

Master Thesis

A DASHED-LINE ROADMAP

for Planning, Implementing, and Reflecting
on Critical Art Education Projects

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Mother of three.

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ABSTRACT

The present master thesis is written in an effort to answer the question: What should be the practice of critical art education so that it initiates sustainable changes and tangible transformation for those involved in it and for the world in which they live? It tackles this topic through a retrospective reflection on a couple of projects in the field of art education, in particular in the context forced migration, in which I have personally participated. I have undergone qualitative analysis based on the coding method. The work presents the results of this analysis based on which several suggestions, or a set of advices, are made. It is also intended to motivate and inform future work in the field of critical art education with an anti-discriminatory perspective.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit ist im Bestreben geschrieben, folgende Frage zu beantworten: Wie sollte die Praxis der kritischen Kunstvermittlung aussehen, damit sie nachhaltige Veränderungen und eine spürbare Transformation für die an ihr Beteiligten und für die Welt, in der sie leben, verwirklicht? Sie behandelt dieses Thema durch eine rückblickende Reflexion auf einige Projekte im Bereich der Kunstvermittlung, insbesondere im Kontext erzwungener Migration, an denen ich auch persönlich teilgenommen habe. Ich habe mich einer qualitativen Analyse unterzogen, welche auf der Methode des Kodierens basiert. Die Arbeit stellt die Ergebnisse dieser Analyse vor, auf deren Grundlage einige Vorschläge, oder 'Empfehlungen', gegeben werden. Sie soll auch dazu dienen, zukünftige Arbeit im Bereich der kritischen Kunstvermittlung mit einer diskriminierungskritischen Perspektive zu motivieren und zu informieren.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Few months after plunging deeper into the theory of art education in the postgraduate degree program /ecm (educating, curating, managing) at the University of Applied Art in Vienna, I had the chance, together with my colleagues, to investigate the story of the building where we had our meetings. We were wondering for what exactly this old building had been used before it became the bright, somewhat blank, and spacious palace of art and knowledge it is today. Gradually we learned some of the stories, but the one that struck me most was the most recent one. It is a story of flight for a life of more freedom, a story of running away from insecurity and search of security — a perpetual narrative in human history. In the period 2015-2016, during the first months of the so-called European migrant crisis, the empty building at Vordere Zollamtstrasse 7, which in the past had served as customs office of the Ministry of Finance, was turned into an emergency shelter for refugees. The wish to open up the narrative of this event brought us face to face with some of the people who had lived in the building and with those working for and with them to meet their everyday existential needs — physical, emotional, and intellectual. The aim of this research and the subsequent curatorial work were to create a public presentation for the first festival of the University of Applied Art, the Angewandte Festival 2019. Besides showing video and photo documentations in a framework of an installation which re-enacted part of the main social space of the emergency shelter, the so-called Café VoZo, we invited 5 ex-inhabitants to make a guided tour in the building and to recount in their own words their memories of that time. Once the festival was over, this experience could be just packed into a neat documentation of a fine program. However, the journey had, and still has to go on. After an exchange with the management of the University, it became clear that there was an interest in an exhibition of photographs from the building before and after closing of the shelter and before the reconstruction works.

However, there is something that still holds a grip on me and stops me from going on actively. I cannot say what it is exactly, or what its origin is. There is some feeling of duality: on one hand, the urge to do something, to believe in its importance and positive drive, in its universal good. On the other, some silent scepticism about

the personal and institutional motives to (re)present something and the positioning of the other players as needy, voiceless, and powerless. Ever since, my conscience is chased by hesitation, combined with a persistent feeling to have to do something. Not letting go, I decided to take the risk and investigate the positioning of this ambiguity, as well as to put it in the global picture. The following writing is a humble attempt to grasp the vast field of critical art education in the pursuit of an increasingly fair and good world. My heart's desire is through reflection on my own experience to develop 'guidelines' or key points which can help the project with pictures of the emergency shelter in Vienna mentioned above to be open, dialogical, and transformative. Or why not, to inform any project which seeks to reach openness, dialog, and transformation.

I would like to express my gratitude to all who in one way or another supported me in this work. My special thanks go to my master thesis supervisors Renate Höllwart and Carmen Mörsch to whom I am grateful for their expertise, encouragement, motivation, understanding, and great patience. I thank Nora Landkammer who, together with Carmen Mörsch, introduced me to the field of practices devoted to criticizing and disrupting discrimination as well as to the methods Action Research and Coding. My thanks go also to Beatrice Jaschke and Andrea Hubin for inspirational and motivating discussions during the first steps of the development of this work, and to Karin Schneider, who together with Andrea Hubin, gave me first glimpses into the coding method. I thank my dear colleagues from /ecm and the curatorial group, Nathalie Bauer and Katharina Lehner, for their cooperation, understanding, and friendship as well as Martina Schöggel and Gerald Bast for their initiation and cooperation of the extended project. My very special and warm thanks go to Helia Mirzaei, Fatemeh Babakhani, Kazem Schirkarami, Ahmadulah Dost, Mostafa Savari, Stephan Trimmel, and Susanne Kober, all cooperators of the projects, who willingly supported not only the projects' work, but also this investigation with additional retrospective discussions and feedback. Thanks to Marion Oberhofer, Jens Hecker, and Stephan Trimmel for the images used in this writing. I am also extremely grateful to my good friend Videlina Dimitrova for the proofreading of the text. Last but not least, I thank my family for the support, understanding, and patience during all the time needed to complete this work.

1. INTRODUCTION

Go out! Get yourselves organised! Do not lay stuck in the depths of the past, grabbed by anxiety for the future! Resist, imagine, change the world! These are all powerful words, springing from and fueling the persistently increasing drive of many to move away from the inherited restrictions of the past. But who is meant here? Who are these talking 'we'? Who are 'you' that 'we' are talking to and urging to move? What could words, though strong, do alone? And under which conditions could they do it? There must be practices where words become reality, not a final and fixed one, but one that is opening possibilities and questioning impossibilities. So that the initial 'words' themselves evolve and move further to new horizons.

The present writing serves as a thesis for completing my two-year postgraduate studies in the field of curating and art education /ecm¹. It results from my striving from the position of an (art) educator to pursue questions concerning strategies in the field of art education, which are intended to discontinue and transform the oppressive effects of hegemonic structures.

Many people often face hidden as well as quite direct oppression due to their gender, ethnicity, economic conditions, education, nationality, race, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, age, class, etc. They feel trapped in this oppressive situation. To transform it, they need to regain their voices and to express their hopes, wishes, visions. However, they are often not convinced in the 'truth', the 'relevance', the 'applicability' of their words. They do not dare to speak them out, let alone follow them. Sometimes they are even not consciously aware of their existence. In order to confront this fully, there is a need of tools which create open and safe spaces and involve the participants actively so that they face these 'sleeping words', investigate, challenge, and transform the uncertainties and (self)distrust.

One such tool is the critical counterpart of art education. Under 'critical counterpart' I mean those assignments of culture, which are complementary (not to say oppositional) to the so-called 'mainstream' culture. Critical art education is not

¹ /ecm, educating, curating, managing, is a postgraduate, extra occupational degree course for people, who are involved in the presentation and communication of real or abstract content and wish to deepen and extend their capabilities. Website: <https://ecm.ac.at/> (last access: 29.12.2020)

concerned with the preservation, propagation and reproduction of the traditional and current knowledges and structures. Its aim is to question and engage in destabilising the status quo of these knowledges and structures. The main question that interests me is: how this 'critical counterpart' can be applied in practice to fulfill its goals? In other words: **what, indeed, should be the practice of critical (art) education, so that it initiates sustainable changes and tangible transformation for those involved in it and for the world in which they live?** More specifically, I look at changes that should affect all actors of such undertakings: their positioning in the world, the way they speak, act, and see themselves and their environment, as well as changes in the social, political and economic structures in which they live. I am looking for some specific key features that should be in the core of any such project, a set of advices which I can derive from my own experience. Or is this ambition incongruous with one of the aims of such projects — to be open for unexpected, unpredictable insights and lessons?

Still, why is it necessary to ask these questions? In my opinion, while a lot of work in the field of critical art education has been devoted to this issue, in practice a lot of efforts are needed to assimilate the messages from this work. The lessons should be repeated again and again, virtually for each individual practitioner and on each separate event. Furthermore, every case has its specific characteristics which cannot be generally answered with some 'universal' guideline but should be examined separately. Thus, it may also add to the common knowledge. The present thesis represents precisely such an iteration, reflecting on several past curatorial projects. It is written in the hope to see what could be (re)learned in the field of critical art education through these experiences.

1.1. A PRESENT TIME STORY

One of the main drives for this work is to build upon some past projects with refugees who used to live in one of the biggest refugee camps² in Vienna between 2015-2016.

² Though in the common language, especially in German, one speaks about 'accommodation' or 'housing' for refugees (the literary translation of the German 'Flüchtlingsunterkunft'), I chose to use the term 'camp' as a direct reference to the precarious conditions of the people housing in these sites. See for example the discussion about terminology in asylum context by Sinthujan Varatharajah,

Since 2018 the building of this temporary refugee camp is part of the University of Applied Arts Vienna (shortly 'die Angewandte'). During the first Angewandte Festival in June 2019 in the framework of the public program of my postgraduate studies *educating, curating, managing* (shortly /ecm) we started to uncover this story. My goal is, before starting to think about new undertakings, to analyse these past projects in order to answer the question: **“What should projects be in order to initiate (and sustain) transformation?”** Here I will try in a concise, but hopefully complete manner to portray the projects under consideration: both to delineate their conceptual content and to describe the framework — geographical, historical, institutional, and personal, in which they happened.

1.2. THE PLACE, THE INSTITUTIONS, THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The venue of Vordere Zollamtsstraße 7, 1030 Vienna, is closely related to the topic of forced migration as well as to the field of art education. From now on, I will use the acronym **VZA7** to denote this place when talking about it as a site, and the abbreviation **VoZo**, when referring to the temporary refugee camp which was housed in this building between 2015 - 2016.

The building of VZA7 was constructed in the years 1898 - 1901 and until the late 1990s was used by the Customs Administration of the Austrian Ministry of Finance. Afterwards, the governmental building was designated to the Angewandte, which planned to adapt the VZA7 for its uses by 2013. However, due to financial shortages, this failed to be achieved and the plan was postponed for 'better' times. Indeed, the reconstruction works began in 2016 and were completed in 2018. The freshly and fashionably reconstructed premises of VZA7 provide now a space of about 15 000 m² for study and research in the sphere of art.

By chance or not, shortly before the end of the time gap in which the building was staying empty and unused, VZA7 had to play an important role for thousands of refugees coming to or passing through Austria in 2015 and 2016 on their way to a

Begrifflichkeiten im Kontext von Flucht und Asyl [Concepts in the Context of Flight and Asyl]. In: Al-Radwany; Froelich; Kolmans; Paetau; Wissert (eds.), *Kulturelle Bildung im Kontext Asyl, ein Dossier*, Berlin, 2017, p.10. (In German, translation of the titles mine, RIK.) Available at: kubinaut.de/media/themen/kubi_imkontextasyl.pdf (last access: 31.12.2020.)

better life. By the end of the summer in 2015 the number of people on the flight arriving in the small Austrian border town Nickelsdorf was so high that it overwhelmed the unprepared (and unsupported by the government) civil volunteers and Red Cross workers³. For many refugees the next stop was going to be Vienna regardless of their plans. Meanwhile, in Vienna, the Viennese association for urban research *dérive*⁴ was preparing the fifth edition of “Urbanize! International Festival for Urban Explorations”⁵ which had to take place between 1st and 12th of October on the ground floor of the empty building of VZA7. Quite unexpectedly, three weeks before the start of the festival the organisers were informed that the empty building had to be urgently converted into a refugee camp by the Red Cross. Literary overnight, the ex-offices of the Ministry of Finance had been turned into a mass quartier. The camp beds were not yet completely distributed in the long-abandoned office rooms when the first refugees started to arrive. For the next 9 months the building served as a temporary ‘home’ for thousands of people — some moving further on the next day, others staying longer or even until the closing of the camp in Mai/June 2016. The situation presented great challenges for the urbanize! festival, but also new opportunities. Upon request by and in agreement with the management of VoZo, some of the contributors of the festival decided to extend their stay in the building and overtake the set-up of a social infrastructure. The publication *Flüchtlingsunterkunft Vordere Zollamtsstrasse 7, Wien Mitte. Ein Massenquartier Wird zum Haus der Möglichkeiten*⁶ [Refugee accommodation Vordere Zollamtsstrasse 7, Wien Mitte. A mass quartier becomes a house of opportunities.] contains a portrayal of the place as a social space, as well as numerous contributions of diverse players in VoZo, such as (voluntary) helpers and inhabitants of the house. A summary of the situation and the activities in VoZo presents also the contribution for the Angewandte Festival 2019 from another group of /ecm participants.

³ See for example the article by Alison Langley, *The day Nickelsdorf was overwhelmed*, in DW, 14.09.2015. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/the-day-nickelsdorf-was-overwhelmed/a-18714394> (last access: 25.08.2020)

⁴ www.derive.at (Mainly in German, last access: 25.08.2020.)

⁵ Website of the festival urbanize!: <https://urbanize.at/> (Mainly in German. Translation of the extended title of the festival mine RIK. Last access: 25.08.2020)

⁶ Harather; Stuefer; Etmüller (eds.), *Flüchtlingsunterkunft Vordere Zollamtsstrasse 7, Wien Mitte, ein Massenquartier wird zum Haus der Möglichkeiten*, Vienna, 2018. (Mainly in German, translation of the title mine, RIK.)

1.3. THE PROJECTS AND THE PLAYERS

Among many other individuals and organisations who helped make from VoZo more than just a refugee camp, was a group of students from the Social Design department of the Angewandte. The core idea of this group was not only to make something for the refugees, but **with** them, involving the people with their competences, visions and energies. One central example is the creation, development, and management of the so-called cultural⁷ Café VoZo. The café was a cooperative product of students from the Angewandte (mainly from Social Design), students from Vienna University of Technology, and people living in the refugee camp. The café served not only as a (quite necessary) place where the inhabitants of VoZo could sit for a while, have a cup of tea or coffee, and talk to one another. It was also a venue for a rich cultural program offering almost on a daily basis workshops, performances, concerts, and dance events with contributions both from inside and outside of the refugee camp.

After the closing of the refugee camp some of the students from the Angewandte, together with several VoZo ex-inhabitant established the nonprofit organisation Einander⁸. This association retained part of the furniture of the dissolved Café VoZo. It also kept in contact with some people who had lived and/or worked in VoZo and a considerable amount of photo documentation of the refugee camp, including of the café space.

In the second semester of the /ecm program my colleagues and I received an assignment to contribute for the upcoming first edition of the Angewandte Festival 2019. The specific task was to conceptualise, develop, organise, and implement an exhibition and a public program. Provided with the assistance of the /ecm tutors and other invited referents, as well as with the generous financial support of the University, the 22 participants of /ecm — a colourful bunch of people with diverse backgrounds, interests, professional careers, and (time) resources — started to brainstorm what to do. At the very beginning of the conceptualisation of the program several groups of participants suggested various ideas. One of the central topics that we decided to focus on was the history of the building VZA7. While some of us insisted

⁷ In German-speaking spheres, the notion Kulturcafé (cultural café) is often used to underscore the devotion of a café place to cultural interventions, often in intercultural context.

⁸ Some (but not all) of the activities of association Einander are to be discovered at their FB page: <https://www.facebook.com/vereinander/> (last access: 31.12.2020.)

to keep the topic broad and to dig in the diverse time layers and directions of its history, others zoomed more on its most recent developments and shifted the point to the topic of forced migration and asylum. Three of us, Nathalie Bauer and Katharina Lehner, and myself, decided to stay somewhere in between and to investigate the recent story of the building as a refugee camp from the point of view of infrastructures for social spaces. This objective was visible in the way we named the group of projects we suggested: 'social space'.

However, over time the topic of forced migration became more prominent in the points of the program of our small three-person curatorial group. At the very beginning we attracted Susanne Kober and Stephan Trimmel from the association Einader as cooperation partners. With their support some specific ideas crystallized. We curated one workshop for furniture for social spaces. We also displayed an installation re-enacting and giving information about Café VoZo. Finally, we organised a guided tour with the generous and enriching contribution of 5 ex-inhabitants of VoZo, Fatemeh Babakhani, Ahmadullah Dost, Helia Mirzaei, Mohammad Savari, and Kazem Shirkarami, as guides and mediators. In this work I will focus on these three projects, plus an extension which took place in September 2019 (see Section 1.4). Further details and some photo documentation of these three projects, as well as other inputs for the entire /ecm program, can be found on the website of /ecm for the Angewandte Festival 2019⁹.

Some additional facts and numbers. The contribution of /ecm to the Angewandte Festival 2019 consisted of 18 projects. Among these, there were 12 program points and 6 installations. The main space which served as a display, a discussion room, and a meeting point, was a room of 120 m² with adjacent inner courtyard in VZA7. This space needed to be designed and curated. Additional tasks, next to the space design, were communication and publication, mediation, documentation, and an overarching project management. All these tasks, together with the curating of the projects, were allocated between the 22 participants. In that sense, everybody was involved in more than one project and had at least one

⁹ Website of the complete contribution of /ecm for the First Angewandte Festival, 2019: <https://www.openingup.org/> (last access: 31.12.2020.)

organisational task. The allocation of our resources, both human and financial, was therefore challenging. This can partly explain the dynamics in the whole /ecm class – the uncertainties within the different groups and the occasional conflicts between the projects. For example, in our three-person curatorial group we experienced fluctuations regarding our time resources. My two colleagues were able to invest themselves fully into the conceptualisation phase of the projects, while later on I had to overtake the coordination and implementation. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 3. For now, I will content myself to say that there are several intertwined factors which have influenced the development of the projects discussed in this writing.

1.4. THE EXTENTION

After the festival the president of the Angewandte, Gerald Bast, and his assistant Martina Schöggel asked /ecm to curate a photo exhibition for a concert which was going to take place in VZA7 in September 2019. This gave us an opportunity to re-open the story of the refugee camp once again. We decided to display the photo material in the framework of our original installation re-enacting Café VoZo for the



Fig1. The installation "Living Room" © Jens Hecker

Angewandte Festival. The material consisted of a number of photographs: about 45 images by Stephan Trimmel representing VoZo during 2015-2016 and in addition to that several photos by the president of Angewandte depicting the empty building after the closing of the camp. The photos were supplemented by texts (stories, names, notes and questions) and a note for the visitors of the concert telling the recent history of

the building. The image on Fig 1 shows the original version of the installation presented during the festival in June 2019. The central item was an old cupboard. A little table and three chairs, all hand-made for the cultural café in the workshop

spaces of VoZo, completed the furniture part. All these pieces of furniture were part of the actual Café VoZo. The visitors could discover information for the refugee camp on different media inside the cupboard and on the table. In the cupboard on one large screen and on a small one two video materials were running: the film *Ankommen* (Arriving) and an interview with the head manager of the refugee camp¹⁰. We rounded up the media part with four audio recordings of the ex-inhabitants of VoZo: Helia Mirzae, Kazem Shirkarami, and Ahmadullah Dost, who were also guides and mediators of the tour in June 2019, and with Stephan Trimmel. We did this last step in order to include voices which were not really present in the already available video material. Photographs by Stephan Trimmel depicting VoZo were placed on the table. For the concert in September, we chose a different set of photographs, including the images after the closing of the camp. Furthermore, we transformed them into postcards with texts.

However prominent, this installation seemed somehow lost in the huge auditorium of VZA7 where the concert took place. In order to bring the story of the building closer to the visitors of the concert, we distributed the postcards on the chairs. In addition, as a gesture of hospitality, before the concert there was a come together organised by the president for the special guests: ex-inhabitants and ex-workers of VoZo. For this event, however, there was almost no contribution by the refugees for themselves — besides being invited.

1.5. WHAT'S NEXT?

After the extended project in September 2019 my enthusiasm to work for and with marginalised people clashed with uncertainty about the nature of my motivation. I reached a point where this internal conflict became so prominent that a reflection was necessary and unavoidable before going on any further (or giving it up). This writing is devoted to this (self-)reflective work, crucial in the field of art education, in particular (but not only) for those working for, about, and with marginalised people.

¹⁰ The film by Karin Macher is to free to stream at <https://vimeo.com/190863311> (last access: 31.12.2020) as well as the interview with Martina Burscher and Renate Stuefer and Karin Harather, which was recorded in Café VoZo: <https://vimeo.com/164806335> (last access: 31.12.2020.)

Before I go deeper into the investigation, I would like to reveal what (not) to expect from the rest of this work.

First let me put down the questions that interest me, highlighting those for which I do special effort to opt for an answer. My main question is:

A. What should be the practice of art education, so that it initiates sustainable changes and tangible transformation for those involved in it and for the world in which they live?

Or, more specifically, my aim is to see:

B. Is it possible, based on the experience of the presented projects, to derive a set of advices describing specific key features that should be in the core of any such projects?

Looking for an answer to these questions, I focus on different aspects, such as:

- How to conceptualise art education projects which aim to be more than a display?
- How to let the voices of all involved be heard¹¹?
- How can all learn from such experiences?
- Who are these 'all'?
- How can the initiators and the actors in such undertakings understand consciously the deeper nature of their motivation to get engaged?
- How to find strategies to face the conflict between the drive to continue the work and the impulse to resist engagement?

The rest of this writing is structured as follows. Section 2 contains ideas, theories, and references connected to the field of (critical) art education and education in general, their 'classical' and their alternative versions. In particular, I introduce the concept of art education as an important factor for the construction of and the influence on social life. References depicting its genealogy are also provided. I introduce shortly the notion of cultural synthesis and critical art education which inspired my own positioning and work in the field. I locate art education in the context of forced

¹¹ As Spivak notes in *Can the Subaltern Speak*, being 'heard' is not simply having the possibility to speak out, but being really perceived. Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak*. In: Chrisman; Williams (eds.) *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: a reader*. New York, 1993.

migration. In order to opt for an answer to my questions I take a closer look at the projects described above. Section 2.2 introduces the methods and the concepts used for the analysis and the reflection on the projects' data. Section 2.2.1 gives a short description of the methods Action Research and Coding. Both methods are used in the field of social studies as tools for qualitative research, creating new theories grounded in the data, and designated for the improvement of the practice directly by the practitioners. In Section 2.2.2 I bring in concepts which have crystallized from the coding of the projects' data. Specifically, the notion of the Double Bind proved to be the central starting point for the data analysis. This concept originates from the psychological studies and has been adapted to the field of humanities and critical studies by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. An overview of the concepts important for the reflection on the projects, such as paternalism, empowerment, hegemonic structures, priorities, symbolic capital, is also provided. The analysis of the data draws back on all these methods and theoretical concepts. The data itself was organised to support a possible answer to my main questions. In Section 3 I present in detail the key results and insights gained by this analysis, with specific examples from the projects. And finally, based on the insights obtained during this analytical work, Section 4 ventures for a list of points which address the main research questions. These tentative answers are formulated from the standpoint of past experiences but seem to be important also for the future work in the field of critical art education. In its majority, if not all, of the points derived in this work have already been recognised by multiple practitioners and scholars. However, as mentioned in the beginning, I believe that it is important to repeat them, adapting and reflecting on them in one's own practice.

I look upon this writing as a source of inspiration and motivation to opt for this journey, even though there is no clear and predetermined itinerary, but a tentative dashed-line roadmap. My hope is that it will empower me and others who read it, especially those who work with marginalised people, to face and challenge the limitations and stumble stones of the social system and in ourselves. So, let's get started.

2. THEORIES, METHODS, CONCEPTS

In this section I start with a discussion on the field of critical art education, the main theories and concepts which serve as a motivation for this work and situate them in the context of forced migration. Then I shortly outline the research methods used for the analytical investigation and the development of projects in diverse contexts, including in the field of art education. Finally, I introduce the major concepts stemming from the analysis of the projects described in the Introduction.

2.1. ART EDUCATION

The definition of the notion **art education** differs depending on its historical development, as well as on the geographical or linguistic location. In this work I use the notion 'art education' to refer to the broad area of practices which stands at the intersection of the educational, artistic, and curatorial. To borrow a description given from Carmen Mörsch in her article *At a Crossroads of Four Discourses*, these are "the practice of inviting the public to use art and its institutions to further educational processes through their analysis and exploration, their deconstruction, and, possibly, change; and to elicit ways of setting these processes forth in other contexts."¹² Practices in art education might be organised and exercised in a strict institutional context (museums, galleries, schools, universities) or in more independent structures, such as local communities, self-organised initiatives, etc. In her writing *Situating Gallery Education*¹³ Felicity Allen gives a short and dense overview of the developments over the last half century and the positioning of art education in the beginning of the XXI century in Britain. The article aims to turn the attention of the institutions and the academic world to the potentials and strengths of these practices which, according to Allen, have inherent specific objectives and characteristics, such

¹² Mörsch, *At a Crossroads of Four Discourses*, *documenta 12 Gallery Education in between Affirmation, Reproduction, Deconstruction, and Transformation*. In: Mörsch et al. (eds.) *documenta 12 Education 2 Between Cultural Praxis and Public Service Results of a Research Project*, 2009.

¹³ Allen, *Situating Gallery Education*. In: *Tate Encounters, [E]dition 2*, 2008. Available at: http://www2.tate.org.uk/tate-encounters/edition-2/tateencounters2_felicity_allen.pdf (last accessed: 31.12.2020.)

as being self-reflexive, dialogical, collective, egalitarian, presenting multiple and alternate voices, and so on.

In her recent book, *Die Bildung der A_n_d_e_r_e_n durch Kunst* [The Education of the O_t_h_e_r_s through Art.]¹⁴ Carmen Mörsch has followed the historical development of art education since the first half of 18th century until today. The monograph demonstrates how this educational tool has been used as a powerful way to create a discourse about the deficiency and the otherness of those who do not conform to the culture of the strong of the day; how these 'others' started to (re)establish their identities and put under critique the 'official' culture and its modes of functioning. This work uncovers the emergence and the evolution of this resistance, led by minoritised positions of mostly, but not always, white middle-class women. The book also describes their searching and "fighting for spaces for self-expression and for re-distribution of the symbolic capital"¹⁵. Mörsch states a core requirement for contemporary art education, namely, to be aware and critical of all discriminatory practices, including those hidden in the practitioners and institutions themselves.

2.1.1. CRITICAL ART EDUCATION

Thinking about what kind of (art) education projects are worth conceptualising, developing and managing, I always end up with two notions which appeal to me: consciousness raising and transformation. Here I mean such enterprises that do not simply affirm, repeat, and reproduce the status quo, but make an effort to break with what is thought and taught to be an irrefutable truth. The need to question presumably eternal and unshakable truths in human studies and in social context, especially such related to the question who is privileged and who is being used, abused, and oppressed, is not new and continues to be relevant today. It has been considered since the beginning of the XX century by numerous theorists and activists,

¹⁴ Mörsch, Carmen, *Die Bildung der A_n_d_e_r_e_n durch Kunst. Eine postkoloniale und feministische historische Kartierung der Kunstvermittlung*, Wien, 2019. (In German, translation of the title mine, RIK.)

¹⁵ Ibid., resumé of the book (translation mine, RIK.)

such as Asja Lācis, Emma Goldman, Walter Benjamin, bell hooks, Judith Butler, and other critical thinkers and practitioners.

In the broader area of education, specifically consciousness raising through literacy, the Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire developed theory and practices which are appreciated for rethinking and reconceptualising the field of education. The ideas in his key work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*¹⁶ played a crucial role for my choice to dive deeper into the field of critical art education. In particular, the concept of **cultural synthesis** informed my own stance towards the work with marginalised people in the projects discussed in this writing. In the last chapter of his book, Freire introduces the notion of cultural synthesis as the situation in which “the actors who come from “another world” to the world of the people ... come [not] to *teach* or to *transmit* or to *give* anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people’s world.”¹⁷ In this sense, cultural synthesis confronts culture itself. It gets to the bottom of the hegemonic structures and eventually opens up a way for transformation. It does not shy from contradictions between the actors who initiate it and the people for whom it is initialized. In fact, in cultural synthesis all those who take part in it are also actors who, while not denying their differences, “affirm the undeniable *support* each gives to the other.”¹⁸ And finally, cultural synthesis is not limited to the immediate aspirations of the participants. It aims to give a deeper understanding of the structures in which people live and act. Thus, it should not be passively bound to people’s aspirations (adaptation), nor should it ignore them to impose the views of the leaders (invasion). Rather, the ultimate aim is to make a combination, a synthesis of both — identification with the needs and demands of the people and posing the very essence of that demand as a problem.

The idea of cultural synthesis was decisive and influential for my own politicisation as an art educator. For me, the goal is to question and transform the reality not individually, but together with those who would (also) benefit from this work. These objectives and this stance intersect with the scope of critical art education, which aims to challenge, deconstruct, and transform existing hegemonic

¹⁶ Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th Anniversary Edition, Continuum, 2005.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 180 (quotation marks and words in italic from the original.)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

and hierarchical structures by working with anti-discriminatory practices¹⁹. One important point of critical art education is participation – those who should benefit from its efforts must be actively involved in it. In a best case scenario, they take part in all steps: from the concept development through the implementation to the reflection. For this reason, critical art education works often with transdisciplinary perspectives and artistic strategies. In terms of the classification of discourses introduced by Carmen Mörsch in *At a Crossroad of Four Discourses*²⁰, critical art education aims at **deconstructive** and **transformative** types of discourse. Still, it is practically impossible to avoid in any such undertaking the simultaneous presence of the **affirmative** and/or the **reproductive** types of discourse, whose objective is to preserve and sustain the cultural heritage without questioning it. It is important that those who conceptualise critical art education projects are aware of the existence of the affirmative and reproductive discourses and the domain of their influence, while also making efforts to minimize their impact.

The affirmative and the reproductive types of discourse continue to be the monopoly in most conventional cultural institutions. The deconstructive and the transformative discourses enjoy an increasing interest, though still rarely and with fluctuating continuity among different entities. Often these are institutions working on contemporary topics, but also traditional ones which are willing to find new ways to define their objectives and place in society. The main characteristic which these two discourses have in common is the communicative way in which art education addresses the public. The goal of both is to examine critically the institution and the structures sustaining it. While the ultimate ambition of the deconstructive discourse is raising awareness about the opaque institutional structure, the transformative discourse goes further: “[in] this practice, gallery educators and the public not only work together to uncover institutional mechanisms, but also to improve and expand them.”²¹

¹⁹ In this writing I use the phrase “anti-discriminatory practice” as a tentative translation of the German “diskriminierungskritische Praxis”. While in general “anti-discrimination” stays mainly for preventing and avoiding discrimination in a given practice, here I use it in the sense of questioning, criticizing, and disrupting discrimination.

²⁰ Mörsch *At a Crossroad at Four Discourses. Documenta 12 Gallery Education in between Affirmation, Reproduction, Deconstruction and Transformation*. In: Mörsch et al. (eds.) *documenta 12 Education 2: Between Critical Practice and Public Service. Results of a Research Project*, 2009.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

However, critical art education initiatives often take place and are supported by institutions belonging to the very structures which they challenge. It might happen that they get unwanted and expelled from the space, as the case of (The) New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. Discussing this example in her paper *Kunstvermittlung und Widerstand* [Art Education and Resistance] ²², Eva Sturm derives important points which position art education as resistance: it works against existing, self-evident, unquestioned power mechanisms; it helps to see more how things are built and entangled; it supports all participants in articulating themselves; it gives a form of participation in public discourse, and thus a form of 'empowerment'; it understands itself as a part of the structure, as an enterprise to be permanently negotiated, in which hegemonic forms easily spread again, that should be deconstructed anew. As it turns out, these points intersect with the conclusions and the set of advices derived by the present investigation.

2.1.2. ART EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF FORCED MIGRATION

One sphere where these different categories, concepts, and ideas play a role is art education work devoted to an important contemporary topic — **forced migration**. This social phenomenon accompanies human life since before recorded history. Yet, in the era of globalisation with its economic, climate, health, and other crises, migration increasingly draws the attention of virtually everyone — in politics, economics, science, culture, arts, etc. The field of art education has its share in this context. More specifically, after the so-called 'refugee crisis'²³ declared in Europe in the summer of 2015 there has been a considerable increase of the projects for and with people with migrant experience. While there have been thousands of initiatives — from generously funded by the public authorities and in strict institutional context to short-lived, self-organised civil ones, the research and documentation in this field

²² Sturm, *Kunstvermittlung und Widerstand*. In: Seiter (ed.), *Auf dem Weg. Von der Museumspädagogik zur Kunst- und Kulturvermittlung*, *Schulheft 111/2003*, p. 44-62. (In German, translation of the title mine, RIK.)

²³ The word 'crises' is one among many other terms, e.g. 'wave' or even 'tsunami', used to refer to the events of forced migration which had their peak in 2015 – 2016. These notions have been used too often in the media and everyday life which reflect and enforce additionally the negative opinion towards the refugees, see for example the discussion in the booklet of the exhibition *The Shores of Austria in the Volkskunde* in Vienna can be downloaded for free from the museum's website. (pp. 102-103.)

is scarce. Nevertheless, there are some, often based on personal initiative, efforts in this direction. Academics and practitioners in the field have reacted to the need for communication, guidance, and exemplary projects. Before the events of the summer in 2015, in the beginning of the millennium, the Brazilian scholar, activist, and educator, Rubia Salgado, who lives in Austria, has published texts concerning the participatory and self-determining role of migrants in art education projects that involve them²⁴.

Recently, after the events of 2015-2016, there are numerous contributions and a growing body of research devoted to such goals. One example is the anthology *Geflüchtete und kulturelle Bildung*²⁵ [Refugees and Cultural Education] edited by Maren Ziese and Caroline Gritschke. This collection of works is devoted to the objective of giving inspiring examples as well as theoretical and conceptual support to those who want to be active in the field of art education in the context of forced migration. It contains many diverse articles, reports, and stories with practical examples and theoretical background. The contributions in the anthology look at the practice of art education for and with refugees from postcolonial, participatory, anti-discriminatory and self-critical perspectives. Another useful source for me is the dossier *Kulturelle Bildung im Kontext Asyl* [Cultural Education in Asylum Context]²⁶ which results from a project attached to Berlin Mondiale. The latter is a platform which was active until 2019 and focused on initiating, guiding, and qualifying cross-generational and multi-discipline artistic collaborations within the context of migration, forced displacement, and exile. The dossier contains practical and theoretical advice, support, and information for people working on the intersection between art education and forced migration: from discussions on the language in this context, through postcolonial theoretical input, to legal issues concerning work with people who have applied for asylum. In my opinion, the inputs from these and similar

²⁴ Salgado, *Zusammenarbeit. Wenn Migrantinnen Voraussetzungen nennen*. In: Bratic; Daniela; Schneider (eds.), *Alianzenbildung zwischen Kunst und Antirassismus: Annäherungen, Überschneidungen, Strategien, Reflexion*. 2004, pp. 11-13 (in German), as well Salgado, *Participation and documentary: artists and migrants in participation art projects*. (2004) In: Isar (ed.) *Inclusive Europe? Horizon 2020*. Budapes, 2005.

²⁵ Ziese; Gritschke (eds.), *Geflüchtete und kulturelle Bildung, Formate und Konzepte für ein neues Praxisfeld*, [transcript], 2016. (In German, translation of the title mine, RIK.)

²⁶ Al-Radwany; Froelich; Kolmans; Paetau; Wissert (eds.) *Kulturelle Bildung im Kontext Asyl, ein Dossier*, Berlin, 2017. (in German, translation of the title mine, RIK.) Available at: kubinaut.de/media/themen/kubi_imkontextasyl.pdf (last access: 31.12.2020.)

contributions dedicated to the critical, just, and participative cultural work in the context of forced migration are necessary prerequisite for all those who intend to initiate or are already active in art education projects.

2.2. HACKING THE CHALLENGES: METHODS AND CONCEPTS

Let us go back to art education and my main question, namely what should be the practice of art education, so that it initiates sustainable changes and tangible transformation for those involved in it and for the world in which they live. I will approach this question by analysing the experience from the specific projects presented in the Introduction and I will try to derive a set of advices describing specific key features that should be in the core of any such project. These advices look at the origin of the aspirations, the potentials, and the dangers for those who engage in critical art education. They aim at raising the awareness of the actors, especially the initiators of such undertakings, for possible obstacles and hidden (inner) enemies. The purpose of the analysis in this work is to help understand the forces and principles that played a role in these past experiences and can be found in similar contexts. My intention is to share the insights from this investigation with those who might find them useful for their own work in critical and participatory art education practices. These are people, who strive for justice and equality and want to move something through their work; who are not afraid to question the power mechanisms within society, examine the way they work, interrogate who is privileged and who is not, even if they themselves or the institutions they work for belong to these privileged groups.

2.2.1. METHODS: ACTION RESEARCH AND CODING

We first start with the methods Action Research and Coding, which inspired and informed the analysis of the projects under consideration. I give an overview and a brief insight of their application in quantitative research.

Action Research is a philosophy and methodology of research generally applied in social sciences which seeks transformative change through a simultaneous process of taking action and doing research, which are linked together through a critical reflection. As the name of the method suggests, it is a research in action aimed at adaptation of a given overarching project during its runtime. The method was introduced by the German American psychologist, Kurt Lewin, who described the process of action research through four iterative stages: **planning — acting — observing — reflecting**. In this sense the method is a cyclical research process of repeating and reiterating these four phases.²⁷ The method involves problem-posing, not just problem-solving. It does not start from a view of ‘problems’ as pathologies. It is motivated by a quest to improve and understand the world by changing it and learning how to improve it from the effects of the changes made. Compared to classical scientific research where the phenomena under research are observed from a distance, here we have a shift or expansion of the researcher’s position: the main researchers are active practitioners in the field under consideration. This method is an attractive tool for practitioners who want to be both involved in the analysis, reflection, planning, and implementation of the research findings in their own work.

One example for action research in critical art education is the international and interdisciplinary project TRACES, which is based on a mixture of artistic, educational, and ethnographic approaches. It analyses challenges, opportunities, and practices inherent in transmitting difficult pasts and heritages. The project was a three-year research (2016 to 2019) with the participation of eleven institutions and cultural organisations from eight European countries. It studied the role of contentious heritage in contemporary Europe.²⁸

As for the cycle of action research, this writing is situated at the steps ‘observation’ and ‘reflection’. I look back at past projects and reflect on them in order to learn about their dynamics from a critical and distanced point of view. At the same time, the aim is to gain knowledge for future work, focusing on questions like how,

²⁷ Lewin, Kurt, *Action research and minority problems*, in G.W. Lewin (ed.) *Resolving Social Conflicts*. New York: Harper & Row, 1948.

²⁸ For more information on the TRACES project, visit its website, where a series of publications could also be found: <http://www.traces.polimi.it/> (last access: 31.12.2020.)

with whom, and for what it should be; what can be expected; who would benefit from it; what challenges one should be aware of.

First, I would like to note that the reflective analysis for this writing was done by only one among all the individuals involved in the projects under consideration, while preferably it should be a collective work. In general, one main virtue of the methodology of action research is to enhance the experience of all participants — be it ‘organisers’ or ‘invited participants’, ‘educators’ or ‘students.’ In the best case, all these actors should participate in some way in the reflection of the work, so that they actively influence the further planning and development. And vice versa, the reflection can enhance their own transformation.

The task at the observation step is to collect and organise all available material. In my case this included records on different media and in diverse forms: text files connected with the projects (such as invoices, drafts, program texts, etc.); all available to me correspondence (emails, WhatsApp, and SMS messages); audio recordings from the interviews as well as videos and photographs taken before, during, and after the projects. After grouping and organising all these items in an excel table I obtained 165 elements: 98 for correspondence, 19 for text documents, 25 for images (each containing up to 20 photographs), 12 for audio and 11 for video files.

There are different methods for qualitative analysis of data. I chose the technique of Coding as introduced first in Grounded Theory. This methodology emerged from the sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, who advocated the idea of developing theories based on the underlying data in their co-work *Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967)²⁹. Rather than relying on deduction of hypotheses based on existing theories and eventually testing these hypotheses afterwards, the authors propose to study directly the data as free as possible from prepossessions. A comprehensive introduction to Grounded Theory containing practical applications can be found in the handbook by Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*³⁰.

Coding is the act of attaching short descriptions, called codes, to a given item of the data, thus depicting what this item is about. The codes help to sort out data and

²⁹ Glaser; Strauss, *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, 1967.

³⁰ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory. A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London, 2006.

make comparisons between different segments of data. Coding is often done in several phases. With each phase a new coding is performed and compared with previous codes. Thus, the understanding for the data grows in a compounding manner. It is important to write preliminary notes, called memos, about the codes, the comparisons, and all ideas stemming from the data that may occur during this work. This process of studying and comparing data and writing memos results into an interpretation of the data through tentative analytic categories. The abstract theoretical understanding built this way is extracted directly from the data of the studied experience.³¹

TYPE OF ITEM	SOURCE	NOTES / THOUGHTS	CODING: concepts which refer to the item
movie	Installation.mov	This recording reveals not only the visual /physical surrounding of the installation Café VoZo, but also the acoustic environment it is emerged in -- loud and competing for attention, swallowing the space, perturbing and repelling the sparkle of readiness to give it a try and dive into the (displayed) stories in this corner. In addition, the Installation is visible from outside, but thick glass stops the interested to come closer , who in order to do so has to take the risk and plunge into the sea of banners blocking the entrance... Very symbolic ... competing interests, priorities, hierarchies, tastes and ideas how a display should look and sound.	privileges / hegemonic structures / repro-duction of status quo

A part of one row from the excel table used in one phase of the coding. This is one example for the first steps of the practical realisation of the coding for one data item. The initial codes are listed in the last column.

The table above gives an example about the first phase of the practical realisation on one data item. The first column shows the physical type of the material, the second the name of the file, so that it can be retraced for references. Next, the third column contains a longer description of the item in which words, phrases, or situations that seemed to be of interest are underlined. These pointed to issues related to the intertwined processes detected in this item from my perspective as a researcher. The texts in this column are drafted in the relatively free style of ‘memo writing’, however with a conscious effort to think from an analytical, (self-)critical, and distanced point

³¹ For a detailed outline of the coding technique see e.g. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* or the lecture notes by Schallberger; Schwendener, *Skript. Einführung in die Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 2008. (In German.) Available at: peterschallberger.ch/lehre/assets/SkriptSchallbergerFOM_Integral.pdf (last access: 30.12.2020.)

of view. A starting question for this step was: 'What is happening here?' at either of the two levels: 'What are the basic social processes?' and 'What are the basic psychological processes?'. The fourth column lists the codes corresponding to this single item, resulting from the first phase. These codes are relatively short, but often more than one as the items themselves point to diverse questions and problems. In this manner a collection of codes related to the individual items is made. In subsequent phases (loops), in which source, codes, and memos are being repeatedly compared, these codes become more categorical and theoretical. This work is done for all 165 items in the table and takes into consideration the interdependencies between the data elements.

2.2.2. MAIN CONCEPTS

It is important and helpful at the beginning of the process of coding to have a set of concepts at one's disposal. They help to shape initial ideas, sharpen one's sensitivity for the research, and formulate particular questions. However, these concepts should be used to guide the research as a starting point at the initial phase of data gathering and analysis, but they should not determine its outcome. In parallel to having in mind the existing knowledges of theories and concepts, one needs to stay as open as possible to whatever the data might reveal. In case the data does not lead to answers to the initial questions of interest, one may decide to reshape the question, see what other questions the data can answer, and eventually see how to re-adjust the way data is being gathered, that is to re-design the research. Often the data itself holds questions which may not have initially been defined, anticipated, or noticed, but which, nevertheless, offer interesting directions for research and insights. In this section, I introduce the main concepts which proved to play a special role for the analysis.

Double Bind

The notion of the double bind played a central role for the motivation of this research as well as for the analytic work, especially at its very beginning. The double bind theory was developed in the 1950s by Gregory Bateson, an English-borne philosopher

and contributor to social science, anthropology, cybernetics, psychiatry, and cognitive science, together with his team of four other scholars from the Bateson Project. The theory is a result of investigations on the underlying reasons for schizophrenia in childhood.³² Shortly, a double bind situation occurs when an individual faces repeatedly conflicting instructions (double bind messages) from an important figure in her or his life. All these instructions are connected with negative outcomes. One basic example is when a mother punishes a child for something, but when the child tries to run away, the mother accuses it for not loving her. As a result, the child has no way to exit the tormenting situation — any action or non-action will be wrong, and a punishment (physical or verbal, direct or indirect) will follow.

Here I use the idea of the double bind as suggested by the Indian scholar, literature theorist, and feminist/postcolonial critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She suggests the application of the double bind concept in postcolonial educational context which aims to be truly transformative. She discusses the concept in different (cultural) aspects and fields in her collection of essays, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*³³. Spivak focuses on the double bind in its different manifestations, for example the double bind between self and other, body and mind, race and class, metropolitan minority and postcolonial majority, etc. Thus, a double bind represents a bunch of contradictory requirements within which humans are obliged to act, like for instance in Spivak's personal example to be a Calcuttan and a New Yorker. However, in contrast to Bateson who focuses on the wrongness of and the punishment after meeting one of the contradictory choices, of central interest for Spivak is the being into the dialectic of the double bind, the resisting the urge to leave it, and the learning to be inside of it. As Castro Varela puts it:

“[unlike] classical ideology critique, which is concerned with unmasking the "false consciousness" or the radical decolonial approaches that propagate a different knowledge outside the Eurocentric framing [...], Spivak postulates a (cultural) education which does not sneak out of the dilemmatic postcolonial situation. [...] This is the only way to design strategies that do not lead to an

³² See e.g. the essay collection by Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, London, 1987 (preprint). In particular the essay *Double Bind*, 1969*, pp. 276-283.

³³ Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011.

either/or dead end, which remains characterized by frustration, feelings of guilt or even heroic feelings.”³⁴

In other words, learning to be in the double bind is different from choosing one of the polarities: either practices which state that the old knowledges should be deleted and negated in favour of better ones, or strategies ‘business as usual’, ignoring any critique of the status quo. For Spivak this means learning to play the double bind and “not learning about it”³⁵. This approach has the potential to unlock the ‘either-or’ polarity and to move between the continuum of these poles. This ‘play’ does not simply negate the historical becoming of the situation but urges those affected by it (and those working for the affected) to understand it and to live within this contradiction. It stimulates the transformation towards a new existence, diagonally different to the old one — ignoring the one or the other pole – by learning to move between these poles, to investigate the histories as well as other new possibilities. In her essay, “The Double Bind Starts to Kick In” Spivak writes:

“When we find ourselves in the subject position of two determinate decisions, both right (or both wrong), one of which cancels the other, we are in an aporia, which by definition cannot be crossed, or a double bind. It is not a logical or philosophical problem like a contradiction, a dilemma, a paradox. It can only be described as an experience. It discloses itself in being crossed. For, as we know every day, even by supposedly not deciding, one of those two right or wrong decisions gets taken, and the aporia or double bind remains. Again, it must be insisted that this is the condition of possibility of deciding. In the aporia or the double bind, to decide is the burden of responsibility. The typecase of the ethical sentiment is regret, not self-congratulation.”³⁶

As Gabriel Huddleston writes, for Spivak playing the double bind is “embracing uncertainty [which] is more than simply abandoning the impulse to get it”, it is “an experience that is disorienting and confusing due to its indeterminacy.” Furthermore,

³⁴ Castro Varela, *Ambivalente Botschaften und Doppelbindung – Warum Kulturelle Bildung das Verlernen vermitteln sollten*, KiWit, 2019. (In German, translation of the quotation mine, RIK.) Available at: kiwit.org/kultur-oeffnet-welten/positionen/position_13120.html (last access: 31.12.2020.)

³⁵ Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, p. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 104-105.

“to move through the double bind does not result in a congratulatory sense of accomplishment, but rather regret and unease.”³⁷

Hegemonic Structures

One of the main notions that turned to be of core importance in the analysed projects is the concept of hegemonic structures. As used and theorized by Antonio Gramsci, (cultural) hegemony is the consensus in a (bourgeois) society supported by a certain dominating social group. This group is not necessarily the majority but is holding the major power positions in the society. Gramsci used the term hegemony to denote the predominance of one social class over others. This represents not only political and economic control, but also the ability of the dominant class to project its own way of seeing the world so that those who are subordinated accept it as 'commonsense' and 'natural'. Hegemonic structures in this sense strive for the permeation throughout society of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs, and morality that has the effect of supporting the status quo in power relations. Hence, hegemony can be defined as an organising principle which is diffused by the process of socialisation in every aspect of daily life. To create a hegemonic system, politics must influence the moral and educational instances of civil society, and vice versa. Therefore, in this perspective, the 'state' cannot be reduced to the three powers, namely Judiciary, Legislative, and Executive, but extends to all private and public organisations — including, more particularly, institutions like schools, universities, cultural institutions, the press, and religion.

In the analysis, there are multiple examples of the influence of hegemonic structures on different levels of the projects. One specific example points also to the double bind in which our small curatorial group at /ecm were acting. Our ambition for the projects in the festival was to question the hegemonic structures by opening a discussion on topics with people who can challenge them. However, in the early version of the 'wish list' of invited guests for this intended panel discussion, we followed a hierarchy which reflected these very structures. Indeed, in our initial

³⁷ Huddleston, *An Awkward Stance: On Gayatri Spivak and Double Binds*. In: *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices* 9:1, 2015, pp. 19-20. Available at: <http://criticalliteracy.freehostia.com/index.php?journal=critical-literacy&page=article&op=viewArticle&path%5B%5D=187> (last access: 31.12.2020.)

working documents, on the top of the list we placed the names of the top management of the University, some professors, and other prominent figures. At the very bottom, we still allowed for the eventual option to include one (nameless) refugee who had been ex-inhabitant in the VoZo. Only after we realised that our resources are getting scarce, the idea for this podium discussion was dropped out. We never analysed the deeper reasons for withdrawing this proposal, besides external ones like other discussions and lack of resources. From my perspective, this is also an example for exiting of the double bind between challenging and following hegemonial structures.

Paternalism and empowerment

This is another very frequent group of terms which emerged from the investigation of the projects' material. Here I use these notions drawing from the paper by María do Mar Castro Varela und Alisha Heinemann, *Compassion, Paternalism, Solidarity*³⁸. In this work the authors discuss the affects paternalism and empowerment in the context of forced migration. Briefly, by paternalism I mean the uncritical, sometimes omnipotent attitude of a person, belonging to a powerful and privileged group, towards the act of instructing, protecting, and supporting others who belong to marginalised and not unprivileged groups. This person acts from the position of superiority with regards to the others. Driven by solidarity with these groups for different reasons, the person wishes to empower them, help them by finding spaces for their self-expression and evolvment. The unheeding and overconfident actions of a paternalistic person can go to extremes and become a domination negating the initially set empowering goals. Indeed, as discussed by Aaba Evelyn Johnston Arthur in her contribution for an online anti-racist glossary, paternalism is too often mistaken, disguised, or labelled for different reasons with the concept of empowerment. As Johnston Arthur states, "to circumvent the trap of paternalism from the very beginning, one should speak of self-empowerment in the first place, in order to bring the term back from the traditional line of social work to the political

³⁸ Castro Varela; Heinemann, *Compassion, Paternalism, Solidarity. On the Role of Affect in Political and Cultural Work*. (in German.) In: Ziese; Gritschke (eds.), *Geflüchtete und kulturelle Bildung, Formate und Konzepte für ein neues Praxisfeld* (in German), [transcript], 2016.

context of self-organisation.”³⁹ While I do agree with this statement, I believe that contributions from ‘outside’ the marginalised circles, that is from individuals having more privileges, do not necessary contaminate but can truly enforce the process of self-empowerment. In this sense I use the term empowerment in combination with the notion of cultural synthesis as introduced by Paulo Freire, see Section 2.1.1. The idea is, that those who strive for self-empowerment and those who want to support them collaborate with each other. The aspirations and the ideas of the latter meet the goals and the needs of the former resulting in a synthesis, a combination of both. Still, this is not a simple act. It can degenerate into a shift in one of the two directions: paternalism (or as Freire calls it “cultural invasion”), or blind adaptation.

There are many examples for the combination of these two notions in the projects’ material. One is the case where we requested personal information from the contributing refugees in order to ensure better visibility and authorship. The uncritical way in which this request was performed made me feel as if I was conducting a police interrogation. As a result, I had the feeling I acted inappropriately. Another example is the first meeting with a refugee contributor inside the building where the guided tour was going to take place. Initially she felt discomfort and unwillingness to even enter the building. We were not certain whether or not our request tended to show paternalism and domination. Still, we did meet and had a walk through all the 6 floors of the building. Later, in number of conversations with this contributor, she clearly expressed how important it had been for her to be able to visit again the place.⁴⁰ Also, she expressed her feeling of “personal inner liberation” due to the possibility to talk directly to others who had been interested and willing to really listen to her experiences. She shared the many difficult, but also good memories with people who were truly open to another point of view. For me this is an example of unexpected self-empowerment – both for us, as initiators, and for this contributor. And this was not a single case – in a feedback conversations with other contributors they also shared feelings of self-empowerment.

³⁹ Johnston Arthur, *Empowerment*, In the online anti-racist glossary [www. no-racism.net](http://www.no-racism.net). (In German, translation of the quotation mine, RIK.) Available at: <http://www.no-racism.net/antirassismus/glossar/empowerment.htm> (last access: 31.12.2020.)

⁴⁰ It turned out that at an earlier stage, when attempting to enter the building, someone had banned her access.

(Self-)Representation, Authorship, Visibility

The questions of (self-)representation, authorship, and visibility were essentially important for our projects as their goal was to open up a space for discourse through a display and mediation of a particular narrative in the context of forced migration. The issues of marginalisation were to be challenged and members from the marginalised circles of the society played one of the main roles. They were among the main actors in a story which was to be told. How we, as curators, could conceptualise this discourse so that it does not become a ‘talking for’ and ‘displaying’ someone else? Already during the development of the separate projects, our curatorial group was aware of the trickiness of the intention to make someone visible by representing him or her from our own position of being privileged. The question was to what extent this act of representation becomes **singularising**, i.e. making a spectacle of a person or a group of people, as discussed by Stuart Hall in his writing *The Spectacle of the ‘Other’*⁴¹. As Hall points out, an “image both shows an event (denotation) and carries a ‘message’ or meaning (connotation)”, in particular about some ‘otherness’ — ‘racial’, ethnic, social, or economic characteristics that make the subjects in the images stand out, attract (our) attention, make us look at them. Such images (as the images of the Asylum Camp in 2015-2016) are “not just about the people and the occasion, but about their ‘otherness’, the ‘difference’.” In this way, the subject ‘difference’ is being marked and made a focal point of interest within the practice of representation of people different than the dominating groups, it becomes significant and starts ‘speaking’⁴².

An example for the idea of self-representation in this sense appeared during the preliminary preparations for the festival. Before conducting one of the audio-interviews, one of the contributing refugees as well as the (also interviewed) member of the association Einander expressed clearly their eagerness and appreciation for being able to recount the story of the refugee camp VoZo, instead of just listening and reading other *white* members of society who tell it. In feedback conversations,

⁴¹ Hall, Stuart, *The Spectacle of the ‘Other’*, In: Hall, Stuart; Evans, Jessica; Nixon, Sean (eds.) *Representation. Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, The Open University Walton Hall, 1997.

⁴² Ibid, pp. 229-230.

the visibility and ability for self-representation which the different contributors could gain through their active participation was repeatedly confirmed. This included also us as individual members of the 'social space' curatorial group and from the /ecm class.

Different Priorities

The analysis of the projects highlights the importance of prioritisation of different issues in our three-person curatorial group. The analysis builds upon the notion of **symbolic capital** and its three different forms as introduced by Pierre Bourdieu: **economical capital** (money), **social capital** (contacts, connections, popularity), and **cultural capital** (education, expertise.)⁴³ The symbolic capital represented by prestige and the privileges that a person can rely on in the social space is composed by the complex interplay of these three types of capital. For every given social field these currencies vary and are in the process of continuous negotiation. Through accumulating capital in a given field, the actors strive for those positions in the field which allow them to influence as much as possible the (re)defining of the values of the capital. In the specific projects, this prioritisation is transparent in the distribution of roles within the working group, as well as in the allocation of resources — economic, human, and time.

Paranoid and Reparative Reading

Before moving on I would like to mention the idea of paranoid and reparative reading as discussed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick⁴⁴. Together with the concept of double bind, this idea proved to be useful in the process of analysing the material of the projects. For me, awareness of and distinction between these two kinds of reading are quite important for the reflection. In a nutshell, a paranoid reading of a text (or other medium) is one where the readers expect to take a specific issue from the text before they have started reading it. The readers anticipate what they will criticise in the piece. This is so to say a 'problematic' reading, in the sense that one follows the trend

⁴³ Bourdieu; Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, The University of Chicago. 1992, pp. 118-119.

⁴⁴ Sedgwick, *Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading. Or, You're so Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay is About You*. In: Sedgwick; Barale; Goldberg; Moon (eds.), *Touching Feeling*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002.

of calling everything problematic or focusing on what is problematic in every text. On the other hand, in a reparative reading one is allowed to be surprised and to find pleasure and support in the texts. Sedgwick claims that, while being critical (paranoid), it is healthy to be engaged in the reparative kind of reading more often. These two types of reading are not to be seen as negative/positive or as do/don't, but as oscillating one around the other. They are interacting and interchanging as two necessary and inseparable parts of a reading whose goal is not to re-produce or ignore/belittle the subject of the critique (e.g. injustice), but to move further and transform both the subject of the reading and the reader.

The awareness of the two different and complementary reading types helped me move through the material of the projects both with the knowledge on hand and with the curiosity for what new, surprising, and repairing ideas this work can open up. In other words, it helped me detach from the severe and sometimes painful self-whipping and look at the possibilities offered by the examined situations. Thus, it was possible to focus on the agency which the people could obtain, develop, and apply in these situations. This was important in order to avoid the tendency to execute victimisation and patronisation through critique.

3. THE PROJECTS REVISITED: RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

The qualitative analysis through coding of the projects described in Section 1.3 and Section 1.4 results in a considerable number of codes which are compiled into 5 categories and 24 sub-categories. The diverse topics and issues raised by looking closer at the data are organised around these (sub-)categories. The categories refer to many different questions: from the individual and group agency within the hegemonic structures in which the actors are embedded, through issues of asymmetry of the allocation of the symbolic capital, resulting in a disparity of priorities for the allocation of resources, to aspects of the level of visibility of marginalised groups. However diverse, the obtained categories are intertwined on multiple levels.

One common feature shared by many categories is the uncertainty and contradictions within them. The characteristics of the observations and the material gathered through the projects often point out to ambivalences and uncertainties on the levels of planning, development, and execution of the projects, as well as in their feedback. One specific example is the strong wish to challenge the political question of forced migration, and thus to question the structures that provoke this issue. While the projects were focused on enforcing the visibility of marginalised positions, we as initiators behold privileges from these very structures. Indeed, one cannot face the fact of the presence of a marginalised group without addressing the parallel reality that there are others who are privileged and benefiting from the system. Thus, by opening a space to interrogate and to attempt to destabilise the hegemonic structures we faced the danger to question and destabilise our own positions.

On a personal level these uncertainties sometimes reached a point of being a double bind in the sense of Spivak (see Section 2.2.2.), though in most cases I cannot prove the latter statement as this would exceed the size and purpose of the present writing. Still, the notion of the double bind became significant for my research. The motivation for this work is a result of the uncertainty, not to say despair, which I sensed after the projects. I felt an ambivalence about whether and how to proceed in the work of art education. The idea of 'learning to be in the double bind' motivated me to proceed with the investigation. It helped me to gain a distance from which to work while carrying within different feelings like dissatisfaction, uncertainty, guilt, confusion, and the urge to give up. For me this attitude of being in the double bind acts as a tool which helps me think and work further despite all controversies, or even exactly because of them.

But let's go back to the categories emerging straight from the investigation of the projects' data. In the rest of this section the five main categories are discussed, together with their corresponding sub-categories. These are:

1. Acting and not acting

- a. Eagerness and unease to touch relevant political questions
- b. Uncertainty if one acts appropriately or inappropriately
- c. Act for the benefit of others and act for one's own benefit

- d. Involve and refuse contributions from the marginalised
- e. Take and delegate responsibility
- f. Enthusiasm and withdrawal
- g. Deserve and not deserve to be part of social life

2. Hegemonic structures

- a. Challenge or follow hegemonic structures
- b. (Self-)empowerment or submission to authorities
- c. Reproduction of the status quo

3. Empowerment and paternalism

- a. Empowerment and paternalism / domination
- b. (Self-)trust / appreciation and distrust / underestimation
- c. Cooperation and (shame of) domination
- d. Gratitude and frustration
- e. Understanding and *whiteness*

4. Visibility, (self-)representation, representational critic, reflection

- a. Make visible and singularise/make spectacle
- b. Visibility and anonymity of the marginalised
- c. Face and avoid reflection / representational critique
- d. Self-representation

5. Priorities, privileges, resources

- a. Priority for material and for human factor
- b. Interest for privileged and for marginalised contributions
- c. Asymmetric distribution of symbolic capital between the privileged and non-privileged
- d. Barriers (language, gender, political)
- e. Underestimation of the need of time, know-how, preparations.

1. Acting and not acting

This category encapsulates diverse ways, reasons, needs, and qualities to be or to restrain / refuse to be (fully) active, resulting in several sub-categories mirroring these different facets. One of them is the (1.a) **eagerness and unease to touch relevant political questions**, an ambiguity that is both explicitly and implicitly found in the

analysed data. One example is the consideration to recount the broader and more general topic of infrastructure for social spaces, and additionally to work with the topic of forced migration. As the latter theme was nevertheless obvious in the projects, our curatorial group felt under pressure to defend and justify the chosen topic from the disapproval of other /ecm colleagues who questioned the correctness of touching this topic. I assume that because of this (imaginary or real) peer pressure we chose the broader generic subject of infrastructure for social spaces as an umbrella for the specific hot political topic and an attempt to conciliate different opinions. The data shows that this uneasiness and duality accompanied us through all the stages of the projects. One possible explanation seems to be the (1.b) **uncertainty if one acts appropriately or inappropriately** — another sub-category extracted from the data. This uncertainty mainly reflects on the motives and the attitude of our small curatorial group as initiators of the projects, both collectively and individually. I take as an example the title and the text for the installation re-enacting Café VoZo — the social space of the refugee camp. It is difficult to find a direct connection with the context of forced migration to which the title and the text actually refer. The uncertainty (1.a) might result from the attempt to avoid other ambivalences, such as (2.a) **challenge or follow hegemonic structures** or (4.a) **make visible and singularise** marginalised groups. Eventually, we were determined to address the specific topic of forced migration directly. This decision placed us in the position to simultaneously (1.c) **act for the benefit of others and for our own benefit** and find a balance between the option to (1.d) **involve or not contributions from the marginalised**. The first sub-category corresponds to our own ambiguous position about our motives to do these projects: on the one side, to create a space for self-empowerment of other people, but on the other, for our personal benefit, e.g. to complete our study duties, to gain know-how, or to be part of social life. The last one corresponds to the uncertainty if one (1.g.) **deserves or not to be part of social life**, a dialectic resulting from my personal experience throughout these projects, but also which can be noticed in the documented discussions and correspondence with the contributors.

Despite the uncertainties and ambivalences, we still insisted to make audio interviews, a guided tour, and later a photo presentation. All these, besides the latter,

were in cooperation with the members of the association Einander and other refugees from VoZo. The people could take the role of mediators and present their own perspectives. This enabled marginalised people to be part of social life and also touched the question of their (4) **visibility and self-representation**. Still, the collaborative work was marked by another controversy: (1.f) **between enthusiasm and withdrawal** or resistance to be active. This was relevant for almost all of us – both the members of the curatorial group and the invited contributors. Due to various reasons our readiness to contribute was quite different. Based on the analysis, according to me some of the reasons are the (1.b) **uncertainty whether one deserves to be part of social life**; the feeling of (5.c) **unfair distribution of capital** resulting in a feeling of (3.b) **(not) being appreciated**; personal priorities in conflict with the (5.e) **undervalued need of time, know-how, preparations**, and others.

The last sub-category allocated of (1) **Acting and not acting** is (1.e) **take and delegate responsibility**. It reflects several other aspects, mainly our ambiguous (5.b) **interest to work directly with marginalised** people, but also our lack of experience, know-how, and sometimes resources. Thus, while willing to be correct and open towards our contributors, we made a safe choice and cooperated with the *white* members of the association to whom we handed over some of the responsibilities for coordination and allocation of the resources. Here comes in play the sub-category (3.b) **trust and uncertainty**.

2. Hegemonic structures

Under this category fall issues on the individual and collective attitude of the people involved in the projects (especially the organisers, but not only) towards the structures in which we were operating. Already at the early stage of the conceptualization, our small curatorial group ‘social space’ agreed that we want to open spaces for counterpublics. These are spaces for those who do not belong to the majority in the society and therefore have limited access to social life and few possibilities for self-representation. This was the fundamental objective of the whole /ecm class. The document with the press release of the complete program curated by /ecm states this unequivocally: to create a program that works as an “amplifier of

voices and counterpublics.”⁴⁵ Our group embraced this idea and began to consider possible contributors. At this point a specific inner conflict was activated: the drive to (2.a) **challenge and follow hegemonic structures**. As already discussed in Section 2.2.2, one instance in which these dynamics are transparent in the data is the initial list with eventual contributors. The first names we could think of were of people belonging to the center of these structures. Still, the wish to involve somehow contributions of marginalised people, in this case refugees who had lived in VoZo, was also present, though at the bottom of the list. This wish grew gradually and with the support of the association Einander, who we luckily contacted at the very beginning, crystallized in a cooperation marked by unpredicted trust and openness.

Whether because we were not prepared and experienced in the work on self-representation of marginalised people, or as a result of the dynamics between groups with different privileges, the analysis of the data reveals multiple cases of ambivalent situations within unplanned or unpredicted events. Here I point out two such situations which fall under the category hegemonic structures. One belongs to the sub-category (2.b) **(self-)empowerment or submission to authorities**. This can be traced in cases of direct or indirect work with the refugees. For instance, when editing the audio interviews, our major concern was to keep the length short. In one occasion, this resulted in damages to the content of the interview, which diminished the inspiration for self-representation and empowerment of the interviewed person⁴⁶. Another notable effect is the tendency⁴⁶ in different cases to (2.c) **reproduce the status quo (with changed roles)**. One example is the start of the guided tour which had to take place outside of the exhibition space. One reason was the need of special preparations in the exhibition space for the next event — a discussion with *white* invited guests on the asylum topic. This situation — gathering outside in the hallways, though maybe convenient and welcome for all who participated in the guided tour, re-enacted unwittingly the events of 2015-2016 when masses of refugees had been waiting outside (of the assigned rooms, the buildings, or the borders of the EU) until they could enter. However, sometimes the reproduction was

⁴⁵ Available at: http://ecm.ac.at/_media/download/OpeningUp_BisAufWiderrufgeoeffnet_Programm.pdf (last access: 31.12.2020)

⁴⁶ Eventually, by mistake or on purpose, a longer version containing almost the complete interview was displayed in the installation.

with **changed roles**. For example, the guides recounted their stories and the (*white*) public had to wait and listen, then hurry to follow the guides, no matter how uncomfortable this was at times. Compare Fig.2 and Fig.3. The image on the right represents an instance of the guided tour. The image on the left depicts a group of people in the refugee camp in 2015 - 2016 gathering at the staircase. There is a sense that nothing has changed in the way people relate to each other and exercise the power they are assigned with. Still, in my opinion, when used consciously, these swapped situations have the potential to interrogate and destabilise the structures and the rules within which people interact. Therefore, they may have an empowering and transformative effect.



VoZo 2015-2016

© Stephan Trimmel



VZA7, guided tour, June 2019.

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3. Empowerment and paternalism

This category summarises observations and situations loaded with the multidimensional meaning of the idea of (self-)empowerment. As specified in the discussion of these notions in Section 2.2.2., acts and positions stated as empowering can hide or mask paternalism, or even domination. To face this consciously, there should be an awareness to what extent one of the two sides is denoted as strong and potent in a given relationship, while the other as receiving, needy, lacking, and inferior. In the qualitative analysis for this work the code (3.a) **empowerment and paternalism** labelling this dialectic was the most frequent. It deals with various actors, in diverse forms, and shows up on different levels of transparency — sometimes quite directly, sometimes hidden behind the scenes. Theoretically, this discrepancy is obvious in any relationship between people with different privileges. Examples are to be found in the interviewing process. In one case, urged by the strong

wish to empower one of the contributors I turned the discussion to her qualifications as an artist and fashion designer. I suggested that she should continue her studies at the Angewandte sharing my own experience. I did not consider her difficult family situation with two dependent children and the fact that she would not be allowed to get social financial aid as a regular student. On one hand, the suggested notion of what is right for her was a nuance of paternalism, even if not very strong in that case. On the other, the very fact of being appreciated for one's own competences may lead to (self-)empowerment. Now this contributor is a practicing jewellery designer and producer. Another example is the preparation for the extended project in September. While in June the refugees led the guided tour and gave interviews, for the event in September there were almost no attempts for their (1.d) **involvement and contribution**. While the very motivation to do this installation was not only to augment the (4.b) **visibility and fight the anonymity** of marginalised positions, but also to create space for their articulation, this goal was not achieved. We took all in our hands⁴⁷ and the refugees were simply invited⁴⁷ to the event. The only contribution we asked for was information for names and stories for the texts on the photographs. Personally, this unlocked in me another disparity — the (3.c) **wish for cooperation and shame of domination** and exploitation, as there was no budget for contributions. The result was (1.f) **withdrawal** of the people, as less than half of the contributors in June came to the event in September. There were just a few exceptions, such as a shared legend for the image on a mural represented on several photographs.

Another sub-category worth mentioning is connected with the emotions (3.d) **gratitude and frustration** which can result in the receivers in a situation of paternalistic behaviour. A specific example is a contributors' narration during the guided tour about the conditions in the refugee camp. While on one hand the sense of gratitude was not missing, there were definitely humiliating and frustrating memories in the narration — the food, the bedding, the hygiene, and all such things connected with the emergency situation. The people needed to express also their frustration and, in my opinion, the possibility to do this was self-empowering and self-

⁴⁷ 'We' are the assistance of the president of the Angewandte and myself, with the support of Renate Höllwart and Beatrice Jaschke from the /ecm management and of Stephan Trimmel and Susanne Kober from the association Einander.

asserting. It had the effect of liberation from the position of a needy receiver who had to be grateful for everything, including the humiliating conditions.

Finally, I would like to mention a sub-category in which I have merged different aspects related to the topic of (lack of) appreciation and trust — the duality between (3.b) **(self-)trust / appreciation and distrust / underestimation**. This reflects the relation between us as curatorial group and the association and the people with whom we cooperated. It also resonates with the uncertainty whether we fully appreciated the contributions from the people. Finally, it encodes my personal ‘awkward stance’ of being both European and ‘other’ and in this sense being from the periphery of the privileged society.

4. **Visibility, (self-)representation, representational critic, reflection**

This category comprises the topic of (self-)representation and self-reflection. At this point, I would like to say a few words about the double meaning of the term ‘representation’ in English. As noted by Spivak in *Can the Subaltern Speak*, the English word ‘representation’ has two meanings. Their distinction is obscured when used in an unspecified way: of standing and speaking for others, what in German is ‘vertreten’, or of depicting others, as in the German word ‘darstellen’.⁴⁸ Yet in both cases there is the assumption that those others are incapable of self-representation, i.e. to talk for and about themselves on their own.

A sub-category, parallel to the duality between empowerment and paternalism in the field of representation, is (4.a) **make visible and singularise/make spectacle**. By this I mean the double effect of the effort to enhance marginalised positions — brought up on the social scene these positions get also exposed to the majority in society and through their specificity might be singularised as ‘abnormal’. The very act of representation of (supposedly) marginalised positions reinforces the marginalisation, the singularization, and hence the undermining of these positions. As Luis Henri Seukwa notes in an interview with Maren Ziese, in the context of forced migration a super-exposing from an uncritical paternalistic position may inflate

⁴⁸ Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak*, p. 70. In: Chrisman; Williams (eds.) *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: a reader*. New York, 1993.

uncontrollably the victimisation aspect of the refugees.⁴⁹ An example from the projects' material is one situation during the guided tour when one contributor shared her story in front of the door of a room where she used to live with her daughter. The story was very personal, she spoke clearly despite the anxiety and the burden of the memories. The distance between her and the public was initially very large and besides the 30-40 pairs of eyes at least five camera lenses were fixed on her. How capable was she for (4.d) **self-representation** or was she rather singularised and marked as a victim at that moment? I would say that both effects were there. However, based on later feedback discussions, we could say that this situation was rather one of strong and convincing self-representation. It had a quite self-empowering effect, both for her individually and collectively for the whole cooperating group. In my opinion, this was due to many factors: her powerful presence, the open and value offering attitude of the public, the free format of the tour, and the atmosphere of trust and appreciation within the group.

Another nuance of the representation problematics are the different levels of (4.b) **visibility and anonymity of the marginalised**. Of course, we as organisers strived for greater visibility, and in this case, also a visibility of those who are doubly marginalised — the women. We were not prepared to respond to this condition on time. The result was incomplete visibility of the female contributors. For instance, in the official program one of the female contributors was with a mistaken surname, and the name of the other was missing as we contacted her after the deadline for the printing of the program. This suggests the need of more (5.e) **time, preparations, and know-how** for projects which aim to fight discrimination in society.

The last sub-category in this group is the uncertainty between the need to (4.c) **face and avoid reflection**. Despite our efforts to be correct and critical with regards to the topic of representation of marginalised positions, e.g. by creating space for self-representation, we could not avoid all mistakes in the representation. Moreover, we did not make an effort (as a group and collaborating collective) to reflect on the work self-critically after the event. One of the uncriticised decisions in my opinion

⁴⁹ Sukwa; Ziese, *Refuge and Agency, Cultural Education and Global Inequality*. In: Ziese; Gritschke (eds.), *Geflüchtete und kulturelle Bildung, Formate und Konzepte für ein neues Praxisfeld* (in German), [transcript], 2016.

was the choice of the video material for the installation. Though telling the story in an interesting and attractive way, these videos contained one-sided, only *white* positions which tended to some extent to paternalism. Another example of ‘misrepresentation’ was the use in the program texts of the controversial term in the German speaking asylum context term ‘Flüchtlingsunterkunft’ (see the note in Section 1.1.)

5. Priorities, privileges, resources

The last group refers to different privileges and priorities in the allocation of resources. The sub-category (5.c) **asymmetrical distribution of symbolic capital for the privileged and non-privileged** is one of the most frequently assigned to the data of all projects. Our curatorial group, consisting of (semi-)privileged members of society, intended to counteract this obvious asymmetry. Yet sometimes we were caught by playing by its rules. For example, we allocated a budget for a remuneration for the contributors, but we could not find a way to pass this monetary capital personally and instead transferred it to the association. We could however show our appreciation through certificates, thus using cultural capital as a direct remuneration.

Playing against the rules of the hegemonic structures in which we acted was not easy and needed much more preparation and information. See for example on this topic the contribution of Nina Hager, *Möglichkeiten der Entlohnung im Kontext von Kultur und Asyl*⁵⁰. Moreover, the project group for the event in September was caught in the duality between (2.a) **challenging and obeying** these structures. This resulted in an unequal prioritisation for (5.b) **contributions from the privileged or the marginalised** and an unbalanced distribution of the resources for the (5.a) **material and human factors**. Indeed, the latter sub-category showed up as a very frequent code in the analysis of the data for all projects. A lot of time, efforts, and more than two thirds of the budget for the projects in June were devoted to material factors — the installation, the furniture workshop, the display material, etc. Less than 20 % of

⁵⁰ Hager, *Möglichkeiten der Entlohnung im Kontext von Kultur und Asyl*. In: Al-Radwany; Froelich; Kolmans; Paetau; Wissert (eds.), *Kulturelle Bildung im Kontext Asyl, ein Dossier*, Berlin, 2017. pp. 27-28. (In German, translation of the title mine, RIK.) Available at: kubinaut.de/media/themen/kubi_imkontextasyl.pdf (last access: 31.12.2020.)

the economic resources were allocated for the contributions of the marginalised (which, as mentioned above, could not be transferred to them directly.) For the project in September there was practically no budget for curatorial work and contributions.

Furthermore, the reflection of the data highlighted the (5.e) **underestimation of the need of time, know-how, and preparations** for all projects. This resulted in some shortcomings, such as the incomplete visibility of the marginalised participants in the text; the promotion of some of the projects; the insufficient representational critique on issues such as the use of the term 'Flüchtlingsunterkunft'; the uncommented display of the videos in the installation; and the incomplete coordination and synchronization with other related program points, i.e. the podium discussion after the guided tour.

The danger of such (self-)critical analysis is that one might feel overwhelmed with all critical remarks and deficiencies, not to say failures, within the studied projects. It should be noted however, that for projects in the framework of a study program, many of these 'mistakes' were unavoidable and a necessary experience for the reflection and transformation of our own positions as art educators. Yet I believe that, despite all unpleasant feelings of shame, dissatisfaction, and confusion which might sometimes arise at the end of a project, the identification and the critical analysis of the 'mistakes' is very important in order to learn how to act differently in one's future work in the field of critical art education.

The last sub-category which I would unwillingly let out from the findings is connected to all possible (5.d) **barriers — language, gender, political**, etc., that have emerged as an issue from the analysis of the projects' data. By this I mean above all the limitations of all participants in the cooperative work – the invited contributors, as well as our own as curators. Here I speak only from my own perspective as someone who belongs to the periphery of the privileged society. For instance, the language barrier often created troublesome situations and uncertainties for us, the newcomers in Austrian society — both from our past experiences and in terms of our limitations for self-representation. However, during the interviews and the guided tour we could successfully overcome this obstacle. I think that one possible reason for this is our shared marginalisation with respect to the language barrier. This

touches to a code, which I have not classified as a (sub-)category, but still would like to mention at this point — my own **double bind between being European and ‘other’**.

4. LOOKING AHEAD: A WRAP-UP FOR FURTHER USE

The objective of this final section is, based on the findings laid out in Section 3, to reflect on some specific challenges and potentials at all steps of art education projects whose ambition is to create a space for self-empowerment of marginalised positions and to enable tangible changes in society. As stated in the Introduction, the ultimate aim of this study is to venture for a couple of advices, or a ‘dashed-line roadmap’ that might be helpful for my future work in the field of critical art education, in particular with marginalised positions. These advices are also a result of my attempt to answer the questions posed at the end of the Introduction by looking closely and critically at the experience gained through the presented projects (see p. 12.) A more ambitious goal is to formulate these suggestions in a way that they can be used by practitioners who would like that their work in the field of art education validate sustainable empowerment and transformation for all people involved in their projects, as well for the system in which they exist.

As these advices are based on the analysis of several specific projects over a short period of time, I cannot, and do not want to claim their completeness and universal validity. Still, I am convinced that most, if not all, undertakings aiming at tackling social and political problems are potentially facing challenges similar to those discussed in the projects presented here.

I recognise that there are numerous contributions and a growing body of research devoted to goals similar to mine. My humble contribution below mirrors and repeats insights obtained by many practitioners and scholars devoted to the field of critical art education. These insights have re-emerged for me through the particular projects discussed in this writing. To mark this existing knowledge, some headings of the

points presented here are borrowed from already existing work. Here is my 'list of advices':

1. Nothing about us without us!
2. Challenge hegemonic structures
3. Do your homework
4. Know and challenge (your) privileges and priorities
5. Let us speak for ourselves!

The first item is the main invocation of a very bold, direct, and clear guideline for artists and art educators published by the Australian organisation RISE. REFUGEES, SURVIVORS AND EX-DETAINEES. This guideline takes the form of a statement titled "*10 things you need to consider if you are an artist not of the refugee and asylum seeker community - looking to work with our community*"⁵¹. In short, through their ten points, the members of the group insist explicitly that marginalised people (in this case refugees) must work with equal rights in projects about them and must not be used as passive material.

Also, in the context of forced migration, the already mentioned anthology *Geflüchtete und kulturelle Bildung* gives a rich collection of contributions sharing practices, experiences, theoretical background, and practical recommendations. An important reference for this work is the article *Refugees are not are Target Group* by Carmen Mörsch. In it the author criticises the use of the term 'target group' as a justification of institutions and initiatives which seek to work with refugees. The second, third, and fourth points in the list above can be found in the recommendations which Mörsch specifies at the end of her writing to support art education projects with anti-racist perspectives.⁵² In particular, the third point "Do your homework" is borrowed from Spivak⁵³ and summarises the need of theoretical background and

⁵¹ Available at: <https://www.riserefugee.org/10-things-you-need-to-consider-if-you-are-an-artist-not-of-the-refugee-and-asylum-seeker-community-looking-to-work-with-our-community/> (last access 31.12.2020.)

⁵² Mörsch, *Refugees are not a Target Group*. In: Ziese; Gritschke (eds.) *Geflüchtete und kulturelle Bildung, Formate und Konzepte für ein neues Praxisfeld* (in German), [transcript], 2016, pp: 67-74.

⁵³ Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, London, 1990, pp. 62-63.

critical reflection on disbalances in the privileges and power distribution which must accompany any anti-discriminatory projects on all levels.

In the rest of this writing, I lay out these points in detail and give some references for the results of the projects' investigation. The grouping of the points below is implied by the outline and the structure of the five main categories as introduced in Section 3. The ordering of the points does not rank the various issues in significance. Rather, they are all connected. Here I try to present and reflect on this interdependence.

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!

Or: active participation of those for and about whom the project is intended in all its phases — from the concept development to the reflection.

After looking retrospectively at the projects discussed here, I can firmly state that, indeed, the active participation of the people for, about, and with whom the projects are conceptualised is a fundamental precondition for all stages on any undertaking with anti-discriminatory perspectives. This is related to numerous observations and their corresponding (sub-)categories which I have discussed in Section 3. Yet, I have assigned the matter of participation to the category (1) **acting and not acting**. It seems to me that this uncertainty can be best 'played' in the sense of Spivak, if in every project which aims to criticise discrimination people belonging to the discriminated group(s) under question are tightly integrated at all its stages. By participation, I mean not only inviting people to contribute for the performance of the project, whatever it is — a workshop, a guided tour, an exhibition, a discussion, etc. Contributions in its ultimate public part is also important, in particular for the visibility and the de-silencing of the people. But maybe even more or at least equally important is the participation of these people also in all other phases — the planning, the implementation, and finally the reflection. Otherwise, for example, the visibility of the people may turn into making a spectacle of them and into their singularisation, see category 4 in Section 3. In the best-case scenario, they are also initiators of the project, or at least have been attracted as collaborators for the conceptualisation from the very beginning. If the presence and the incorporation of people belonging to the marginalised group under consideration is ensured from that starting point to

the very end of the project, including its reflection, all uncertainties described in this first category can be managed in a truly productive way. Such uncertainties include: the relevance and the focus of the topic; the appropriateness of the ways it can be tackled; the ambivalence about whose benefit one is acting for; the way the topic is represented; the extent and the areas in which it has potential to trigger a change; and the allocation of resources. In a preferably heterogeneous group, the diversity of the positions can supply the work with multiple points of view. However, if the group is to benefit from its richness, with respect to background and position in society, and not just to use it as a nice label for diversity, it is crucial to make additional efforts to value the contributions, the views, background, and capacities of all team members, to reassert that all are worthy to be part of the work.

CHALLENGE HEGEMONIC STRUCTURES

Or: establish and develop awareness and critique of the structures within which the members exist and act.

This point corresponds to the category (2) **hegemonic structures** as discussed in Section 3. It describes the need to be consciously aware of the impact which the ruling structures have on the work and on the personal and institutional relations in the project group as well as in the environment in which it functions. This doesn't mean that one should try to get rid of these influences — for me this would be a pure delusion and an attempt to ignore the ambivalences between the need to (2.a) **challenge and follow** these structures. It means that at all stages and in all working practices of the group the question of the way and the extent to which the actors challenge or follow rules put forward by the hegemonic structures should be firmly on the agenda. Especially members of the project team – individuals or organisations, privileged by the hegemonic structures, should pay attention and be self-critical of their own motives and actions, and insist on open and direct feedback from their non-privileged co-members. In this way, for example through working together and discussing, one can avoid the unwitting reproduction and consolidation of the status quo and of past oppressive situations which can be a result of insufficient critique in the representation of a specific issue. Yet, to ensure this, the group must invest

additional time in special efforts to enable the marginalised participants in the project to speak out confidently and express actively their opinion.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

(Self-)Critical reflection on the relations within the group and the represented topic.

Theoretical background of anti-discriminatory practices.

This condition corresponds to the category devoted to the dynamics and dialectics between (3) **empowerment and paternalism**. In this category I have discussed issues on the relations within the projects' contributors and their attitude towards marginalised positions. This particular ambivalence is maybe the most difficult in the work with marginalised topics and groups. On one hand, individuals belonging to the privileged society, even though often to its periphery, have the possibility and are sometimes urged to support the self-empowerment of those who do not belong to it — by offering space, resources, etc. On the other, the very act of giving defines those who are being helped as inferior. Often (not conscious) paternalistic behaviour and statements on the part of the helpers underline additionally the inferiority to the extent of victimisation. Even the fact that I write about this topic and use so often the term 'marginalised' already plays some role in the consolidation of this inferiority.

How, if at all, can this vicious circle be broken? I believe that the first step is to stick to the fundamental condition to have in the working team people belonging to marginalised groups with equal duties, rights, and priorities as the more privileged members. This can ensure overcoming, or even better, productively confronting the controversy between empowerment and paternalism. In this mixed constellation cultural synthesis can happen — the merging of wishes, needs, and aspirations of the marginalised with ideas, input, and resources of the privileged cooperators. The term '(self-)empowerment' should be settled together and the question "who empowers who and how?" must be openly and frequently placed. To this end, the entire group should spend time and efforts to invest in gathering theoretical knowledge and information with practical examples. This work is what Spivak calls 'doing your homework'. It is an important task for every individual and group intended to effectively 'play the game of the double bind' and daring to drill holes in the wall of the status quo.

LET US SPEAK FOR OURSELVES!

Or: self-representation, visibility, critical reflection.

The dialectic between making visible and singularising marginalised positions is a specific manifestation of the ambivalence between empowerment and paternalism in the context of representation. I discuss this aspect separately as (re)presenting stories and positions is a method often applied in art education practices. Here, again, the act of presenting situations or positions as an issue might highlight their specificity, sometimes even assigning them to abnormality. Making efforts to present others with the aim to give them visibility may enforce the peculiarity of these persons. I claim that this issue is already half solved, given that those who are presented or belong to the presented positions are also initiators or at least actively involved contributors to the presentation. Then these people are self-representing their stories and positions. This diminishes the danger of blurring the stories by extrinsic, misrepresenting mirroring. However, to facilitate a strong and empowering self-representation, those who represent themselves should be the ones who decide on the form and the content of the representation. They should also be involved in the overall planning — place, time, environment, strategy, etc. They must be tightly incorporated in the decision-making and the development of the representational concept.

A last sub-point here is the need for active and interested reflection on the project from the group. This reflective work is often ignored or left out as overwhelming and uncomfortable. Yet, I am convinced that it is a necessary condition to activate sustainable transformation. Through retrospective reflection, specific problematic processes which have occurred during the work become more visible and clearer. Their background and meaning crystallizes, ideas for changes appear, the overall awareness sharpens. The larger the number of participants involved into this reflective work, the broader and stronger the transformative effect of the whole undertaking would be.

KNOW AND CHALLENGE (YOUR) PRIVILEGES AND PRIORITIES

Or: Be aware of the role of privileges and priorities. Invest enough time in a fair allocation of resources.

The question of the resources and their distribution is relevant for all art education projects, not only those with anti-discriminatory perspectives. Nevertheless, especially for these particular undertakings it is of great importance to pay attention to the rules and structures which influence the allocation of the assigned resources — be it time, money, efforts, know-how, etc. Often some practices, that in ‘classical’ cases are self-evident and automatic, do not work that smoothly when the process involves topics and people facing different kinds of discrimination — including political. To give an example I would like to address one usual but fussy issue — the remuneration of the contributions from asylum-seeking people. Usually it is illegal (hegemonic structures) for such people to be officially paid for their work. This means that there is a need for special endeavours to search for alternative ways to overcome this problem. One alternative to official payment which is often used in such cases is to resort to other types of capital: cultural (e.g. certificates for contribution) and social (connections, further recommendations). Nevertheless, this mode of remuneration should not be used without commenting critically the unfair exploitation of the peoples’ efforts and competencies. Here the main message is that there must be a balance in the appreciation of the work done by privileged and non-privileged contributors in the group and in the framework of a given program. This balance should be established already at the point of building the team, making a design of the program, deciding on guests and contributors to be invited, and carefully planning the distribution of all types of resources for various items. The group should build up the ability to understand the reasons for imbalances in the priorities for the distribution of the available resources. For example, the tendency to spend the largest part of the resources (money, work, and time) on materials implies, in my opinion, a discomfort about the challenging topic. It is an unconscious subjugation to the hegemonic structures, or an uncritical self-positioning as a member of the privileged part of the society. To uncover such ‘traps’, first, the group should be diverse, secondly, the members should have equal rights to express freely

their opinion, and, finally, sufficient time and efforts should be invested to clarify the rules for distribution of the resources.

One more word about the diversity of the contributors. While the term 'diversity' is advertised as a virtue, the actual problematics which it carries is often forgotten. A diverse group means that there are people with different backgrounds, but also belonging to different groups with respect to privileges. In this sense, the team needs a group culture in which these differences do not act as deficiencies for those who are less privileged; who for example do not speak fluently the language or do not possess other cultural capital (such as education) as the majority; who have less legal rights, etc. Through that group culture, all contributors are appreciated, given an opportunity for free expression and action, and stimulated to unfold their capacities in order to become actively involved. For me only in this case diversity can be a true virtue.

5. A FEW LAST WORDS

All points in the previous section were an attempt to answer, if only partly, the initial question posed in the Introduction, namely: What should be the practice of art education so that it initiates sustainable changes and tangible transformation for those involved in it and for the world in which they live. These reflections were inspired by a wish to derive, based on my own experience, a set of practical advices describing specific key features that should inform and support the work in the sphere of critical art education. For this I applied the coding method to perform qualitative analysis on a diverse set of material from past projects in the framework of my master program at /ecm. The data analysis resulted in five main categories reflecting on critical issues: the question of participation of the marginalised; the presence of hegemonic structures; the ambivalence of empowerment and paternalism; the need for representational critique; and, finally, the question of priorities and the allocation of resources. The interdependence of these issues is detailed in Section 3. Building upon these insights, I have formulated five specific

pieces of advice for future work in critical art education. These are not new findings, but rather reflect upon the work of other practitioners and scholars, such as Spivak, Carmen Mörsch, and the Australian organisation RISE, in the framework of my particular experience in art education.

The first and maybe most important point is that people belonging to marginalised groups must be actively contributing, so that they are, in the best case, initiators and implementors of the projects. Furthermore, all members should have equal rights and duties and be equally appreciated. The complete team must be self-critical and aware both as individuals and as part of an institution to their positioning within the hegemonic structures. They must question the mechanisms that are at work in the team and its environment. They have to be open and set enough resources for discussions which add value to each member – during and, very importantly, after the completion of the project. Only then all involved actors can understand their deeper motives to engage, or to resist their (full) engagement in the undertaking. I think that only in this way art education can be more than a display, it can let the voices of all involved to be heard and make it possible for all to learn from their experience. Who are these 'all'? For me, 'all' means all those who are willing to play the game of the double bind, that is to stay within the controversies in which we live, challenge them and their origin, and by doing so go further into the pursuit of transformation for a just world, no matter how unsatisfying and destabilising at times this might be.

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