

## Methods for De/Liberation

### Historical tensions in action research and their negotiation in the co-research of *Art.School.Differences*<sup>1</sup>

*“Action research is not for the impatient”<sup>2</sup>*

This text will outline a number of key moments in the history of action research. In doing so, it will focus on the perspectives and tensions inscribed within them. Against this backdrop, I will sketch out the general concept and methodological approach of the co-research carried out in the project *Art.School.Differences*. The text concludes with a reflection on what was achieved in this setting, and on the limits of co-research in *Art.School.Differences* with reference to the tensions outlined, and measured against the initial objectives of the project. The aim of this is to encourage the use of participative action research in settings of research-based, institutional work against inequality, and to make a contribution to a critically informed reflection on these methods.

### Genesis in the German-Speaking World<sup>3</sup>

It was in the 1910s that the notion of action research first began to circulate in German-speaking regions. Inspired by the desire to “to overthrow all conditions in which man is a debased, enslaved, neglected, and contemptible being”,<sup>4</sup> it developed at a juncture of open interaction between psychology, social science, political activism and art. The first confirmed use of the German concept *Aktionsforschung* was in the work of Jacob Levy Moreno.<sup>5</sup> Moreno worked as a doctor, social philosopher, sociologist, poet and co-editor of the literary journal *Damion*. Besides *sociometry*, an empirical method for the diagrammatic representation of social relations,<sup>6</sup> Moreno also developed psychodrama, a therapeutically

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<sup>1</sup> This text is dedicated to Catrin Seefranz, without whose persistence there would have been no co-research at *Art.School.Differences*, and who was crucially involved in its conception

<sup>2</sup> Adelman, Clem (1993): Kurt Lewin and the Origins of Action Research, in: *Educational Action Research* 1(1), pp. 7-24, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> The situation documented here refers to the Anglophone and German-speaking world. On action research in the Francophone context, see, for example, the anthology by Messier, Pierre-Marie/Missotte, Philippe (eds.) (2003): *La recherche-action: Une autre manière de chercher, se former, transformer*, Paris: L'Harmattan; in particular, Berger, Guy: *Recherche-action. Epistémologie historique*, pp. 11-26; Morin, André (2004), *De l'anthropopédagogie à la recherche-action intégrale*, in: *questions vives*, n°3(2), pp.15-26. For a brief overview, see Barbier, René (2006), *Historique de la recherche-action*, online at: [http://foad.iedparis8.net/claroline/courses/8327/document/barbier\\_rechercheaction/01.Historique.html](http://foad.iedparis8.net/claroline/courses/8327/document/barbier_rechercheaction/01.Historique.html), (accessed: 09.03.2016).

<sup>4</sup> Marx, Karl (2002[1844]): 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' in: *Marx on Religion*, Raines (ed.), Philadelphia, p.177.

<sup>5</sup> Petzold, Hilarion (1980): Moreno – nicht Lewin – der Begründer der Aktionsforschung, in: *Gruppendynamik* 11(2), Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, pp. 142-163.

<sup>6</sup> Moreno, Jacob L. (1996): *Die Grundlagen der Soziometrie: Wege zu Neuordnung der Gesellschaft*,

oriented method of analysis and reorganisation of society “from below”,<sup>7</sup> out of a critical confrontation with both psychoanalysis and Marxism, and significantly influenced by expressionist tendencies in the art of the time. The first impulses behind the development of psychodrama were provided by experiences with a *Stegreiftheater* (impromptu theatre) which Moreno ran in the 1920s together with artists in Vienna on the premises of the *Association of Austrian Visual Artists*.<sup>8</sup> In this *theatre without an audience*,<sup>9</sup> the division between performers and public was blurred through a process in which everybody collectively staged and reflected upon scenarios from their everyday lives. During his medical studies in Vienna – which had been governed since 1918 by the Social Democratic Workers’ Party and had been significantly marked by massive improvements in the area of housing construction, education and healthcare – Moreno supported a group of sex workers in the district of Spittelberg, who aimed to self-organise to fight for labour rights and for the recognition of their work as a profession.<sup>10</sup> Moreno is credited with referring to this group as *co-researchers*, and to have applied the concept of action research to the collaboration. He saw the traditionally passive role of the research subject as an instrument of oppression; at the same time, in keeping with his broader philosophy, it was important to him not to stipulate their positioning as researchers in advance, but rather to shape it step by step as part of a social process.<sup>11</sup> This represented a fundamental, Marxist-informed critique of science; in particular of the established paradigms of OBJECTIVITY and REPLICABILITY [see Glossary: methodologies]. Objectivity was replaced by political engagement and an orientation toward achieving social justice; and replicability made way for the applicability of research results in a concrete social context and the ability to transfer successfully tested strategies to similar contexts.<sup>12</sup> Moreno’s approaches can be viewed as forerunners of techniques which, influenced by the tradition of “militant investigation”, are today experiencing a boom in the artistic field under the banner of “artistic research”; and of art-based survey and presentation

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Opladen, Leske + Budrich.

<sup>7</sup> This is the title of the publication by Buer, Ferdinand (2010): *Psychodrama und Gesellschaft: Wege zur sozialen Erneuerung von unten*, Wiesbaden: VS.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example Moreno, Levy Jakob (1970[1924]): *Das Stegreiftheater*, New York: Beacon House. See also: Archiv für die Geschichte der Soziologie in Österreich, Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz: Jakob Levy und das Barackenlager Mitterndorf, online at [http://agso.uni-graz.at/mitterndorf/jakob\\_levy\\_moreno/04.htm](http://agso.uni-graz.at/mitterndorf/jakob_levy_moreno/04.htm) (accessed: 04.03.2016) and the historical survey by the Association of Austrian Visual Artists, online at <http://www.vbkoe.org/2010/10/22/jakob-levy-moreno/> (accessed: 04.03.2016).

<sup>9</sup> See Lesák, Barbara (2016): *Die österreichische Theateravantgarde 1918-1926: Ein Experiment von allzu kurzer Dauer*, in: Primus-Heinz Kucher (ed.), *Verdrängte Moderne – vergessene Avantgarde: Diskurskonstellationen zwischen Literatur, Theater, Kunst und Musik in Österreich 1918-1938*, Göttingen: V&R uni press, pp. 43-64, p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> See Buer (2010): 73.

<sup>11</sup> See Altrichter, Herbert/Gstettner, Peter (1993): *Action Research: a Closed Chapter in the History of German Social Science?* In: *Educational Action Research* 1(3), pp. 329-360.

<sup>12</sup> See Gunz, Josef (1996): *Jacob L. Moreno and the Origins of Action Research*, in: *Educational Action Research*, 4(1), pp. 145-148, p. 146.

methods in qualitative social research and education studies, which have taken root above all in North America.<sup>13</sup>

Kurt Lewin, who is widely considered to be one of the founders of action research, was in close contact with Moreno at this time, as were some of his adherents. In the 1920s, influenced by socialist ideas and Gestalt psychology, Lewin worked as an assistant professor in the Psychological Institute of the University of Berlin (today the Humboldt Universität Berlin), where he taught philosophy and psychology. He also taught adult education and advocated for the strengthening of women's rights.<sup>14</sup> As an academic, he gained a profile during this time with his progressive ideas in children's psychology, and more importantly, in industrial and organisational psychology or 'psychotechnics', with studies on the development of test procedures in the employment of factory workers or to optimise workflows. These contributions were focused around the tensions between the interests of employers and workers. Lewin hoped to resolve the **OPPOSITION OF THE INTERESTS OF CAPITAL AND LABOUR** [see glossary: social classes] through a scientifically based intervention into the strongly Taylorist logic of manufacturing, whereby all participants could be made aware of the advantages of a humanised production apparatus. From his position – perhaps more social democratic than socialist – Lewin saw “the psychologist to be more on the side of the unions”.<sup>15</sup> As such, he demanded the inclusion of workers in operational decision-making and problem-solving processes.<sup>16</sup>

As two of the multiple historical founders of action research,<sup>17</sup> Lewin and Moreno could as such be distinguished both by their theoretical frameworks and their research ethics. While at this time Moreno had rejected a positivistic conception of knowledge,<sup>18</sup> Lewin was attempting to extract rationalisable rules of human behaviour in the workplace through carrying out tests in experimental sequences. While Moreno was problematising the supremacy of the researcher in the production of knowledge about social transformation, Lewin clung to their

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<sup>13</sup> See Knowles, Gary/Cole, Ardra (2008): *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues*, London: Sage, and: Mörsch, Carmen (2012): *But is it ABER?*, in: Mira Sack/Anton Rey (ed.), *Ästhetische Kommunikation im Kindertheater: Eine Studie zu Rezeptionsweisen und Erlebnisqualitäten*, Berlin: Alexander, p. XX; see also p. XX ff in this essay.

<sup>14</sup> See Smith, Mark K. (2001): Kurt Lewin, groups, experiential learning and action research, in: *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*, online at <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-lewin.htm> (accessed: 04.03.2016).

<sup>15</sup> See Lück, Helmut (2011): *Anfänge der Wirtschaftspsychologie bei Kurt Lewin*, in: *Gestalt Theory* 33(2), pp. 91-114, online at: [http://gth.krammerbuch.at/sites/default/files/articles/Create%20Article/L%C3%BCck\\_KORR.pdf](http://gth.krammerbuch.at/sites/default/files/articles/Create%20Article/L%C3%BCck_KORR.pdf) (accessed: 04.03.2016), p. 101.

<sup>16</sup> Lewin, Kurt (1919): *Die Sozialisierung des Taylorsystems: Eine grundsätzliche Untersuchung zur Arbeits- und Berufspsychologie*, Berlin: Gesellschaft und Erziehung.

<sup>17</sup> Mayring has pointed out that there were other forerunners to socially committed action research, for instance, the study *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal* (*The Unemployed of Marienthal*), referred to as “sociography”, which was first published in 1933. The study was confiscated in the same year by the Nazis, and only republished in 1960. Like Lewin, the three authors of this study also emigrated to the USA and Great Britain. See Mayring, Philipp (2002): *Einführung in die Qualitative Sozialforschung*, Weinheim: Beltz, p. 54; Zeisel, Hans/Jahoda, Marie/Lazarfeld, Paul (1933): *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal: Ein soziographischer Versuch über die Wirkungen langandauernder Arbeitslosigkeit*. Leipzig: Hirzel; first re-edition: Allensbach 1960; published as a book by Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1975.

<sup>18</sup> Buer 2010: 33ff.

privileged status as pioneers. But what they both had in common was the goal of employing research in the interests of the transformation of concrete social relations to achieve increased social justice.

### **Development and Controversies in Action Research in the US<sup>19</sup>**

Lewin and Moreno are united by their experience of forced migration. Both of their parents, facing poverty and anti-Semitism, emigrated from their countries of birth, to Vienna and Berlin respectively. Moreno migrated to America as early as 1925, where he was able to continue to develop his techniques of sociometry and psychodrama in an institutional context. Lewin fled to the USA with his partner and child shortly after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933; his mother Recha Lewin was murdered in the Sobibor extermination camp. Current research on Lewin illustrates the influence that these experiences had on his research topics and methodologies in America.<sup>20</sup> He worked there as a professor at various universities and ultimately founded the Research Institute for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston, the first of its kind. From 1935 until his death in 1947, his projects all revolved around the question of how a society could be educated in democratic values, and how to combat the development of totalitarianism. He was concerned with shifts in behaviour and opinion in social groups, with the tensions between such groups, and with the connection between political leadership styles and education. He worked in the fields of childhood psychology, education, anti-Semitism and anti-racism training, and advised, founded and ran various organisations which worked to combat the discrimination of minorities.<sup>21</sup>

As a background to this text, it is worth mentioning that for their ground-breaking investigation into authoritarian and democratic leadership and education styles in the mid-1930s, Lewin and his colleague Ronald Lippitt selected a series of experimental tests in which art education formed the framework: in regular meetings over several months, various groups of children were given the task of painting, drawing and making theatre masks. While one group was made to follow detailed, step by step instructions delivered in an authoritarian manner, another group had to agree on the various working steps, with the teaching staff taking on more of a consultative and facilitating role. In a third group, the teacher behaved as

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<sup>19</sup> From this point on, I focus on Lewin's work and leave Moreno's trajectory behind. Lewin had the greatest influence in terms of action research in public education institutions such as schools and universities, and was a focus of the project *Art.School.Differences*.

<sup>20</sup> Ash, Mitchell (2005): Learning from Persecution: Émigré Jewish Social Scientists' Studies of Authoritarianism and Anti-Semitism after 1933, in: Beate Meyer/Marion Kaplan (eds.), *Jüdische Welten: Juden in Deutschland vom 18. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart*, Göttingen: Wallstein, pp. 271-294.

<sup>21</sup> Including organisations such as the *Commission on Community Interrelations of the American Jewish Congress*, the *Commission of Community Interrelations (CCI)* and the *Institute of Ethnic Affairs*. On the latter, see p. XX in this essay.

passively as possible. The meetings were filmed and documented by multiple observers in detailed notes. The data from the meetings was used to investigate the diverse effects of three different educational and leadership styles: authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire.<sup>22</sup> This experiment was carried out in three connected, stage-like rooms, separated by curtains:

Rather than a fully controlled space, Lewin and Lippitt set up, deliberately or inadvertently, a sophisticated transitional setting, a stage on which a multitude of underdetermined events could proliferate. The experimental attic is in this sense an inconclusive locale, unable (or unwilling) to draw the distinction between ludic laboratory and scientific playground.<sup>23</sup>

Lewin and his colleagues used the findings from these experiments to argue for the representative participation of minorities in politics and for the reform of the education system along the lines of John Dewey's model of experiential learning.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, upon this foundation, Lewin put forward suggestions for a goal-oriented approach to the re-education of the German people after the anticipated victory over the Nazis.<sup>25</sup> Simultaneously and in concert with this, Lewin recommenced the workplace research that he had begun in Berlin. The experiments that he and his colleagues carried out with employees produced essentially similar outcomes to his research and development work on education styles: more democracy and self-determination meant an increased sense of purpose and satisfaction for individuals, as well as increased cohesion among the group – and therefore led to an increased willingness to perform, less sick days, less losses in efficiency through internal conflicts in the organisation, increased efficiency in workflows, and consequently to increased generation of capital. Lewin and his colleagues thus proved the potential value of participation in industrial organisations, and as such, also of participation-based research approaches for reforming and stabilising existing relations:

Lewin's ideas on democratic participation in the workplace did not include any critique of the wider society, particularly the range of economic relations between worker and employer, capital and labour. Indeed a fair observation would be that although Lewin and his co-workers demonstrated the efficacy of action research for improving

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<sup>22</sup> Lewin, Kurt (1938): Experiments on autocratic and democratic atmospheres, in: *The Social Frontier* IV(37), pp. 316-319.

<sup>23</sup> Lezaun, Javier/Calvillo, Nerea (2014): In the Political Laboratory: Kurt Lewin's Atmospheres, in: *Journal of Cultural Economy* 7(4), pp. 434-457.

<sup>24</sup> McKernan, James (1991): *Curriculum Action Research. A Handbook of Methods and Resources for the Reflective Practitioner*, London: Kogan, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Lewin, Kurt (1943): The special case of Germany, in: *Public Opinion Quarterly* 7(4), pp. 555-566.

productivity, they did not develop conceptual structures that took explicit account of the power bases that define social roles and strongly influence the process of any change in the modes of production.<sup>26</sup>

However in his 1946 text *Action Research and Minority Problems*, Lewin maintained that action research was intended to serve the self-empowerment of minority groups in their struggle for “independence, equality and co-operation”.<sup>27</sup> In this work, Lewin explicitly mentioned overcoming exploitative conditions in American ‘dependencies’<sup>28</sup> as a goal toward which action research could make a contribution. So here it was depicted as a thoroughly partisan intervention aimed at achieving a radical transformation of existing relations of power.

The expansion of the experimental test procedure to include action research created a certain additional tension between the research models of social constructivism and positivism. Lewin’s dictum “no action without research; no research without action”,<sup>29</sup> which describes the spiral of action and reflection which is inherent to this approach to research, was underpinned by a constructivist understanding of research as the production of meaning within the context of social relations. At the same time though, he also carried out experimental test sequences as part of his practice of action research, and insisted on the replicability of their results. In 1993, Clem Adelman, who works on Lewin’s methodologies from the perspective of practice-led research in English schools, attempted to describe Lewin’s approach to research in the following way:

Lewin is not a scientific positivist but a scientific pragmatist. His methodology derives from [...] an interpretative (of many social perspectives) epistemology melded to a quasi-experimental orientation.<sup>30</sup>

The researchers who worked with Lewin differentiated between four kinds of action research: *diagnostic action research*, in which a ‘change agent’ intervenes into a pre-existing situation, diagnoses a problem and suggests a solution which is then tested in practice, which in turn provides data for the continuation of the process and so on; *participant action research*, in which a group which is affected by a problem is actively included in the research right from

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<sup>26</sup> Adelman (1993): 10.

<sup>27</sup> Lewin, Kurt (1946): *Action Research and Minority Problems*, in: *The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues* 2(4), November, pp. 34-46.

<sup>28</sup> This refers to former colonies which have their own government, but which retain US legislature, and are significantly influenced by the US in terms of government and civil affairs.

<sup>29</sup> Marrow, Alfred Jay (1977 [1969]): *The practical theorist: The life and work of Kurt Lewin*, New York: Teachers College Press, p. 193.

<sup>30</sup> See Adelman (1993): 12f.

the beginning and in all aspects of the process; *empirical action research*, which consisted in collecting and evaluating data generated through observations of group-related practice; and *experimental action research*, which was based on controlled, experimental series of investigations. These different approaches were united by an aspiration to bring about changes in practices (be it in the workplace, the school, or social practices more broadly), and by a conception of the research process as a chain of feedback loops.<sup>31</sup> According to Margaret Mead, it was Lewin who established the concept of *feedback* within social psychology, which he took from the science of cybernetics, which was developing at the same time.<sup>32</sup> Through this technologically informed perspective of society, art and science did not necessarily become tools of an emancipatory practice, but rather moved “from the ivory tower to the control tower”, as Marshall McLuhan enthusiastically asserted in 1964 with regards to the shifting role of artists in society.<sup>33</sup>

The political dimension to the tensions inscribed in Lewin's contribution to the establishment of action research will be illustrated in the following by way of the example of a conflict which broke out after his death between two of his research partners, and which is documented in their correspondence.<sup>34</sup> At the Center for Group Dynamics at MIT, in the work of his colleague Ronald Lippitt<sup>35</sup> and others, Lewin's research and development work into organisational psychology was continued. In opposition to this, another of Lewin's colleagues, John Collier, had been running an independent research and development institute since 1945 called the Institute of Ethnic Affairs, whose work was avowedly aimed at [DECOLONISATION \[see glossary: postcolonial critique\]](#). Since 1933, Collier had directed the Federal Bureau for Indian Affairs, and contemporaneously with Lewin, had used the designation ‘action research’ for activities in which representatives of Native American<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> A maxim that has been continually ascribed to Lewin is: “if you want truly to understand something, try to change it”.

<sup>32</sup> “In 1946, a Macy Foundation interdisciplinary conference was organized to use the model provided by ‘feedback systems,’ honorifically referred to in earlier conferences as ‘teleological mechanisms’, and later as ‘cybernetics’, with the expectation that this model would provide a group of sciences with useful mathematical tools and, simultaneously, would serve as a form of cross-disciplinary communication. Out of the deliberations of this group came a whole series of fruitful developments of a very high order. Kurt Lewin (who died in 1947) took away from the first meeting the term ‘feedback’. He suggested ways in which group processes, which he and his students were studying in a highly disciplined, rigorous way, could be improved by a ‘feedback process’, as when, for example, a group was periodically given a report on the success or failure of its particular operations.” Mead, Margaret (1964): *Continuities in Cultural Evolution*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, p. 272f.

<sup>33</sup> “To prevent undue wreckage in society, the artist tends now to move from the ivory tower to the control tower of society [...] the artist is indispensable in the shaping and structures created by electric technology.” McLuhan, Marshall (1994[1964]): *Understanding Media: the extensions of men*, Cambridge: MIT Press, p. 65.

<sup>34</sup> See Cooke, Bill (2012): *The early Cold War politics of action research and group dynamics*, in: David Boje/Bernard Burnes/John Hassar (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Organizational Change*, New York: Routledge, pp. 59-73, p. 66.

<sup>35</sup> Lippitt was a cofounder of the Research Center for Group Dynamics at MIT. After Lewin's death and the relocation of the institute in 1948, he cofounded the Center for Research on the Utilization of Scientific Knowledge at the Institute of Social Research in Ann Arbor.

<sup>36</sup> This term is used as a collective self-identification by the communities which inhabited the territories which now make up the USA prior to colonisation, and which were violently subordinated and decimated by the processes of colonisation.

communities operated as researchers and teacher-activists. This version of action research can also be viewed as presenting an epistemological<sup>37</sup> challenge to Western traditions of research, if nothing else because it took place in a context of a new politics of Native American self-determination, which Collier was able to politically push forward thanks to the influence of his position. Collier was of the belief that Native American cosmologies should play a central role in shaping the political consciousness and self-concepts of the people of North America in the future.<sup>38</sup> Both parties invoked Lewin's legacy in their contrary understandings of action research. Collier viewed the role of researchers as activists, as allies in the emancipatory struggle of the oppressed. In the figure of the researcher – distinguishing clearly between socio-political engagement and a supposedly unbiased scientificity – Lippitt saw a “middle man” tasked with working with the respective actors to develop a scientific foundation for the analysis and resolution of their problems, without being influenced by their respective intentions and ethics. The only thing that this middle man had to convince people of was the central value of scientific methods. This polarisation of these conflicting approaches which Levin – who had been working in the social-democratic atmosphere of Roosevelt's New Deal – had been negotiating simultaneously, took place before the backdrop of the Cold War, in the radically anti-leftist climate of 1947, at the beginning of the McCarthy era. The catalyst for the correspondence was Lippitt's resignation from the board of the Institute of Ethnic Affairs. Shortly thereafter, the institute was forced to close, since their tax rebate was refused on the basis of the assertion that it was a political organisation rather than an academic one. Lippitt's work, on the other hand, withstood this era of persecution due to its supposed political indifference.

Lippitt's arguments can be seen to have prepared the ground for action research's shift away from the early focus on social change to intra-organizational and workplace from the early 1950s onwards [...]. Process came to be all, and in *The Dynamics of Planned Change* Lippitt et al's position on the change agents value judgements, and how they inform practice was merely that the 'Judeo Christian democratic ethic provides general prescriptions which can guide the activities of an agent.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge; to the preconditions which underpin knowledge and cognition.

<sup>38</sup> In order to avoid the impression of idealising John Collier, I would mention here the critique of his romanticising and homogenising view of Native Americans and of the political measures that he took for their emancipation, which remained indebted to the British colonial practice of “indirect rule”. See, for example, Cooke, Bill (undated): A Foundation Correspondence on Action Research: Ronald Lippitt and John Collier, Manchester: IDPM working papers, online at: [http://www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/IDPM/working\\_papers/mid/mid\\_wp06.pdf](http://www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/IDPM/working_papers/mid/mid_wp06.pdf) (accessed: 22.03.2016), p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> See Cooke (undated): 16.

It can be inferred that the different lines of enquiry in American action research have diverged since the Cold War between the poles of “radical social change and/or corporate-friendly science”<sup>40</sup> and associated with this, between conflicting, hierarchically related epistemologies and conceptions of society and critique.

### **Action Research in Curriculum Development and Teacher Training in Europe: Between Ideological Critique and a Hegemonic Tool**

Similar lines of conflict emerged in another area, namely in school-related action research in Europe. This area of enquiry took root in Germany and England in the late 1960s, once again in a climate of progressive social-democratic governments. In Germany, it was born out of the student movement and the so-called ‘positivist dispute’ within German-speaking academia.<sup>41</sup> In this strand, under the banner of a Marxist critique of society, methods were taken up which had been developed before the Nazi seizure of power: action research was expounded as a method of ideologically critical social science, psychology and education studies, and as such, as a form of resistance against a conservative academic system.<sup>42</sup> The German-speaking discussions connected attempts to create a just society through education work and collective research – such as the work of Paolo Freire, Orlando Fals-Bordas (see p. XX in this essay), Ivan Illich and the Centre for Information and Documentation (CIDOC, founded by the latter in Cuernavaca in Mexico) – with the interrogation of their own education systems.<sup>43</sup> The critique of the mechanisms by which the education system excludes and produces uncritical individuals for use in the labour market and of out-dated curricula inscribed in imperialist discourses and authoritarian teaching methods which Ivan Illich laid out in his book *Deschooling Society* in 1970, appeared a mere two years later in German.<sup>44</sup> Alternative schools were founded where research and training formed an integral part of the

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<sup>40</sup> See Cooke (2012): 66.

<sup>41</sup> “[...] in sociology, the Frankfurt school formulated their theses within the framework of critical theory, and in doing so, exerted a fundamental critique of traditional and empirical positions in the theory of science (the positivism dispute. [...] Lively and critical debates took place in almost all social-scientific disciplines, and there was a growing search for interdisciplinary dialogue. In this context of a rethinking of social and academic critique, action research promised to be the appropriate research strategy for practically and empirically implementing these theoretically formulated positions.” from Unger, Hella/Block, Martina/Wright, Michael T. (2007): *Aktionsforschung im deutschsprachigen Raum: Zur Geschichte und Aktualität eines kontroversen Ansatzes aus Public Health Sicht*. WZB Discussion Paper SP I 2007-303, Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum für Sozialforschung Berlin. Online at <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/47408> (accessed: 04.03.2016), p. 13.

<sup>42</sup> Altrichter, Herbert/Posch, Peter (2007): *Lehrerinnen und Lehrer erforschen ihren Unterricht: Unterrichtsentwicklung und Unterrichtsevaluation durch Aktionsforschung*, Regensburg: Julius Klinkhardt, p. 350.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Borchert, Manfred/Deirchs-Kunstmann, Karin (1979): *Schulen, die ganz anders sind: Erfahrungsberichte aus der Praxis für die Praxis*, Frankfurt: Fischer; von Henting, Hartmut (1972): *Cuernavaca; or: Alternativen zur Schule?* Stuttgart: Klett/Kösel.

<sup>44</sup> Illich, Iwan (1972): *Entschulung der Gesellschaft*, München: Kösel.

attempt to reform curricula and develop new pedagogical models.<sup>45</sup> In this context, school-based action research developed in close dialogue with comparable efforts in England, in particular with the Humanities Curriculum Project (1967-1972) which was directed by Lawrence Stenhouse. Even today, for German-speaking approaches to team research and practitioner action research, Stenhouse represents an important point of reference from the Anglophone world.<sup>46</sup> The Humanities Curriculum Project was an attempt to make history and social studies teaching in secondary schools more relevant for the students, and to utilise them for citizenship education. This occurred through the introduction of a teaching model based on the identification of problems and on tackling them via discussion and research.<sup>47</sup> Stenhouse's declared aim in his work was to combat mechanisms of exclusion in the education system.<sup>48</sup> The Humanities Curriculum Project represented an intervention into the established and habitual concepts of teaching and learning, and for this reason, came up against significant resistance among teaching staff. Dealing with this resistance led to the development of a form of research conducted by the teaching staff themselves.<sup>49</sup> The hope here was that progressive impulses from education studies and corresponding changes to the curriculum would then be better adopted in the classroom. Like Lewin, Stenhouse was particularly concerned with the effect of different education styles on behaviour and attitudes, and was of the opinion that for education in a democratic, liberal state, a mode of teaching based on participation was vitally necessary. As such, Stenhouse saw the teaching staff – not unlike Lewin's 'change agents' – as neutral moderators whose role was to accompany and support the students in their debates and quests for knowledge, without personally influencing the process. This is where that which is obscured in Levin's approach is revealed: it presupposes that there can be an academic position which is disinterested and objective, and that a general belief in Western capitalist and democratic values suffices in order to be committed to promoting the greater good. This ignores that this supposedly *neutral* position is ultimately a hegemonic one, which in the name of scientific [VALIDITY](#) [see glossary:

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<sup>45</sup> Of these attempts, Hartmut and Henting's 1974 cofounding of the Bielefelde Laborschule is of particular note. This institution is still run by the University of Bielefeld together with a senior secondary school, and conceives of itself as a research and teaching institution simultaneously.

<sup>46</sup> On team research, see, for example, Fichten, Wolfgang/Meyer, Hilbert (2007): *Oldenburger Teamforschung: Ein Versuch zur Wiederbelebung der Aktionsforschung in der LehrerInnenbildung*, Oldenburg: Didaktisches Zentrum; on action research in the classroom, see Altrichter/Posch (1993).

<sup>47</sup> This is comparable to Wolfgang Klafki's concept of "key epochal problems". From 1972 on, with the *Marburger Grundschulprojekt* (Marburg Primary School Project), he also directed an action-research-based school program on curriculum reform. See Klafki, Wolfgang/Scheffer, Ursula/Koch-Priewe, Barbara/Stöcker, Hermann/Huschke, Peter/Stang, Henner (1982): *Schulnahe Curriculumentwicklung und Handlungsforschung im Marburger Grundschulprojekt*, Weinheim/Basel: Beltz.

<sup>48</sup> Rudduck, Jean (1988): *Changing the World of the Classroom by understanding it: A Review of some Aspects of the Work of Lawrence Stenhouse*, in: *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 4(1), pp. 30-42, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup> See Elliot, John (2009): *Research-based Teaching*, in: Sharon Gewirtz/Pat Mahoney/Ian Hextall/Alan Cribb (eds.), *Changing Teacher Professionalism*, London/New York: Routledge, pp. 170-183, p. 174 f.

[methodologies](#)] must continually interrogate its own position and the effect of this position on power relations.

As in 1950s America, during the Thatcher and Kohl eras in the 1980s, the approaches of academic institutions to action research in schools became depoliticised and developed into a more starkly instrumentalist and individualist *practice research*.<sup>50</sup> In 1984, a decade after the Humanities Curriculum Project and the establishment of the Centre for Applied Research in Education (CARE) which grew out of it, under the title *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*, a critical appraisal of Stenhouse's life's work and his wide-ranging impact on the English education system was published at the University of East Anglia.<sup>51</sup> The publication outlined the effects of the institutionalisation of his methods, such as the trend away from the collective effort of a research team to collaboratively transform the overall curriculum and teaching style of a school towards the isolated figure of the reflexive practitioner or researcher-teacher<sup>52</sup> who merely seeks to optimise the performance outcomes of their class. In opposition to this, the authors demanded a form of action research informed by [CRITICAL THEORY \[see glossary: social construction; essentialisation/anti-essentialisation critique\]](#) and activism:

Action research, being concerned with the improvement of educational practices, understandings and situations, is necessarily based on a view of truth and action as socially-constructed and historically-embedded. [...] action researchers are distinct from interpretive researchers in adopting a more activist view of their role; unlike interpretive researchers who aim to understand the significance of the past to the present, action researchers aim to transform the present to produce a different future. [...] The action researcher attempts to discover how situations are constrained by 'objective' and 'subjective' conditions, and to explore how both kinds of conditions can be changed.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> The concepts *Aktionsforschung* (*action research*) and *Praxisforschung* (*practice research*) are often used interchangeably in German. The literature sets out similarly divergent and contradictory approaches under *Praxisforschung* as it does for action research. On this issue, see, for example, Sommerfeld, Peter (2000): *Forschung und Entwicklung als Schnittstelle zwischen Disziplin und Profession*, in: Hans-Günther Homfeldt/Jörgen Schulze-Krüdener (eds.), *Wissen und Nichtwissen: Herausforderungen für Soziale Arbeit in der Wissensgesellschaft*, Weinheim: Juventa, pp. 221-236. When it first appeared however, the concept marked a depoliticisation of 'action research', which had been associated with the student movement (see, for example, Altrichter/Posch 1993: 332).

<sup>51</sup> Carr, Wilfred/Kemmis, Stephen (1984): *Becoming Critical. Education, Knowledge and Action Research*, London: Routledge Farmer.

<sup>52</sup> This concept was significantly influenced by the following publication: Schön, Donald (1983): *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, New York: Basic Books. Peculiarly, this publication does not look at teaching staff, but primarily at the behaviour of designers. The 'Oldenburg Team Research' likewise references Schön, though it combats the isolation of the researchers through the formation of teams of students, teaching staff and academics. However these teams – unlike early on with Stenhouse – are not so much conceived as political collectives as they are generational research groups possessing diverse bodies of knowledge.

<sup>53</sup> Carr/Kemmis (1984): 182f.

This demand was not met. On the contrary, in 2009, John Elliot pointed out the distortion of Stenhouse's approaches effected by the organisation of contemporary teaching and learning research around outcomes and standards:

'Practitioner Research' of this kind is shaped by an objectivist and instrumentalist rationality as opposed to the deliberative and democratic rationality embedded in the idea of research-based teaching to improve the ethical quality of teacher's interactions with students in the teaching-learning process.<sup>54</sup>

However the fact that practice research also represents a social-constructivist exception in the cognitive psychology-dominated canon of education studies, and that its existence is strongly dependent upon political cycles, provides food for thought considering that the Centre for Applied Education Research at the University of East Anglia was closed in 2015. The centre's work in research-based curriculum development could hardly be accused of constituting engaged action research over the last few decades, but rather was shaped by the standards-based approaches which Elliot criticised. In light of the fact that after 70 years, the status of action research within academia remains precarious, it is hardly surprising that the conflictual history that I have outlined here has seldom found mention in the contemporary German-speaking introductions on practice research in schools.<sup>55</sup> It seems that there is still an overwhelming necessity to legitimate this field of research by harmonising its antagonistic methods, disarming their political volatility and emphasising their instrumental utility for all parties. When Altrichter et al. refer in their handbook to a "family of research approaches",<sup>56</sup> this initially evokes associations of a harmonious context in which the various members stick together and support each other. However, against the backdrop of this history of conflict, the family metaphor also conceals the potential and the necessity of understanding action research as a contingent bundle of indissolubly bound, conflicting approaches, which are left with scarcely any alternative other than to address the different rejected dimensions of their own strand.

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<sup>54</sup> Elliott (2009): 179.

<sup>55</sup> This is despite the fact that they make key references to Lewin and Stenhouse, and even though at the zenith of German-speaking action research there was a very serious controversy: from the Marxist side, the majority of the projects were accused of being reformist, because they failed to take account of the fundamental contradictions within society; and from the positivist-empiricist side, the scientific claims of the projects were rejected. An overview of the German-speaking debates of this time is provided by Unger et al. (2007): 17ff.

<sup>56</sup> Altrichter, Herbert/Feindt, Andreas/Zehetmeier, Stefan (2014): Lehrerinnen und Lehrer erforschen ihren Unterricht: Aktionsforschung, in: Ewald Terhart/Hedda Benewitz/Martin Rothland (eds.), Handbuch der Forschung zum Lehrerberuf, Münster, New York: Waxmann, pp. 285-307, p. 285.

## Participatory Action in the Global South: Between Emancipation and Co-Optation

Also beginning in the 1960s, though not ensuing from the education system but rather from social resistance movements, variants of action research developed which aligned themselves with the concept of *militant investigation* in the context of neo-Marxist movements in Europe, as *participatory action research* in the form of alliances between academia and civil rights movements in the US<sup>57</sup> and as part of **DECOLONISATION** movements [see glossary: postcolonial critique] in the **GLOBAL SOUTH** [see glossary: global south/global north].<sup>58</sup> For the reception of the latter, the work of Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals-Borda and the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire have been particularly influential in the German-speaking world.<sup>59</sup> Together with other activists and academics, Fals-Borda defined *participatory action research*, PAR for short (in Spanish, *investigación acción participativa*, or IAP), as the production of critical knowledge carried out systematically by those oppressed by colonialism for their own emancipation, both as a research-based transformation of concrete living conditions and as a *cultural movement*.<sup>60</sup> Making use of Gramsci's concept of **HEGEMONIC CRITIQUE** [see glossary: hegemony], and of Freire's concept of *conscientização*,<sup>61</sup> the protagonists of PAR accused the international left of concentrating too much on the unequal distribution of the means of production, and in doing so, reflecting too little upon the unequal distribution of knowledge, and consequently, of doing too little to combat it. While state socialism assumed that there was an intellectual avant-garde which had privileged knowledge at its disposal and was thus legitimately tasked with directing the fate of the populace, the representatives of PAR saw a de-hierarchisation of various forms of knowledge and a simultaneous redistribution of academic knowledge as a precondition and effect of liberation struggles. Correspondingly, it was part of PAR's program

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<sup>57</sup> On the significance of the feminist movement for American action research, see Brydon-Miller, Mary/Maguire, Patricia/McIntyre, Alice (eds.) (2004): *Traveling Companions: Feminism, Teaching, and Action Research*. Westport: Praeger. On black liberation research, see Reason, Peter/Bradbury, Hilary (eds.) (2006): *Handbook of Action Research: Concise Paperback Edition*, London: Sage, p. 51ff.

<sup>58</sup> For all their differences, the thing that the approaches which grew out of these movements had in common was that their anti-domination stance and the political goal of liberation formed the basis of their research methods and their epistemology. Due to space, their fragile positions between becoming **HEGEMONIC** [see glossary: hegemony] and being marginalised cannot be investigated here at length. At the time of writing, a project is being prepared at the IAE in cooperation with the artist collective *micrsillons*, initiated by the collective to investigate the history and effects of Freire's concepts becoming **HEGEMONIC**. The history of *militant investigation*, carried out partly in Italian and Spanish, is currently influential within the contexts of the new protest movements such as *M15/Los Indignados* (see the text by Malo de Molina, Marta (2004), written six years before the birth of those movements: Common notions, part 1: workers-inquiry, co-research, consciousness-raising. Online at <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0406/malo/en/print> (accessed: 04.03.2016)).

<sup>59</sup> Fals-Borda, Orlando (1978): Über das Problem, wie man die Realität erforscht, um sie zu verändern, in: Heinz Moser/Helmut Ornauer (eds.), *Internationale Aspekte der Aktionsforschung*, München: Kösel, pp. 78-112; Freire, Paulo (1974): *Erziehung als Praxis der Freiheit*, Stuttgart: Kreuz.

<sup>60</sup> Fals-Borda, Orlando/Rahma, Mohammad Anisur (eds.) (1991): *Action and Knowledge. Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action Research*, New York: Apex Press, p. 18ff.

<sup>61</sup> This can be translated as "critical consciousness building" in the broadest sense of the term.

not just to utilise various linguistic registers in addition to an academic one, but also to “strive to end the monopoly of the written word”:

Account is taken of cultural [...] elements frequently ignored in regular political practice, such as art, music, drama, sports, beliefs, myths, story-telling and other expressions related to human sentiment, imagination and ludic or recreational tendencies.<sup>62</sup>

As was already the case in Moreno’s work,<sup>63</sup> this has led to the adoption of artistic processes in the research work of PAR, and these continue to play an integral role. Their validity is evaluated according to the practical utility of the enquiries and results for the researcher-protagonists and for comparable contexts. Informed by critical theory, PAR worked (and continues to do so) from the assumption that there is no such thing as objective, disinterested science or research, but rather that research is always directed by particular interests and carried out from a particular perspective. Therefore it is the researchers’ responsibility to acknowledge their respective points of view and their ‘cognitive interests’,<sup>64</sup> and from this position, to justify their methodological approach. Doing this is one of the criteria by which the **VALIDITY** [see glossary: [methodologies](#)] of such research is judged. In the 1970s and 1980s, PAR spread through numerous countries across all continents.<sup>65</sup> The approach began to become a **HEGEMONIC** force [see glossary: [hegemony](#)], which became noticeable in the establishment of courses on PAR in the social science departments of international universities throughout the Global North, and in the fact that NGOs in **DEVELOPMENT AID** [see glossary: [Global South/Global North](#)] appropriated the approach in de-radicalised variants: in this context, the participation of local social groups could serve not to redistribute the privileges of their employees from the Global North, but on the contrary, to retain them. In this way, the effects of these practices in turn tended more strongly towards the action research described above, which identified potentials for participation as methods for guaranteeing organisational harmony and profit maximisation. In 1991, looking back on the development of PAR since the 1960s, Fals-Borda and Rahma

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<sup>62</sup> Fals-Borda/Rahma (1991): 8f.

<sup>63</sup> See p. XX in this essay.

<sup>64</sup> *Erkenntnisinteressen* refer to the interests which inform not just different forms and bodies of knowledge (for example practical, historical, hermeneutic, empirical or technical), but also the procedures and techniques by which they are produced. Cf Habermas, Jürgen (1972[1968]), *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Boston: Beacon Press.

<sup>65</sup> A list of these countries and descriptions of examples of the different research contexts can be found in Fals-Borda/Rahma (1991): 26ff.

criticised these tendencies as a form of misappropriation and co-optation, which twisted the emancipatory aims of PAR, in some cases turning them into their very opposite.<sup>66</sup>

### **Action Research in the Arts and the Arts in Action Research**

In the previous chapters, I outlined various instances where action research has taken cues from the arts: Moreno's *Stegreiftheater*; the (not explicitly substantiated) use of aesthetic education and the performative, stage-like setting in the investigations on education styles by Lewin and Lippitt; the programmatic deployment of artistic processes in PAR in an effort to undo the hierarchies of forms of knowledge and to redistribute academic knowledge. The influence in the opposite direction – of art making use of research – has an equally long history, which includes, for example, “ethnographic surrealism”<sup>67</sup> in France and the project Mass Observation<sup>68</sup> founded by artists and anthropologists in England in the 1930s. There is not sufficient space here to look at the history of these appropriations in detail, but it should be noted that the conflicts over their divergences exhibit clear correspondences to those within action research itself. An illustrative example of this is the Artist Placement Group (hereafter referred to as APG). This group, founded in London in 1965,<sup>69</sup> was characterised by their work with and on society, which transcended the field of art and the art public. The APG worked into the 1990s as an agency which placed artists in companies and social organisations as researchers and consultants.<sup>70</sup> In the first phase of such a cooperation, the ‘open brief’, the artists and the participating organisation would come together for a limited time and without a pre-determined goal. Out of this, a ‘feasibility study’ would be produced which contained the artist’s suggestion for the setting in question. If both parties decided to continue the collaboration an implementation phase followed, which went on for several months or years, and was contractually bound.<sup>71</sup> Initially, the APG primarily initiated cooperations between artists and industrial enterprises.<sup>72</sup> In 1972, a collaboration with the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.: 28f.

<sup>67</sup> Clifford, James (1988): On Ethnographic Surrealism, in: James, The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 117-151.

<sup>68</sup> MacClancy, Jeremy (2013): Anthropology in the Public Arena: Historical and Contemporary Contexts, London: Wiley Blackwell.

<sup>69</sup> See <http://www.ravenrow.org/texts/43/> (accessed: 08.03.2016).

<sup>70</sup> For example, placements occurred at the British Steel Corporation, Scottish Television, Hillie Co Ltd, ICI Fibres Ltd, the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, the National Coal Board, British Rail and in the intensive care unit of the Clare Hall Hospital. Part of the documentation of the work of APG has been in the Tate collection since 2004, available at <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/a/artist-placement-group> (accessed: 08.03.2016).

<sup>71</sup> The pay was modelled on that of other specialist consultants.

<sup>72</sup> American projects on the connection of art and technology were an important reference, such as the group E.A.T. (Experiments in Art and Technology), formed in 1967.

Home Office ensued which would run for more than ten years.<sup>73</sup> Employed as public servants, the artists placed by the APG worked in settings such as the Department of Health, Age Concern (an institution which tends to the well-being of the aged), in psychiatry, in urban planning departments and environmental initiatives. The conceptual foundation of the APG was formed by the cofounder John Latham's theory of art, which was informed by various sources, including systems theory. This so-called 'time base theory' privileged process and context as dimensions of the work over materiality and products: 'context is half the work' was the motto.<sup>74</sup> It was on this basis that the APG viewed the consultancy of artists and the effects which these sometimes produced as artworks. The artists in the 'placements' were referred to as 'incidental persons'. The semantic field of incidental encompasses both the idea of being a minor accompaniment to something, as well as happening through a chance connection with something else. As such, the aim was to allow the artists to appear as temporary incidents in the contexts where they – not dissimilar to the 'change agents' in Lewin's action research – were to use their outsider's perspective to draw attention to problems which the internal, organisational perspective failed to recognise. However the point here was to assert a specific kind of "artistic expertise",<sup>75</sup> which the respective contexts and participants had to be convinced to utilise. By 1976, 15 artists had taken part in placements set up by the APG, including film-makers, musicians, writers and visual artists. Over time, the work of the APG came in for criticism from various sides. Organisations which did not ascribe to a departure from established conceptions of artworks and authorship in the arts expected that the placements would lead to the production of something that was legible for them as a work of art. Fellow artists, in particular those among the Community Artists who were part of a Marxist tradition, accused the APG of collaborating with those in power instead of showing solidarity with the oppressed, and using the latter more as material rather than supporting them in their struggles.<sup>76</sup> Indeed the APG was open about the fact that its primary addressees were influential figures in economics and politics. In addition to this, especially for the core of the group, their visibility in the art sector was important.<sup>77</sup> However this did not apply to all artists who worked for the APG. Some of them saw the role of the 'incidental

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<sup>73</sup> See Sachsse, Rolf (1991): From 0-1 to 0+1. The Artist Placement Group, Stuttgart, in: exhibition catalogue John Latham, Kunst nach der Physik, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart., online at [http://www.hbksaar.de/fileadmin/hbk/images/personen/sachsse/Texte/John\\_Latham\\_und\\_die\\_Artist\\_Placement\\_Group.pdf](http://www.hbksaar.de/fileadmin/hbk/images/personen/sachsse/Texte/John_Latham_und_die_Artist_Placement_Group.pdf) (accessed: 08.03.2016).

<sup>74</sup> See Slater, Howard (2000): The art of governance: The Artist Placement Group 1966-1989, in: Variant 11, p. 45, online at <http://www.variant.org.uk/11texts/Slater.html> (accessed: 22.03.2016); Sachsse (1991): 45-50. An archive exhibition on the APG, which took place in the winter of 2015 at Kunstraum Kreuzberg / Bethanien in Berlin likewise bore the title *Context is Half the Work*. See <http://contextishalfthework.net/> (accessed: 08.03.2016).

<sup>75</sup> See Pohlen, Annelie (1978): Bonner Behörden entdecken "künstlerischen Sachverstand": Erste Auswirkungen der Initiative des Bonner Kunstvereins, Kunstforum 27(3), p. 117.

<sup>76</sup> Fuller, Peter (1970): Subversion and APG, in: Art and Artists, December, pp. 20-23.

<sup>77</sup> For example, in 1977, the APG was invited to the Freie Internationale Universität at Documenta 6 in Kassel, and exhibited at the Kunstverein Bonn and in the Galerie nächst St. Stephan in Vienna.

person' as involving a much more pronounced component of social activism. For example, Ian Breakwell's placement in the Department for Health and Social Security in 1977 led to a paper produced in collaboration with a team at a hospital containing suggestions for how the centre should be managed. In 1976, Stuart Brisley spent some time in the mining city of Peterlee, and together with the local inhabitants, developed a museum about the city, which was founded in 1946. Roger Coward worked together with the inhabitants of an economically depressed suburb of Birmingham to collaboratively research their situation, about which they produced collaborative videos and theatre productions.<sup>78</sup> The differences between the systems-theory-informed goals and methodologies of the core group of the APG and some of the more Marxist artists they worked with led to explosive controversies, which in turn culminated in the question of the positioning of the artists between the role of 'middle man' and 'civil rights activist'.<sup>79</sup> In this way, its history is not unlike that of action research, and indeed many of the methods and processes which were employed in the placements bore strong resemblances to those of action research.

Currently, various refigurings and continuities of the mutual influence of art and action research can be observed. In the field of art, for example, projects from the tradition of *militant investigation* are finding an audience within the new social movements, an example being the Spanish feminist collective *precarias a la deriva*,<sup>80</sup> which have appropriated the concept of the *dérive*, which arose in the context of artistic and political/theoretical movements, namely those of the Lettristes and the Situationists. Gathered under the notion of the 'educational turn',<sup>81</sup> for some ten years now there have been appropriations of critical pedagogy (founded by Freire and others) and its associated research methods in the field of art.<sup>82</sup>

In 2008, a handbook edited by Canadian social researchers on the arts in qualitative research was published.<sup>83</sup> The approaches documented in this publication correspond with artistic practices at the intersections of activism and education work as displayed in the

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<sup>78</sup> Other outcomes from APG placements included the permanent establishment of information and advice centres, plans for garbage disposal, urban renewal or the re-purposing of unused public spaces.

<sup>79</sup> On the conflicts over the direction of the work of the APG and the divergent desires within it and the concealed politics of the 'incidental person', see Slater (2000).

<sup>80</sup> *Precarias a la deriva* (2011): "Was ist dein Streik?" Militante Streifzüge durch die Kreisläufe der Prekarität, Vienna: Turia & Kant.

<sup>81</sup> The term 'educational turn' refers to a move within curatorial and artistic practice toward the field of pedagogy, which has been evident since around 2006. This turn is usually linked with a critique of the economisation of education, of artistic training and of institutionalised knowledge production in the course of the neoliberal restructuring of Western societies and their education systems under the notion of 'cognitive capitalism'. Because of this, there is a particular interest in emancipatory pedagogies, which encompass a spectrum of diverse lines of thinking, ranging from Freire to bell hooks to Jacques Rancière.

<sup>82</sup> The lines of conflict associated with these processes of appropriation and the potential for a form of art education which conceives of itself as critical practice is documented in the volume: *schnittpunkt. Ausstellungstheorie & praxis*/Jaschke, Beatrice/Sternfeld, Nora/Institute for Art Education Zürcher Hochschule der Künste (eds.) (2012): *educational turn. Handlungsräume der Kunst- und Kulturvermittlung*, Vienna: Turia + Kant.

<sup>83</sup> See Knowles/Cole (2008).

exhibition which Mary Jane Jacob curated in 1992 in Chicago, called *Culture in Action*, and described in the book *But is it Art?* edited by Nina Felshin (1994).<sup>84</sup> These contributions make clear that one of the most important motivations for employing artistic procedures in research continues to be the redistribution of academic knowledge and the de-hierarchisation of forms of knowledge demanded by Fals-Borda and others. Both in the Anglophone world and in the [GLOBAL SOUTH \[see glossary: Global South/Global North\]](#), we see projects which have their origins both in socially-engaged art and in the practices of PAR, which were informed by the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The activities of the Public Science Project of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York<sup>85</sup> (which have been evolving for over a decade) or the Proyecto Latin@ (in which researchers from the University of Toronto work together with youth from the Latin American diaspora to research their circumstances at school with the aim of eradicating discrimination there<sup>86</sup>) provide prime examples for the education sector. Firstly because in these projects we witness a growing influence of 'indigenous theories' in terms of their overall perspective – if nothing else because it provides a vantage point from which suggestions can be made for a mode of working which transcends the controversies informed by the binary oppositions depicted in this text (emancipatory versus instrumentalising, scientific versus activist or artistic, and so on).<sup>87</sup> Secondly because artistic processes continue to be implemented in action research. The projects of the Public Science Project, which are carried out with young people, combine methods of empirical research with performance and with the techniques of artistic intervention into public spaces, as well as with approaches which reference Augusto Boal's 'forum theatre',<sup>88</sup> and which could also be linked to Moreno's *Stegreiftheater* (see p. XX in this essay). A project from Quito, Ecuador, in which IAP was implemented in order to protect the workers in a marketplace from gentrification, to preserve the bilingual schools run by *indigenas*<sup>89</sup> and to establish alternative forms of commerce, occurred as a collaboration with the museums in the city and worked above all with the production of images.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> See Brenson, Michael/Olson, Eva/Jacob, Mary Jane (eds.) (1995): *Culture in Action: A Public Art Program of Sculpture Chicago*, Seattle: Bay Press; Felshin, Nina (1994): *But is it Art? The Spirit of Art and Activism*, Seattle: Bay Press.

<sup>85</sup> <http://publicscienceproject.org/> (accessed: 20.02.2016).

<sup>86</sup> See Guerrero, Cristina/Gaztambide-Fernández, Rubén/Rosas, Monica/Guerrero, Elizabeth (2013): Proyecto Latin@ On Stage and Under the Magnifying Glass: The Possibilities and Limitations of a High-Profile Institutionally Sponsored Youth Participatory Action Research Project, in *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 4(2), pp. 105-126.

<sup>87</sup> See Tuck, Eve (2009): Re-visioning Action: Participatory Action Research and Indigenous Theories of Change, in: *The Urban Review* 41(1), pp. 47-65.

<sup>88</sup> See Boal, Augusto (1979): *Theater der Unterdrückten. Übungen und Spiele für Schauspieler und Nicht-Schauspieler*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

<sup>89</sup> Overarching concept for the populations of Latin America who inhabited the continent prior to European colonial settlement, and who were enslaved and in part exterminated by it.

<sup>90</sup> See Cevallos, Alejandro/Galarza, Valeria (forthcoming): *Bildung in Museen, Community-Vermittlung und das Recht auf Stadt im historischen Zentrum von Quito*, in: Carmen Mörsch/Angeli Sachs/Thomas Sieber (eds.), *Ausstellen und Vermitteln in der Gegenwart*, Bielefeld: Transcript. Currently, this project is again under pressure

Another strand of art-informed action research documented in the handbook is the stream of ‘Arts-Based Education Research’ (ABER), which has been around since the mid-1990s.<sup>91</sup> With ABER as well, the aim is to find answers to central challenges which correspond to the tensions of earlier historical moments described above. That is, the conflicts between the goals of progressive and critical pedagogies and positivist education studies research which is guided by the optimisation of control, discipline and performance evaluation; informed by these insights, a comprehensive interrogation of how one’s own position influences the approach and the research methods; a lack of satisfaction with the relationships between education studies and their site of implementation, the education system; and the associated desire for cooperation and participation and a problem of public perception – for example, in response to the reporting about schools in the mainstream media and its influence on education policy. In 1991, Eliot Eisner, one of the founders of ABER, made analogies about the field of art and the field of pedagogy, by positing ‘educational connoisseurship’ and ‘educational criticism’ as prerequisites for quality education studies research and school development.<sup>92</sup> Even in this research method, conflicts arise around the differing alignments: while some projects (such as the aforementioned Proyecto Latin@) exhibit a reflexive approach in relation to art and its internal power relations, other projects under the banner of ABER tend to devalue pedagogy in favour of art and, like Eisner himself, idealise the employment of artists and contemporary art in schools as progressive in and of itself.<sup>93</sup>

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from shifting political forces, since the social democratic local government in Quito was ousted by the conservatives.

<sup>91</sup> On this, see <https://www.zhdk.ch/index.php?id=98524> (accessed: 03.03.2016).

<sup>92</sup> See Eisner, Eliot (1991): *The enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice*, New York: MacMillan.

<sup>93</sup> In my opinion, the project *The pedagogical impulse* tends towards this, which, like the *Proyecto Latin@*, is based at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the University of Toronto. See <http://thepedagogicalimpulse.com/> (accessed: 08.03.2016).