical approaches considering artistic and broader creative practices, in the sense that it does not concentrate on the “producer” of artistic forms and meanings as the major, and sometimes even the only, actor of culture, but rather focuses on the complex, socially and economically embedded processes of creation, presentation, perception and evaluation of artworks. The concept of cultural production considers art as being shaped by various actors involved in the abovementioned processes and thus focuses on such factors of cultural production, dissemination and consumptions as economic, institutional, and organizational ones, which directly affect the creation of symbolic goods (Santoro, 2008).

According to Richard Peterson, “the production of culture perspective focuses on how the symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved” (Peterson & Anand, 2004, p. 311). Peterson’s input into cultural studies and sociology of arts is that he suggests using the achievements of sociology of profession, organizational sociology and other subdisciplines in the analysis of creative processes. This idea allows researchers to consider artworks not as the direct and exclusive results of a creator’s labor but rather as integrated outputs of collective efforts implemented by artists in collaboration with their colleagues and peers. Moreover, Peterson’s approach suggests analyzing the environment (social, political and economic contexts) in which cultural production takes place. At this point, the role of curators becomes significant, since their field of practice includes mediating between other actors involved in these contexts.

Peterson also reflects on cultural consumption, where the interpretation and reproduction of the symbols and meanings generated in creative labor takes place, so that cultural production can be defined as autoproduction: the “consumer” operates with symbolic meanings hidden in artworks, and produces forms of interpretations similar to or different from the original messages of the creator(s) (Peterson & Anand, 2004). Autoproduction should also be considered not as an individual process, but rather as a result of communication of individual consumers with others shaped by people’s socialization, personal experience and preferences (Peterson & Anand, 2004).

From my point of view, the major shortcoming of this theoretical concept is that it is restricted to a focus on the economic and organizational conditions of symbolic goods production. Meanwhile, cultural production does not refer to purely economic or institutional factors: there are various complex processes beyond the market that affect the production of symbolic goods. This is why it is important to consider yet another theoretical perspective which continues the analysis of artistic and broader cultural scenes within the logic of cultural production. Correspondingly, the next paragraph introduces and discusses the ideas on collective art production by H.S. Becker and gives greater insight into the subject of my research based on his theory.

1.2. Curators in the “art world”: Howard Becker

One of the most important theoretical frameworks applied in my research of contemporary art curators is the concept of art world introduced by Howard S. Becker, the representative of the Chicago school of sociology. Following the logic of the symbolic interactionist approach, Becker stresses the importance of artworks created as the result of the collective actions and cooperation of numerous actors, thus problematizing the previously existing common image of artistic work as a purely individual process. According to Becker, art creates a specific framework within which agents of an artistic network perform collective actions, and those collective actions and events produced by art networks “are the basic unit of sociological investigation” (Becker, 1976, p. 775). Sociological research should therefore answer the question: “Who is joining together to produce what events?” (Becker, 1976, p. 775).

Becker’s ideas are in line with the general logic of my research, since curators also significantly contribute to artworks presentation and sometimes even creation. The basic categories and assumptions suggested by Becker are thus analyzed and applied in this paragraph.

The notion of the “art world”, the key concept of Becker’s works, was originally introduced by Arthur Danto who stressed the institutionalized character of the art world as a complex environment of creative labor (Farkhatdinov, 2008). According to Becker, who is borrowing this term from Danto, art world is “the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of artworks” (Becker, 1982, p. 10). The notion of art world thus corresponds to the idea that the particular expertise and experience of people working in the field of artistic production play a significant role in the whole process of art creation and demonstration. Becker argues that works of art can be thus defined as results of the “coordinated activities” of various actors involved in the cooperation which is essential for the actual occurring of the works (Becker, 1976). Moreover, Becker offers a typology of actors involved in the abovementioned cooperation. In particular, he distinguishes between such categories of actors as people who design the concept of the artworks; actors who actually create these artworks; providers of required materials and equipment; and, finally, actors inviting and forming the audience for the artworks (Becker, 1974). Becker’s standpoint is that, even though it is conventionally assumed to ascribe the major responsibilities for artworks to individual artists or groups of artists, sociologically is more relevant “to see the work as the joint creation of all these people” (Becker, 1976, p.704).

Curatorial practices, being a complex professional framework, include various activities which might be captured in the types of actors described above. Multitasking and multi-functioning are often seen today as a “must” in various jobs, especially creative ones, and curators are also required to combine multiple tasks and responsibilities in their professional routines. For instance,

Becker describes the role of curators as following: “curators, publishers, conductors, and theatrical and movie producers all perform editorial functions by creating and maintaining channels of distribution more adequate for some kinds of work than for others, and totally inadequate for still others. They thus select, or lead makers of art works to select, choices which fit easily into the available system” (Becker, 1982, p. 214). Curators thus appear as intermediaries between actors involved in artistic production and the presentation of its results, being responsible for artworks framing. Importantly, the legitimacy of performing such a function is grounded in a curator’s expertise and experience which enables them to embed artworks within the logic of particular cultural contexts. The way such logic works in specific cases is not always obvious, and their choices are often based on the conventions of the art world. A convention itself is a form of collective beliefs and notions that shapes and structures actions and determines the mode of artistic practices (Becker, 1982).

Conventions facilitate the regulation of communication and cooperation in the art world. The decisions formed or influenced by conventions are characterized by high respect of the values of aesthetics and other socially and culturally embedded values and norms which dominate in art and are reflected in artworks. On top of this, conventions performing in the sphere of art are not so well-defined: they usually do not presuppose a clear set of basic rules and directions of action and communication, but instead, being based on a constant (re)interpretation of works of art by different actors, are flexible and context-specific. Moreover, conventions “do not exist in isolation, but come in complexly interdependent systems, so that making one small change often requires making changes in a variety of other activities” (Becker, 1976, p. 772). Such conventions can be exemplified by the distribution of roles in a theatre, one which is not fixed on paper but normally relies on repeated, routinized procedures (Farkhatdinov, 2008). Speaking of contemporary art curators, conventions could be seen in such practices as, for example, the unspoken rule that a particular curator works with a specific artist on a regular basis.

Elements of conventions system are objectified in the form of materials and equipment. In other words, the system of conventions gets embodied in equipment, materials, resources, notation system (a system of symbols applied in a specific field of practices), etc. (Becker, 1976). This means that a convention is a tool with the help of which the participants of artistic events gain the possibility to arrive at a consensus and jointly shape the project of an event. This can be achieved in the form of meetings (official or non-official, private, etc.), correspondence (e-mail or written), phone conversations (including Skype and similar programs), communication through social media, etc.

My research attempts to exemplify the participation of curators in the art world by analyzing the empirical data collected in St. Petersburg and Hamburg. I expect to find the common features and differences in the convention structure

of the art worlds of these cities at various levels by considering and comparing different types of artistic institutions and styles of curatorial work both within and across the national contexts of Russia and Germany.

My major concern regarding Becker's concept is that Becker does not clearly explain the notion of conventions, despite it being the central concept of his work. In order to clarify the practices taking place in the art world, I shall turn to the approach developed by Pierre Bourdieu in the next paragraph. Although his approach differs from Becker's theory significantly, it is important to mention that both scientists share a view on art as a collective action.

1.3. Position of curators in the field of cultural production: Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu, French sociologist and philosopher, tends to criticize the aesthetic approach to artistic production traditionally applied to sociological research even more severely than the previous authors do. Bourdieu suggests considering art as a sphere affected by various social factors: institutional, economic, organizational and others (Farkhatdinov, 2008).

1.3.1. The notion of field

In order to apply Bourdieu's theoretical approach to my study, the key concepts essential to the understanding of the role of curators in the field of cultural production should be reached.

According to Bourdieu, "any social formation is structured by way of a hierarchically organized series of fields" (Johnson, 1993, p. 6). Bourdieu argues that social space, a system of relations between individual and collective actors based on the forms of capital which they possess, can be divided into several fields, such as educational, economic, political fields, and the field of cultural production. Every field is a specifically structured set of agent social positions. Each field functions on the basis of its own rules and can be seen as a relatively independent structure, although it is certainly connected to other fields. The dynamic concept of a field is based on the idea that a field's structure constantly changes with the shifts of an agent's positions and depends on the interaction between agents and their positions.

The position of curators can be seen as located at the intersection of various fields, for instance, the field of cultural production and its artistic subfield, as well as the fields of economics, politics, and education. It can be explained by the fact that artworks exhibited and promoted by curators are cultural, which means they should be interconnected with various spheres of life. Economic and political factors matter in the processes of artworks creation, dissemination, discussion and exhibition, and the structure of artistic institutions is normally also related to these factors. The field of education, for example, is presented in

various museum programs for schools and additional projects organized in cooperation with different partners, and expressed in the global aim of artistic institutions of making artworks and knowledge about them available to a larger audience with different backgrounds and statuses.

1.3.2. The field of cultural production

When conceptualizing the field of cultural production, Bourdieu reflects not only on artworks that are produced by this field and defined as objects existing “as such only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 35), but also on agents who form the social relations inside the field and thus shape its structure: the “producers” of artworks (e.g. artists), and those agents who have the power to legitimize the status of producers and their artworks’ symbolic, social and economic meanings. The latter category of agents is exemplified by art historians, critics, publishers, etc. (Johnson, 1993). Although Bourdieu does not include contemporary art curators in this category, which can be explained by the fact that in the times of his academic activities curatorship as a profession had not been institutionalized yet, I believe they can be also ascribed to this category of intellectuals, since curators have the power to “bring” an artwork to an artistic institution and choose the artworks and artists to be exhibited and thus recognized in the art scene.

The artworks themselves can be described through the notion of “symbolic goods” which the field of cultural production aims to produce. Symbolic goods differ from other types of goods in that the consumption of such goods done through appreciating and understanding their meanings, and their symbolic value is not directly related to their market value (Brubaker, 1985).

The field of cultural production has a complex structure which is defined through the dichotomy of two opposing subfields – the field of large-scale production and the field of restricted production (Bourdieu, 1993). The large-scale production is characterized by its market orientation and, consequently, broad target audiences. This subfield embraces popular (mass) culture, so that the aesthetic value of the artworks produced by this subfield is normally easily understandable for a large variety of people. On the subject of the field of restricted cultural production, it should be mentioned that it is focused on so-called “high art” which is represented by “serious” artworks which have strong symbolic connotations, and normally requires specific skills from its agents such as, for example, knowledge of art history. Originally, the artworks belonging to this field are not aimed at gaining profit (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu describes this subfield as the “production for producers”, referring to the idea that its symbolic power is reinforced by various artistic institutions, such as museums, galleries, and also by the academic field, which basically means that the professionals in this artistic field have the power to enlarge the symbolic capital of the artworks produced in the field of restricted cultural production. Bourdieu

argues that “the field of restricted production tends to develop its own criteria for the evaluation of its products, thus achieving the truly cultural recognition accorded by the peer group whose members are both privileged clients and competitors” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 5), and the power to establish these independent criteria serves as a mean of achieving and maintaining the relative autonomy of this field. For my research, this notion is particularly interesting, since the fact that contemporary art curators have the power to establish such criteria legitimizes the position of curators in the field of cultural production.

One interesting idea suggested by Bourdieu is the conceptualization of the public meaning of artworks that “originates in the process of circulation and consumption dominated by the objective relations between the institutions and agents implicated in the process” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 9) This public meaning is produced in and by social relations depending on the position of agents in the field of restricted cultural production. The social relations between such agents as artists and critics, publishers and critics, or, as particularly relevant for this research, curators and artists, accompanying the creation of public meaning are thus in the focus of analysis. These complex relations are characterized by the actors’ perception of objective factors affecting the relations as well as their images of their own positions in the field (Bourdieu, 1984).

In order to analyze the agents’ practices affecting the abovementioned social relations, Bourdieu also introduces the concept of *habitus*. This term is defined as a system of “durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). In other words, the notion of *habitus* reflects the specific structure of emotions and mind which is influenced by an agent’s ranges of obtained dispositions, tastes, and emotionality. *Habitus* affected by such factors as family background, education, social and economic status, etc., develops an individual attitude towards society and shapes an agent’s practices in the fields to which they belong. In case of my research, I assume that curatorial *habitus* constitutes the core of the practices and strategies performed by curators.

The notion of strategies is another essential concept suggested by Bourdieu. A strategy is a “product of the habitus... based on ... results from unconscious dispositions towards practice” (Johnson, 1993, p.17). Strategies are affected by the position of an agent in the field and various controversial issues that might create a confrontation in the field and thus require solutions which are formed through social relations. Strategies consist of sets of practices aimed at achieving certain goals. For example, an agent can act in accordance with their strategy of self-presentation, or working strategy (acting as a demanding leader, or as a disciplined and responsible colleague, etc.) Moreover, Bourdieu suggests a concept of trajectory, meaning a set of positions successfully

occupied by agents in a specific field and reflects the objectified relationships between the field and the agent (Bourdieu, 1993). For example, a set of professional positions occupied by an agent throughout his/her career can be seen as a social trajectory. Finally, the concept of practices introduced by Bourdieu is also crucial for the research. It reflects the actions performed by an agent located in the field towards other agents and objects shaped by various factors (social, economic, political, etc.) and aimed at meeting an objective. In the course of my research, I am going to analyze curatorial practices, strategies and trajectories. However, in order to provide a full picture of these, I should first analyze the forms of capitals accessible for agents in the field, as they influence the positions of agents.

1.3.3. Forms of capital

As mentioned above, the position of an agent in the field is influenced by the agent's capital. According to Bourdieu, capital means "accumulated labor", and "a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 46). Bourdieu distinguishes between four specific forms of capitals: namely, economic, cultural, social and symbolic capitals, "which agents mobilize in order to enter and move on social fields" (Walther, 2014, p. 9).

1.3.3.1. Economic capital

Property rights and financial issues (money) are incorporated into the notion of economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, a patent for a newly invented technology represents this form of capital, as well as the wealth inherited by a person or a monthly salary. The economic capital provides an agent with the power to perform a strategy aimed at achieving a particular goal.

In case of curators, economic capital can take several forms. First of all, curators normally have to deal with financial issues: they are engaged in projects budgeting and fundraising. Moreover, a curator's position on the labor market is characterized by specific mechanisms of salary formation: a curator's income might significantly differ in size and form, depending on the institutions the curator belongs to, or the properties of the local artistic scenes in which they operate. Finally, the economic value of artworks also affects curatorial practices: there is a wide range of prices of artworks on the art market, which divides the artworks by such criteria as accessibility, conditions of work with artworks, etc.

1.3.3.2. Cultural capital

Bourdieu states that cultural capital can exist in three forms. First of all, cultural capital can take an embodied state, which means “the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47); second, the objectified state, which covers various forms of symbolic goods, literally – physical objects which have specific symbolic meaning, or can be used as tools in the course of cultural production. Finally, cultural capital can take an institutionalized shape, which relates to the academic and educational qualifications of agents.

The first form of cultural capital refers to the inherited characteristics which are usually gained through socialization in the family by interiorizing its values and traditions, or consciously gained properties, such as taste, attitudes and manners, which affects an agent’s strategies and preferences. Bourdieu suggests that taste is formed by the competition between classes and creates a marker of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). In this sense, distinction is understood as a set of aesthetically and culturally divided social positions based on the tastes of an agent and the availability of certain aesthetic and cultural forms to particular social groups. Taste is thus distributed unequally and is seen as a capability of material and symbolic obtainment of certain sets of practices, or objects. As mentioned above, taste, as an embodied form of cultural capital, is transmitted through family socialization as well as through socialization processes taking place in the educational system. Consequently, the manners and fashion style of a person, or the person’s food preferences, or his/her aesthetical choices might be considered as examples of this state of cultural capital.

Cultural capital taking the objectified state refers to various objects recognized as symbolic goods. In particular, books, paintings, and sculptures fall under this category. Although there might be an owner of this form of capital, it is also available for other agents who consume its symbolic meaning. Still, such capital is not generally assessable, as one should often have specific knowledge and experience to understand the symbolic meaning it possesses.

Regarding the institutionalized state of cultural capital, it should be emphasized that it has a significant impact on an agent’s labor market position due to the fact that it embraces an agent’s academic qualifications recognized by legitimate institutions and can be relatively easily converted into economic capital, since an agent’s income often depends on their academic degrees. This state of capital is expressed in the academic positions of agents, e.g. their BA, MA, PhD degrees, as well as by the sets of skills and knowledge gained by the actors that can be applied to a specific field of practice. For example, a juridical/law MA degree means that a person should have enough knowledge, skills and experience to occupy a position of a lawyer in a legal firm; and a background in history of art makes the judgments of an art critic legitimate in the artistic scene.

Considering my research, I assume that all the mentioned states of cultural capital play an important role in the curatorial practices and strategies. In particular, the embodied state reflects a curator's family and educational background in the sense of how family traditions (for example, generational continuity of professional choices), or the inherited preferences for particular artistic genres and forms, can shape an actor's actual curatorial practices, just like their academic experience in art studies. In the course of my research of contemporary art curators, their educational background is considered, since their curatorial orientations are expected to be strongly affected by their academic past. Family issues may also contribute to the professional formation of curators: for example, if a curator has been raised in an artistic atmosphere, this would probably affect their future choice of profession, as well as their belonging to an informal environment that can be identified as artistic, or at least creative. In both cases of socialization through family or educational system, there could be also some intergenerational continuity observed in the curatorial strategies and practices. For example, curators might opt for artistic institutions to which their supervisors belonged, or exhibit works of art produced by artists from friendly circles within their artistic families. Additionally, professional socialization in a particular artistic institution should be also taken into account in the course of my research, since the cultural capital of curators is also probably defined by institutional norms and values, preferred working styles characteristic to their universities, etc.

On the subject of the objectified state of cultural capital, it should be mentioned that curators work directly with artworks (paintings, drawings, sculptures), and thus their professional practices are strongly interconnected with this state of cultural capital. Moreover, curators have an opportunity to shape the symbolic meanings of artworks by conceptualizing them in the course of exhibitions or art projects.

Finally, the institutionalized state of cultural capital is expressed in the academic background of curators. Skills and knowledge gained by curators during their education might strongly affect their curatorial strategies. In the field of cultural production, academic degrees, in fact, have an important impact on the position of curators in this field. Due to the fact that academic institutions are ranked by the quality of education they provide, belonging to a particular academic institution might influence the hierarchical positions of curators in the field of cultural production. On the other hand, curators normally choose a particular direction for their scientific interests, which makes them professionals in a particular genre, period of art history, etc. Moreover, the institutionalized state of cultural capital constitutes a specific feature of curatorial profession: curators tend to be highly self-reflective professionals, which means that the academic research of curators performed by curators themselves is no exception, and is considered by peers in the field and representatives of related professions as an essential element of curatorial identity.

1.3.3.3. Social capital

Social capital is a set of social relations of a person, which is obtained through various practices and experience (Bourdieu, 1986). In particular, Bourdieu defines social capital as “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 119). The so-called “network” of social relations allows a person to get access to different fields and sources, such as information and knowledge, expertise and skills, and to material resources as well. Since curators communicate and cooperate with diverse actors in their professional network, such as other curators, artists, journalists, administrations, businesses, etc., their social capital is an issue of great relevance to my study.

According to Bourdieu, the relationships that form social capital can “exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51). In the case of curatorial practices, I presuppose that social capital plays an important role in a curatorship, due to the fact that a specifically symbolic exchange matters in this field of activity: curators have an opportunity to ascribe symbolic meaning to artworks and support the artists by presenting the artworks to a broader audience, and this curatorial “power” allows curators to control the trajectories, or “careers”, of artworks for a certain period of time. Moreover, curators receiving financial support from sponsors can also grant the persons or organizations giving financial support higher status by producing positive connotations of charity or involvement in culture respected in society.

Social relationships can also be “socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name (the name of a family, a class, or a tribe or of a school, a party, etc.) and by a whole set of instituting acts designed simultaneously to form and inform those who undergo them” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51). This type of social capital also plays a significant role in curatorial practices, since, for example, friendly circles of peers working in the artistic field are usually constituted through belonging to particular academic institutions.

1.3.3.4. Symbolic capital

Finally, the notion of symbolic capital, which “is not an independent type of capital within itself, but rather consists in the acknowledgment of capital by the entirety of the peer competitors on a specific field” (Walther, 2014, p. 10), is also relevant to this research. A curator acting in the field of art has to obtain the status of a trustworthy, well-educated person in order to build a successful career. The acknowledgement from the colleagues and public also plays an important role in the professional life of curators. Another important factor influencing the symbolic capital of curators is their exclusive access to symbolic goods. Taking into account the fact that curators work with objects of art and

establish links between artists and their audiences through exhibitions and other types of artistic events, their presentation and (re)interpretation of the meaning of artworks both guides public perception and increases the symbolic capital of these professionals.

1.3.4. Curators as cultural intermediaries

The following paragraph provides an insight into the key concept of my research – cultural intermediaries. Workers engaged in “the occupations involving presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration and so forth) and in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services ... and in cultural production and organization which have expanded considerably in recent years” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 359) are considered cultural intermediaries by Bourdieu. Contemporary art curators can be seen as a vivid example of this category, since they mediate between various actors at the intersection of different fields. Furthermore, curators might affect both cultural production and consumption by performing several functions, such as the coordination and presentation of the results of artistic production, gatekeeping, producing catalogues, editing articles and other texts, scheduling, distributing information and knowledge, developing marketing strategies, etc.

The notion of cultural intermediaries is tightly connected with the concept of taste, since, according to Bourdieu, cultural intermediaries actually handle the tastes of various agents (Bourdieu, 1986) by shaping their preferences “for particular goods and practices, and defining and defending (new class) group positions within society” (Maguire & Matthews, 2014, p. 16). Cultural intermediaries, and particularly curators, do not directly convince agents (consumers) to “buy” a specific symbolic good, for example, an artwork, but rather they “create the conditions for consumers to identify their tastes in goods” (Maguire & Matthews, 2014, p. 20). Due to the large volumes of cultural, symbolic and social capitals that cultural intermediaries have, they obtain legitimized power to shape the tastes of other agents.

Moreover, cultural intermediaries are part of the “new economy ... whose functioning depends as much on the production of needs and consumers as on the production of goods’ (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 310), since this newly emerged consumer economy requires a wide scope of “merchants” and “taste-makers”. Consequently, cultural intermediaries cannot be considered outside the frame of class relations, which have been rapidly changing in recent decades, especially due to the redistribution of higher education resources: higher education has become more open to diverse agents representing different social classes, and thus new occupations have emerged, specifically those related to the production of cultural needs and symbolic goods.

Bourdieu emphasizes such a feature of the “new economy” in the shape of the growing professionalization of the agents mediating between production and consumption. This is fully applicable to the educational and professional tracks

of curators: originally, curators were mostly educated as art historians, but, although they are still often required to have such an academic background, especially by institutions exhibiting classical art, in the field of contemporary art, the emergence of new educational academic programs which specifically offer qualifications for contemporary art curators is currently being observed.

1.3.5. Criticism addressed to Bourdieu's approach

Summarizing the ideas and theoretical notions described above, it can be concluded that the application of Bourdieu's theory to my research will allow me to provide a better interpretation of the qualitative data collected over the course of empirical work, and to link together various aspects of curatorial activities.

However, Bourdieu's theoretical approach has received a large amount of criticism in the field of social science. The major point of criticism targets the lack of conceptual transparency in this framework (Sullivan, 2002), which leads to diverse interpretations of the theory produced by other researchers, as well as the various, and sometimes contradicting, conclusions drawn from it. Moreover, the concept of *habitus* has been recalled as deterministic and not sufficiently considering the level of individual agency (DiMaggio, 1979). Additionally, the lack of attention given to gender differentiation and inequalities is also seen as a drawback of Bourdieu's approach (Kanter, 1986), although in the course of my research the lack of gender conceptualization does not appear to be core to the analysis.

Meanwhile, in the course of my research I have experienced a lack of analytical tools in Bourdieu's theory that would enable analysis at an international level, since Bourdieu only considers things at a national level and often refers to the specific history and conditions of his homeland, France. Still, I believe this shortcoming can be compensated in my study through the implementation of other, complementary, theoretical perspectives such as sociology of profession and the theory of creative class.

1.4. Analysis of curatorship through the lens of sociology of profession

As mentioned above, consideration of complementary theoretical perspectives gives me an opportunity to conduct a deeper analysis of curatorship. The following paragraph suggests an overview of theoretical frameworks analyzing curatorial practices as part of occupational activities.

First of all, curators are representatives of the art management sphere, but it should be mentioned that the formalization of regulations in this profession is normally lacking, due to the fact that curatorial practices are performed differently in various artistic institutions or beyond them. With this as a basis, I argue that a sociological analysis of curatorship should be more focused on the

actions of curators and strategies of mediation between diverse actors from multiple fields and symbolic objects. Yet it should be added that there are still “formal” rules and institutionalized forms which affect the professional status and practices of curators, such as the rules and norms of taking care of artworks, or legal issues, or the rules of particular artistic institutions in which curators operate.

In my research, I apply the following definition of profession suggested by Gunter Burkart: “Professions are occupational categories whose members have degrees of statutory power and autonomy, because they successfully claim to solve better than others relevant problems of their clients or of society in general. The expertise of their members is validated by advanced university degrees, theoretical knowledge and technical skills” (Burkart, 2006, p. 470).

This definition reflects various aspects of profession and refers to the notion of cultural capital described in the previous part of the theoretical chapter. Now, I would like to briefly describe the major approaches developed in sociology of profession which may be useful to my research.

First of all, I would like to mention Andrew Abbott, who suggests considering professions as open systems characterized by internal dynamical competition for a monopoly for competence and professional credibility (Abbott, 1988). Abbott also stresses the important role of knowledge and skills division in professional settings divided by symbolic boundaries. Moreover, according to Abbott, contemporary studies of professions have to consider conterminous professions. Conterminous professions are those that are strongly related to a particular occupation but still represent a different type of job, although such professions are often linked in their practices. For example, we can consider psychology as a profession bounded to the job of social workers, since psychologists and social workers often collaborate in order to perform their duties successfully. In the case of curatorship, this notion is valuable, due to the fact that curators usually work in tandem with representatives of various artistic and academic professions, as well as professionals from media and management, and thus can also be defined as part of a system of conterminous professions.

The idea that particular occupations should not be analyzed separately from allied professions due to the fact that changes in related professions may affect them (Abbott, 1988) thus provides relevant theoretical grounds for a qualitative analysis of curators as mediators between diverse actors working in related fields.

1.4.1. Curators as creative professionals

It should be added that curatorship as a profession representing a managerial occupational category is not limited to purely organizational issues. Issues of aesthetics also play a significant role in curatorial practices, which should be

taken into consideration when analyzing curatorship as a professional category. Moreover, as it was already mentioned above, cultural capital represented by the academic and professional competences of actors alongside their social and symbolic capital play an important role in the course of defining the positions of curators in the labor market of arts, which makes curatorship different from traditional managerial occupations.

Curators are therefore obviously involved in creative practices and thus belong to new professional category, that of creative professionals. According to Richard Florida, creative professionals form a new class – creative class – and can be defined as agents involved in work the main aim of which is to create “new meaningful forms” (Florida, 2002). Florida suggests the following structure of the creative class: the super-creative core represented by such professionals as artists, poets, scientists, engineers, actors, editors and other creative professionals. While the first subcategory creates the new forms themselves (for example, musicians compose new pieces of music, or architects develop new projects), the latter on the other hand helps to solve various problems by applying creative practices and academic knowledge. This group of creative professionals involved in “knowledge-intensive industries” (Florida, 2002) is supposed to have a high level of education and social capital and to make decisions based on their qualifications, when producing new ideas. The examples of such occupations are event-managers, PR-managers, business developers, account managers, etc.

Contemporary art curators are also involved in the second kind of practices described above: they have to tackle different problems and arrange the conditions that will help artists and their public to meet each other and to become involved in communication mediated through artworks in a museum or gallery.

1.5. Research on curatorship: Two perspectives

In order to perform the analysis as deeply as possible, I find it important to consider the research on contemporary art curators which has been already conducted in various fields of study. The first subparagraph of this paragraph sheds light on how the analysis of curatorial practices is performed by curators themselves, while the second one describes sociological research of curatorship, which is still rather rare and fragmented.

1.5.1. Insider perspective

Curatorial studies can be considered as a functional duty of curators related to the development of exhibition projects. Normally, curatorial studies take the form of research into the work of particular artists, as well as artistic forms and directions developing in particular periods in the history of art. Nevertheless, as actors of the artistic scene, curators also frequently become a research focus

for both other curators and art historians. Thus, interestingly, the majority of studies about curators are conducted within the professional field. The resulting insider perspective provides rich material for future studies of curatorial practices conducted within social sciences and the humanities, as they give a detailed description of the functions of a curator, produce typologies of exhibitions and artistic projects, classify agents acting in the art scene, define basic terms related to curatorial practices. On the other hand, such studies might lack the objective perspective that an outsider approach could provide.

The increasing number of curatorial studies can be explained by the growing popularity of the profession, as well as by the increasing role of curators in the artistic scene and on the art market, as well as the rapid development of new art museums, galleries, and artistic projects. Moreover, there is a growing number of curatorial educational programs at BA and MA levels that seek to distance themselves from educational paths in history of art and art management (where managerial and thus commercial issues often dominate) in order to prove their autonomy and value.

Insider researchers justify the need for curatorial studies through several arguments. First of all, such research, they claim, can significantly contribute to the production of artistic knowledge. Secondly, there is currently a deficit of analyzed and documented information about the history of contemporary art in which curators play an increasingly significant role. Finally, the changing operations of artistic institutions meeting the challenging of new symbolic economy have to be analyzed (Cherix, 2014). In particular, “exhibitions have become the medium through which most art becomes known” (Greenberg et al., 1996, p. 2), and the forms of exhibitions have changed dramatically, as today museums and art galleries tend to present their permanent collections in temporary exhibitions, while exhibitions as such can be currently seen as “sites of exchange in the political economy of art, where signification is constructed, maintained, and occasionally deconstructed. Part spectacle, part socio-historical event, part structuring device, exhibitions – especially exhibitions of contemporary art – establish and administer the cultural meanings of art” (Greenberg et al., 1996, p. 2). In this sense, the role of curators organizing such exhibitions becomes especially significant and deserves careful analysis.

There are diverse definitions of the term “curator” produced in such insider studies, all of them generally reflecting the role of curators as linchpins between artists and their public, and as guides to the artistic world. Today, the definitions of “curator” have become more complicated, due to the diversification of tasks performed by the representatives of this profession. For example, Hans Ulrich Obrist defines this term in the following way:

Today it is much, much more than filling a space with objects. It has to do with filtering, it has to do with enabling, it has to do with synthesizing, with framing, also with remembering; and it's definitely become clear, sort of seeing the exponential growth of the use of the note curator on the internet, that the

proliferation of ideas, of information, of images needs somehow, obviously, a guiding and it seems also that within this whole information explosion curating is used more and more (Obrist, TEDx Talks, 2011, pp. 11ff).

H.U. Obrist is a world recognized curator currently working as the artistic director at the Serpentine Galleries, London. He has also organized numerous independent curatorial projects internationally, as well as created various discussion platforms for curators and art historians. He is also working on “The Interview Project”, which began during his student years. Over the course of this project, Obrist has collected an impressive set of interviews with various representatives of the art world. Moreover, Obrist is particularly known for his research on the history of curating described in his book “The Brief History of Curating” (Obrist, 2009), which is of particular interest to this research. Obrist has conducted several interviews with pioneer curators, who are universally respected not only in the professional community of curators and artists, but also in broader institutional and public settings. Interviews with such outstanding curators as Anne d’Harnoncourt, Werner Hofman, Jean Leering, Franz Meyer, Seth Siegelaub, Walter Zanini, Johannes Cladders, Lucy Lippard, Walter Hopps, Pontus Hultén, and Harald Szeemann cover a great number of issues concerning the job of curators, biographical trajectories of curators, their understanding of actors involved in the art world, and institutions that shape the artistic environment. The book is considered a great contribution to the history of contemporary art, and has valuable insights into the logic and structures of art, especially qualitative data potentially applicable for sociological research and interdisciplinary cultural studies.

I would also like to mention another work, the article “Beyond Boundaries: Rethinking Contemporary Art Exhibitions” (Morin et al., 2000) written by curators who have great practical experience. The article addresses various innovative practices and models developed by curators in recent decades in order to present contemporary art inside and outside institutional spaces in the shadow of new challenges in the world of art, as well as in related spheres. Being very different, these models are insomuch united by the idea that contemporary art can perform an integral role in society by implementing a tool of establishing spaces where individuals would have the opportunity to reflect on their personal experience and their communication with the world. This process, the authors argue, requires the reconsideration of the main categories of the contemporary art world: curators, artists, exhibitions, and audience, as well as the revision of the relationship between them (Morin et al., 2000).

The article under discussion is divided into six parts that are written by professional curators. Firstly, Valerie Cassel, the director of the Visiting Artists Program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, analyses the experience of the artistic residency “Cry of My Birth”, which is organized in cooperation with the Visiting Artists Program. Artists from different countries have been invited to

work on their projects in Chicago, both in independent projects and in groups. The residency provides them with the curatorial help necessary, and organizes discussions and other public events (Morin et al., 2000).

Secondly, France Morin, an independent contemporary art curator and art historian based in New York, covers specific issues of the establishment and performance of the project named “The Quiet in the Land: Resistance and Healing through Art” aimed at reflecting the conventional notions of gender, work, and spirituality and to challenge the widespread belief that art and life are realities that do not have much in common. The space has been created for and shared by artists and local communities through the implementation of different projects reflecting the plots mentioned above in the form of exhibitions and further publications (Morin et al., 2000). The next part of the article is written by Apinan Poshyananda, the associate director of the Center for Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University, in Bangkok, and curator of numerous exhibitions. He reports on different issues related to the organization of contemporary art exhibitions in Asia and discusses the challenges of presenting Asian contemporary art globally by describing several curatorial projects he has participated in (Morin et al., 2000).

The fourth part, written by Mari Carmen Ramirez, a curator of Latin American art, depicts the present struggle between global and local interests in the art world and discusses the role of curators as brokers, translators, or cultural agents (Morin et al., 2000). His projects question the “dominant curatorial models that continue to encase the artistic production” (Morin et al., 2000, p. 14) and state that curators have to be flexible and creative, using various strategies in different shows. The fifth part describes the experience of Caroline Turner, deputy director of the Humanities Research Centre of the Australian National University, and director of cultural research projects, as a project director of the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art – an impressive exhibition project involving over six hundred artists, curators, and writers from the region. The final part of the article submitted by curator Igor Zabel provides an analysis of organizational and content specificity of Manifesta 3.

The abovementioned article is an illustrative example of curatorial studies aimed at sharing the experience and knowledge of curators as experts and at increasing the awareness of the public about the challenges curators face in their works. Such perspective is also of great importance due to the fact that it mirrors the international aspects of curatorial work, and today curators often have to deal with international projects and cooperate on a worldwide scale.

It should be mentioned that the majority of studies dedicated to curatorial practices are conducted by representatives of Western art scenes, while there is an obvious lack of such research in Russia and many developing countries. Nevertheless, there is also one work focused on the Russian context that is worth considering in my research due to its great influence on the curatorial

practices in the country: “Five Lectures on Curating” (Misiano, 2014) written by Viktor Misiano, which is the first study of curatorial practices and theory written in the Russian language.

Misiano is a noticeable figure in the Russian artistic scene as well as in the European one, being a prominent curator and contemporary art theorist. Living and working in Moscow, Russia, he has curated various events at local, national, and international levels and worked for different art journals. Today, he is actively engaged in teaching and gives lectures in various locations (Kandinsky Prize, 2015).

In his book “Five Lectures on Curating”, Misiano provides an overview of the development of curatorship as exemplified by international projects and events which are part of his personal professional experience. He describes curatorial practices as a form of non-material production and underlines their relational and dialogical character, presenting curatorship as a part of a complex artistic system (Misiano, 2014). “By joining the international discourse on curatorial practices, Misiano projects its key concepts onto the Russian scene, and highlights the relationships between the local artistic system and diverse global processes, including political and social trends and events” (Kandinsky Prize, 2015). Misiano also describes the artistic scene of Moscow and investigates the basics of its operation. He stresses the public character of curatorial work, which brings him to the idea that curatorial practices have to be always considered within the context of communication (Misiano, 2014), interplaying with the view of curators as cultural intermediaries.

Misiano also develops a useful classification system for exhibitions (Misiano, 2014):

- history and art exhibitions that are of academic character and are based on scientific research; those are mostly organized in and initiated by museums;
- representative exhibitions where the exhibited items (rather than previous research) play the most important role; such exhibitions are aimed at presenting the artworks of a specific region, period, genre, etc.;
- thematic exhibitions that are similar to historical and art exhibitions in form, but normally demonstrate contemporary artworks;
- solo shows exhibiting the artworks of a particular artist;
- experimental exhibitions aimed at creating new formats of exhibitions instead of replicating traditional ones;
- mega-exhibitions, which have the most complicated structure among the abovementioned types since they combine various artworks, genres, forms and locations, and may also embrace a series of artistic events (e.g. Manifesta, Documenta).

According to Misiano, curators have to adapt their strategies to the particular type of exhibitions they work on (Misiano, 2014).

As demonstrated above, curators attempt to structure their practices by analyzing their personal experience and that of their colleagues. Curatorial reflection on the practices and strategies of curatorship produces fruitful research material, and also proves the role of curators as cultural intermediaries, but probably lacks analytical distance. I shall therefore turn to sociological inquiries into curatorship in the following section.

1.5.2. Sociological perspective

Although there is an obvious lack of research on contemporary art curators in social science, there are still some researchers working in the field of sociology of art who address this type of agent of the artistic field. In particular, I would like to consider the interdisciplinary research of curators done by Sophia K. Acord. In her article “Beyond the Head: The Practical Work of Curating Contemporary Art” (Acord, 2010), Acord covers several important issues concerning curatorial practices. Firstly, she discusses classical theoretical approaches that are usually used by sociologists in order to analyze the artistic framework in general: P. Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, H.S. Becker’s approach to collective creative work, and P. Di Maggio’s analysis of cultural production, to draft the theoretical frame for her analysis. Secondly, Acord turns to the methodological questions of curatorial studies and describes the methods applied in her own research: she has opted for “photo-and video-based micro sociological studies” (Acord, 2010, p. 453), namely a combination of video data analysis with follow-up video-elicitation interviews (Acord, 2010). In her research, Acord concentrates on the curatorial work with artwork installations, which explains the choice of such methods (the need to analyze visual materials). As a result, Acord describes interesting empirical material and introduces practical ideas of curatorial work suggested by curators themselves. Finally, the article considers the current debates around the studies of curatorial and artistic practices, opposing the artist-oriented approach concentrating on the aesthetic values and the micro-sociological perspectives going beyond the symbolic meanings of art (Acord, 2010). In my eyes, this paper contains materials extremely useful to social researchers, as it covers various ideas which can be applied in further studies. For example, Acord empirically confirms the conclusion that artistic production, and particularly curatorship, should be considered as a form of cultural production. Moreover, she stresses the need “to examine art world actors and mediators from the position of performance and meaning making, especially when this practice involves new or changing art forms” (Acord, 2009, p. 217). She also concludes that contemporary art curators “exercise agency within institutional restrictions during the exhibition-planning process” (Acord, 2009, p. 217).

There is currently a tendency among social scientists to study curators in relation to other actors in the art market such as contemporary artists, artistic institutions, critics, and audiences. Here, curators appear just as a marginal category of analysis but their role as cultural intermediaries is still often

recognized. Another trend is to conduct case studies of particular art projects, where the processes of communication and collaboration of actors involved are analyzed in many details. For example, the paper “When a bus met a museum: following artists, curators and workers in art installation” describes many stages of art project realization and analyzes the curatorial mediation between artists, technicians, curators, and the public, demonstrating the importance of their coordinated actions (Yaneva, 2003).

To conclude, the first chapter of my paper provides an insight into the paradigm of cultural production, which does not consider the artistic production from the artists’ position as the key one in this process as key to this process, but rather concentrates on various actors and institutions involved in cultural production. At this point, contemporary art curators become a legitimate cultural intermediary belonging to the group of creative professionals and linking various agents together in order to create new meaningful forms. Both academic and practical perspectives are valuable for the study of curators and curatorship, since there is a need to overcome the shortcomings of each approach in order to present a more balanced and detailed picture of curatorship. In the second chapter, I shall introduce the results of my empirical investigation of contemporary art curators in St. Petersburg and Hamburg and use this complex theoretical frame to tackle the findings.

Chapter 2. Contemporary art curators of St. Petersburg and Hamburg as cultural intermediaries: The results of comparative empirical research

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology applied to data collection and analysis, describes the research sample and gives some insights into the limitations of my research. The main part of the chapter covers the results of the empirical analysis of the collected data and answers the research questions posed over the course of my study.

2.1. The logic of data collection and analysis

The following paragraph describes my choice of the methods of data collection and data analysis. It also sheds light on the challenges of the applied methodology and describes the research limitations in order to provide a clear picture of what has been done so far.

With regard to the aims of my study, I decided to work with qualitative data collection and analysis. Qualitative methodology provides a researcher with deep and valuable insights into the subject of inquiry. It provides an opportunity to gain access to the closed fields and to study new social phenomena, provides a high degree of flexibility during the research process, and is considered to be one of the best options to collect data about personal and sensitive issues due to the use of face-to-face communication with informants. In the case of my research, it was extremely important to collect the data that would deeply describe the personal experience of curators, and thus face-to-face contact with the curators was certainly preferable. Moreover, due to the fact that my research is dedicated to rather new social phenomena, it was essential to collect the narratives which were not affected by formalized questions, but were rather shaped by the informants themselves.

It should be mentioned, however, that qualitative methodology lacks a formalized and unified approach to data analysis. Due to the fact that qualitative analysis is based on the interpretations of the reported and observed facts, actions, and social phenomena introduced by the researcher, the analysis is inevitably subjective. There is also a risk of obtaining rather descriptive findings and conclusions. Still, I believe that qualitative perspective provides me with a deeper view on the topic of my research, since it allows us to capture the individual perceptions and experiences of contemporary art curators. Moreover, the suggested methodology also gives me the opportunity to discover the hidden dimensions of curatorship as a set of professional practices and agents performing them, and to analyze the diversity of curators' strategies presented in two European cultural capitals and in two national contexts. In-depth interviewing was applied as a means of data collection, which allowed me to cover the issues considered by the informants as important. The in-depth interviews also gave me the opportunity to gain insight into the biographical

trajectories of informants which influenced them as curators, in order to get an idea of the daily work of curators in artistic institutions and to grasp the evaluative perspectives of curators towards their work in particular institutions and in particular cities.

2.1.1. Sampling

Since my research has a comparative perspective and focuses on curators working in two countries, Germany and Russia, the fieldwork for data collection was done in Hamburg, Germany, in the period of 07.02.2016 - 17.03.2016 and in St. Petersburg, Russia, in the period of 20.03.2017 - 20.04.2017. These two cities were selected in order to provide the ground for comparative studies, since St. Petersburg is considered to be the “cultural capital” of Russia, just like Hamburg in Germany. Moreover, the size of the cities and cultural and artistic diversity presented there are also comparable: Hamburg occupies the territory of 755.16 km² and has the population of around 3.5 million people (Official Hamburg website, 2016), while St. Petersburg has 5.2 million inhabitants and occupies 1439 km². Although these numbers differ, both St. Petersburg and Hamburg are the second largest cities in their countries.

Aiming to provide the maximal variety of narratives, I developed a specific structure for typological sampling. To collect informative and comparable data, the following categories of interviewees were suggested:

- Contemporary art curators working in state-funded institutions (e.g. museums);
- Contemporary art curators working in private institutions (e.g. galleries);
- Curators working as freelancers or engaged in self-run projects.

It should be mentioned that I have managed to collect interviews fully covering the suggested typological sample only in St. Petersburg, since in Hamburg the distinction between state-funded and private artistic institutions does not really apply: almost all institutions receive both governmental and sponsored financial support. Thus, it should be mentioned that public support of art in Germany varies from that in Russia, since private artistic institutions also constantly receive financial support from the government, which can also currently be observed now in some institutions in St. Petersburg, although such a form of combining public and private funding is not widely spread yet.

The average duration of the collected interviews is one hour, although in some cases the interviews lasted 1.5 or 2.5 hours. Ten in-depth interviews constitute the total amount of collected data. Low formalization of conversations was provided in both cases, which gave the interviewees the opportunity to lead the talk and to refer to the issues of curating relevant to them. The interviews with the informants from Germany were conducted in English, while the interviews with Russian curators were conducted in Russian.

2.1.2. Working with data: Transcribing, coding, analyzing

An interview guide was developed in accordance with to my research design, and especially the research questions stated there. The applied interview guide in English is included in Appendix 1 of this paper.

The collected interviews were recorded using a dictaphone, and the interviewees were asked in advance if they agreed to be recorded. Then the recordings were accurately transcribed: in order to contextualize the interpretations, opinions, statements and evaluations given by the informants, all the conversational strands, repetitions and emotional connotations of the statements were to be reflected in the transcripts. Since some of the recordings were made in cafes and other public spaces, there were some additional noises recorded, which made transcription difficult. It should be also mentioned that there were also some challenges in the transcription process due to the fact that for four out of five informants representing the Hamburg case English was not their native language, which means that sometimes their pronunciation was not very clear. Luckily, there were no significant mistakes made during the recording process, such as the disruption of technical devices, so the data was carefully registered.

The transcription was done with the help of the “oTranscribe BETA” online tool. This program allows researchers to avoid switching between different programs while transcribing, to pause, rewind and fast-forward without taking their hands off the keyboard, to automatically (and regularly) save the written information to the browser's storage, and to export the finalized text to Google Docs. Moreover, this tool is available free of charge. Evidently the process of transcription was demanding and time-consuming, but this was compensated by the fact that in the end all the transcripts constituted a vivid and insightful basis for further qualitative analysis.

In my research, I applied three steps of analysis: open, axial and selective coding. Introducing the procedure, it should be said that coding is a specific way of analyzing qualitative data which is implemented through categorizing and sorting textual information. A code itself can be stated in a form of a short but illustrative phrase or a word having a strong symbolic meaning. The codes are assigned to the selected parts of analyzed text. One part of the text may have several codes assigned to it. Open coding is the first stage of language-based data analysis that is done by splitting written data into first-level concepts. Axial coding is the next stage of analysis where some of the preliminary codes are preserved, others are merged into bigger categories (codes) thus turning into subcodes; and the interlinks/connections between the codes are established in order to create a microtheory out of the collected data. Finally, selective coding presupposes a choice for particular codes out of the full set in order to answer specific research questions. All these steps were implemented in the course of empirical analysis within the framework of my research.

I decided to use the Google docs form in order to analyze the collected data. All the transcribed interviews had separate files, and the coding process was done by inserting comments to the selected parts of the text. There were two waves in this procedure: the first one – for open coding, and the second one – for axial coding. A table of applied codes and referring subcodes was created, a fragment of which can be found in Appendix 2. During the final step of the coding procedure, I grouped the codes and the corresponding examples of referring quotes into two tables describing curatorship in Hamburg and in St. Petersburg, and, finally, I used these two tables in order to answer my research questions from a comparative perspective.

2.1.3. Challenges: Access to the field and research limitations

The field of art is a complicated area of research, as creative people usually have a lot of simultaneous tasks and have a constantly changing schedule, and curators, who are no exception to this rule, are generally very busy people. That is why in both cases it was difficult to arrange meetings with potential informants, even though they were willing to talk to me. In Hamburg, there was a challenge to establish first contact with curators, since originally I did not have many acquaintances there. However, thanks to the internship which I undertook in Hamburg during the course of my master studies and the research project into a Hamburg artistic community that I am involved in, I got recommendations and contacts for conducting my interviews. In St. Petersburg, it was much easier for me to establish the necessary links since I have quite a few contacts within the artistic network there.

As already mentioned in paragraph 2.2.1, there are some research limitations in the sampling for Hamburg, although they do not dramatically affect the research in general. The major limitation can be seen in the number of conducted interviews, but, unfortunately, as a student my time and financial resources were limited, and access to the field was not easy. In any case I view the result obtained as a good start for researching curatorship in Russia and Germany. The research also has geographical limitations: ideally, in order to get a full picture of contemporary art curatorship, the choice of cities under study should be broadened. Conducting series of interviews in the capital cities (Moscow and Berlin), as well as in the smaller cities of two countries, would be a valuable addition to what has been done so far.

I would also like to mention that in some of the interview cases I felt that it was a bit difficult to start the conversation, since I was a new person to my informants. That is why some of their statements may reflect official standpoints of the artistic institutions where the curators work rather than their personal opinions. However, in the course of the interviews, this communicative barrier was often possible to overcome.

2.2. Empirical analysis: Curatorship in St. Petersburg

The sample of interviewees from St. Petersburg consists of five curators representing various artistic institutions: the State Hermitage (SC1)¹, LUDA Gallery (SC2), Erarta (SC3), the State Russian Museum (SC4), and the Creative Association of Curators TOK (SC5). The brief description of these institutions is provided below.

2.2.1. Artistic institutions represented in the research sample (St. Petersburg)

I would like to start with the description of the most well-known and appreciated institution – the Hermitage. Founded in 1764 the State Hermitage Museum is one of the oldest museums in Russia and in the world. Moreover, it is one of the world's largest artistic institutions with over 3 million items in its collections. The collections are divided according to art history periodization and also in accordance with geographical logic, and “contain paintings, graphic works, sculptures, works of applied art, archaeological artifacts and numismatic objects” (The State Hermitage Museum, 2016). The museum has six locations, namely the complex of the Winter Palace and its connected buildings, the Menshikov Palace, the Museum of Porcelain, the Storage Facility at Staraya Derevnya and the eastern wing of the General Staff Building. The latter one has been recently renovated and permanent and temporary exhibitions of contemporary art are organized there.

The Hermitage is a large artistic institution with a complex structure and more than 1000 employees. It is engaged not only in the preservation and exhibition of artworks, but also in academic work regarding history of art, and very importantly the Hermitage is state run and owned.

The second institution represented in our sample in St. Petersburg is the State Russian Museum. This museum has the largest collection of Russian art ranging from Old Russian art to contemporary artworks. The collection is divided between several buildings that are also prominent examples of 18th and 19th century architecture: “Mikhailovsky, Stroganov, Marble Palaces, and Mikhailovsky Castle, the Mikhailovsky Garden, the Summer Garden and Peter I's Summer Palace as well as the Cabin of Peter the Great are also part of the museum complex” (The State Russian Museum, 2016). The Russian Museum also has a strong academic research orientation and is a state property.

The next artistic institution represented in the sample is the largest private museum of contemporary art in Russia, “Erarta”. Being relatively new (it was established in 2010), Erarta has already obtained an impressive collection of

¹ (SCn) and (HCn) refers the St. Petersburg and Hamburg interviewees consequently, whose names are not mentioned in the text due to the anonymity reasons.

contemporary art produced by Russian artists in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries. The collection has about 2300 items: paintings, drawings, sculptures, objects, installations, and is constantly being enlarged. The specific feature of Erarta is that it also has an art gallery where visitors can buy artworks.

The abovementioned artistic institutions have a common feature: all of them do not simply store and exhibit artworks, but also organize various educational and entertainment events (e.g. concerts, performances) targeted at different audiences: school children, students, adults, professionals, etc.

The fourth institution covered in the research is the LUDA Gallery: a small contemporary art gallery located in the center of St. Petersburg. This gallery is a curatorial project by Peter Belyi, a famous artist from St. Petersburg. This gallery was launched in 2009 and was open until 2010. The “rebirth” of the gallery took place in 2014. Peter Belyi describes the gallery in the following way: “LUDA is artists, groups, archives – everything that reflects the high-strung and sensitive flesh of art” (Belyi, 2016). LUDA is specifically known for its unusual way of dealing with exhibition projects: almost every week, the gallery opens a new exhibition showing artists who mostly represent art from Russian regions. LUDA is a non-profit gallery.

Finally, my research includes an interviewee from an independent curatorial project – the Creative Association of Curators TOK. This is also a non-profit art organization that was founded in 2010 by Maria Veits and Anna Bitkina. The organization serves as an “interactive intellectual platform for collaborations between curators, artists, researchers, designers, sociologists, anthropologists and other professionals in the sphere of art and culture from Russia and other countries” (TOK, 2016) and focuses on public art projects.

2.2.2. Becoming a curator: Classical education vs. newcomers

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, one of the key factors of a curator becoming a cultural intermediary and a creative professional is their educational background and thus the cultural capital gained through the educational system. At this point, the interviewed curators from Saint Petersburg can be divided into two categories: curators with an educational background in art history and curators with curatorial degrees.

2.2.2.1. Art historians as curators

The first category is represented by curators SC1, SC3 and SC4. Interestingly, these curators are from the same university and even the same department – the Faculty of History (today renamed as the Institute of History) at Saint Petersburg State University (Department of History of Art). This education is considered classical among the curators, and my interviewees confirm this fact:

“I have a classical art historian education” (SC3). It should be mentioned that the three curators graduated from this educational program in different years: for example, SC4 studied there during the Soviet era. Interestingly, all of these interviewees describe the program as lacking curatorial studies: *“... the curatorial practices are almost not discussed there, there is only something like an introduction to it in the shape of an elective course, which allows you to meet other museum institutions, these being Saint Petersburg institutions of course”* (SC3). Moreover, since this program is not directly related to curatorial issues, students and graduates may not in fact identify themselves as curators, even though they occupy these positions and perform the corresponding duties: *“Actually, I have never considered myself a curator, as first of all I am an art historian”* (SC1).

Nevertheless such a type of classical education creates a strong basis of knowledge and skills, which helps graduates with such an academic background to achieve expert status in the field of art. I would also like to mention that curators with such an academic background usually also specialize in specific fields of art history. For example, during her studies SC4 focused on 17th century Russian art, while SC1 gained her specialization in Old Russian architecture. Although these particular majors are not related to contemporary art, knowledge of art history remains essential for curatorial work, as my interviewees admit. Moreover, a deep knowledge of a particular field of art history, as well as the skills of conducting research and writing analytical texts gained through the educational process, are extremely important for curators and affect their curatorial practices in such a way that curatorial work becomes a research-based process: *“I choose those directions that I know well, because we are not supposed just to exhibit, we also have to present some kind of academic research”* (SC1).

As was mentioned above, educational programs in art history generally lack courses in art management and curatorship. This is why curators have to gain these skills and knowledge through other experiences, such as internships, academic exchange programs, and part-time jobs. For instance, all of the curators representing the first category of my interviewees have some additional experience of non-formal and informal learning. SC3 had an internship at Pompidou-Metz, France: *“It was great! Several months and... actually of practical work, yes. I was immediately plunged into the curatorial context such as the preparation of two exhibitions, and this internship [EUNIC internship for young curators] allows you to gain experience not only in the institution where you have your internship, but also different meetings with other institutions were organized, particularly in Luxemburg”* (SC3). Another example is the case of getting a job as a student, which then turns into a permanent placement, as was the case for SC4: *“I was nineteen years old, and there was a position in the engraving department of the Russian Museum, and at that moment I was interested in Old Russian Art, attended seminars dedicated to Old Russian Art and found the topic related to my work, engraving, because I was in the engraving department, and had an interest in Old Russian Art”* (SC4). At this

point, it is also interesting to observe the continuity of generations in chosen educational and professional tracks. SC4 mentions that she was expected to choose the engraving department, since her reviewer and supervisor from the Russian Museum wanted her to continue working on the history of engraving at the Russian Museum. This did not happen, but SC4 still works at the Russian Museum, albeit for the Contemporary Art department. While studying, curators often find a kind of mentor who provides them with valuable knowledge and also introduces young creative professionals into the local art scene. For example, SC4 was “guided” by the famous Soviet expert in the Russian avant-garde Evgeny Fedorovich Kovtun, and it was under his influence that she decided to concentrate on new forms of the avant-garde in Russia in her future research.

Interestingly, today SC4 also works for Saint Petersburg State University, heading the newly established master’s program “Curatorial Studies” at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences and also teaching at the program “Art Criticism” (both are the only academic programs where students can get curatorial education in Saint Petersburg). At this point, I would like to describe the young generation of curators who have graduated from this faculty.

2.2.2.2. Curatorial academic background

Two curators from my research sample, SC2 and SC5, represent the new generation of Russian curators who got their degrees in curatorial studies. SC5 graduated from a BA program at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Saint Petersburg State University. During her studies, she spent one year at Bard College (New York, USA). *“Smolny gave me open mindedness... it has widened the borders regarding what a person could actually do – because I chose extremely diverse courses while studying”* – that is how SC5 describes the major output of her educational program. She says she has concentrated not just on the history and theory of visual arts, but also on social sciences and particularly on social anthropology. SC5 got her MA degree at the Faculty of Sociology, Saint Petersburg State University, and also participated in an academic exchange program in Berlin, working with such forms of contemporary art as installations. During her PhD, she focused on visual methods in anthropology in order to combine social sciences and visual arts.

Meanwhile, SC2 got a BA diploma in journalism at Saint Petersburg State University and decided to continue her education at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences. She studied under the guidance of SC4 at the “Art Criticism” program. Previously, she had enrolled in the curatorial school organized by SC4 and Sergei Bugaev (Afrika), a famous artist from Saint Petersburg. In her interview, SC2 expresses her view on the MA program “Art Criticism”: *“We had a mix of this and that, on the one hand, it was not very good, because it was a little bit of a muddle, but on the other hand, I think this is also a specific feature of curatorship in Russia, because you have to do everything simultaneously. Write, create, and manage, and everything”* (SC2). The interviewee views the openness and practical orientation of the program as its main advantages and

considers her graduation course as a successful one: *“We were the first ones who created an exhibition as our diploma project. It was also possible just to present something at a conference, but I created an exhibition”* (SC2). Later on, SC2 has also participated in the curatorial summer school in Moscow organized by V. Misiano.

SC4, who is currently teaching at the “Curatorial Studies” program, describes the new generation of St. Petersburg curators as people with diverse academic backgrounds who have a desire to create new concepts for displaying contemporary art. She stresses the importance of several qualities necessary to become a successful curator: *“A curator is an international profession, the ability to rethink conceptually is required here, because a curatorial job is conceptual, it is conceptualizing, actually, it is rethinking a particular idea. You have to know art [...], and you have to be an opportunistic person in this sense”* (SC4).

Although all interviewees admit the positive role of the establishment of the “Curatorial Studies” MA program, there are also some critical concerns regarding the way it is currently organized. For instance, SC2 says that *“the guys [students] complain, because the programs [“Art Criticism” and ‘Curatorial Studies’] have been divided but the space left is not filled in, both regarding the teachers, and the lectures, because the lecturers remained the same”* (SC2). Similarly, SC5 doubts about the “contemporaneity” of the program, since it also has a classical art-historian perspective and is “too academic”, while *“it would be better to involve young curators, experts, people who really do something”* (SC5), as curatorship is a dynamic profession, and thus it is important to learn about new developments in the art world.

In any case, it can be concluded that the young generation of curators has diverse academic backgrounds, often not directly related to art history. The new forms of education, such as internships and different curatorial schools also become a popular source of gaining access to the professional field of curatorship. The cultural capital gained through such educational experience becomes a valuable source of achieving higher status on the artistic scene. All of the interviewees consider gaining their academic degrees as an important step in their career. Those who currently do not have a PhD degree are planning to get one or are already working on it. An academic degree particularly matters for those curators who work at state museums (there, institutionalized cultural capital is always required), and since curatorial jobs are dynamic, and curators might often change their places of work, the degree also matters for those who currently work for private organizations or self-run projects. Cultural capital is therefore a universal source of legitimizing curatorial positions in the field of cultural production in St. Petersburg.

2.2.2.3. Academic background as a source of social capital

All five curators interviewed in St. Petersburg stressed the role of their academic background in the creation of their professional networks. The former course mates become friends and colleagues, co-founders of artistic projects and co-organizers of artistic events. Academic experience also allows curators to find jobs or gain support in their professional careers. While studying, curators meet different people who work in the fields of art, PR and journalism, as well as in governmental structures, businesses, etc. Educational experience thus plays an important role in the shaping of curatorial networks, which in turn helps curators in their further professional and communication practices.

For example, describing her work with the colleagues from different departments, the curator working at the State Hermitage, SC1, says that *“we all have studied together, graduated from the same chairs, had similar stories related to exactly the same university [Saint Petersburg State University]”* (SC1). New acquaintances made during the time of studies may lead to future employment, as in the story of SC2. Peter Belyi, a famous artist from Saint Petersburg, invited her to assist him in the “Signal” project in the framework of MANIFESTA 10, and later on she started working at the LUDA gallery alongside him: *“It was a very intense time, the year of my thesis defense, all in all, getting into the environment, and thanks to “Signal”, of course, I met lots and lots of artists, and it was a very good start, actually, because I got to know everything that was going on here [on the Saint Petersburg art scene] literally during the course of one week”* (SC2).

The social capital gained from the years of studies helps curators to establish new artistic forms of cooperation. For example, in 1986, together with the former course mates and university colleagues, SC4 organized a club of young art historians which was run by their teacher Ivan Dmitrievich Chechot, who is currently also teaching at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences: *“We [...] got a space for our meetings. We renovated it [...] and started to give talks on avant-garde, new art, invited musicians there”* (SC4). When this union of young art historians lost their space one and a half years later, they continued to collaborate and communicate, and today they also sometimes work together, maintaining their friendly circle of creative professionals. Another indicative example of the creative collaboration of course mates is the Creative Association of Curators TOK, Saint Petersburg. Curators working there used to study together at Smolny, and later they decided to work together as a duo: *“At that moment she also experienced a kind of a crisis in her work, so we decided to establish our own organization, where we could do projects at the intersection of social sciences and contemporary art”* (SC5). Today they are successful representatives of independent Russian curatorship actively working in Saint Petersburg and abroad.

2.2.2.4. Family background

The family background of Russian curators represented in my sample is also worth considering: as stated in paragraph 1.3.3.2, the embodied state of cultural capital owned by individuals is affected by socialization taking place within the family. It is therefore important to trace the influence of a curator's family on their choice of careers as creative professionals, starting with the choices of educational tracks.

In my research, only one Russian curator, SC3, grew up in an artistic family. She is the daughter of a famous Russian artist, a member of the prominent St. Petersburg art group "Mitki". Moreover, her grandparents were also artists. She confirms that her choice of working in the art sphere was strongly influenced by the occupation of her relatives and the artistic environment in which the family was embedded: *"Well, first of all, it affected my choice of future profession. Of course, it affected me in the way that I am good at art, especially at contemporary art. Well, maybe better than my course mates, because I am in that environment... because I have known artists rather well since childhood, so I know how to communicate with them"* (SC3). The example of SC3 shows how the family can contribute to the professional curatorial career by enriching the cultural and social capital of a curator and thus shaping the curatorial practices and strategies.

The other four curators admit that their parents were always in favor of cultural studies and supported their enthusiasm for studying art. In the case of SC4, the family had to travel a lot due to their father's military service, but after they moved to Leningrad, a new family tradition was established: every weekend SC4 had to visit a museum: *"I have to say that when I was ten, I didn't understand why all children, as normal children, went to drink "Buratino" lemonade, while I was standing in the line in front of the Hermitage or the Russian Museum in violent heat or bitter frost. [...] and then you get into this palace, this museum, and when you see all these paintings you become immersed. It was such an experience!"* (SC4). Moreover, SC4 says that her father's job (he worked in missile troops) has also influenced her current curatorial practices: *"I actively work on the topic of space. I wrote a lot about space [...] I produced exhibitions about space, so in this sense my father had a strong influence on me"* (SC4).

SC5 describes her family as a *"typical family from Leningrad"* with a philological academic background: *"Well, of course, there were books about art at home. And, naturally, you know, if you were born in Leningrad, you were taken to... the Hermitage, all the theatres"* (SC5). She also stresses the supportiveness of the family in her choice of an independent curator's career: *"Of course, this helped a lot, because, well, when we just started doing something as curators, everything was not very clear"* (SC5). Similarly, SC2 describes her parents as very supportive, having liberal views, and as creative, although they do not have professions in the artistic field: *"But they have always supported me, and*

mother always wanted me to do something like this, well, I mean, to find myself. It means that I could work anywhere, but both of them, mother and father, always strongly supported me” (SC2).

As I discovered from the collected interviews, family support of the choice of becoming a curator is highly appreciated by the informants. All of the Russian interviewees also stress the importance of their parents’ initiative in sparking their interest in art when they were children or teenagers. Such family traditions as going together to art museums or attending other artistic events create the basis for long-standing interest in artworks and people who produce them. If a person has been raised in an artistic family, they also acquire specific everyday habits and skills valuable to professional curatorship.

To summarize the abovementioned observations, I can conclude that the collected narratives show that the cultural capital of St. Petersburg curators is shaped by their socialization in the family unit, as well as by their educational background. The generation continuity in professional choices has also been discovered, and is expressed in two forms: family continuity and “from teacher to student” continuity.

The educational and research background of curators may differ, but in Saint Petersburg it often remains rather classically oriented, although it is still diverse, due to the specialization of the curators in particular fields of art and art history. The institutionalized state of cultural capital gained by curators through their academic experience becomes a starting point in their curatorial careers and provides the curator working in Russia with legitimate positions of experts in the art scene. Moreover, the social capital gained by curators during their studies also plays an important role for their professional practices, as their personal professional networks start to develop during their university studies when they first gain access to the artistic scene.

2.2.3. Curators in public artistic institutions

As was already mentioned earlier, two of the curators from Saint Petersburg work in state-funded museums: the State Hermitage (SC1) and the Russian Museum (SC4). These museums are perfect examples of large museum structures with complicated organizational systems incorporating numerous departments and services. This kind of complex structural organization of art museums makes curators employed there mediate between various agents within their working environment.

In the contemporary art department of the Hermitage, the curator has to coordinate and control various processes in cooperation with different services of this institution, such as financial, legal and PR departments. SC1 describes the work of a hermitage curator as consisting of various tasks: *“A curator is a person who takes the major decisions. Yes, he develops the project concept, he decides which objects are to be included in the project, he involves in the*

negotiations, he writes texts, articles. But an exhibition is not just words and negotiations, it is also a lot of organizational work" (SC1). She also mentions such duties as organizing and controlling the transportation of artworks, mantling and dismantling, and working with custom services. For all these tasks performed during the organization of exhibitions, there are specific services in the Hermitage, and the curator has to carefully plan their actions and to be present at every stage of the realization of the plan. Similarly, SC1 mentions the organizational work done throughout the projects and related communication and cooperation with various agents as essential elements of curatorship.

SC4 associates the work in a state museum with the feeling of being protected by the image of the institution, which refers to the notion of symbolic capital: *"You have such a beautiful name, a beautiful business card"* (SC4). This means that the state museum has an appreciated status of a trustworthy institution in the eyes of various agents ranging from artists and partners to audiences. In this sense, a curator working in such a museum also obtains a legitimate status in the artistic scene, which provides them with various opportunities for cooperation with art-related agents, and guarantees stable attendance of the exhibitions, which can be seen as an important advantage.

Moreover, a prestigious status of such artistic institutions as the Hermitage and the Russian Museum draws attention of international colleagues and institutions; therefore, there emerge diverse opportunities to organize joint projects or to exhibit artworks from international collections, as well as to present Russian collections abroad. However, according to SC1, there are many difficulties to be faced in the process of international cooperation, as partners sometimes do not understand the complexity of the structure of big museums: *"Those who want to organize something do not understand that it is, in fact, a giant organizational work, which is very hard to get done by those who are smaller than the Hermitage"* (SC1).

A curator working for a public artistic institution is supposed to correspond to its structure, as well as to support it. It means that this curator has an additional responsibility of representing the well-known image of their institution. SC1 however sees it rather as a positive element of her work in the Hermitage: *"Great responsibility is good, not bad, because it motivates you to do your work well, that is why I don't see it as a barrier, vice versa, I think it is an advantage. [...] The higher the bar, the more ambitions you have, and you do your job better"* (SC1). SC1 believes that the difficulties caused by the existence of a huge organizational structure and bureaucratic issues related to it can be overcome through good self-organization of the working processes: *"If you accept that there is such a state of affairs, that there are rules, that the elementary rules should be kept to make system work [...] then it doesn't initially cause difficulties, if you accept it at the beginning, and work, and shape your work according to all these moments"* (SC1).

Furthermore, the fact that big museums have great collections of artworks, which SC4 calls “treasures”, allows their curators to obtain a deep knowledge of these unique funds and thus create a strong basis for future work in any form of intellectual labor. This reflects the idea of enriching a curator’s cultural capital, which is essential for curatorial career perspectives. Both SC4 and SC1 stress the importance of academic background for curatorial practices.

On the other hand, there are also many challenges in such a professional occupation such as time-consuming professional growth and postponed entrance into the labor market: *“It is as if you were entering a monastery. And you have to handle it, because in the museum you have to work at least for ten years to become a specialist, so you are studying artworks, sitting in the library for ten years. Later on, after ten years, such a slow maturation, you understand that you have become a specialist, you are ready to work independently”* (SC4). Similarly, SC1 mentions that at the Hermitage everyone has to start their careers at the positions of research assistances, and later on, depending on their professional performance and academic career development, they can hope to achieve higher positions in the museum’s hierarchy. Taking into account the dynamic and rapidly changing artistic scene and labor market of today, this might be a challenge for young curators, SC4 states. There is yet another challenge related to financial issues – low wages in state-funded museums – which might be a deterring factor for young professionals.

SC4 offers a typology of exhibitions which she organizes within the framework of the Russian Museum. First of all, it includes exhibitions based on the collection of Russian contemporary art that belongs to the Russian museum. SC4 provided an example of such exhibition project that took place in 2010 – “Brushstroke. The New Artists and Necrorealists. 1982 – 1991”: *“This exhibition was related to the fact that, in due time, the Russian Museum received an enormous gift from the artists in early 90s, from artists such as Timur Novikov and Sergei Bugaev (Afrika), and we finally showed this collection”* (SC4). Secondly, there are thematic exhibitions, *“where, actually, museum artworks and artworks from outside the museum are gathered”* (SC4). The next type is the “imported” exhibitions, where the artworks produced by foreign artists are shown. SC4 also works on large-scale exhibition programs, such as German video-art program that starts in May 2016: *“Once in a month, the video program will be changed, it will be shown at the Ludwig exposition [“The Ludwig Museum at the Russian Museum” is a permanent exhibition of art from the second half of the 20th century presented to the Russian Museum by German collectors Peter and Irene Ludwig]. So we, me as a curator from the Russian side, and a German curator, we have created this program, and there will also be lectures”* (SC4). Finally, there are also retrospective exhibitions where the works of one particular artist are usually shown. SC4 finds an interesting difference between retrospective exhibitions organized in the Russian Museum in the Soviet times and today: *“In the Soviet times, only classics, that is to say, academics, Moiseenko and Mylnikov [Evsey Evseevich Moiseenko and Andrei Andreevich Mylnikov, famous Soviet artists] could have an exhibition, and only once during*

their life, they could have a retrospective exhibition. Retrospective exhibitions were shown only when the artist had already died. But after the Perestroika, already... a living artist could have a retrospective exhibition, but there are not so many of them. Of course, there is usually only one exhibition in a big museum, in extremis, two [retrospective] exhibitions” (SC4).

SC4 works on various types of exhibitions within the Russian Museum, and she also has an opportunity to work on other projects outside this artistic institution, both in Russia and internationally. Meanwhile, SC1 works only on the architectural program of the contemporary art department at the State Hermitage Museum. Nonetheless she also works on different types of exhibitions: solo shows, such as the Zaha Hadid exhibition (2015), group shows, and thematic exhibitions, which constitutes the main field of interest of SC1 as a curator, since such exhibitions are based on the Hermitage’s collection and require a strong research basis. Both SC1 and SC4 stress the fact that even if the exhibitions are not composed of objects from the collection, they have to be adjusted to the museum’s concepts: *“The Hermitage is a very specific space that has its own history, its own life, it interacts with exhibit items in its own way, and we make our selection based on this experience. We are interested in doing a project for the Hermitage” (SC1).* SC4 reflects similarly on the situation in the Russian Museum: *“Certainly, when there is an exhibition in the [Russian] Museum, it surely fits the museum” (SC1).* Curators at the Hermitage and the Russian Museum are also involved in planning exhibition programs. For example, SC1 tries to leave enough time for exhibitions preparation – up to 3 years. Moreover, such planning allows the museums to get better financial support: *“When the exhibition is planned in advance, of course, there is a budget for it” (SC4).*

Summarizing the specific features of curatorship in state-funded artistic institutions in Saint Petersburg, it should be emphasized that here curatorial work has to be adjusted to particular rules and organizational structures of such museums. This requires mediation between various colleagues and services within the museums and taking responsibility for each step of exhibition preparation and presentation. To occupy a position in the museum hierarchy that allows a curator to be a decision maker, they must possess a significant amount of cultural capital enriched with the skills and knowledge obtained during the first years of working for the institution.

Although there are internal difficulties related to organizational work, curators employed in public museums in Russia gain valuable social and symbolic capital, due to the high status of their institutions. They have diverse opportunities to use this capital in their curatorial practices, but their professional strategies are thus shaped by the norms, values and traditions that express and reproduce images of the museum in question.

2.2.4. Curators in private artistic institutions and self-run projects

The following paragraph gives insights into the specific properties of curatorship in independent artistic institutions or art projects in St. Petersburg. There are three types of institutions under analysis: private museums of contemporary art, private galleries, and public art projects.

2.2.4.1. Curatorship in a private museum

The example of a successful private museum structure in St. Petersburg would be the “Erarta” Museum of Contemporary Art, which has a rather large and complex structure. SC3, the curator working for Erarta, describes her working experience there in a way similar to the curators working for state museums: *“Erarta is a very large structure, because there are many different things here”* (SC3).

This leads to a need for the curator to cooperate with different museum departments: *“More often, of course, the greatest collaboration takes place with the PR-service”* (SC3). According to SC3, a curator at Erarta should also work together with such departments as technical services, the so-called “workshop” where the artworks get “dressed” with frames and other elements required for exhibitions. These services also help to prepare the exhibition space for the upcoming show: the curator thus works closely with this service in the processes of mantling and dismantling, which are the direct curatorial duties. Similar to the curators working in public institutions, SC3 has to control other issues related to exhibitions creation: artworks selection, communication with artists, transport and custom control, writing texts, and more.

Meanwhile, there are issues specific to private institutions which affect curatorial practices here: *“Since our museum is a private structure, and is financed by private founders, a curator doesn’t therefore belong to himself, he has to defend each project in front of the founders”* (SC3). Although the budget has to be always approved by the major decision makers in artistic institutions of various size and structure, SC3 stresses that in her case it is sometimes an extremely challenging moment: *“The curator’s task is to be able to give, to present something in a very diplomatic way, sometimes it is very difficult. Sometimes it leads to some kind of conflict, when you just fight, fight for the project to be implemented”* (SC3).

Another specific feature of Erarta is rooted in the fact that it is a rather new artistic institution. Thus, one of its most important tasks is to attract new publics, to enlarge its target audiences. Simultaneously, Erarta aims at establishing interesting and deep projects by showing diverse forms of contemporary art. Because of such tasks, in Erarta the exhibition department is divided into two subdivisions – the curatorial department, where three curators work on temporary exhibitions individually, and the managers, who organize shows for the vast audience: *“We have exhibitions that we do for ourselves, that is to say,*

those that we like, those which are interesting to us. They are aimed at supporting artists, attracting the St. Petersburg public to artworks produced by artists from other cities, or genres that are still not well known. And at the same time, there are exhibitions, well, roughly speaking, that attract the broadest audience, who might be not ready yet to perceive contemporary art. Yes, they are ready to attend an exhibition as an entertaining event” (SC3). An example of the latter type of exhibitions would be Erarta’s recent project of fashion shoes done by architects. Such exhibitions generate great public interest, but people coming to see such expositions might also get to know other forms of more complicated contemporary art: “They discover our museum, our collection, and our temporary exhibitions” (SC3).

SC3 works on two types of exhibitions – solo shows and thematic exhibitions. She always organizes temporary exhibitions which are not related to the permanent collection of Erarta, which also constitutes a separate subdivision of the museum’s work. At this point, she has to communicate a lot with various artists, to find them, to select their artworks to be exhibited. Being an expert in contemporary art recognized by the professional community, SC3 has an opportunity to invite famous artists from the Russian artistic scene, as well as international artists.

The cultural capital gained through her family, education, and practical experience becomes a key source for her successful collaboration with different agents, and particularly artists, which is also supported by her social capital constituted in/through her artistic family’s networks and professional experience of work with and within different artistic institutions. Mediating between various actors again becomes a key function of her job as a curator.

2.2.4.2. Self-run curatorial projects

My research covers two examples of independent curatorial projects: LUDA Gallery (SC2) and the Creative Association of Curators “TOK” (SC5). Moreover, SC2 is also involved in the work of CEC ArtsLink – an international organization founded in the USA and having a representative office in Saint Petersburg aimed at the support of creative professionals and encouragement of various art projects. Art Prospect, a public art festival annually held in St. Petersburg, where SC2 participates as a co-curator, is also organized by CEC ArtsLink.

Working as an independent curator in a low-scale project is completely different from working for an artistic institution with a large structure. It should be clarified that when I talk about “low-scale projects” I mean the small size of the team constantly working on artistic events within a project (from 1 up to 8 people). In my research, these are curatorial duos, which mean that all the curatorial tasks and duties are divided between two people, and thus they have to communicate, collaborate and mediate a lot between various external actors involved in cultural production.

The first specific feature of such projects is the space for artistic events within the framework of such projects. For example, TOK, concentrating on public art events and organizing those in different locations, does not have any permanent working space: *“We don’t have an office, we work from home, there is no place in Saint Petersburg where we usually stay. And we also do not have our own exhibition space. But yesterday we were thinking if we actually needed it or not. Because, of course, you are better known if you have some space, because people associate you with the space, they come there, and so on”* (SC5). On the contrary, LUDA Gallery has its own permanent location, but the time they will be able to keep this small exhibition space remains unclear as it is a location of temporary use only: *“We were given this space for free for a two year period, and actually these two years are over now, but the space is now for sale, and... we are here for an uncertain period of time. So we only pay for the electricity here”* (SC2).

Another specific property is directly related to financial issues, since independent curators often have to find fund sources themselves. Due to the fact that such self-run projects normally take the shape of a non-profit organization, a new curatorial function appears as one of the key elements of project implementation – applying for various grants: *“Every time there are some new duties, we shouldn’t forget about such an important thing as writing applications. [...] We live on grants; we do all our exhibitions on grants money”* (SC5). Similarly, SC2 states that in collaboration with European projects, they *“try to receive a grant”* (SC2), or financial support from such organizations as the Institut Français in Saint Petersburg. SC5 says that they receive financial support mostly from international organizations and funds: *“Since foreign artists are actively involved in our projects, the money mainly comes from consulates and funds that give money for contemporary art projects and work with Russia”* (SC5). She also complains that the process of writing applications for a grant is very time-consuming. It also means that curators working on such projects and searching for grants have to be skilled in budgeting, as well as to be able to develop a convincing project concept.

Furthermore, both SC2 and SC5 have to perform various functions on their own, as they do not have any services to be engaged in such activities as mantling and dismantling, PR, transporting of art objects, buying necessary equipment, organizing artists’ visits, and other tasks additional to curatorial practices: *“I deal with all the organizational issues, such as who is arriving, what is arriving, what to buy for them, what to buy for us. I do newsletters, work with the press, Facebook, webpage, all communications, invitations, and so on”* (SC2). Similarly, SC5 admits that she also has to perform all these tasks: *“A curator does absolutely everything today”*. The abovementioned tasks and duties can be identified as practical ones, and if in state museums or private artistic institutions curators tend to control these tasks performed by other colleagues, in self-run projects such labor division is impossible, and thus purely curatorial tasks, such as communication with artists, creating exhibition concepts, etc. are inevitably combined with organizational issues: *“A curator*

comes up with an idea. He chooses an artist who can implement his ideas. He finds money to arrange everything. He communicates with an enormous amount of people involved in the project. This is, I don't know, the space, technicians, PR, designers and so on" (SC5).

TOK tends to plan its projects in advance. There are several projects done almost simultaneously, for example, the "Critical Mass" public art project, which takes place once every two years, but the preparations start way in advance, since the curators have to invite different artists, and the project is based on curatorial research, which also takes time. Both SC2 and SC5 are responsible for all publications and other texts written in their projects, while exhibition or project concepts are developed collectively with their colleagues: *"Peter [Peter Belyi] is the main curator, I am like a co-curator, but yes, we work together. So, in principle, we are rather democratic... so he comes up with something, wants to do something, and we discuss it. I come up with something, and then we also discuss it"* (SC2).

As we can see, curators working on independent artistic projects are multifunctional creative professionals even in a broader sense than curators working in complex large-scale artistic structures. Their skills (and thus their cultural capital) are enriched by the experience of working in various spheres, and their professional networks vary significantly by the agents involved (predominantly external agents as opposed to intraorganizational agents in big museums).

2.2.5. Curator and artist: Having a show

The key relationship in curatorial practices leading to the implementation of artistic projects is the interaction between an artist and a curator. If the artist has died, the figure of artist is replaced by those who own the artworks. The communication strategies chosen by curators towards artists can significantly differ. The following paragraph describes the tendencies in curator – artist relationships discovered in St. Petersburg.

Importantly, in their interviews four out of five curators from St. Petersburg have underlined the need to establish friendships with the artists. SC4 describes this phenomenon in the following way: *"What is it like to be friends with artists? It means to know them well, to know the older generation, and the new generation, to treat them humanly, with respect, because respect of the artistic community comes first, it is the most important thing. And if you love art and if you are friends with the artists, so you know art and the artists, it will let, in addition to your knowledge and the ideas that you have, it will let you fill the idea with artworks"* (SC4). Similarly, SC2 says that *"art is such a sphere, where a lot of things are passed from one person to another, of course, it is about contact, and about friendships"* (SC2). SC5 also underlines the importance of personal contacts with artists and the need to have a similar way of thinking with the artists during the course of the working process, otherwise the project

will not be implemented: *“It is very important to be familiar with each other, perceive the way the artist works, and the artist needs to understand how this curator works”* (SC5). SC3 also states that personal contacts matter for the quality of exhibitions, as well as for the process of collaboration with artists as such: *“Everything comes from personal experience. Some threads appear, and then they are united in something more global”* (SC3).

Meanwhile, being friends with artists does not mean that curators do not create a framework for future exhibition or a project. Depending on the type of the artistic event, curators choose various strategies of working with artists. For example, if there is a collective exhibition, SC4 believes, curators have to be *“tough and even totalitarian”*, since otherwise the exhibition may fail, especially when curators give too much freedom to artists in deciding which artworks are to be exposed. On the contrary, she thinks that in case of individual shows it is normal to consult the artist about the final choice of the objects to be exhibited. Still, the concept developed by curators should be kept, and curators play the leading role in exhibitions composition. SC3 also says that if there is a thematic exhibition, the artist has limited capacities to intervene in the creation of the exhibition concept, as *“the curator becomes a leading artist”* (SC3). She also believes that it is more convenient to work alone, that is why she prefers artists to give her freedom to take her own curatorial decisions regarding artworks selection and the composition of exhibitions. SC3 also stresses that specifically the artists presenting installations are usually involved in the mantling process, whereas the others step back from it.

Meanwhile, SC5 says that *“you have to understand that you shouldn’t press the artist, because the artist is the boss”*. Similarly, SC2 tends to work on the exhibitions together with artists: *“There are such cases when the artworks arrive, and we realize that they are not conceptual enough, or weak, and then, especially if the artist is also there, we start to discuss the artworks during the mantling process. [...] To work with the artist somehow, to do some psychoanalysis or even elimination of illiteracy”* (SC2).

SC1 and SC3 also underline the fact that there are some limitations imposed over artists caused not by curators as persons, but rather by the technical requirements and specificities of the exhibition space, and curators have to explain this to the artists and arrive at a consensus.

Interestingly, SC1 says she used to prefer working with archives than with living artists, but now she enjoys both types of “communication” with artworks. Since the Hermitage often invites “stars” for temporary projects, it might be difficult to establish personal working contact to such an artist or architect, due to his/her tough schedule or troublesome personality: *“They all have some hangs-up, some specific features. It is impossible to communicate with some of them, due to the fact that he is a “star”. Some of them are very democratic and give you full access to themselves. As a rule, such a process turns out to be much more fruitful”* (SC1).

As for the process of communication with the artists, all five curators have similar strategies here. In order to find an artist, they all attend various artistic events: local, national and international. That is how SC4 describes it: *“First of all, we always attend exhibitions, observe what is going on. Follow, read the journals. If we are interested in the artist, then it depends on if it is a solo show, or if the artist is to be included in a group project”* (SC4). SC5 follows the same strategy: *“We watch a lot, we try at least once a year to attend some big event [...] such as Documenta or Manifesta, something that has big cultural importance. We try to follow artists who are interesting for us”* (SC5). SC2 says that it is easier to find an artist in St. Petersburg and to start cooperation through meeting them face-to-face at local events, but she also tries to attend such large-scale international events as Venice or Berlin Biennales, and if she fails, she studies the lists of participants and searches for information about their artworks. Sometimes artists find curators themselves and offer their artworks to be presented, but such communication does not necessarily lead to successful cooperation, since curators prefer to work with the independently developed concepts.

After the exhibition concept is developed by curators, they begin interaction with artists by presenting the project concept in person if possible, or via phone and Internet. Since curators often work with artists residing outside St. Petersburg, communication via Skype and email becomes essential. Artists do not always attend the exhibitions where their works are displayed, but still they pay a great attention to the installation processes: *“The only thing is, of course, that many of them often insist on particular installation of their artworks, it is always important for an artist, and then they may come for mantling to install the work in a better way”* (SC5).

The curatorial choice of an artist, or several artists, to be exhibited strongly depends on the concept of the exhibition or the project, that is why curators already have a pre-selection of artists by genres, directions or even geography, as in the case of the LUDA Gallery: *“We exhibit the regions, or other cities, or other countries”* (SC2).

Generally, it can be concluded that Russian curators tend to establish friendly relationships with artists and also try to understand the artists' personality in order to find the right approach to collaboration. Artistic networks give curators an opportunity to follow the tendencies of contemporary art by attending various events and meeting artists personally, while the Internet and other means of communication also help to establish and maintain such contacts and to organize cooperation. Interestingly, all curators confirm that it is sometimes difficult to collaborate with artists due to their troublesome personality or specifically due to the lack of self-organization. That is why curators have to be tactful, diplomatic, creative, and sometimes even tough. In order to get access to the objectified state of cultural capital in the form of artworks, curators have to

be flexible and watchful, and their knowledge of art becomes essential here alongside their status of professional curators, which refers to the importance of curatorial symbolic capital.

2.2.6. Curatorship in St. Petersburg today: Overcoming challenges

As representatives of every profession, curators also face challenges. In the case of curatorship in St. Petersburg, there are major two categories of difficulties mentioned in the collected narratives: personal challenging curatorial moments and the challenges created by the local artistic scene.

The first family of challenges refers to the aspects of curatorial work that are related to intellectual tasks and everyday duties. Being creative people working with aesthetic issues, curators may face problems with the development of exhibition concepts. Moreover, due to the fact that curators have to mediate between various agents a lot, and thus to communicate with different types of people, including artists who often react emotionally, there are also challenges of interpersonal communication.

The challenges of the local artistic scene, which curators also have to deal with, shape curatorial practices and thus are particularly interesting for my research. According to the interviewees, although St. Petersburg is considered to be the “cultural capital” of Russia, contemporary art is not presented there on a proper scale. This happens because there is a lack of contemporary art institutions, and financial support for contemporary art projects is also lacking: *“The problem is the absence of spaces, and, obviously, finances. Compared with Moscow it is actually worse here, simply because there is no place and no money to do interesting projects. Our curators then go to Moscow or to Europe in order to do something”* (SC3). SC4 also supports this idea by considering the example of contemporary art galleries in St. Petersburg. She believes that there should be much more of them than are available today. Interestingly, all curators mention the same contemporary art institutions as worth attention, namely the State Hermitage, the Russian Museum, Erarta, the Anna Nova Gallery, the Marina Gisich Gallery, the LUDA Gallery, the Savina Gallery, the Novy Museum, and the Vertical Gallery. SC1 explains the lack of contemporary art spaces in the city in the following way: *“In my opinion, our Saint Petersburg is provincial. It is... neither good nor bad. It is as it is”* (SC1).

Another curator, SC2, also sees the problem of newly emerged spaces in that they lack the ability to become noticeable and noticed in the local artistic scene: *“The mistake of many places is that they do not choose any trajectory, yes. And, additionally, I think that another big and important factor is experience and professionalism. Sometimes, there is none of them in the spaces”* (SC2). Hopefully, the interviewees say, the situation with the lack of proficiency among creative professionals dealing with contemporary art will start to change soon, as the first steps have been already made, such as the establishment of the abovementioned curatorial educational programs “Art Critics” and “Curatorial

Studies". Other important artistic educational institutions that support the development of the local contemporary art scene are Pro Arte and the National Centre for Contemporary Art: *"Pro Arte educates the young artists, and the NCCA makes different programs and exhibitions"* (SC4). Moreover, such museum structures as the Hermitage, the Russian Museum, Erarta, and independent initiatives as TOK or Art Prospect and CEC ArtsLink, develop various educational events and programmes, organize lectures and conferences in order to share the personal, local, national and international experience of cultural and artistic production. Curators are also involved in such events and share their experience with diverse audiences.

Meanwhile, another important problem faced by curators in St. Petersburg is the lack of art criticism: *"We either have publications about the upcoming event, or post-releases, or some ordered article which just describes the event. Extremely rarely is there an art critic commenting on or arguing about something he doesn't like. There is almost no professional press left, almost all the journals are closed, and there is nobody who could write such a thing"* (SC2). That is why curators see writing analytical texts about their projects as an important task, which also supports the idea that curators are self-reflective cultural intermediaries.

Curators also compare the current situation on the artistic scene of St. Petersburg with the beginning of the 1990s when there was a great interest in Russian contemporary art in the city and worldwide: *"You could have met four directors of the biggest foreign museums at Saint Isaac's Square simultaneously, not knowing what to do with them, because you had to bring them to the artists' workshops. Everybody was impressed. In addition, these museums started to organize international exhibitions and to invite our artists, to do curatorial projects here, to bring them here. There was, that is to say, funding from institutions and national funds. Now we keep going because of that charge, that fuel"* (SC4). At that time there were various important exhibitions organized, such as "Art territory" initiated and curated by famous Swedish collector and curator Pontus Hultén who worked in cooperation with the curators from the Russian Museum. It was the first time ever that such prominent artists as Marcel Duchamp were shown in Russia. For example, SC1 also thinks that the period of the 1990s was brighter for contemporary art in Petersburg than the recent years: *"I think that if the 90s had been now, I would have attended much more events than I do now"* (SC1).

The interviewees also mention Manifesta, a complex exhibition that took place in 2014 in Saint Petersburg, as a relevant recent event that has changed the local artistic scene. This international event is considered by them to be a new starting point in the development of this scene: *"I think that everyone in Saint Petersburg after Manifesta felt maybe a kind of a freedom or courage. And now they initiate different stories, they are not afraid of being mistaken, of doing something. There are a lot of initiatives from young artists and curators"* (SC2). All of the curators represented in my sample participated in Manifesta events.

Meanwhile, SC3 thinks that Manifesta has shown the insufficiently institutionalized state of curatorship in St. Petersburg: *“At that time, of course, all the curators became active, almost everywhere, almost in every communal apartment there was some exhibition. So, yes, many names were strengthened, and there are enough good curators in our city, I think. And they do their job well. But, almost all of them, every recognized curator is, obviously, a person with an international background”* (SC3). This means that, according to SC3, in order to become a successful curator in Russia, a person should have valuable experience gained abroad. This opinion can be confirmed by the fact that all of the interviewees actually have such international experience and consider it to be important for their professional careers.

Summarizing the abovementioned facts, I can conclude that curators in St. Petersburg have to adapt to the local artistic scene and to be united in a professional community of artists, curators and other creative professionals, in order to overcome the challenges faced in their practices. This is done through sharing experiences, following each other’s efforts and enriching their cultural and social capital by keeping in touch with the international artistic community.

2.3. Empirical analysis: Curatorship in Hamburg

The sample of interviewees from Hamburg includes five curators. Two of them currently do not belong to any particular artistic institutions and work as freelance curators (HC1 and HC3), although HC3 used to be the art director of the city’s Kunsthhaus. Currently both of them organize exhibitions within different artistic platforms. The next one is a FRISE artistic community member (HC2) who is an artist also occupied with curatorial practices. The last two interviewees represent artistic institutions of Hamburg: Deichtorhallen (HC4) and Kunsthhaus (HC5). The following paragraph provides a brief description of the abovementioned institutions.

2.3.1. Artistic institutions represented in the research sample (Hamburg)

Since two curators work as freelancers and do not belong to any particular organization, I shall concentrate on the latter three institutions: FRISE, The Deichtorhallen and Kunsthhaus.

The FRISE Künstlerhaus (artistic house) has a long history dating back to 1977 when a group of artists from Hamburg came together in order to provide joint accommodation for their exchange of living, working, exhibition and communication areas as well as their own space. FRISE artists represent different forms of contemporary art and work with different techniques and formats. Many of them are also involved in curatorial practices, due to the fact that there is an exhibition space in FRISE House and an international artistic residence program has been in place there for many years

The second example of an artistic institution covered by my research is the Deichtorhallen Hamburg which is one of the largest exhibition centers for photography and contemporary art in Europe (Deichtorhallen Hamburg, 2016). The Deichtorhallen occupies two historic buildings located in the center of Hamburg that were originally built as market halls. After the restoration of the buildings in 1989, the city of Hamburg assigned the buildings to a limited liability company Deichtorhallen-Ausstellungen GmbH, and exhibition programs were launched there. Today, the Deichtorhallen has an impressive collection of artworks and presents a diverse artistic program including various educational events.

Finally, I would like to introduce the Kunsthaus Hamburg – an exhibition hall for contemporary art founded in 1962. The Kunsthaus is located near the Deichtorhallen and also occupies a part of the building where a former market hall was once located. The Kunsthaus does not have an own art collection. The exhibition program of this hall is dedicated to contemporary visual arts and related disciplines, particularly concentrated on the artworks of young artists representing the Hamburg artistic scene.

Due to the fact that freelance curators collaborate with different artistic institutions, these institutions will be mentioned throughout the rest of the text.

2.3.2. Joining the profession: Academic background

As well as in Russia, educational backgrounds matter a lot for the curators working in Hamburg. This experience shapes their tastes and preferences in curatorial practices. The cultural capital gained through university experience is also important for their career perspectives, since curatorship in Germany is more intense, which is why curators have to possess expert skills and knowledge in order to occupy stronger positions in the artistic scene in Hamburg.

Interestingly, the interviewees from Hamburg represent different universities and programs. For example, HC1, who is now working as a freelance curator, was born in the USA and studied literature and languages at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen and at the University of North Carolina. She later decided to change her focus to contemporary art: *“I studied in Göttingen, which is where my father taught at the university and... and in the United States, and I studied, originally I studied poetry, literature and linguistics. When I came to Hamburg twenty-five years ago and have been, and refocused my... my priorities to... to contemporary art”* (HC1). She stresses the fact that her family influenced this change of focus: *“Actually, my father painted, so, and always had this idea that he would either study art, or languages, or math [laughing]. And then he decided to... then he became a specialist in languages. But he did paint quite seriously for a while and... so, there was always an interest also for the family in art, and we went to, you know, we looked at churches, and went to see some, you know, historical art, and also some, you know, went to larger exhibitions.*

Documenta was pretty close by, right next to castle and so” (HC1). Her interest in contemporary art stemmed from early childhood, when she started to visit such exhibitions as Documenta with her parents. Due to her MA degree in literature, she started to write and work as a journalist. When she came to Hamburg, she began working as an editor for a local newspaper and to write about various issues including art. At that moment, the artistic scene of Hamburg was very bright and changeable: “There was a kind of wave, one might say, of contemporary art institutions either freshly opening up. [...] And there were new curators heading the Kunstverein and the Kunsthalle [...]. So, all these things were happening, and it was, you know, very interesting and... and exciting for me at that time to accompany these developments in Hamburg” (HC1). HC1 describes her involvement in the art world of Hamburg as a constant communication with contemporary artists, and as a process of learning about contemporary art from artists themselves. Consequently, HC1 grew involved in curatorial practices: “The colleague and I opened up a gallery space, and we featured some quite interesting exhibitions with... with kind of Hamburg-based artists” (HC1). Since that time, HC1 started to write only about art, to work on catalogues for exhibitions, and to curate her own projects, and later also to teach at the university. She has been teaching at the University of Arts, Hamburg, for over six years. This year HC1 is defending her PhD thesis at the University of Arts, Braunschweig.

Another example of a curator coming out of the artistic community is HC2, who is actually a recognized contemporary artist. He graduated from the University of Fine Arts, Hamburg, where he studied visual communication and fine arts. His curatorial track started in late 1990s when he began to cooperate with various NGOs, such as the International Association of Art, by participating in conferences organized by them: “When I stepped in the boat, I started to make... side-panels for the conference with, to show art, video-art” (HC2). After that, he decided to launch a little video art gallery together with other artists in the public space in the center of Hamburg: “[We] bought one of the first projectors you could afford at that time. So, we did projection from inside to outside. And our interest was to show video art in public space, and at... In the situation where nobody expects artworks” (HC2). Today HC2 curates numerous exhibitions and participates in joint curatorial projects, based on his knowledge of the artistic scene, artists and his personal experience as an artist.

These two curators illustrate the overflow of various forms of capitals, when social capital (being acquainted with artists) is converted into cultural capital (knowing artists and their artworks), which creates the basis for starting curatorship and entering this professional field. Moreover, such an insider perspective on self-learning and getting practical experience makes the position of a recognized curator an interesting type of achievement. HC2 also represents a specific group of curators – curating artists – which is typical for the German artistic scene.

Meanwhile, curators HC3, HC4, and HC5 have an educational background more typical of curatorship. HC3, representing the older generation of Hamburg curators, graduated from Hamburg University where he studied art history, pedagogy and archeology: *“Pedagogics and art history, so... we all thought in that time that... pedagogics... talking about art, talking about contemporary art is, was... very important for the... for the society, so we studied in combination – artists and pedagogics”* (HC3). While studying, he started to work with a group of other students at the art-holding at the Hamburger Kunsthalle: *“And we were the first group which... made guide tours through the... collection and also through the exhibitions, and that was very new, and that was very-very interesting”* (HC3). His parents were not involved in artistic practices, but his grandmother *“was a very good friend of the director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, but it was at the end of the 19th century”* (HC3), and the interviewee states that it was a bit easier for him to start working at the Hamburger Kunsthalle due to this fact. HC3 explains his decision to work with contemporary art by arguing that at the time when he was a student *“in Hamburg it was a desert”* (HC3), i.e. communication within and about art and the art scene was lacking. After graduation, he was working for ten years as a freelance curator in Hamburg, then he was invited to Berlin, and *“after a while the Hamburgerians, the Hamburger cultural department asked [HC3] to come back to Hamburg and to make the Kunsthaus”* (HC3). Another important notion that should be made here is that HC3 thinks that he has managed to build a successful curatorial career due to the fact that he was always in touch with artists, beginning in his student years.

HC4 first studied at the Sorbonne in Paris, but in 1987 she decided to change university and entered the University of Kiel: *“there I had the wonderful situation that we had a very small institute with only three professors. So we began with around about twenty students. So, everybody knows everybody. And all professors know you, and you have a name, you're not a number like in the big institutions in Munich for example, or Berlin. So, this is very nice, because the education is more direct”* (HC4). She was studying history of art, particularly concentrating on the history of photography, but in the interdisciplinary context: *“So, finally I studied history of art, pedagogics, then ethnology, and psychology, [...] through ethnology, I discovered photography for me”* (HC4). She mentions that there were some challenges while studying at the university related with social inequality: *“But the people there, they are coming from other social classes, which we are... higher than my class, you know. So, it was always a bit a conflict, you know, I wouldn't... but I was a bit of an outsider, you know”* (HC4). Anyway, she graduated successfully with an MA in 2000, and was invited to work for one year at the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Hamburg, since she had already had some contacts with this institution beforehand, to analyze and relocate the photography collection of the museum. During this period, HC4 got to meet her future employee: *“During this time, they organized an exhibition and... with many pictures of F.C. Gundlach collection. And that's the reason why I got in contact with F.C. Gundlach. And after that year, he said to me: “Hey, work for me”. Because he had the whole collection which was in disorder, which*

was chaotic” (HC4). She also mentions positive recommendations from her colleagues at her first place of employment as a factor that influenced Gundlach’s decision to offer HC4 a job at the House of Photography at the Deichtorhallen.

Initially, HC4’s interest in art stems from her family environment, which can be described as creative: *“My mom, she painted all her life. So, I grew up with the smell of paint and... to see her painting, you know, was a normal thing to see: in which way she arranged a picture, in which way she used the colors, dissent basics to the ground, you know. The details, all this”* (HC4). She even states that her inspiration to become a curator or her professional intuition originate not from her studies of art history, but rather from the observations of her mother’s work: *“And I think this is the reason why I studied history of art, because this is something which is really interesting, and I feel familiar with painter, you know, it’s... it’s something I know. I know how to work in. So, this was my basics, my ground. My ground was not history of art; my ground was to see my mother painting”* (HC4).

Like HC4, HC5 has an artistic family background, but she does not feel its strong influence on her choice of becoming a curator: *“My mother was an artist, but it was so... it was so natural that the house was full of art, it was... it feels natural to me and wasn’t something... special or something. And we didn’t go to museums so much. It was more like her passion. But of course I was confronted with art very directly and in a very... yes, natural way”* (HC5). HC5 studied in Essen and Cologne, where she chose media arts as her major: *“I studied at an art academy, I don’t have like a typical art historian curatorial... studies”* (HC5), and this choice of academic program was grounded in an interest in contemporary art and culture. Interestingly, at first HC5 did not consider the job of curator as interesting: *“I studied with artists, but I never was interested in becoming an artist myself. And while I was studying, I recognized that I was spending much more time in visiting exhibitions than working on my own stuff”* (HC5). This is why she started to do various internships in art galleries and institutions, such as the Deichtorhallen, related to art management, and discovered that curatorship was most suitable for her.

It can thus be concluded that curators in Hamburg have a broader educational background due to the interdisciplinary studies available at German educational institutions. The “practical” knowledge gained from personal experience of being an artist or studying with artists, or communicating with artists directly, form valuable cultural and social capital which can become a basis for curatorial engagement.

2.3.3. Freelancers and employees: Curators working in Hamburg

As mentioned in paragraph 3.2.1, two curators out of five representing Hamburg currently work in artistic institutions in permanent positions, while the others are involved in curatorship on a freelance basis and combine curating with other

activities, such as artistic production and teaching. Obviously, there might be some differences in the curatorial strategies and practices of the interviewees depending on the type of their occupation. The following paragraph aims to analyze these distinctions.

The first group of curators is represented by HC4 working at the Deichtorhallen, and HC5 working at the Kunsthaus. Although HC4 works in a museum institution with quite an extensive and complex structure, she prefers to manage all issues related to curatorial practices on her own. The only thing which she does not deal with is communication with the media, since the Deichtorhallen has a PR-department, and the exhibitions are promoted by her colleagues from this department. There is another colleague within the institution, the leading Deichtorhallen curator, but he is not involved in issues related to F.C. Gundlach's collection of contemporary photography, so only HC4 works with it: *"I'm responsible only for the collection and the exhibitions out of the collection except for some projects"* (HC4). Other projects mentioned by the interviewee are normally solo shows of contemporary photographers who are somehow connected with F.C. Gundlach. Generally, HC4 has many duties related to organizational work: *"I'm organizing the whole collection, and I'm responsible for transport, for the insurances, for the loans, you know, we have many loans and national loans, international loans... But I always have some exhibition projects here for the Southern hall, for the big hall. And I do some publications, and I'm writing essays and so on, and so on"* (HC4). The interviewee calls herself an *untypical curator*, since she takes care of every step of work with art objects: *"My work is not a typical work of a curator, because the base on which I'm working is much broader, you know. I register, I do the insurance, you know, in this and in other houses you have many departments working on this, and for me it's very good because it's united in my person. So all, which belongs to the collection is in my hands, is under my own control. And this is very good, you know. But you have to be very busy"* (HC4). Moreover, she is also personally responsible for finding additional financial support for art projects, apart from what is received by the Deichtorhallen institution as a whole: *"they [sponsors] give into the whole construction of Deichtorhallen, the Northern Hall, the Southern Hall. And we, so, it will... will put in a big pot, you know, a big daily pot. And sometimes we find some sponsoring for a single project"* (HC4). It should be also explained that the Deichtorhallen receives annual financial support from the Hamburg city administration, but this funding is rather low: *"The Deichtorhallen in Hamburg GmbH, this is the name of the enterprise. They are a daughter of the cultural ac... the minister of culture in Hamburg. So, we have yearly support in money, but this is very low. And for twenty years the same sum. So, it begins to... It's very. it's very... it's not easy, it's not easy for us"* (HC4).

Similarly, HS5 has to deal with many issues but in a different way. She works as an art director of the Kunsthaus, and for an art space organized in the shape of a non-profit organization: *"Actually I'm the CEO, that's what my position is called. [...] I'm responsible for the daily business for the staff, for the budgets,*

for maintaining the house for everything. And I'm also the artistic director. And of course I have to fundraise a lot, because we have institutional funding from the Kulturbehörde [Ministry of Culture in Hamburg]" (HC5). HC5 is also responsible for communication with artists, public, media, and local communities. The team working in the Kunsthhaus is not very big: "So there are two more people working here in the... except me in the core team... And then there's an accountant and that's it... more or less. I mean there're also people working in the reception. But like the core team organizing and taking care of the program is just three people. And they are not all full-time employees" (HC5). The team includes a project coordinator, who is occupied with organizational issues, such as exhibition mantling, dismantling, and transport, a press-officer, administrators, and an accountant. Today, the Kunsthhaus has undergone a transformation: the art program has been changed, and many new issues related to that have emerged which HS5 has to take care of: "For the first two years, or to starting up the new program, I wanted to help up a new profile with annual themes, these are like umbrella themes to bring diverse projects together. [...] I do group shows that are under a specific theme, then I try to bring together international artists with local artists. And not only do it when organizing shows with local artists and then with international, but to bring them together on the level of... if the content of the themes that they are dealing with in their art. And I'm also always inviting international artists to do a solo show" (HC5). Thus, HC5 is involved in the creation, development, and support of the exhibition program of the Kunsthhaus, as well as in managing the daily life of the artistic institution. She states that her job consists of constant mediation between and communication with various agents in order to maintain the status of an attractive contemporary art institution. Thus, her tasks and daily practices are not limited to curatorship.

Another curator from my research sample, HC3, also used to work for the Kunsthhaus on the same position as HC5 currently does. He recalls this experience as a successful and rewarding one, since the audience, the artists and the city administration were happy with the program organized by HC3: "I have had two halls, as I said, one hall I made a program for the Hamburgian artists, especially older and younger. I concentrated myself also on the elder artists in Hamburg, which have no chances of showing their works in Hamburg. Mm... The elder ones. The younger have their own rooms and so on, but the older, it's not so easy. [...] And in the other hall, I made symmetric exhibitions with themes" (HC3). HC3 describes his strategy for the Kunsthhaus as proceeding from the local scene to the international one, and he thinks that today's Kunsthhaus faces some challenges in terms of remaining local: "It is an opposite to my program, and a lot of people are not very happy with it. [...] She tries to bring the international scene into the local scene. That is, I think, not the aim of the Kunsthhaus" (HC3). Meanwhile, today HC3 continues working as a freelance curator and is involved in various local, national and international projects. Artists and organizations often invite him to prepare exhibitions, and he has also curated numerous public art projects.

HC3 sees the main duty of a curator as *“bringing people together and... helping them to see what the others are doing, to organize themselves”*. That is what he is actually doing: he has an extensive network consisting of artists, creative professionals, businesses, state administration, etc. The process of exhibitions organization thus starts with concept development and proceeds with choosing people from this professional network with whom he would like to collaborate. Although the interviewee does not have any colleagues who would constantly help him in organizational issues, he still tends to engage in stable collaborations: for example, working with one particular designer for the production of catalogues and other printworks. In addition to curatorship, HC3 does guided tours around artistic studios in Hamburg, or places where contemporary art is concentrated. Finally, he is also occupied with lecturing in different academic institutions of Hamburg and abroad, in China, teaching art history.

The next interviewee, HC2, an artist also involved in curatorship, tends to combine artistic production and curatorial practices: *“The last two years this comes together... At the end, I thought that this could happen. But, at the beginning it was always... I deal with my own things, and I do together with others. It was always a group. We invite artists, we show artists”* (HC2). This is also possible due to the specificity of the artistic community FRISE that HC2 belongs to, since they have an exhibition space and an artistic residence program which allows HC2 and other FRISE members to organize (local and international) exhibitions on a regular basis: *“I am quite fixed to this, because this artist studio, we had this artists’ residence studio takes a lot of time, so... it’s very much focused on this”* (HC2). HC2 complains that the organizational issues related to the exhibitions are not always dealt with in a proper way, since artists are not professional art managers, and do not have expertise in promoting events: *“We improvise always. So, when we do... PR work, when we write... press information and propose it, it is always like we did for the first time. That’s not, that’s totally not professional. So, it is always. And sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t work”* (HC2). He also compares himself to “normal” curators: *“Since I am not really professional, I do not handle professionally with time. So, I always work like I do for the first time. That means that I can’t tell you that this takes two hours. But the curator in the museum, he goes there from nine to five, and then he says: ‘It takes two weeks to prepare something’”* (HC2). This feeling of not being a professional curator could be explained by the lack of specific skills and knowledge that other curators gain through their professional experience and education. The artist’s cultural capital in this sense is limited, but on the other hand, a curating artist also has specific insider knowledge and, what is even more important, more social capital thanks to the involvement in artistic networks.

Finally, speaking of HC1, who works as a freelance curator, it should be mentioned that she prefers to work with artist-run spaces and so she also often organizes exhibitions in the FRISE space. Moreover, she prefers to curate group shows: *“I kind of like this interaction between the, you know, different*

people and how it is, works can inspire, you know, each other or find, you know, interesting dialogs between, between works and artists” (HC1). HC1 divides curatorial tasks into conceptual and practical ones. The first category unites all the issues related with the development of exhibition concept: “I think this concept is... is the first step basically, and then it kind of depends on... are you working with, you know, contemporary artist... or, you know, people who are no longer there, which is definitely a problem. You work with contemporary artists, then I find then it's, you know, I think it's kind of important to... to convey my idea and also to talk, you know, about this idea with the people who are in this, who I ask to be in this exhibition” (HC1). The creation and development of an exhibition concept thus requires a lot of intellectual work and related communication. In turn, practical issues include the installation processes, communication with technicians, transporting artworks, working with media, etc. Since HC1 has a background in journalism, writing texts is also an important task for her as a curator. She also develops guided tours and organizes artists' talks. Since she also teaches at the university, she often involves students in exhibition preparation and conceptual development. HC1 also has to find financial support for her projects, such as grants or funding from private sponsors. It should be also mentioned that HC1 also curates artists of projects abroad, participating, for example, in different international contemporary art events. Generally, she has from two to three exhibitions per year.

Summarizing this paragraph, I can conclude that curators in Hamburg tend to take care of all the issues related to exhibition-making individually, but in artistic institutions there are also other colleagues helping them out with particular tasks. Interestingly, all curators are involved in fundraising for their projects. The main difference between the curators working in artistic institutions and the freelancers is related not to the duties which curators have to perform, but rather to the level of flexibility in their practices and freedom of choices of the spaces and themes for their work.

2.3.4. Working with contemporary artists and art in Hamburg

Differences in the strategies of communication and cooperation with artists are also found among the interviewees from Hamburg. Generally, curators in Hamburg try to give artists the opportunity to participate in the creation of exhibition concept, but the degree of an artist's “freedom” differs from interviewee to an interviewee.

For example, HC5, who is trying to exhibit artworks of living artists, prefers to work with artists closely: *“Whenever it is possible to work together, then we develop the shows together. Especially if it's a solo show, then there are often works being produced especially for the show, works being adapted to the space, and then it's always a very close collaboration” (HC5). According to her, in group shows such collaboration is also determined by the necessity to adapt works to the shared space. The general strategy is to stay in close contact with*

the artists. HC5 also organizes various types of meetings of artists with the public in cooperation with Hamburg curatorial association “Stadtkuratorin”: *“And it was like a very fast and flexible form that gave a lot of freedom to the artists who presented themselves like they wanted. But also for the audience, the chance to meet and ask questions and just to see what kind of person this artist is, because seeing the art in a white cube is completely different than seeing an artist talking about his own works”* (HC5).

HC3 also works in an intense collaboration with artists and even tries to develop exhibition concepts out of the communication with artists: *“Before I’m starting such a program or concept, I’m going to the artists. Into the studios, because artists have all the time the best ideas and... special knowledge, they are very special. So, I look at the works, and I can distillate themes out of the works of the artists. I think I was at that times. One time a week, I was in an artist room and ask them, and discuss. I formed concepts out of the studios and out of the artists’ programs and ideas”* (HC3). Such a strategy thus depends on the artist’s cultural capital presented in all three states (embodied, objectified and institutionalized), when the valuable artworks and the legitimate aesthetic vision of an artist become a starting point and/or a source of inspiration for a curator.

HC2 reports applying a similar strategy: *“Artist curators just follow the artist’s instinct. [...] If you... start this process without... having... the idea that it could work, if you start with the idea, with no idea, which accepts changes, then there are no problems. But that’s the way you work with the artists, you do not know them before, and you start to talk with them about very simple things”* (HC2). Since this interviewee mainly curates exhibitions of artists not living in Hamburg and even in Germany, there is often no certainty about what the exhibition will look like in the end. The first and major discussion happens when artists arrive in Hamburg and when there is not so much time left before the opening: *“And then you just, then at the end we have to be very creative”* (HC2).

HC1 is inspired by the artworks, and then she tries to relate them to her curatorial interest, which is now focused on the theme of memory. Later she tries to find other artworks and artists who may “intersect” with each other in order to form an integral group show. The next step is to discuss the concept together with the artists, to exchange ideas and to finalize the exhibition design.

Interestingly, HC4’s strategy of working with artists is based on completely different principles. She firstly develops a clear exhibition concept alone: *“First without the artist, because [they are] an artist, he wants always to show. You know, this is important to have first a very concrete sketch before you present it to the artist. Because you must unite your own view with the view of the artist”* (SC4). In her practices, artworks play the most important role, especially those that belong to the collection HC4 works with: *“I’m really emotionally bond[ed] with my pictures, these are not my pictures, I’m aware of this, these are the pictures of Mr. Gundlach. But, they are like, it’s a bit like children, you know. It’s a bit, I have a personal relationship to each print”* (HC4). HC4 often deals with international loans when artworks from the collection are travelling for

temporary exhibitions into other institutions, often located abroad: *“They fly to London. And me, I’m flying with another machine, you know, to London, too. And then I wait in the airport for my crates, and they transport me, and the crates, and my babies, to the Tate Modern. And then they are sleeping there for forty-eight hours because of the climate, you know. And then they open the crates, and I have my little babies in London. And so I give it to the curator there, and they will hang it on the wall, they will fix it on the wall. I control the hanging and all this. And after this, I return to Germany because there my job is done”* (HC4). This narrative reveals a very specific attitude towards artworks, a certain degree of their personalization and sacralization, and none of other curators represented in the research sample have shared it.

Another important aspect in the relationship between curators, artists and artworks is simply finding one another. Two curators from Hamburg, namely HC2 and HC3, establish cooperation through personal networks. HC2 calls such a strategy *“a simple, old-fashioned, reference system”*, when new contacts are established through the recommendations of friends and colleagues, or through face-to-face, sometimes unplanned, meetings: *“I have contacts to artists personally... and then they bring other artists. So, when I invite artists here, mostly they are friends or colleagues, or close to other artists I already did”* (HC2). The communication with artists from other cities and countries is organized via Internet. Although HC2 belongs to the artistic community FRISE and does exhibitions in the community space, he normally does not show FRISE artists: *“I do not like it. I do not like to show people from the house. Not because I do not like them, I showed one artist here, from FRISE... because I think... that’s like... to show myself here, in the house”* (HC2).

Meanwhile, other curators, HC1 and HC5, actively attend various events such as biennales or large-scale exhibition projects such as Manifesta or Documenta in order to find new interesting artworks and meet promising artists: *“It’s just when I see an artist or the work, I think it’s interesting for issues that I think I am interested in these days and would make sense in accordance to our space here, then I invite them. I approach them through the institutions, through galleries or through friends’ networks”* (HC5).

Since HC4 normally works with the permanent collection, she sometimes has to add works to it or organize an exhibition related to the collection. In such cases, she studies the artists’ profiles in the Internet, gets to know their works, and only after that initiates direct contact. But often this turns out to be an unnecessary procedure, as she has to work with famous contemporary photographers, the classics of the genre.

Generally, all the curators take into account their artists’ opinions and views regarding the composition of the exhibitions. For the majority, the relationship with artists forms the basis for a successful exhibition. The artists thus have the position of experts rather than simply of agents producing symbolically meaningful forms objectified in artworks.

2.3.5. Artistic scene in Hamburg and the role of curators

The local artistic scene of a city can shape curatorial practices, as I have already demonstrated by the example of St. Petersburg. The Hamburg artistic scene also has a specific structure in which curators are included and by which they are influenced.

First of all, it should be mentioned that there is no strict division into state-funded and private artistic institutions in Germany. Every artistic institution has an opportunity to receive financial support from the Hamburg city administration, particularly from the Hamburg Ministry of Culture. However interviewees have mentioned several difficulties related to this type of financial support for cultural and narrower artistic initiatives. Firstly, there are quite a few artistic institutions in Hamburg, and almost all of them receive some state funding, but as the limited amount of money is distributed among them all, this support is limited so that it is often impossible to work simply based on this money. This is particular relevant to larger artistic structures and institutions. Moreover, the procedure of getting money is not easy and involves a lot of bureaucratic steps, which makes it a time-consuming process. Finally, today the city of Hamburg has less money than it used to have, and this is why financial support of cultural institutions has also been cut.

Under these conditions, all the curators have to find alternative ways of financing their projects, and thus get engaged in a new mediation process in addition to more traditional curatorial practices, that of fundraising. Some curators apply for grants, others try to find sponsors among private business structures, which is also a complicated and time-consuming process: *“Contemporary art, it's something that seems to be popular, but still it's something, it's a niche, and it's not that the sponsors are waiting to... for you, that they're giving out lots of money because it's... because our program is not popular, and even popular contemporary art institutions struggle to raise funding”* (HC5).

Speaking about the content of Hamburg artistic scene, curators argue that in comparison to the 1980s and 1990s artistic life in Hamburg has become less intense: *“So, for a while this was like very-very active, and now it's maybe a little, I don't know, is it really less active, I can say”* (HC1). HC3 also refers to the 1980s as the “Golden Age” of art in Hamburg and expresses disappointment about the current situation in the artistic scene: *“Today, a lot of good artists with art, they went to Berlin mostly, also to Cologne, also to Frankfurt. A generation of artists, and all these... curators and organizers, they're also intelligent people, they're also out. Everybody is no longer here, in Hamburg, and the new generation is an event generation”* (HC3). According to the curators, such negative changes in the artistic scene are related to urban gentrification and commercialization, since some previously interesting and active artistic spaces have been squeezed out by big businesses. It has also become not so easy to arrange public art projects due to property rights issues.

HC1 also sees a specific feature of the local artistic scene as being concentrated on internal art: *“In Hamburg, the art scene is not that international, I find. Hamburg is always calling itself the gate to the world. Concerning contemporary art, it doesn't apply. It's quite local, and there's lots of artists that stay here, and stay here for a long time, so they are very attached to the place, and also to the communities, there are strong communities”* (HC1). It means that curators working in Hamburg have to mediate between such community structures, in order to become recognized, and that there might be additional challenges in attracting public, and even professional, attention to international exhibitions.

Curators working in Hamburg also face difficulties when communicating with local media. They feel that contemporary art is not actually attractive for the new forms of Internet media, and the printed media are not so popular with the publics anymore: *“The press in Germany, especially in Hamburg, they do not care about us, they look away”* (HC3). Due to this fact, curators have to find new ways of attracting an audience, e.g. to use personal networks in order to spread information about upcoming events. All interviewees admit that they see communication and current collaboration with media as challenging.

Finally, there is also a specific bottom-up initiative for artists to organize *“different platforms, different things”* for showing the artworks independently, not resorting to the services of curators: *“And it is very strong. It is very interesting and also... giving the artists the chance to be... alive as an artist”* (HC2). This means that the role of curators can be shared or fully taken over by artists in a way that is legitimate for the artistic field.

Curators in Hamburg are trying to overcome these challenges by establishing their own personal networks of various agents. Since there are still quite a few initiatives, projects and institutions dealing with contemporary art, personal curatorial networks do not necessarily intersect. Curators in Hamburg having different forms of employment (freelance, permanent, combined) have to take care of all the steps of exhibitions development or artistic project release, no matter whether they are supported by their artistic institutions or not.

2.4. Curators as cultural intermediaries in two national contexts

The definition of cultural intermediaries provided by Bourdieu covers professionals occupied with the functions of cultural products presentation and representation and engaged in the activities of various institutions dealing with symbolic services and goods, as well as in broader cultural production (Bourdieu, 1984). As we can see from the collected data, contemporary art curators correspond to this category. This can be confirmed by several arguments.

First of all, the legitimization of the positions of curators as skilled professionals is provided in and through the educational system. All the curators included in the sample have higher education, and some of them also have an academic background or are currently engaged in academia or academic studies. At this point, there is a difference between Saint Petersburg and Hamburg: all Russian curators have an academic background. In addition, the educational background of Russian curators is more related to art history, while all the German curators were doing interdisciplinary studies. This is explained by the fact that in St. Petersburg curatorial or art management programs have been only been established relatively recently, and only the latest generation of curators had an opportunity to study there. Moreover, three out of five Russian curators consider research as the basis of their curatorial practices. Meanwhile, curators from Hamburg do not stress the need for academic research for their curatorial projects, but three out of five curators are also occupied with teaching at universities, while in St. Petersburg only one curator is involved in this form of work. Meanwhile, due to the growing role of the educational function of artistic institutions, curators from St. Petersburg and Hamburg often participate in or organize various lectures and workshops in order to share their knowledge and experience or to present specific artists and artworks.

Another important difference in the biographical trajectories of joining curatorship in Hamburg and St. Petersburg is related to geography. In St. Petersburg, a predominant trend has been observed: curators become recognized by the professional community and occupy stable positions in the field if they have graduated from universities in St. Petersburg. All curators in the research sample and their successful colleagues whom they mention have taken such educational paths. It can be explained by the fact that the artistic scene in St. Petersburg is rather small, and there is severe competition between curators. This is why it is extremely important to start building a personal professional network before a curator actually becomes a professional curator. The support of a legitimate institution is also highly important: the higher the status of the academic institution to which the curator belongs, the higher the chances of them becoming a successful curator. As a result, after graduation, a person already has a quite stable network of professional connections embracing artists, colleagues, journalists, etc., with whom they are going to work over the coming years. Of course, this network will be expanded but, as the interviews show, curators often repeatedly cooperate with the same artists, especially if we consider local or Russian artists, and they also tend to use similar channels of gaining access to new artists. Such phenomena as generation continuity in curatorial practices, e.g. working with the same artists with whom their scientific supervisors or parents used to work, also demonstrate the artificial narrowing of curatorial practices. Moreover, if we take a look at the leading positions of artistic institutions in St. Petersburg, we can see that they are also occupied by people from St. Petersburg, who have been studying and working in the city for a long period of time. Thus, I can conclude that the artistic scene of St. Petersburg has a strongly hierarchical structure, with rather fixed trajectories of performing curatorial work. This conclusion is also confirmed by

the fact that in order to occupy a position of an independent curator in a state-funded institution, a person has to start from the lowest position, and only through years of working for a particular institution a new status can be achieved.

The situation is completely different in Hamburg. Curators do not necessarily graduate from the universities there: they often study in other cities or even countries, and then come to Hamburg for their professional work. Furthermore, there is normally an open contest for the top positions in artistic institutions, and there is also the pan-European tendency to invite particular curators and gallerists who are external to the institutions: *“We’re getting a new director for the Kunsthalle, who was coming from London, and he’s German, but he’s, he also worked in Amsterdam”* (HC1). Thus, curators in Hamburg are more mobile, they are not so strongly attached to particular institutions, and they tend to cooperate not only with the representatives of their personal professional networks but also with external actors both nationally and internationally.

Thus, it can be concluded that in St. Petersburg curators have to possess valuable cultural, social and symbolic capital, and all of the three forms matter equally for the performance of curatorial practices, while in Hamburg the cultural capital of curators plays the most important role along with the social capital.

The major task of curators is to show artworks which are a form of symbolic goods (Bourdieu, 1984) produced by artists. At this point, curators themselves describe their main task as *“being a mediator between the artist and the audience and helping to establish communication between them”* (SC2). Here, we can observe the overflow of capitals: artwork as an objectified state of cultural capital turns into symbolic capital by bringing a particular meaning from an artist to the public. Therefore, curators in Hamburg and St. Petersburg consider the knowledge of the audience attending their exhibitions to be important. They organize guided tours for the exhibition, try to follow reviews on the Internet and to read visitors books in order to get feedback. Although, according to the interviews, the main audience visiting contemporary art exhibitions in both cities is young people, especially students, and representatives of the professional community, St. Petersburg curators often mention that today the viewing public has become more diverse. Curators working in bigger artistic structures also argue that they have regular visitors: *“Every museum has its own fans”* (HC4).

Collaboration with artists is also, obviously, an essential part of curatorial practices. Based on the interviews, two extreme strategies of working with artists can be observed. The first is characterized by giving the artists an opportunity to develop an exhibition concept together with curators, and to influence curatorial decisions. I shall call such a strategy “tandem work”, when an artist participates in almost all stages of exhibition preparation. Such type of collaboration usually takes place in solo shows or public art projects. If the artwork is specifically created for a particular project developed by a curator, the curator literally participates in artistic production. On the contrary, the second

type of collaboration is characterized by the leading role of curators who require artists to follow their instructions: such communication strategy is often applied over the course of the organization of group shows or thematic exhibitions (I would label this “curatorial guidance”). Interestingly, even though both types are found in curatorial practices in both St. Petersburg and Hamburg, curators working in Germany generally tend to give more freedom to artists themselves.

Regarding the choice of artworks and artists, curators from both countries admit that they have their favorite artistic genres and formats, or they concentrate on a particular topic, and thus, they try to show the artworks related to their professional curatorial interests. At this point, curatorial job is also impossible without artists, artistic institutions or other agents producing or owning the cultural capital in the form of artworks.

All the curators stress the importance of artistic networks, which they develop and which consist of various agents who are involved in cultural and artistic production: *“... artists, curators, writers, academics in the cultural field, film-makers, cultural entrepreneurs, workers, creative people. But sometimes the most interesting encounters are those people from different... from other disciplines. Because then you learn the most, and you're always... your own profession is at question, mostly. And this, I think, is the most interesting issue”* (HC2). These networks constitute the social capital that can be converted into the cultural capital, when a curator, by knowing an artist, invites them to participate in an exhibition and obtains the artworks for presentation and (re)interpretation, or into the symbolic capital, when, for example, journalists and art critics write reviews on the exhibitions, and even into the economic capital, when the acquaintances help a curator to find financial support and sponsors to realize a certain project. Curators always have to mediate between these diverse agents in order to be able to create an exhibition, and thus such mediating becomes the core activity of any curator.

By applying skills, knowledge, experience and contacts, as well as holding certain positions in the artistic scene, curators in Hamburg and St. Petersburg indeed perform the role of cultural intermediaries, although the local specificity of artistic practices and broader cultural production brings along some differences in the practical performance of this role in the two national contexts under study.

2.5. Curatorial practices: Duties and tasks

Curators, being creative professionals, represent a specific subgroup of this professional category which is characterized by particular tasks and duties which may differ slightly in specific cases depending on the type of the institution with which curators work. These tasks and duties are also quite similar in both national contexts, and, according to an Obrist study (2013), even worldwide. The last paragraph of this chapter sums up the duties of curators typical for Hamburg and St. Petersburg.

1. Developing exhibition concepts

This duty, currently the principal duty of many curators, sounds rather abstract and vague. In fact, this duty involves many other tasks, such as working with collections (if curators work in artistic institutions owing such collections), studying literature on the topic of the future project, working in archives, or in the library. Furthermore, the process of selecting artworks or artists for future exhibitions is also included in the process of concept development. Furthermore, a curator creates a future plan, or design, of an exhibition. The development of an exhibition concept can be implemented in several stages, but usually there are some changes even at the stage of exhibition installation, e.g. in the composition of artworks.

2. Coordinating the actors involved in the exhibition project

This duty refers to arranging communication and controlling the actions of all actors involved in the process of exhibition organization. Since projects are different, the related tasks may also change. Basically, the list of coordination tasks includes the following:

- Working with technicians managing exhibition spaces;
- Working with transportation services when artworks have to be transferred from one location to another;
- Working with custom and legal services (if artworks travel (from) abroad);
- Working with financial services or/and sponsors in order to arrange budgets for exhibitions;
- Working with media and journals (writing texts for announcements, giving comments and interviews);
- Coordinating the work of the print office and designers of exhibition catalogues;
- Working with the public;
- Sometimes working with city administration.

It should be added that in St. Petersburg curators find it difficult to work with the city administration and get support from the authorities, especially for independent projects and public art events: *“Building such relationships is a separate curatorial project. The city administration is afraid that you do something wrong. They are afraid of losing their position”* (SC5). In Hamburg, at the same time, the most challenging communication is the communication with sponsors.

3. Collaboration and communication with artists

All curators mention that this duty is also a specific one, and it is not similar to communication with other types of actors, since it requires a special connection with artists as unique personalities, sometimes mediated by artworks. In order

to stay in touch with artists and to collaborate successfully, curators and artists use specific conventions (Becker, 1976) regulating friendship ties, communicating via email, meeting at big international artistic shows, etc.

4. Writing texts

The interviewees are also actively engaged in writing analytical texts: articles, notes for catalogues, etc. For SC5, for example, writing is even directly associated with the job of a curator: *“I think that a curator is a person who has read something and then writes about what he has read. For me, first of all, a curator is a person working with words. A person, who attracts attention to some topic”* (HC1). Indeed, all the curators have mentioned that they enjoy this part of their work, and that they have a feeling of satisfaction when they have a catalogue of their exhibition printed. This could be explained by the fact that temporary and even permanent exhibitions are dismantled or rearranged someday, but catalogues remain as a proof of their particular curatorial efforts. Moreover, according to Bourdieu (1984), cultural intermediaries with great cultural capital need to be self-reflective. That is why there is a tendency among curators to share their ideas and experiences in the form of written texts.

5. Practical duties

Curators are also involved in practical and sometimes even physical work, such as the installation and dismantling of exhibitions, buying materials and equipment, cleaning, repairing, etc. Although there are usually workers for doing such jobs, at certain moments curators are ready to deal with such issues themselves.

As we can see, the curatorial profession presupposes collaboration with contiguous professionals, and requires multitasking. This also affects the private life and lifestyles of curators: due to constant and intense communication, they tend not to distinguish between work and leisure time, and their friends are also members of artistic circles, as Richard Florida would insist: *“I have always thought that it is hard to imagine that people who work together, let's say, in some office or a bank, that they will come on Friday evening to a bar and will discuss this bank or a company. But artistic people, they work the whole week, they work during the weekend, and at the weekend evening they meet the same friends from artistic people and discuss art. So it takes 100% of your time, all your life”* (SC2). Only one out of ten curators attempts to not to mix private life and work and explains this as a personal decision which was made in order to keep doing their job of curatorship well: *“I'm working in a business which is frequented by people in the leisure time, you know. When you have very good contact to all these groups, all these different groups. You are working not only eight hours, but sixteen hours, because the private life and the professional life will be mixed totally up. So you spend much more energy in this. This is good*

for the institution, it's good for the job, but it's not good for yourself. Because you lose the look out of the distance of... on things, because you are the context, when you have too many contacts you are very easy to manipulate" (HC4).

Summarizing the results of the analysis, I conclude that curatorship is a profession that requires constant intellectual work combined with practical duties, and mediation between numerous actors. The empirical results confirm the argument that artistic production is impossible without cooperation, and that art is not produced by artists alone (Becker, 1982). Curators mediating between diverse agents develop strategies and forms of collaboration based on conventions (Becker, 1982) by handling the available social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993). The role of a cultural intermediary in the art world becomes significant for those who are involved in cultural production and cultural consumption (the audience). Although artistic practices and related processes seem to be chaotic, nevertheless there are certain patterns that are met in different national contexts, such as curatorial duties and the forms of artistic presentation (Misiano, 2014). The major differences between curatorship in Hamburg and St. Petersburg are found in the contemporary artistic scene structure and dynamics.

Conclusion

According to Pierre Bourdieu, cultural intermediaries are professionals involved in cultural production as legitimate participants due to their high level of cultural capital; those who mediate between different agents of the field in order to enable and enrich creative labor (Bourdieu, 1984). My empirical materials show that curators indeed perform as important cultural intermediaries as they possess core knowledge and skills related to art, such as higher education and often also academic research background. In Russia, the educational background of curators is not so diverse, as education in curatorship has only relatively lately grown more institutionalized. Curators are mastered and highly knowledgeable in art history, and thus they often have to compensate for the lack of knowledge in art management by joining international projects, undertaking internships, or participating in academic exchange programs. Meanwhile, in Hamburg curators usually have an interdisciplinary academic background.

In their work, curators communicate with colleagues within their institutions (both other curators and representatives of other departments: financial departments, PR, technicians, legal services); peers from other cultural institutions; art historians and critics; city administrations; businesses; audiences; and certainly artists. Communication thus becomes a key function of curators, along with developing exhibitions or artistic projects concepts, and professionals with whom curators communicate and work also shape curatorial practices (Abbott, 1988).

The strategies and practices of cooperation with artists are especially diverse. Here, I distinguish between two ideal types of such cooperation: (a) tandem work (when artists are seen as equal co-creators of exhibitions whose freedom of artistic expression is seen as a core value); (b) and curatorial guidance – the domination of curators who independently create exhibition frames by limiting the input of participating artists and requiring their subordination. Interestingly, some curators can switch between these two strategies depending on their goals and the conditions of project realization. Curators in Hamburg tend to choose tandem work even in those projects where a clear plan is required. Russian and German curators otherwise develop the conventions (the means and rituals of communication) (Becker, 1982) in a similar way.

The functions of curators are not limited to organization and communication. Instead, they create new meanings associated with artworks by writing research-based analytical texts and giving guided tours of the exhibitions. Thus, they explain to audiences how to interpret specific messages hidden in artworks, influence their cultural tastes and shape demand on the market of cultural production, which endows them with significant power in the field recognized by other actors and also confirms their status as cultural intermediaries.

It should be also emphasized, that curators as cultural intermediaries having valuable forms of capital, usually have the opportunity to convert them into each other: for example, social capital can be converted into cultural capital (knowing an artist might promise getting his/her artworks for an exhibition), symbolic capital into economic capital (working on an important exhibition or in a recognized institution – into getting financial support), etc.

Furthermore, a specific feature of curatorship has been revealed which is the high level of self-reflexivity within the professional community: curators sometimes engage in research of curatorial practices or strive for the accumulation and transmission of professional experience through establishing and maintaining formal and informal educational programs and workshops. In Russia, this trend is now more acute as the deficiency of institutionalized professional structures is still evident. Moreover, since academic degrees are required in Russia for reaching higher positions in the artistic scene, curators usually stay involved in research even after graduation. In Hamburg, curators preserve links to academia mostly in the form of teaching.

The differences in the professional practices of curators are determined not so much by national or city contexts but rather by the institutional contexts in which curators work. Curators employed in public institutions work with the collections of those institutions, are not largely involved in fundraising and budgeting, and are not occupied in promotion, with the exception of writing texts on artworks (as there are special departments of services aimed at these duties). Meanwhile, curators employed in private galleries or working as freelancers have to actively search for artists and artworks to exhibit in a broader artistic scene (locally, nationally and sometimes internationally) and often face the challenge of multitasking.

Still, some local differences have also been discovered. For example, on the small and highly competitive art market of St. Petersburg, the degree of curatorial networking is higher: all curators will inevitably engage in dense personal communication with their peers and have great awareness of the activities of their colleagues. The resulting dense network of multitasking professionals ensures a continuity of curatorial traditions, as younger curators often used to be students of the older ones. On the other hand, the large scale and diversity of the German art market makes regular and intensive communication between curators representing different institutions unnecessary and often undesired. The character of the market also shapes the character of cooperation with the artists: in St. Petersburg, curators tend to reproduce stable patterns of cooperation with the same artists with whom they are connected by personal acquaintance. Meanwhile, in Hamburg curators are more open to new cooperation and often establish contact through anonymous communication with new agents of the city and the broader cultural scene. This fact illustrates the artistic practices being influenced not only by the principle aesthetics, but also by market conditions (Peterson, 1976).

Interestingly, curators from St. Petersburg and Hamburg tend to contrast the local artistic scene not with international arenas, but rather with other local arenas within the national context: there is a clear opposition constructed between the artistic scenes of St. Petersburg and Moscow in Russia, and Hamburg and Berlin in Germany. Moreover, the interviewees also compare the situation in the local artistic scene with conditions in different periods of time, claiming that the current situation is far from perfect in both cities, and nostalgically recalling the boom of contemporary art in the 1980s and 1990s.

The research shows that in St. Petersburg further institutionalization of curatorship is required. This could be achieved by the development of new educational programs and the improvement of existing programs through introducing interdisciplinary approaches to curatorial studies. As a result, the whole local artistic scene would benefit, since this could lead to the enlargement of the local artistic network.

Since the research covers two cities, further comparison between other cities would contribute to the knowledge about contemporary art curators and their practices, and may provide additional insights into the strategies of curators as cultural intermediaries in the field of cultural production.

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Appendices

Appendix I. Interview guide

Thank you for participating in the interview. Your experience is very insightful and helpful for understanding the specificity of curatorial practices. My research relies on a comparative perspective on curatorship in Germany and Russia illustrated by the examples of curators working in Hamburg and St. Petersburg.

First of all, I would like to ask if you are ready to participate in one-hour interview.

I hope that you do not mind the conversation to be recorded. The information will be used only for my research analysis. Your personal identification will remain concealed in the written reports. If there are any issues you would not like to be recorded, please let me know.

The interview is just a conversation, you are not supposed to give direct answers, and I shall be very grateful if you could mention as many details as you feel would be relevant.

Topic 1: biographical trajectories

- Would you please describe your educational background? Did you participate in any international exchange programs?
- What is your parents' educational and professional background?
- When, why and how did you decide to become a curator?
- Who or what influenced your decision on choosing this professional field?

Topic 2: professional experience

- Where and why do you currently work? How long have you been working here?
- Could you please describe your previous professional experience?
- How could you describe the differences between working as a curator in various art institutions (private gallery, state museum, private museum)?
- Have you ever worked as a freelancer? Please, describe your experience. If not, then is there any specific reason for that?
- What are your current duties? Do they differ from the previous ones, and if yes, could you please tell how? Could you please describe your typical working day?
- Could you please bring examples of organized exhibitions or projects?
- Have you ever worked in international projects or abroad? Please, describe your experience.

Topic 3: organizing an exhibition

- Could you please describe the process of an exhibition organization? What stages does it have?
- With whom do you collaborate/communicate/work while organizing an exhibition?
- How is your working schedule changed in this process?
- Could you please tell more about the aims which you try to reach by organizing exhibitions?
- Is it a part of your responsibilities to take care of commercial success of the exhibition? If yes, then how do you balance between the aesthetic quality of an exhibition and its commercial profit?
- What type of art do you usually exhibit? Please, bring some examples. Is there any type of art or artistic projects which is not acceptable for you? What is “good art” in your opinion? What are your personal preferences?

Topic 4: Interactions with artists

- Could you please describe the way you work with an artist?
- How do you find each other? Do you have some regular cooperation with artists? Please, bring some examples.
- Do you usually curate an exhibition or an artist in different exhibitions? Do you work on joint art exhibitions? What is special about such type of projects? Please, describe the way you work on such exhibitions. How do you connect different artists participating in a joint exhibition?
- How often do you usually meet while preparing the exhibition?
- Which means of communication do you use to stay in touch with artists?
- How can you describe the way you communicate with an artist? Is it rather informal or formal communication?
- Are there sometimes conflict situations? If yes, then how do you deal with them?

Topic 5: Interactions with colleagues and administration

- Could you please tell with whom of your colleagues and administration of your art institution do you communicate with more often/seldom? Please, describe.
- Is there any control over you? What type of control is it?
- Could you please describe the style of communication inside your art institution?
- Do the conflicts sometimes happen in the working process? How do you resolve them? Please, bring some examples.
- Do you sometimes work in cooperation with other curators? What do you prefer: to work independently or in a team?
- Do you communicate with state/city/local administration/investors? Please, describe the way you do it. What are the benefits and challenges of it?

- In your work, do you also sometimes cooperate with NGOs? With what NGOs and art foundations do you work? Please, describe. What are the benefits and challenges of such cooperation?

Topic 6: Communication with the public

- Do you have a target group for your exhibitions? Please, describe your audience.
- How do you communicate with the public? How do you collect feedback from the public?
- Do you participate in different events such as press-conferences, lectures, debates, forums? Please, describe your participation.

Topic 7: Challenges

- What kind of challenges do you face in your work related to the organizational process, etc.? How do you deal with them? Please, bring some examples.

Topic 8: Outside the working process

- With whom do you usually communicate outside your work? Do you feel that your leisure time is influenced by your job? How do you try to divide your private life from your work? If not, then could you please explain, why?
- Who are your friends? Are they from the same professional field?

Topic 9: Evaluating curating

- What do you think about curating in St. Petersburg/Hamburg? Could you tell more about the advantages and disadvantages of curatorial job in your city?
- What do you think about curating in Russia/Germany? How would you evaluate the level of curating in your country?
- What do you think about curating in Europe/the world?
- Could you please tell more about your impressions of the professional community in Russia/Germany?
- Could you please describe the way you see the dynamics of curatorial job? Is it changing now? What was specific for this profession before? What are the new, emerging, features of curating?

Topic 10: Future perspectives

- How do you see your professional future?
- What are your plans for the next projects?
- How do you see the future of curating in your country and worldwide?

Appendix II. Table of codes (a fragment)

| Code | Subcodes |
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| Curatorial duties | <p>Working with archive, organizing exhibition, giving a part of collection away to public institution, working with collection, organizing collection, being responsible for transport, being responsible for insurances, being responsible for loans, national loans, international loans, curating exhibition projects, preparing publications, writing essays, non-typical work of curator, performing multiple tasks alone, control over all issues related to collection, being responsible for collection and exhibitions beyond collection, working on additional projects, organizing solo show, Hamburg event, exhibiting Philip Toledano's works and works from collection show, not working with media, work planning, developing a publication, having loans from other collections, creating a concept of exhibition, presenting concept to artists, doing interviews, 'writing, it's something like painting', taking control over everything, preparing a loan, transportation of an artwork, packaging of an artwork, control hanging, control mantling, working with reservation, written control, travelling, doing curatorial guided tours, budgeting, research fellow, keep and show objects, assisting on a project, individual curatorial project, architectural program planning, developing new exhibition program, huge responsibility, adapting side-project, making choices, taking main decisions, developing concepts, guiding negotiations, choose artworks, holding openings, working with financial department, working with legal service, coordinating, huge amount of work, working with custom service, period of preparation of an exhibition, curator mediating between various services of the museum, working with media department, not often working with media, giving lectures, working with guides, organizing conferences, catalogues design, making the design of an exhibition, finding new solutions, dealing with bureaucratic issues, dislike of organizational work, writing letters, coordinating people, adapting exhibition plan, approval of fire-security service, not dealing with fundraising, working on catalogue, CEO, maintaining the house, responsible for the daily business for the staff, artistic director, communication with artist, working with sponsors, institution promotion, finding artists</p> |

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| <p>Curatorial practices</p> | <p>Being very busy, not doing artworks professionally, 'You are working not only 8 hours, but 16 hours', working overload, mixing up private and professional life, 'overworking is good for the institution and bad for a person', 'to discover things anew', work planning since pictures are not structured, few aspects are important for curatorial work, important to notice all the details affecting the artworks, idea, idea sketch, never know how project will develop, running a project alone, New York, 2,5 years to prepare a project, difficult project, unique exhibition, international exhibition, repeating show in another location, challenging work of a curator, adding new scientific view on artworks production, 'writing it's something like painting', "You lose energy and kilos and all this", inspiration comes out of the collection, mood matters, no particular preferences, find the point, the conception of line, developing exhibition concept, 9 years of work in Hermitage, 20th century architectural schools, the collection you work with matters, period of preparation of an exhibition, curator mediating between various services of the museum, working with media department, working with collection, general overview of the concept, the final idea varies from the original one, difficult to avoid communication with media in the course of contemporary art exhibitions, great media attention, professional experience as a basis but not the audience tastes, carefully prepare the material presentation to make it understandable, attend exhibitions in Moscow, attend exhibitions abroad, reading exhibitions catalogues, 'fully curatorial projects', art world, no standardized procedures, 'the best moment is to get the printed version of an exhibition catalogue', 'acts of God', working with living artist, working with archive, start working at Kunsthaus, little time left to curate, freedom in creating program</p> |
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| <p>Curatorial strategies</p> | <p>Professional decision to keep distance from local artistic scene and network, 'to have this immense water, and so you can think clearer', not living in Hamburg, Hamburg, need for structure in work, personal experience is valid, other curators have another strategy, personal choice of appropriate strategy, developing a concept of exhibition without artist, concrete concept of an exhibition, not every curator controls everything, dangerous to compare one artist with another one, not considering herself as a curator, personal field of interest, academic research as basis, doing own projects, 'not I but WE', projects FOR Hermitage, location depends on a project, exhibition location preferences, dislike to give guided tours, attending many exhibitions, interest in exhibitions, 'we (art historians and historians) see everything', every project is unique, getting some ideas for design, other exhibitions have minimal influence on work, following rules of institution, flexible working schedule, academic work is strongly interconnected with curatorship, start working in Hermitage, curatorship as side-duties, not to make an archive out of an exhibition, participating in side projects as a text writer, no time to curate in outsider projects, artists status doesn't matter, essential to fix important moments, not being a promoter, being creative, working with young artists, the influence of social and political issues</p> |
| <p>Working with artist</p> | <p>Exploring artist's work in the Internet, checking artist's website, evaluation of artworks, time-consuming process of thinking about the artist's work, 'disgusting' works, developing a concept of exhibition without artist, presenting concept to an artist, working with living artist is different from working with an artist who passed away, discussing a project with an artist, discussing a project with artist's assistants, e-mail, correspondence, viewing exhibit items, every time is a different process, difficult to communicate, seeing a lot of shows, doing studio visits, meeting artists, developing a project with artist, works produced specifically for show, being in close contact with an artist, being friends with artists, respecting artists, limiting artists' involvement, giving an artist freedom, supporting ideas, working several times with the same artists</p> |
| <p>Public</p> | <p>'Every museum has its own fans', different visitors, young people, specialists, different visitors in different countries and various artistic institutions, diverse cultural and national background of visitors, target audience, professional audience, architects, students (architecture), enthusiastic audience,</p> |

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| | public opinion formation, audience response, expectations met, art-related people, people interested in art, diverse age, tourists, elderly people, retired people, audience interested in contemporary art, artistic circles |
| Financial issues | Budgeting, working with sponsors, financial support from Hamburg city authorities, European institutions have smaller budget, common budget, special sponsorship, 'money is always a challenge', fundraising, institutional funding, Kulturbehörde, Ministry of Culture in St. Petersburg, low salary |

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