

Affect, practice, and change: Dancing world politics at the Congress of Vienna

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Affect, practice, and change: Dancing world politics at the Congress of Vienna

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journals.sagepub.com/home/cacFelix Rösch 

Abstract

How do practices change? To approach this in practice theory (PT) is a widely debated question. This article brings PT in conversation with the study of emotions in International Relations by considering the role of affect in practice changes. For it is affect that permeates the spatiotemporal and bodily constellations during practice performances, continuously provoking changes in and through practices. In initiating this conversation, this article adds to current PT literature by arguing that world political transformations not only find their origin in external conditions, identified as such through individual reflection, but also in affective dynamics of the everyday. To elaborate this more theoretical argument, this article evolves against the empirical backdrop of dancing as an everyday international practice at the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815). Affect that permeated dances in Vienna not only substantiated changes in this practice but, with the waltz replacing the minuet as the preferred dance among international political decision-makers, also changes through it occurred. While the minuet embodied collective sentiments of a transboundary European elite, the waltz helped to further national imaginations of world politics.

Keywords

affect, change, Congress of Vienna, dance, nineteenth century, practice

Introduction

Almost a decade has passed since Raymond Duvall and Arjun Chowdhury (2011: 337) observed that ‘the analysis of practices falls short of offering satisfying ways of theorizing change in international politics.’ Even today, while pooling many different approaches, practice theory (PT) is united in identifying the issue of change as requiring further attention (Cornut, 2018; Hopf, 2018; Loh and Heiskanen, 2020; Mulich, 2018; Schindler and Wille, 2015; Stappert, 2020). To address this issue, this article brings PT into conversation with the study of affect (Åhäll, 2018; Fierke, 2013; Hutchison and Bleiker, 2014; Koschut, 2018), as so far affect has only been mentioned ‘*en passant*’, to use Monique

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Scheer's (2012: 199; emphasis in original) words, when it comes to practices, apart from some notable exceptions (Bially Mattern, 2011; Solomon and Steele, 2017).

Studying affect as processes of becoming, what Todd Hall and Andrew Ross (2015: 848) captured in the term 'affective dynamics', supplements recent PT discourses that locate politically significant practice changes in the cognitive abilities of practitioners. There is disagreement if these abilities are being stimulated only by exogenous factors, making endogenous factors negligible, or if substantial changes might not also be rooted within practices themselves (Schindler and Wille, 2015; Stappert, 2020). However, there is agreement that such processes of change are being initiated by deliberate reflection. Studying affective dynamics, by contrast, shifts scholarly attention to the transpersonal constellations that emerge during practices. In doing so, this article returns to PT's original intention of theorizing in-between (Bueger and Gadinger, 2015: 451), as it helps to understand that individual cognitive abilities are not the only reason for practices to change. Rather, what appear to be unconscious, unreflective adaptations are outcomes of directed and transpersonal affective processes in which further politically significant changes are rooted.

To disentangle these processes, this article concurs with Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (2011; also Schindler and Wille, 2015) in arguing that changes happen in and through practices, but it is affect that drives them. Affect informs changes in practices because its bodily constellations in place and time are constantly reformulated. Hence, affective context-dependency (Bleiker and Hutchison, 2018: 328) prevents people from replicating practices. At the same time, affect initiates changes through practices with the potential to have world political implications. Affect shapes practices by informing peoples' 'routines, knowledge making . . . and the prioritization of certain kinds of information' (Crawford, 2019: 229). In doing so, it prescribes potentialities of giving meaning to the (im)material world that surrounds people and the inter-human relations in which they are tied.

To elaborate this theoretical argument, this article evolves against the empirical backdrop of one particular practice at one particular event – dancing at the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815) – for three reasons. First, dance provides for a particularly insightful practice to be studied. Globally, dance epitomizes that, as 'patterned actions that are embedded in particular organized contexts . . . and are socially developed through learning and training' (Adler and Pouliot, 2011: 5), practices are 'ordinaries' (Berlant and Stewart, 2019: 5). As such, practices such as dance help people deal in collectivity with the contingent, unstable, and ephemeral mundanities of life in an attempt to find stability and to learn to understand and accept their emotional complexities in this process (Kowal et al., 2017; Militz, 2017; Mills, 2017). Second, despite this ubiquity, dance is still treated as one of those 'little nothings' in International Relations (IR) (Huysmans and Nogueira, 2016: 310). So far, dance has only occasionally been mentioned in the IR literature; mainly as a metaphor (Åhäll, 2019; Solomon, 2019), and its potential to resolve conflicts (Head, 2013), to perform political protests (Mills, 2017; Shapiro, 2016), and to teach (Rösch, 2018) has been touched upon. Hence, this article also serves as an intervention to consider the politics of dance more widely. Finally, dancing at the Congress demonstrates that even changes to practices as ordinaries can affect politics on the international stage. In Vienna, a post-Napoleonic order was not only instigated across negotiation

tables behind closed doors but also on dance floors. Varying dance performances offered Congress participants affective opportunities to embody different political communities and imagine conflicting trajectories for a new European political order.

To proceed with this argument, this article first critically reviews PT's current focus on individual agency and reflection in the second section. This helps to highlight the benefits of studying affect for understanding how practices change which are further elaborated in the following section. Discussing how affect imbues practices with change, the third second section reflects on its aspects (place, time, and bodies), before demonstrating affective changes in and through practices. Building on this discussion, the fourth section reconstructs international sociability at the Congress of Vienna by focusing on dance. In a comprehensive study of letters and diaries, substantiated by newspaper articles and secret service reports, the emotional intensities of Congress attendees are revived to record affective changes in and through dance. The fifth section concludes the article.

Change as extraordinary: practices and reflection

Practices continuously change (Bueger and Gadinger, 2015: 456). In initial structural explanations, however, the ubiquity of change often fell 'out of sight', as Rebecca Adler-Nissen (2012: 14) observed. By contrast, in more recent (historical) sociological readings of practices, many of which found inspiration in the works of Pierre Bourdieu, Luc Boltanski, and Bruno Latour (Martin-Mazé, 2017; Mulich, 2018; Pouliot and Cornut, 2015), and in normative-hermeneutic accounts (Lechner and Frost, 2018), questions of change moved into the focus, with internal understandings predominating. Finding their origins in the actions of individual performers, changes in these accounts are often considered to be largely pre-reflective in that they simply occur through what practitioners are doing, making them 'unintentional, non-directional, and unpredictable' (Hopf, 2018: 705) or they are understood to originate in reflective deliberation (Bode, 2018; Hopf, 2018; Neumann, 2002). Following Ted Hopf (2018: 688), it is this latter type that 'account[s] for the kind of meaningful and significant change that we mostly care about in the study of world politics.'

With this focus, PT is in the position to address critiques of lacking emphasis that, according to Jonathan Joseph and Milja Kurki (2018: 93), 'obfuscate[s] more than assist[s] in [understanding] . . . complex world political processes.' However, limiting significant political changes to being grounded in individual reflection also means that these accounts do not consider the often unobservable affective constellations in-between practitioners in this process. It is for this reason that significant changes appear to merely emerge in the extraordinary beyond the specific everyday in which practices are being performed.

To further elaborate this point, this article turns to the moment that reflective processes are being initiated, that is, the observation of external conditions. Following Hopf (2018: 689), the possibility to observe is rooted in the everydayness of practices. Being able to habitually perform practices, not least because they contain repetitive elements (Bueger and Gadinger, 2015: 456), frees practitioners to mentally step aside and observe. Hence, practitioners initiate processes of reflection while performing practices at the

same time. However, by concentrating only on ‘the role of individual agency’ (Bode, 2018: 295), the simultaneity of performing and observing causes practices and external conditions to emerge in reflective practice contributions as ‘lasting’ in a ‘static present’ (Jonas, 1954: 513), meaning that they are unaffected by spatio-temporal constellations. This is because trying to make sense of external conditions by comparing them to practitioners’ experiences and previous social interactions (Bode, 2018: 298–299) favors aspects that are discernible to practitioners during reflection.

However, ‘not everything can be understood through the empirical method of mere observation’ (Eisler et al., 2020: 156) because it only partly accounts for the transpersonal complexities of ‘sensory, affective, and aesthetic experiences that together constitute the lived dimension of social life’ (Ross, 2019: 28). Hence, practitioners-cum-observers do not appear as recognizing that external conditions only acquire meaning as such through them granting practice changing status via these sensory, affective, and aesthetic experiences. They are also not characterized as being aware of the complexities of these experiences in which their position is affected by practices and these conditions.

Experiencing practices and external conditions as being, rather than becoming, the latter appear therefore in recent PT accounts as ‘present to me without drawing me into . . . [their] presence’ (Jonas, 1954: 515; similarly in Ross, 2019: 31–32). In other words, arguing that practice changes with a significant impact on world politics are only triggered by external conditions ‘takes a rigorous separation of mind and body for granted’, as Dirk Nabers (2017: 420) puts it for the IR literature on crisis. Similar to these understandings of crisis, also conditions for change are seen in reflective PT as ‘existing independently’, not acknowledging that they ‘only acquire meaning through our mental activities’ (Nabers, 2017: 420) and affective dynamics in transpersonal constellations. This turns reflection into a process ‘wielded by humans as atomistic, isolated, units’ (Cornut, 2018: 718) in which change is initiated by conditions that temporarily surface, which have to be addressed, rather than seeing them as permanent attributes of their everyday lives. In doing so, the agency of others, performing practices that the observer identifies as external conditions, is (unintentionally) taken away.

Other PT contributions, while continuing to concentrate on reflective deliberation, have called this focus on exogenous conditions as the sole stimulus for change into question, demonstrating that significant political changes can also originate in practices themselves (Schindler and Wille, 2015; Stappert, 2020). However, identifying different interpretations of past events as the reason for such changes still disregards the transpersonal character of practices. In doing so, also these contributions account for an extraordinariness in practice changes that their location in the everyday does not warrant. Rather, when Annika Björkdahl et al. (2019: 126) write that the everyday oscillates ‘between the unconscious and conscious’, then this alludes to an in-between that continuously permeates practice performances. As Adler and Pouliot (2011: 4) insinuated in their definition of practices as ‘competent performances’, practices always imply the existence and acceptance of an other, even if the other is reduced to an audience. Considering this in-between exceptional spatio-temporary intermittences of otherwise stable practices turn into transpersonal continua by refocusing on the specific assemblages that practitioners are situated in. In other words, practices are continuously subject to change in an everyday in which people try to take their place in the world and

make sense of it (Kessler and Guillaume, 2012: 118; Mannergren Selimovic, 2019: 131). As the next section shows, these continua of change are initiated by affect.

Change as ordinary: practices and affect

A first indication for this initiation is to be found in another well-known practice definition. For Andreas Reckwitz (2002: 249), a practice is ‘a routinized type of behavior which consists of several elements interconnected to one another.’ One of these elements is ‘states of emotion’. Indeed, this emotional aspect is central for Reckwitz (2017), as he subsequently expounded in more detail: practices evoke emotions, allowing people to express and negotiate them in collectivity. Hence, affect encourages or discourages people to continue to act together. It is therefore less the observable materialization of practices through bodies that constitutes the social meaningfulness, to which Adler and Pouliot (2011) alluded in their definition, and ultimately change, but it is primarily to be found in-between bodies during practice performances (Hutchison, 2019: 287).

Previous contributions to PT, however, remained skeptical towards emotional aspects, arguing that such a focus would create ‘an “outside” world according to . . . internal mental dispositions and feelings.’ While Jérémie Cornut (2018: 718) concedes that considering emotions ‘may open the rationalist black box of the human brain to explain the frequent departures from “rational” behaviour’, it still shares ‘with rationalists an individualistic conception of agency.’ However, as recent IR scholarship (Beattie et al., 2019: 138; Hutchison and Bleiker, 2014: 492) demonstrated, emotions are not to be reduced to merely individual physical intensities but there is also a collective dimension that connects and transcends individuals. To prevent reading the following paragraphs as a continuation of what has been critiqued in the previous section, the collective dimension of emotions is termed affect. This understanding coincides with IR scholarship, discussing it ‘as embodied transpersonal movements that often exceed individual subjects’ (Solomon and Steele, 2017: 276; also Åhäll, 2018; Ross, 2019). While Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchison (2018: 331) note that affect is often unconscious and unreflective in the sense of being ineffable in contrast to individual emotions, affect still leaves room for directed processes, as further elaborated below, but it rules out affect as driven by rational, reflective processes.

Operating with affect as transpersonal embodied becoming, the remainder of this section first investigates the elements through which affect permeates practices. Emerging from encounters between bodies (Pile, 2010: 9), affect not only permeates in-between them but these encounters also occur in a specific place and time (Anderson, 2006: 736–737; Scheer, 2012: 201). Considering these interrelations allows the recoding of affective changes in and through practices in the final section, demonstrating that significant world political changes can root in the affective transpersonal constellations of everyday practices.

Place, time, and bodies

While performing practices, people interact through bodily movements with each other and the natural and built environment, non-human living matter, and (im)material objects

(Lorimer, 2008: 552). In reference to Stuart Elden (1999: 262), these sites of lived interactions are referred to as places in this article, rather than spaces ‘characterised as Cartesian.’ By providing for these interactions, ‘shared places help to forge communities’ (Solomon and Steele, 2017: 277) because access to them may be restricted. Take the Congress of Vienna. Not all dance floors were accessible to Congress attendees. Some were temporarily set up in private lodgings. Others were to be found in public parks, inns, and the garden of city-palaces. While the former provided for intimate encounters, the latter were meant to affect a wider audience that even extended to the general public by setting representational stages.

However, places not only forge communities by policing access but also by providing for an ‘in-between’ (Pile, 2010: 15) through regular contact. As particularly embodied in the practice of dance (Manning, 2006), regular contact enables people to intensify their relations, as their sensorimotor and endocrine systems start to respond to each other in relation to the places in which practices are being performed (Scheer, 2012: 197). Places therefore serve as a platform for people to negotiate their emotional complexities in what unfolds as reality in front of them. This imbues places with further layers of meaning (Crouch, 2017: 8–9), helping to constitute common affective worlds (Ling, 2014: 579). Hence, rather than changes in the everyday being imposed by an extraordinary, ‘the extraordinary emerges from the banal’, as Ben Anderson (2006: 738; emphasis in original) writes.

By permeating places in this way, affect is not timeless. Rather, when performing practices, their ephemerality crystallizes in a ‘moment of “doing”’ (Bially Mattern, 2011: 75). This can be understood literally, as it implies that there are temporal limits as to when and how long practices can be performed. These temporal limits may be of physical or mental nature, as practitioners exhaust themselves in the often repetitive movements. This was the case half-way through the Congress in January 1815, when signs of fatigue to perform more elaborate dances were beginning to show (Freska, 1919: 130). There may also be constraints in and through the places of practice performances that restrict their duration. At the end of 1814, Viennese nightlife was still full of bodies moving rhythmically to the sounds of music, but only so long as the last candle had burned down. Hence, the circulation of affect is transient because the interplay of place and bodies limits the time of practices.

However, time is not only an element of affect due to the ephemerality of practices but time also provides a standard for orientation, direction, and meaning (Guillaume and Huysmans, 2019; Hom, 2018). This, what can be called ‘rhythm’ (Solomon, 2019; Solomon and Steele, 2017; Wetherell, 2012) in reference to Henri Lefebvre’s particularly apt terminology when writing about dance, implies that to affect others, practices have to be temporarily situated within a specific socio-political and cultural context (Hutchison, 2019: 290). Regardless if people perform practices or merely watch them, they have to be able to understand them for which they draw on shared repertoires of meaning. These repertoires are ‘bestowed by learned social rules and dependent on emotional intersubjectivity’ (Beattie et al., 2019: 139; also Coen Leep, 2010: 332; Koschut, 2018: 327) and are therefore representations of previous and existing knowledge–power relations. As such, affect has a historical dimension, as the practices through which it circulates carry an ‘emotional baggage’ (Åhäll, 2018: 40) that restricts performances in the present. It

also delineates futurity, as present practices contribute to determine future repertoires of meaning.

Finally, affect would not be able to permeate a specific place in time without the relationality that establishes the place in time in the first place. This requires bodies. As Margaret Wetherell (2012: 13–14) writes, ‘in affective practice, bits of the body . . . get patterned together with feelings and thoughts, interaction patterns and relationships, narratives and interpretative repertoires, social relations, personal histories, and ways of life.’ Although there are mental and/or physical limitations as to what kind of practices bodies can perform, they always have the capacity to ‘create and transform meaning by acting within and upon their environment’ (Fierke, 2013: 22). Hence, bodies emerge as a ‘device that reveals’ (Pile, 2010: 11). At the Congress, dancers regularly transformed places that had been created for different purposes. As such, dancing was part of a wider embodied context with extensive choreographies that often also entailed theater and music performances. Hence, considering Tim Aistrop (2020: 171), at such occasions also the poetics of language contribute to their meaning through chanting, laughter, hissing, and even silence. In short, while performing practices, people unfurl the world that surrounds them by enacting – and being acted upon – their place in it through bodily interactions. While this contains elements of intercorporeality (Militz, 2017: 183), it takes place through and within individual bodies. This means that while bodies move through the same places, their emotions are individual. However, the alignment of these individualities in collectivity provides for the potential of transformation, due to the inherent contingency of these processes.

In and through

Considering the interplay of these aspects through which affect permeates, a clearer picture of practice and change emerges. Affect causes practices to change in two ways. As Janice Bially Mattern (2011: 82) puts it, they ‘entail the forces of their own transformation and . . . the transformation of the various social orders that they constitute’. Hence, affect causes change in and through practices. While the former leads to everyday changes that remain largely unnoticed, the latter has wider implications for world politics. However, these two ways are not separate processes, but they are interconnected, happening concomitantly, as practices change when meaning that is conveyed through practices changes and vice versa. Only for heuristic purposes, these two ways are discussed separately.

While performing practices, various bodily processes are being activated in relation to natural and artificial environments. Dance is a particularly multidimensional practice, as it stimulates a wide range of ‘sensory modalities: the sight of performers moving in time and space, the sounds of physical movement, the smell of physical exertion, the feeling of kinesthetic activity or empathy, the touch of body and/or performing area, and the proxemic sense’ (Hanna, 1987: 25–26). To perform a practice such as dance, people not only have to reflect but they primarily have to coordinate and often synchronize their sensory modalities. For example, dancers have to align their breathing to the music to stay in rhythm. This coordination/synchronization is substantiated through activities in the brain. As neuroscientific research has demonstrated, the same brain regions activate

through the firing of mirror neurons while performing and observing practices (Holmes, 2018). Hence, considering affect transcends reflective accounts. When performing/observing a practice, people not only reflect individually but they also think in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017) by communicating ‘in a direct fashion, unmediated by interpretation and discourse’ (Ringmar, 2016: 202), crossing bodily, social, and cultural boundaries. Therefore, while I agree with Aistope (2020) about the importance of language, it is neither the only means of communication, nor is language the most fundamental one (Thrift, 2004: 59).

Following Judith Hanna (1987: 66), change in practices reside in this process of coordination/synchronization because it can ‘lead to altered states of consciousness . . . by circumventing the loading process, [which normally keeps] . . . our minds so busy with familiar ideation that unwarranted thought processes have no chance of intruding’. By circumventing ideational processes, practices, even if they are performed by the same people, can never be replicated in exactly the same manner, as different spatio-temporal contexts and aging bodies require new efforts of affective coordination. It is due to these inconspicuous adjustments to a different affective mix of place, time, and bodies that change in practices often happen unconsciously (Hall and Ross, 2015; Hopf, 2018).

At the same time, affect initiates changes through practices by providing for a directional experience (Wetherell, 2012: 13). As patterned actions, practices help to structure the everyday through which people perform imaginations of being ‘at home in the world’ (Arendt, 1994: 308). During these performances, people are constantly encountering something or someone that triggers an emotional reaction. At such occasions, ‘when something addresses us’, as Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004: 310) called it, the initial emotional reaction happens at an individual level. Trying to make sense of these experiences, however, takes place in collectivity (Degerman, 2019: 163), as people align them to their ‘sensus communis’ (Gadamer, 2004: 21), that is, what is taken to be self-evident in their everyday lives. This is not only a reflective process. Rather, by using their existing repertoire of meaning, people also revert to affective meaning-making processes that are embodied in practice performances, as noted in the literature (Åhäll, 2018: 38; Militz, 2017: 180; Ringmar, 2014: 11; Wetherell, 2012: 4). These processes are ‘strategic without implicating conscious goal-orientation’ (Scheer, 2012: 203). This means that affect is meaning-making as existing affective repertoires of meaning prescribe potentialities (Crawford, 2019: 230). However, due to the continuously transforming affective constellations, these potentialities open up ambivalences (Schick, 2019: 261), meaning that practice variations can coexist and are even placed in tension with conflicting world political imaginations being enacted.

Let’s dance: affective practice changes at the Congress of Vienna

To exemplify the impact of affective dynamics on practice changes, this article turns now to the Congress of Vienna and the dancing that took place between September 1814 and June 1815. Dance is not the only cultural practice that allows reflecting on affective dynamics. As recent scholarship has demonstrated (Mahiet, 2019; Ramel and

Prévost-Thomas, 2018), also music provides for affective encounters to facilitate conflict resolution and Vienna was no exception. Ludwig van Beethoven even composed his only polonaise during the Congress, dedicating it to the Tsarina. However, as mentioned, dance is a particularly multidimensional practice and it was the one practice all attendees could participate in. In fact, so much dancing was going on that the Austrian field marshal Charles-Joseph de Ligne feared that the Congress would end up in failure, allegedly complaining that ‘le Congrès danse, mais il ne marche pas [the Congress dances, but it does not progress]’ (cited in Fournier, 1913: 273).

However, dancing was not merely a pastime for Congress attendees. Rather, by performing different dances, ambivalent potentialities of world political imaginations could be enacted. To demonstrate these potentialities, this article deliberately does not focus on the polonaise, ‘the epitome of aristocratic elegance’ (Vick, 2014: 51). Rather, it discusses two other dances: the minuet, at the time of the Congress already in decline, but still widely enough performed to alleviate negotiations in Vienna, intended to reestablish peace and reverse the political changes of the French Revolution, while the rising popularity of waltz provided for opposite world imaginations by embodying liberal, national sentiments.

Considering Tom Lundborg’s (2009) Deleuzian reading of the event, recording the interrelations between place, time, and bodies during these two dances in each sub-section therefore not only shows changes in practices but it also allows to condense affective dynamics that in the case of dance as an international practice became protracted throughout the nineteenth century. Each sub-section then investigates changes through these dances that affected world political imaginations.

Minuet: performing a transboundary world

Having originated out of French rural circle dances in the sixteenth century, the minuet had become the standard dance at European courts by the seventeenth century. Characterized by expansive, geometric, and balanced steps, the minuet offers little physical contact between dancers. Unlike later ballroom dances, it is performed through frequent changes of partners and does not encourage virtuosity. Rather, it requires to meticulously follow predefined steps, conforming to wider observations in the discipline that ‘hegemonic social structures sediment in . . . bodies’ (Nexon and Neumann, 2018: 666). This structure in movement and composition embodied an affective ‘community of dancing practice’ (Kavalski, 2017: 18) that served two intentions in Vienna.

First, strictly defined movements reassured dancers of their position within a European aristocratic order, while at the same time it embodied collective public approval of this order and its members (Mahiet, 2018: 119). This reassurance of the nobility’s societal position and relevance therefore involved dancers and audiences. Indeed, ‘what is conveyed through this *Gesamtkunstwerk* is not only a series of physical movements and a story, but, crucially, also a certain atmosphere. That is, performance conveys a certain way in which it feels to be a certain person and to live a certain kind of life’ (Ringmar, 2016: 115; emphasis in original). Hence, by carefully staging minuets, the nobility allowed for an embodied aesthetic that was carried by their rhythmic movements and affective properties. This is evidenced in the opening ball on 2 October 1814. It took

place at the imperial palace, comprising not only its two ballrooms but also the *Winterreitschule*, an indoor riding school, in order to accommodate 10,000 guests (*Wiener Zeitung*, 1814a, 276: 1). On the occasion, thousands of candles were lit, leaving a lasting impression on numerous eyewitnesses (Zamoyski, 2007: 285). This ostentation of splendor and the carefully staged dances symbolically re-legitimized the nobility's claim to power vis-à-vis the public by helping to constrain 'the revolutionary virus' (Lawson, 2019: 105; also Buzan and Lawson, 2015: 56). As provocatively put by Jonas Teune (2012: 190), the nobility had to dance to be able to rule again.

Second, dancing also helped to establish with the Concert of Europe a relatively long-lasting system of conflict resolution. Like the polonaise, the minuet could fulfill this purpose, as it allowed dancers and observers to communicate directly. Through choreographed movements of their bodies in specific placio-temporal settings, affect was stimulated through audiovisual and olfactory sensations, making 'a thoroughly lively and engaging conversation . . . [possible] in the rich silence of movement' (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017: 7). Many of these sensory sensations were to be experienced on the anniversary of the Battle of Nations on 18 October 1814. For the evening, a Festival of Peace was organized that filled guests such as Anna Eynard-Lullin 'with memories for our lifetime' (in Zamoyski, 2007: 321). Its artistic centerpiece was a choreography similar to the *Ballet de la Paix*, staged by the French delegation at the peace conference in Münster (Grimm, 2002). Like in 1648, a character called *Discord* appeared and people were seen to flee from it in its black horse-drawn carriage. Only after starting to cooperate, people were able to defeat *Discord* and the performance ended with actors grouping around a peace altar, chanting songs of unity and pronouncing their alliance (Metternich, 1880: 425–426). This and other performances at Metternich's festival provided onlookers with an affective stimulus to overcome previous conflicts and establish peace.

As such, dancing was a central practice to sustain a transboundary aristocratic network that existed until the nineteenth century. Epitomized by the minuet, the nobility's nocturnal encounters helped to form affective communities. As Karl Varnhagen von Ense (2018: 485) later recollected, 'the evenings . . . reunited what the mornings . . . had separated.' Hence, dancing offered former enemies temporary opportunities to become 'empathetic partners' (Mahiet, 2018: 127) by creating affective memories and developing emotional knowledge about themselves and their dance partners (Koschut, 2018: 327). Dancing therefore provided for a creative force of meaning-making to identify communalities while not renouncing diversity. This affective meaning-making contributed to end hostilities and enabled France to retain its great power status. It also helped to create the Concert of Europe, in which a shared togetherness was established that at least nominally gave everyone the same voice in the annex to the final act (Mitzen, 2015: 92). It also furthered perceptions of a world in which states as international actors were not considered exclusive and mono-cultural, bounded by clearly demarcated and unsurmountable lines, but were woven together by sets of inclusive relations as multicultural constructions.

Waltz: spinning for the nation

At the same time, people started to imagine a different world and dancing helped them to affectively negotiate these ambivalences. Important in this respect was a dance that only

had evolved out of alpine folk dances such as the *Ländler* at the end of the eighteenth century, but which would transform ballroom dancing in the nineteenth century. While still danced in three-four time, the waltz no longer required performers to move through dance floors alone in collectivity in the sense of having no permanent contact point (Albright, 2013: 312), but dancers constantly touched one another in closed position. With its repetitive, almost ecstatic turns and constant embrace, the waltz provided for a rhythmic experience that individualized dancing. Unlike the minuet, it ‘emphasized not uniformity, but individual expression; there are no rules . . . save for a few basic steps; the individual is encouraged to introduce his own variations and interpretations’ (Katz, 1973: 371). While this created barriers between dancers, it helped to reduce them between classes, as dancing skills became more important than the performers’ status. This no longer offered collective assurance, as the aim was to outperform other couples on Viennese dance floors but, speaking with Michael Shapiro (2016: 114), it also transformed them from ‘zone[s] of coerced rhythm to one[s] of artistic expression and playful exuberance.’

While there are only later recollections of waltzes having been performed at official balls (Edling, 1888: 178; Freska, 1919: 50), this dance became central to Viennese ‘salon diplomacy’ (Sluga, 2015: 125). Considering that ‘there was no separation of politics from culture’ in Vienna ‘but an awareness that culture *was* political’ (Lawson, 2019: 107; emphasis in original), salons, hosted by women such as Catherine Bagration, Wilhelmine von Sagan, and Dorothea de Talleyrand-Périgord, were used to steer foreign policy-making in Vienna. By providing a venue for more intimate encounters between members of the nobility *and* the bourgeoisie, controversial opinions could be voiced, pioneering a more liberal, yet also more nationalistic view of the world. While the lodgings of Sagan were the preferred venue for the Austrians, the Russian delegation met with Bagration, and Talleyrand-Périgord entertained the French delegation (Vick, 2014: 113). Hence, the composition of place, time, and bodies diverged from official occasions during which amongst others minuets were performed and salons provided for affective dynamics that opened up different potentialities to embody common affective worlds.

Regularly performing waltzes helped to create an atmosphere that supported the *salonnières*’ political ambitions. Being accessible to all and having no strict sequence of steps, the waltz embodied liberal views, promoting equality on a national basis (Katz, 1973: 374; Zbikowski, 2012: 164). Hence, in contrast to the minuet, whose affective dynamics evoked an ‘inter’ (Hellmann and Valbjørn, 2017) across a transboundary European elite, the emergence of the waltz enabled to ‘constantly generate, rework and mediate nationalisms’ (Militz, 2017: 181), coinciding with imaginations of the international in which the ‘ideal of cosmopolitanism started to give way to tropes of cultural belonging and national commitment’ (Conrad and Sachsenmeier, 2007: 4). In the decades following the Congress of Vienna, spinning around the dance floor commonly embodied national sentiments throughout Europe. It therefore resonated well with the changing social cohesion at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which ‘saw the birth of international relations as we know it today’ (Osterhammel, 2014: 394; also Buzan and Lawson, 2015).

The Congress further accelerated this change in which nation-states gradually came to be perceived as the only representation of modern society by not only promoting the

waltz but also other folk dances from across the Austrian Empire. On 6 October 1814, people could observe ‘a display of national dances’ (Vick, 2014: 45) during a *Volksfest* that attracted 20,000 visitors to the *Augarten*, a large park in central Vienna, giving people the opportunity to meet dignitaries in public and develop common national sentiments. There were further occasions where people created affective memories, interacting across classes, but within a national context such as the performance of Georg Friedrich Händel’s *Samson* by an orchestra made up of members of all classes (*Wiener Zeitung*, 1814b, 292: 1). Prior to the French Revolution, such intimate encounters were unthinkable. While this physical contact did not erase class differences, it still normalized contact between them and Congress participants started to develop emotional allegiance to the states they represented and no longer to a European cosmopolitan elite (Katz, 1973: 376–377; Vick, 2014: 4).

Conclusion

This article brought PT into conversation with the study of affect in IR to further our understanding of how practices change. It demonstrated that even practices as ordinaries, rooted in and constitutive of peoples’ everyday life, can change in a way that they have transformative effects on world politics. With this focus on affect, it supported Adler and Pouliot (2011: 1) in arguing that PT helps IR to ‘zoom in on the quotidian unfolding of international life and analyze . . . [how the everyday impacts on] the “big picture” of world politics’.

This is because affect permeates practice performances, causing them to change. By continuously reshuffling constellations of place, time, and bodies, affect leads to changes in practices that often remain at first unnoticed, as they are relatively marginal adaptations. However, rooted in these everyday adaptations are potentialities to transform world politics, as affect is meaning-making in the sense of people creating affective memories and developing emotional knowledge about themselves, their fellow practitioners, and their life-worlds through contingent and ephemeral encounters during practices.

To exemplify this role of affect and demonstrate that significant world political changes are rooted in everyday practices, this article reflected on dance as a political practice at the Congress of Vienna. Transformations to ballroom dancing that were popularized in Vienna happened not only because of changing fashions but also because of the specific meanings embodied in them. Dances such as the minuet still evoked transboundary images of the world. They were not free of power relations, as during dancing bodies not only act but also are being acted upon. In Vienna, dancing the minuet was meant to sustain a trans-European dynastic order, making their performances political by affectively reassuring its members of their commonalities and of their position in this hierarchical order. At the same time, dancing the waltz contested these transboundary images by embodying liberal, national sentiments. With the rise of the latter, ballroom dancing was freed from its previous statism, providing space for individual interpretation and offering permanent contact points with fixed partners. This transition did not stop then and there, but later in different affective constellations also the waltz came to be

considered unsuitable to perform national sentiments in the crumbling Eurasian empires, being replaced by Hungarian csárdás, Czech polkas, Polish mazurkas, and kolos in the Balkans.

As the Congress demonstrated, affective adaptations often take place in antagonistic processes of becoming. This opens pathways for future research. While Hopf (2018: 705) is right in arguing that ‘we are going to need to abandon any hopes of predicting social change’, considering affect when studying how practices change can still sensitize us for the politics involved in these processes. Accepting change as continuous and inevitable, questions of continuity may receive more consideration, encouraging the discipline to investigate how people manage to find stability in the ambiguity of continuously changing practices and how this helps them to engage with change in an unprepossessed way. Indeed, recent contributions to diplomatic as well as peace and conflict studies (Behr and Devereux, 2020; Holmes, 2018) have begun to think in this direction by questioning essentializing conceptualizations of peace and understanding differences as opportunities for cooperation, rather than sources of conflict. While still a novelty in IR, other disciplines have shown (Croft, 2015; LeBaron et al., 2014; Mahiet, 2019; Urbain, 2007) that the affective potentials of dance (and other cultural practices such as) deserve further investigation, as they can have positive practical implications to identify communalities and eventually build identities while not renouncing diversity.

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