Birgit Fritz

The Courage to Become

Augusto Boal's Revolutionary Politics
of the Body

Translated by Lana Sendzimir and Ralph Yarrow

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Cover illustration by Alex Carrascosa

»Deconstruction does not say there is no subject, there is no truth, there is no history. It simply questions the privileging of identity so that someone is believed to have the truth. It is not the exposure of error. It is constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced.«
(Spivak 1996: 27)

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Acknowledgements

There is no revolutionary action that can be done without love.

We want to be seen as who we are. We want to be embraced, totally. We want to embrace, life, totally.

This book was brought together by many people, their actions, their search, their love.

Ultimately it comprises many and different journeys of the heart.

A lot is being said these days, about radicalisation, deradicalisation, emancipation, transculturality and transdisciplinarity. In the end, it is what we perceive in the most immediate form, through the body, what remains or becomes our individual truth.

In our bodies, we are all human. A hug, a touch, a gentleness.

I deeply respect and thank my mentor and friend, Ralph Yarrow. He has sculpted out of a text, that used to be an unreadable PhD with thousands of footnotes, the essence of communicating reflections (reflections in communication) and the intrinsic message of their encounter, that I had hoped to express, but wasn't sure how to. His belief in my work and me as a person, has been life-changing.

I thank Lana Sendzimir, whose passionate enthusiasm was the initial driving force to undertake this adventure, the making and the translation of this book. During my research she fed me in innumerable ways. Without her, these pages wouldn't have come into life. Love and Respect.

I thank Carlos Zatizábal and Abel Solares, who have most generously supported me with knowledge and insight, guiding my research in invaluable ways.

I want to acknowledge the many revolutionary theatre people, at all times, in all places. Their work has become a huge inspiration in my life and in the face of war, terror and trauma, the healing spaces they are providing keep me alive.

Let us keep weaving love back into life, giving space to an alternative narrative, which inspires hope.

Grateful thanks are due to the several people who have read the manuscript at different stages and offered informed and helpful suggestions.

Birgit Fritz
Vienna 2016

Foreword

No-one working in the fields of theatre and politics, applied theatre, theatre history, theatre and performance theory, and transdisciplinary enquiry across the borders of theatre, society, ›development‹, sociology and social practice from the late twentieth century on can avoid the centrality of Augusto Boal's theatre practice and methodology, its application and implications. This book recognises these dimensions, which have been the subject of a wide range of critical work and the inspiration for extensive and diverse theatre practice across the world. It also seeks to outline a number of framing contexts which have shaped this work and to draw from them conclusions about its relevance beyond its original context. It brings together a range of historical, political and aesthetic perspectives which make clear where Boal comes from and why he drew on his lived experience to construct an embodied strategy which transcends its origins to resonate with the business of claiming the fullness of what it may mean to be fully human in human society.

The book seeks particularly to open up questions about Boal's work in the following areas:

- Social and political: how do Boal's practice and premises inflect how we might or should conceptualise and structure society, individuals, power relations, economies?
- Critical pedagogies: how does Boal's work and its relational nexus, including for example Freire and Fals Borda, demonstrate and/or develop the understanding and application of practices of learning, understanding, growing and collaborating?
- The body: in which dimensions does Boal's practice illuminate and open up somatic practices and aesthetic sensibilities which are crucial to social, political and environmental relationship for the twenty-first century?

There are three strands to the argument. The first part of the book consists of an analysis of Freirean roots and sources in the Theatre of the Oppressed, as well as the context of revolutionary discourse and Boal's experiences in Latin America: the Freirean people's cultural centres

in Brazil, the period of the Arena Theatre and Boal's participation in the Peruvian ALFIN alphabetisation project. At its heart is a Freirean interpretation of the Declaration of Principles of TO (Theatre of the Oppressed), published in 2003. Whereas the revolutionary Latin American theatre movements, under the influence of Paulo Freire, aimed to mobilise the masses towards democratisation, the Theatre of the Oppressed's declared goal has been the *humanisation of mankind*, as set out in the Declaration of Principles.

The second part attempts a kind of geomorphological comparison and reconstruction of TO by analysing the Participatory Action Research (PAR) of Orlando Fals Borda and the process of Collective Creation based on the work of Enrique Buenventura. By means of this analysis the practice of TO is linked to *emancipatory art and sciences* in Colombia. The underlying goal of this comparison is to reintegrate essential context-based characteristics of TO that might have been neglected or lost during its transfer into the European context, in order to create an extended range of potential connections to challenges of the twenty-first century.

The third part of the book contextualises the theatre of Augusto Boal in terms of an *aesthetics of perception* and an orientation towards *peace*. On the physical, somatic level, it draws on the methodology of Moshé Feldenkrais's school of perception, which was also referred to and used by Augusto Boal. It also makes links with work on the biology and neurology of self-determination and on the aesthetics of awareness (Maturana, Varela and Welsch), in particular the latter's observation that aesthetic thinking gives rise to exceptional ›reality competence‹. This chimes with Boal's last work, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, referenced here on the basis of the 2009 Portuguese text, which differs considerably from the English version of 2006.

If the dominant economic and political mindset in much of the world exemplifies an ethos of production and consumption, and an assumption of ›ownership‹ rights applied to ›property‹ – including the ›environment‹ – an enormous shift of the imagination is required to reposition the relationships and practices which have built upon that perspective. And imagination, to transform into any kind of political action, needs to be rooted in somatic, aesthetic processes. This book shows clearly, via accounts of the political and theatrical situation in Latin America in the 1960s and 70s, the description of Boal's Peruvian

ALFIN work, a Freirian analysis of the relationship between pedagogic practice and the principles of Theatre of the Oppressed, an examination of the ethics and praxis of Participatory Action Research (PAR), and finally an analysis of the somatic, aesthetic and corporeal dimensions of Boal's work in the light of recent transdisciplinary approaches, that successive forms of such a reimagining can be identified across the development and deployment of Boalian practice. As a necessary part of this, relationships between human beings, between ›self‹ and ›other‹, between the ›human‹ and the ›natural‹ can be repositioned, re-experienced and revalidated.

The book concludes that the main endeavour of emancipatory research, sciences and arts lies in the attempt to reconstruct and to repossess history on a personal, biography-based level as well as on a political, community-based level. It thus traces the sources of the Theatre of the Oppressed in the 1960/70s‹ politics both of Latin America and of Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and goes on to situate it as a form of embodied learning: as a process of developing critical awareness of and activating the mechanisms, which Boal and Freire perceive as fundamental to social change and the challenging of dominant frameworks of thought and behaviour. It both situates Boal and Freire historically and politically within the times and spaces of their initial work and shows how their thinking and practice draws on this moment of ›wound‹ under oppressive regimes to evolve an active humanism and a model of development which is rooted in individual bodies and the world they inhabit; and signals that the implications extend well beyond Latin America in the 1960s.

In this vision therefore, ›politics‹ may be understood as a variety of social and pragmatic positions and practices, whose focus might be: i) applied theatre practice; ii) Theatre of the Oppressed and other Boalian work; iii) development theory and practice; iv) somatic and psychodramatic process; v) educational theory and methodology; vi) politics and history, particularly theatre history, of Latin America in the latter half of the 20th century; vii) sociology and participatory methodologies.

In the Foreword to the German edition of this book (2013), Harald Hahn writes: ›(the book) shows that, even after the death of Augusto Boal (1931–2009), Theatre of the Oppressed has the means to engage boldly and successfully with the concrete practical demands of the 21st century‹, in large part because ›TO is positioned as a theatre of Human

Rights, though not as one-dimensional theatre for the purpose of *education about* human rights, but rather a theatre of active work for peace, which aims to produce a form of healing‹.

The book however also locates the origins of Boal's work in a context in which both peace and human rights were in short supply; and documents and analyses the contexts of that reality and Boal's place in it alongside Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* the liberatory theatre activity of the 1970s in Latin America (including Enrique Buenaventura's *Creación Colectiva*) and the radical refocusing of research orientations which underpins Orlando Fals Borda's development of Participatory Action Research.

In bending together origins, contexts and methodologies, its vision is characterised by the author's understanding of TO as autopoeitic theatre work, a form of practice ›whose particular contribution is to enable both communities and individuals, in terms of their communal identity and their personal history, to recreate themselves continuously from their own resources and transform themselves by an aesthetic of awareness‹, in fulfilment of Boal's final writing.

Birgit Fritz
Ralph Yarrow

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) was born from a deep wound to humanity. Augusto Boal's response to oppression, torture and violence was to evolve a theatrical practice which gave back to people the right to own their own bodies and use them to shape, articulate and reclaim their own world. The legacy of this work and vision has been the spread and application of TO throughout the world in the last three decades of the twentieth century. This book traces the origins and impulses for Boal's practice and interrogates the pedagogical, political and theatrical parameters of its development. But it also goes further, by asking what the relevance of Boal's work is now (2016) for the twenty-first century. To answer this question it aligns a combination of practices (pedagogical, theatrical, somatic and aesthetic) which together provide a wider understanding of the depth and significance of Boal's contribution; and allow us to see how and why its aesthetic engenders a personal and political ecology and mode of relationship which addresses some of the major challenges of our time.

These issues will be briefly outlined in this Introduction in four sections:

1. Why this book now? What is its main thesis?
2. What methods and approaches does it employ?
3. What contexts does it use to frame Boal's work? How and why do these open up new understandings of what it can be in the present and the immediate future?
4. How does it position itself against existing views of TO and ›applied theatre‹, including current practice in the world and recent scholarship?

1.2 Why this book now?

The central goal of the book is to identify the salient features of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* which equip it to play a role in responding to the challenges of the 21st century. In order to do this it examines, in greater depth than before, the following key influences on Boal's work:

- The Latin American historical and political context and its associated theatre history, specifically in terms of revolutionary theatre practice and Enrique Buenaventura's *Creación Colectiva*.
- The relationship of Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire, in terms of the development of practical pedagogies in response to the above situation.
- The role of new research practices – especially Participatory Action Research – and technologies of the body in relation to the understanding and development of individual and collective agency.

The book explores major issues and characteristics of the revolutionary theatre movement, drawing on politically committed scholarship in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. The intention here is to check whether issues and characteristics lost in the transfer to Europe may need to be brought back to the forefront of practitioners' consciousness, to ensure that TO work outside the Latin American context can be a sustainable, in-depth practice.

In the course of history, theatre has repeatedly been instrumentalised – by conquerors, missionaries, and ruling powers. In Latin America in the 1970s the time seemed right to acquire the instrument ›from below‹ and to use it for the common goals of a wider social stratum, as an instrument of the revolution[1].

Now in the twenty-first century, the aim of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* as laid out in the Declaration of Principles (see below, pp. 72ff. and Appendix 1) is the *humanisation of humanity*. TO is human rights theatre, as Boal has upheld in several interviews. It is imperative to know what these human rights are, to address them and to ›work for them‹. These are not laws carved in stone, but rather, movable ›goods‹ that must be evaluated on both a societal level and in every individual case. Yet what does the ›humanisation of humanity‹ mean on the individual,

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1   Something similar occurred in South Africa under *apartheid* at roughly the same historical period.

personal level? Is commitment to and engagement for human rights the sole approach to humanisation? Or is it rather an ability to perceive, a consciousness of differences, which allows for evaluation and decision making in each individual case?

My argument is that the *Theatre of the Oppressed* possesses tendencies which are intrinsically revolutionising (in the sense of making new beginnings possible) and humanising. They occur in individual and collective bodies (groups, communities) through practising the methods brought together by Boal and underpinned by the ethical imperatives which govern that practice. Walking the path of theatre together is the truly revolutionary aspect of the *Theatre of the Oppressed.*

Given the diversity of protagonists and transcultural nature of the TO movement, it is not accurate to speak of a single method. But there are fundamental characteristics which are found on a global scale. What does the committed *Theatre of the Oppressed*-landscape look like in the twenty-first century? Where are the interfaces with relevant theoretical approaches and how far does TO work stimulate or require a rethinking of theory? How are sequences, devising processes, the involvement of the audience and presentation organised? Which criteria are helpful in devising framework conditions for TO-processes to be effective over the long term?

Changes in the reception and transmission of TO methods arguably correspond to a world in which the concept of revolution is multifaceted, complex and problematic. As both Boal himself and Sanjoy Ganguly have emphasised, it is at the very least to be understood to involve both internal and external transformation; and even this emphatically offers no simple solutions, but rather a proliferation of questioning. Both these modes have been at the centre of Boal's practice throughout, but need to be re-emphasised in the contemporary context. It is appropriate to ask what continues to give Boalian theatre work, considered globally, its justification, vitality and strength? What are its foundations?

At its core, Augusto Boal's theatre is not primarily a form of theatre production, culminating in a ›product‹ (a performance). Rather, it is a way of reflecting on life, communicating about it and changing oneself and one's environment during that process, in order that more people may claim voice and agency. Those who practise TO are not, in any conventional sense, ›doing‹ anything other than creating a space in which people devise their path, their path of development, their humanisation.

TO practitioners experience the same process through their action. In the aesthetic space opened up by TO the intention is not to postulate standpoints, but to ask questions. Personal experiences become public by playing them out, playing with them, changing and sharing them, learning from and through this process of theatre.

In the contemporary world, there are people in all nation states who have had experiences of war, in different generations, either as survivors, as children and grandchildren of war, as refugees, or as those who escaped into exile. If, in the figurative sense, the word war also includes victims of human trafficking, victims of medical experiments, victims of domestic or institutional violence, as well as the ›ghettoisation‹ of refugee camps and reservations, then the circle of those who carry experiences of trauma widens. The violence that ensues from an aggressive politics of globalisation, such as through multinational corporations, the spreading of monocultures and so on, widens the scope even further. The TO community unites people who share experiences of oppression of various intensity and origin. Likewise, they are part of communities which, as such, are in turn acting oppressively upon others (the global North with reference to the global South, to name one example). Internally as well as externally, both on a personal and on a societal level, they intend to effect transformation.

No one is entirely untouched by experiences of crisis, conflict and oppression, which in part explains why the *Theatre of the Oppressed* can speak to so many people. Virtually no-one is untouched by the monopolistic mind-set referred to earlier, in which parameters and capacities of ›self‹ and its interaction with its contexts is squeezed, deformed and disabled. In response, Boal's practice claims that all people are indeed artists, carrying creative potential within themselves, seeking both individual fulfilment and an extension of connection with others.

In the context of dynamic peace work, particularly through its contribution to the rewriting and reclaiming of personal and communal history, as well as to the reconstruction of the biography of its participants, the *Theatre of the Oppressed* can lay claim to global importance. We need then to look further at Boal's understanding of aesthetics and at a complex of methodological approaches which clarifies how and why this is key to a repositioning of his work for the twenty-first century.

1.3 Methodologies and approaches: aesthetics and autopoiesis

Augusto Boal's last book is *A Estética do Oprimido*, published posthumously in 2009. It may therefore be significant in indicating his concerns at this stage of his life. In the book, which I discuss fully in Part 3, he claims that: ›aesthetic transcendence of reason is the reason for theatre and for all the arts.‹ (Boal 2006: 15).

What is the role of the aesthetic in the *Theatre of the Oppressed*? How does it relate to the discovery and deployment of human creative potential? What does Boal mean by ›transcendence of reason‹? In what way is the aesthetic a means to go beyond reason, and how does Boal see this as an essential quality of theatre? What is this ›reason‹ which needs to be transcended?

Aesthetics in this context means: i) understanding the world by sensing and feeling; ii) imagining it differently. In other words, it is a process of engaging directly in and comprehending one's own experience, and using it to posit – both intellectually and practically – alternative ›realities‹.

In Image Theatre and Forum Theatre (key modes of *Theatre of the Oppressed* work), the body is the site of signification and the means of constructing new forms of behaviour and action. Boal's structure for approaching practical work in TO starts with Knowing the Body and continues through Making the Body Expressive to exploring Theatre as Language and as Discourse. Games for Actors and Non-Actors focus intensively on work with the senses.

Actors and spect-actors in Image Theatre and Forum Theatre mobilise the body and the imagination of alternative patterns of lived experience (as ›rehearsal for revolution‹).

In *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, John Paul Lederach writes:

> Aesthetics help those who attempt to move from cycles of violence to new relationships and those of us who wish to support such movement to see ourselves for whom we are: artists bringing to life and keeping alive something that has not existed. As artists, aesthetics requires certain disciplines from us. Be attentive to image. Listen for the core. Trust and follow intuition. Watch metaphor. Avoid clutter and busy-ness. See picture better. Find the elegant beauty where complexity meets simplicity. Imagine the canvas of social change. (Lederach 2005: 73–4)

In *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed,* Boal charts as fully as possible what he means by humanisation. He articulates the hope that the human ability to heal will lead to a regeneration of the planet. In this last book, Boal again makes it apparent that he wishes to engage people to use the body as the principal means with which to explore different levels of perception and how these may affect subsequent action. He discusses how aesthetic experience occurs and how it constructs new patterns of significance, both in terms of psychophysical process and of the ethical consequences. For Boal, theatre – as process and performance – provides the aesthetic space in which to create the world anew, and thus functions as a site of healing for individuals and societies (see Schutzman 1994: 137–56).

The Declaration of Principles of the Theatre of the Oppressed (written by Boal and others in 2002) clearly establishes the humanitarian goals of his project and sets it within the framework of Human Rights. For Boal here, even without explicit targeting of societal change – though that is covered in the Declaration – the essential elements of theatre (person, space, perception) are the basis upon which to deliver this outcome. He writes that every person is theatre. And the body alone can be space enough to perceive ourself as such. This is what Boal means when he speaks of the subjective theatre, the objective theatre and the language of theatre in his Declaration of Principles. Work on the sensory, the motoric and the image-making capacities unlock this transcendence, a step beyond the inherited and accepted modes of understanding in conceptualising one's world. Transcendence of reason and experienced reality and the ensuing conclusions and realisations begins in a revolutionary, new experience of what it means to be human. Many developmental psychologists and epistemologists have interrogated how to achieve this goal, among them Francisco Varela, Humberto Maturana and Jean Piaget. When Boal says: ›Have the courage to be happy!‹, he is also saying that we all have the potential and the resources to be fully human, thereby clearly opposing the social-Darwinian ›Survival of the Fittest‹ doctrine.

Humanising humanity means instigating a process by which individuals can develop subjectively and objectively, as agents and as critics of their own reality. Boal's theatre work incorporates both dimensions and moves between the individual and the group, the personal and the public. The methodology of his practice is rooted in somatic work on

feeling, moving, expressing, relating and creating together. It can be seen as fundamentally autopoietic in nature, identifying and promoting the ability of self-creation and interactive operation.

The path of theatre leads to personal change, the search for consciousness, growth and the ensuing commitment to change on a trans-individual level. The key insight of Boalian practice is the addition of *action* to the analytical and intellectual deconstruction foregrounded by Brecht. Spectators become spect-actors, both on and off stage, and engage in a physical and verbal reconstruction of the parameters of their (oppressed or subaltern) reality. They ›rehearse‹ in their bodies new attitudes, new behaviours, new ›interventions‹. This means, crucially, that the work can and must proceed initially, directly and personally from the individual body. Change is identified as a material and physiological process. There is no shortcut. An intellectual position cannot be sustained unless it is embodied and enacted, and the path of change may lead through personal disruption and crisis.

Boal's practice, especially Forum Theatre, identifies contrary forces, roles, positions and strategies. *Theatre of the Oppressed* uses the terms protagonist and antagonist to assist the process of playing these out in order to grasp how they function in life, how they may be challenged and renegotiated. It is essential to become aware of oneself in the world: the theatre is a space for learning and experiencing.

The aesthetic is a practice (or *praxis*), a way of becoming familiar with the possibilities of change. That is why Boal returns again to this dimension in his last book. The cultural theorist Wolfgang Welsch says that the aesthetic is the ›thematization of perceptions of all kinds, sensory as much as mental, every-day as [much as] sublime, phenomenological as [much as] artistic‹ (Welsch 1993: 9). It is directed both inwardly and outwardly, it is a form of awareness that has a sustainable impact on action, a synthesis of production and reception, and sometimes also the unity of cognition and emotion (Duderstadt 1996: 2).

A twentieth-century pioneer in the field of body awareness was Moshé Feldenkrais, the founder of Functional Integration and the method of Awareness through Movement. Boal, who knew the Feldenkrais method through Schechner and the Actors Studio, utilised its methods again and again in his workshops[2]. On a somatic level, Feldenkrais

2   Based on author's conversation with Henry Thorau, Vienna, July 2012.

trainers are movement detectives, experienced in disengaging neuro-
logical behavioural habits, so that new realms of bodily experience can
become accessible. These changes, and the experience of a newly found
ease and wider range of mobility, inevitably lead to a new perspective
and a new way of moving in the world.

The Feldenkrais method and the Theatre of the Oppressed both op-
erate a ›politics‹ of the body, which seeks to open new spaces through
demechanisation. A further similarity is the exploration of biological/
neurophysiological and epistemological processes, which are funda-
mentally important for both methods/movements. Changes in stance
and movement lead not only to a new kind of thinking (psychological
change), but effectively ›write‹ themselves in the tissues of the human
brain.

Boal's theatre leads to a continuously refined state of awareness,
both inner and outer, and gives rise to a restructuring of behaviour.
The linkage of intellect and emotion in ›real time‹ (theatre always takes
place in the present moment) leads to self-regulation through a positive
feedback loop and is directed towards action and awareness. Learning
cannot be prevented (cf. Ginsburg 2004: 49). It is ›triggered‹ by new,
intriguing and life-affirming experience, which ultimately leads to an
altered self-image. Nevertheless, as the Feldenkrais practitioner Carl
Ginsburg puts it, we as practitioners should avoid ›the arrogance of
believing that we are responsible for what occurs during the process‹
(Ginsburg 2004: 75). It is enough to initiate it and allow things to take
their course. Feeling and understanding alternate and will occur dif-
ferently for different individuals. This also applies to TO practitioners.
Through working together, through theatre, ›differences become ob-
servable‹ and people receive and create new information. The work is
›purposeful but not invasive‹ and things are ›brought into relation with
one another once again‹ (ibid). In this sense, body awareness work and
TO can both be said to operate a ›somatic dialogue‹.

1.3.1 Dialogic and interactive structure

This book's method is to operate a similar methodology of relation,
juxtaposing insights from the various strands mentioned above with
biographical and historical contextualisation of Boal's life and the de-
velopment of his work. It is important to position TO historically, po-

litically and pedagogically as many other writers have done. Identifying other approaches and forms of discourse (aesthetics of awareness, somatic practice, Participatory Action Research) enables the book to propose an extended articulation of the range of agency of Boal's legacy. The book thus brings together methodologies from different domains in an attempt to suggest that they may speak to each other productively. These domains also include the ethical, the performative and the postcolonial. Central to many of these approaches is the combination of participatory and observational methods, reflecting Jean-Marie Pradier's insight that there are ›neither bodies without understanding nor understanding without bodies‹ (Pradier 2000, 78–9). The conflation of different perspectives is an attempt to understand how TO has acted and can act in different locations as a theatre of change. An essential starting point is the parallel with Paulo Freire's work and his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which is developed in Part 1, Chapter 2. Freire positions learning as an interactive and interrogative process, rather than a unilinear delivery and reception model. Learning becomes critical action, potentially activism.

1.4 Contexts

1.4.1 Political and historical origins (Latin America)

Theatre of the Oppressed can be used outside a revolutionary context in a sustainably meaningful way. But it is important for practitioners to recognise how their own history and situation conditions their practice, and to be sensitive to the history of the contexts in which they are working. For Latin America, this includes an understanding of the role of Creación Colectiva as well as that of Participatory Action Research; these movements, less well known among TO practitioners in Europe, display important emancipatory elements and approaches, and are related to TO both politically and historically as well as methodologically.

TO is deeply rooted in Latin America, where many groups have identified their work as a theatre of the oppressed. Within the spectrum of this work, Creación Colectiva (collective creation) is a fundamental method of Latin American popular theatre, if not a purely Latin American ›invention‹. There have been several cultures and societies through-

out human history in which it or similar models have been used.[3] Parallel developments in Europe, the USA, Africa and Australasia have occurred in collective and collaborative work, devising practice and so on. Boal was familiar with this creative process and used it in his work with the Teatro de Arena, whose goal was to correct Latin American historiography and political narrative with the help of theatre. Influenced by the liberation movement, and the teachings of Paulo Freire in particular, he later developed his own methodology – the Theatre of the Oppressed. By expanding the remit of theatre to become an instrument of pedagogy, therapy and social change, he charted a space between committed art and science. This development reflects the Zeitgeist of the sixties and seventies: the Esalen Institut in the USA, the writings and travels of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, the emergence of psychodrama, Gestalt Therapy, the production and way of life of the Living Theatre, to name but a few. These were atmospheric hubs, as were the Latin American revolution, the developments in Cuba, the critical stance towards the war in Vietnam. It was an intense, violent, and at the same time, very creative period, characterised by military dictatorship, oppression, murder, torture, persecution, resurrection, new developments and shifts of meaning. Boal's exile in Europe allowed TO to become a bridge between the continents, which ultimately led to its growth worldwide.

The nineteen eighties saw the first flowering of Boal's work in Europe. After an initial phase of struggle he began being invited to many countries and contexts, by actors, activists, trade union organisers and other interested groups. Interest in TO waned after the nineteen eighties but experienced a revival in the early years of the new millennium. The creation of the ITO (International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation) website, though not linguistically accessible to all, gave rise to a sense of identity among practitioners. There was also a growth of interest in academic institutions, where Boal's work is now known across a range of disciplines.

TO work in Europe focused partly on inner changes rather than solely on outer ones, on situations in which personal experience was manifest, rather than on large-scale grassroots movements. It is nevertheless

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3   Santiago García traces its influence on Columbian theatre in his workshops back to the work of the British actor Joan Littlewood (1914–2002).

used in a wide variety of specific material situations – homelessness, asylum and refugee status, gender issues, work in prisons and so on. In many of these contexts, practitioners have become aware of the need to mediate between inner and outer dimensions, to address both the how and the what of processes of change for individuals and groups. Likewise, Boalian theatre work has increasingly been found in the context of skills-acquisition, as well as in the context of emancipatory alternatives.

The journey to the roots of Latin American popular theatre can, I hope, lead to inspiration much needed by the globalised world. At the start of the twenty-first century, in which the relationships between continents, countries and people are so tightly woven that no one can say: ›That has nothing to do with me‹, the theatre offers an alternative language, a possibility to develop communication about the unspeakable, at a time in which language is often exhausted and senses have been dulled by over-stimulation and by uniform consumer culture. Through (hi) story telling we connect with human history and establish relationships with others, whom we might otherwise have felt to be strangers.

There are thus solid grounds for locating the beginnings of Boal's work in Latin America. These include:

- Direct Latin American historical and political foundations to Boal's experience, which shape the development of his theatre practice, the goals he envisages for it, the methods he develops to realise them and the ethics which frame them.
- Very clear influences on the development of Theatre of the Oppressed from significant practices developed and/or implemented in Latin America, as well as strong parallels in the conception and methodological framing of the role of theatre.
- The link to Paulo Freire, though well known, also occurs within this Latin American context and is explored in this book to a greater and more detailed extent than in the majority of published work about Boal/TO. The model of Pedagogy of the Oppressed is used to frame and interrogate TO as a pedagogy, a mode of knowledge, a form of political activism and an attempt to construct a new humanism.
- Latin American initiatives, including PAR and CC, have been important in the articulation of ›different‹ models of the relationship between humans and the environment, which reflect kinds of awareness which the somatic reach of TO work is also concerned to stimulate.

- Practitioners from Latin America have often expressed the view at international TO events that European and American critiques of Boal have focused excessively upon his theoretical appropriation of some Aristotelian concepts and have failed to give due credit to the geopolitical contexts of his work. Whatever the balance of these debates, this book seeks to redress that situation in so far as it offers a broader scenario of Boal's work as embedded in a range of Latin American influences and contexts.

The depth of the challenges which theatre workers pose to societies depends on their experience, sensitivities, awareness and resources. Although conventional twenty-first century models of knowledge and education tend to privilege intellect and the acquisition of ›facts‹, a more holistic view of processes of knowing is advanced by Freire, Kusch, Feldenkrais, Dietrich, Welsch and others cited in this book; there is also of course a strong history of ›alternative‹ educational models from Dewey to Heathcote to Steiner, frequently incorporating forms of active and embodied practice. Theatre helps to extend the spectrum of how and what we know through its ability to ›get people in contact with their bodies‹, and make them the protagonists of their own story through a creative process. Theatre thus becomes a means of agency, participation and humanisation.

1.5 Frameworks of contemporary practice and scholarship

1.5.1 Current State of Research

This book proposes a particular vision of Boal's theatre, against a continually changing scenario. So its mapping of that scenario, both in terms of practice and research – which often overlap and feed each other as *praxis*– necessarily includes gaps. This brief overview acknowledges that but tries to trace some of the less obvious manifestations.

The *Theatre of the Oppressed* can be said to encompass both its philosophical, historical and pedagogical foundations and the methodologies themselves, which constitute a ›grammar‹ of play made up of materials (games, exercises) and methods (strategies, structures). It has its own literature (Boal's books, as well as documentation of completed projects, talks, films, conference records, interviews, amongst others; plus a substantial body of books, essays and articles about his work). Furthermore,

it is shaped by his travels around the world, his changes and development through both theoretical and practical dialogue. The *Theatre of the Oppressed* can be understood both as a language, based on its own grammar and literature, and as an expanded theatre concept, one that can extend to much scenic, performative practice, in so far as its practitioners locate their work within these traditions of theatre (for example, community, interactive and applied theatre, actor-training methodologies, etc.). It is a theatre which adopts a particular ethics and works towards a declared goal based on specific principles; a single *Theatre of the Oppressed* does not exist.

1.5.2 Published work: an indicative overview

The Bibliography gives details of the range of work in the areas mentioned above. This section does not attempt to include all the extensive work on Boal and TO; but rather to indicate some major areas of its scope and its geographical and linguistic spread. Boal's own work receives a major impetus from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), which articulates many of the key insights, positions, methodological positionings and goals of Boal's practice.

The Routledge Performance Archive contains interviews with Boal from 1971 to 2009.

The most widespread English language publications on the *Theatre of the Oppressed* and its uses were edited by Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz:

1994 *Playing Boal, Theatre, Therapy, Activism* (case studies; the overlap of methods such as TO and psychodrama; TO and activism; discussions of Boal and Brecht; TO in connection with questions of solidarity, globalisation, feminism and politics – e g. Legislative Theatre.)

2006 *A Boal Companion, Dialogues on Theatre and Cultural Politics* (framing and discussing these issues via other systems, thought structures, methodologies – postcolonial, feminist, liberation psychology, etc. – on the level of agency as well as ideology).

The 1995 issue of the journal *Contemporary Theatre Review* edited by Frances Babbage on the subject *Working Without Boal: Digressions and Developments in the Theatre of the Oppressed* focused on Great Britain. At the time of its publication this issue was seen as a kind of breakthrough, as it presented projects which have much to do with Boal, but which

simultaneously ›emancipate‹ themselves from him. Babbage also published the book *Augusto Boal* (2004) with Routledge, giving a very good introduction to the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, though without reference to Spanish and Portuguese language sources, which were not then available in English translation.

Sanjoy Ganguly's 2010 *Jana Sanskriti: Forum Theatre and Democracy in India* demonstrates the large-scale application of Boalian practice and ethics in a further geographical, political and cultural context: his adaptation of Boal's method shows many links with the stance developed in this book.

In addition there are many shorter pieces in books and journals whose contexts are applied theatre practice, e.g. Richard Boon and Jane Plastow's two edited books and Sheila Preston and Tim Prentki's *The Applied Theatre Reader* (2009). Books on the application of TO to conflict situations include Sonja Kuftinec-Arsham's *Theatre, Facilitation and Nation Formation in the Balkans and the Middle East* (2009), and Peter Duffy and Elinor Vettraino's edited volume *Youth and Theatre of the Oppressed* (2010).

There are also books on TO and Boal in Portuguese: Flavio Sanctum, *A estética de Boal* (2012); Bárbara Santos, *Teatro do Oprimido, Raizes e Asas* (2016); French: Mado Chatelain and Julian Boal, *Dans les coulisses du social: théâtre de l'opprimé et travail social* (2010); Bernard Grosjean's *Du théâtre interactif pour déjouer le réel* (2013); Yves Guerre's *Jouer le conflit: pratiques du théâtre-forum* (2006) and a doctoral thesis by Clément Poutot: *Le théâtre de l'opprimé: matrice symbolique de l'espace publique* (2015); German: Armin Staffler's *Augusto Boal: Eine Einführung*, 2009 and Henry Thorau's dissertation *Augusto Boals Theater der Unterdrückten in Theorie und Praxis* (1982); and Turkish: Jale Karabekir's *Türkiye'de Kadinlarla Ezilenerin Tiyatrosu. Feminist Bir Metodolojiye Doğru* (2015).

These areas – kinds of practice, geographical and social location, forms of application, methodologies, ways of framing the practice and its influences and effects – are also widely discussed in journal articles in many countries and languages; in many cases Boalian practice is addressed in terms of its relationship to social, pedagogical and developmental contexts, as well as in terms of its position within theatre and performance, in terms of aesthetics, history and politics.

1.5.3 Forms of Praxis

›Take the theatre and use it!‹, Boal said repeatedly. The *Theatre of the Oppressed* was changed, adapted, it experienced ›excursions‹ into other media/genres. Here are a few examples of different locations, formats and applications with and after Boal. Material on other established groups can be located via the bibliography (e.g. companies working with the disabled in the UK, with transgender issues and with refugees, asylum seekers, those ›without papers‹ in Germany and France.)

The Canadian David Diamond, founder of Headlines Theatre, achieved a world-renowned interactive Forum Theatre performance via television and internet, and created the concept of the ›Theatre for Living‹ for his work, which used a systemic perspective from which to examine communities and search for solutions to current problems (see Diamond 2007).

Gonzalo Frasca is a Uruguayan videogame expert, who at the time of the publication of his master's thesis (Frasca 2001) was working for the ›Danish Centre for Computer Game Research‹. In his view, the *Theatre of the Oppressed* is the perfect model for designing non-Aristotelian, non-immersive videogames, in which people's relationship with their environment can be discussed instead of giving criteria that offer solutions. Forum theatre is already more play than performance, says Frasca, referring to Philip Auslander (Auslander 1999), with certain rules, in which one can simulate different incidents and behaviours: ›Without a single line of computer code, Boal created a Third World, non-Aristotelian version of the Holodeck. And the best thing about it is that it actually works‹ (Frasca 2004).

The Indian theatre movement Jana Sanskriti[4] however, lives the *Theatre of the Oppressed* in the form of traditional people's theatre structures, which transcend the dimensions of conventional theatre through a contemporary ›spirituality‹. Within their network there are sub-organisations in ten Indian states, united with many local theatre activist groups

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4   Jana Sanskriti (founded 1985) are considered an exceptional development in the international landscape of the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, alongside the Movimento dos Trabalhadores rurias sem Terra (MST) (the largest Brazilian landless people's movement), who also have integrated TO methods into their work.

and Human Rights Committees, which are connected to large Indian ›Mass-Organisations‹, with whom they engage in advocacy work and whose members they support in their daily fight against human rights violations. A book by Dia Da Costa (*Development Dramas: Reimagining Rural Political Action in Eastern India*, 2010) places the roots of TO in a ›People's Culture‹ and derives a new definition for the terms culture, politics and ›attributed to the people‹, as well as challenging the normative perspectives and views on (peoples') culture. Sanjoy Ganguly's book *Jana Sanskriti: Forum Theatre and Democracy in India* (Ganguly 2010) reveals and reflects on the first 25 years of this theatre movement, from the perspective of one of its founding members. Jana Sanskriti has recently established an International Research and Resource Institute for applied theatre work at its centre in Badu, outside Kolkata.

In 2005, the Israeli-Palestinian group Combatants for Peace (www.combatantsforpeace.org) was formed, made up of former soldiers from both sides of the conflict. Intending to do therapeutic activist work, the group met in open spaces for street blockades, dialogue events, demonstrations, processions, direct actions or aid work for farmers; simultaneously the group developed performances based on their personal experiences. The Theatre of the Oppressed offered opportunity to take on the role of the respective other, to play each other and for a tragic and painful experience to become liberating, amusing and bridge-building. In the Combatants for Peace Forum Theatre performances the role of the protagonist as well as that of the antagonist are open for replacement by audience intervention. The English edition of Chen Alon's book, describing the ›polarized‹ model of TO used in Combatants' work in the Israel/Palestine context, is awaited (2016).

The Swedish theatre worker Katrin Byréus has been using Forum Theatre methods for over seventeen years in her work with girls. In collaboration with The Women's Organizations' Committee on Alcohol and Drug Issues (WOCAD), an umbrella organisation for approximately thirty women's organisations in Sweden, she published ›Rubble and Roses – A Guide for Working with Girl Groups‹, selling 15,000 copies. ›Bella – Rubble and Roses 2 – for girl groups‹ was published in 2006 and is available in English. Her sensitive and focused work is an important contribution to emancipatory educational work for young women. There has been an annual Forum Theatre Festival in Sweden since 1991.

Festivals also take place in African countries where there are extensive networks of associated groups and practitioners (Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mozambique); publications about them have been rare until recently: at best, articles appeared in *Metaxis*, the publication series of the Centro de Teatro do Oprimido in Rio de Janeiro (www.ctorio.org.br). There have been festivals in Latin America also: recently in Bolivia and in Argentina (Buenos Aires) (2015). See also under Madalena below.

Since January 2013, the excellent and multilingual Senegalese site www.alainde.org has been available, where activists from Kàddu Yaraax have made the so-called Expanded Scripts of their plays public[5]. Drafting for the editorial team are, among others, Mouhamadou Diol and Kerstin Meyer.

Evaluations of TO work are primarily conducted (for example by the EU) within the framework of projects which integrate evaluative methodology into their project work (cf. Alpha, State of the Art). Ernst & Young evaluated an extensive project in Mozambique, carried out in collaboration with UNICEF (UNICEF/Ernst & Young 2009).

In 2002, Agora, the largest Legislative Theatre project in Europe to date, was realised in Wales (Iwan Brioc) (see Owen 2002). Further legislative projects are taking place, for instance, in Portugal, which has a connection to the Portuguese parliament through the theatre activist José Soeiro. The well-known UK company Cardboard Citizens, which works with the homeless, has also made extensive use of Legislative Theatre, and the Lille-based T'OP! Théâtre draws on it in its work with ›les sans-papiers‹.

From its beginnings in Brazil, the ›Madalena Project‹ – TO work with, by, and for Women – has spread across the continents. Studies on this are not yet available, though initial reports can be found in Metaxis (2010) and in German by Fritz (2011). Updated information on regular international Ma(g)dalena (this form is now also used) activities can be found on Bárbara Santos's website: www.kuringa.org. So far there have been two international seminars (Rio 2012, Berlin 2013), plus international meetings (Berlin 2012/13, La Paz 2014); in September 2015 the first international Ma(g)dalena Festival took place in Puerto Madryn, Argentina, the second in July 2016 in Barcelona.

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5   Some of Jana Sanskriti's plays are published as *Where We Stand: Five Plays by Sanjoy Ganguly.* Kolkata: Camp 2009.

In 1995, Doug Paterson founded the annually held international conference *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (PTO: www.pto.org), taking place in the USA. It is the largest Think Tank, so to speak, on the methods of Augusto Boal. In the last four years the topics covered a broad thematic spectrum, which along with the theatre methodology, addressed many important areas of communal life and critical praxis. This included areas like pedagogy, politics and people's education, multiculturality, diversity, learning transformation, handling trauma, healing and ritual work, and further LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer) subjects. The PTO conferences are spaces in which both marginal and mainstream activists can meet for an independent and critical exchange about their artistic, pedagogical and societal activities.

During the course of a festival in 1999, Vienna, Austria became, for a short time, the platform of the European TO-World. Moreover, the encounter and collaboration of Augusto Boal, Julian Boal, Luc Opdebeeck and Ronald Matthijssen, led both to the newsletter *Under Pressure* and to the virtual ITO platform (founded 2003), which for a time became the most important international medium of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* scene in the northern hemisphere. The website's Forum, Yellow Pages, News and Library, along with its archive, hosted by the Dutch organisation Formaat, were and continue to be a treasure trove and connection point for those interested in TO. Due to a lack of resources the website was predominantly moderated in Europe in English, which made for limitations and consequent criticism. During the CTO-Conference in Rio in 2009 a working group was formed with a representative from each continent, with the aim of democratising the sharing of information; this however remains to be found. Facebook has taken on the role of the old networking media, but is no true replacement for the, albeit limited, sincere discourse facilitated by Formaat.

Augusto Boal and his centre in Brazil, the CTO-Rio – which continues to coordinate and stimulate much work in Latin America – published *Metaxis – The Theatre of the Oppressed Review* for the first time in 2001. The first two issues were in English and Portuguese, the later editions only in Portuguese.

Under Pressure and *Metaxis* included reports, studies and project descriptions of TO's many areas of application. *Metaxis* had a stronger focus on Brazil and the bridge to African countries with Portuguese language, while *Under Pressure* had more of a European influence.

1.5.4 Ethics and practice

Sanjoy Ganguly describes the central element of TO as the ›attitude‹ of the protagonists/practitioners/agents (in Fritz 2012: 162). An understanding of democracy and participation, trust in the intellect of those affected, their abilities and essential competence in problem solving, as well as a clear sense of values, are absolute prerequisites for the Joker role (Fritz 2012: 138–151). In this respect, the Theatre of the Oppressed is a very particular phenomenon in that its ethics underpin and condition the forms of its practice and its essential social and political aims. The genre it adopts is less important than how it negotiates with its participants, practitioners and audiences. Boal said: ›There are many kinds of theatre, I love them all (Yo las prefiero a todas)!‹ – adding ›If they serve their purpose‹ (Boal in Monléon 1978: 81).

The most important elements of the method, as well as its possibilities for adaptation, expansion, reduction etc., can be found in its developmental history. With the knowledge of the roots and Zeitgeist from which Boalian theatre was born, we can shape it into forms appropriate to contemporary usage and ask if it can achieve its intention to humanise humanity.

Boal's validation and extension of Brecht is part of a perspective which sees increasing choice as a move towards greater agency, freedom and ethical value. In Brecht's and Boal's terms, ›wrong‹ choice would strongly correlate with kinds of self-interested behaviour which closes down options for others[6]. To avoid this intellectual, affective and operational restriction, one way is to seek to re-engage as much as possible with all channels of human cognition and interaction – with others and the world; a practice of theatre rooted in the body has much to offer in this respect.

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6   John Stuart Mill expresses similar views: ›Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.‹ (Utilitarianism. Buffalo: Prometheus Books 1863/1967: 16–17); and: ›The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it.‹ (*On Liberty* and Other essays, Ed. John Gray. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, OUP 1991: 17)

In the nineteen seventies in Latin America, in the hands of Buenaventura, Boal, García and others (see Chapter 8), theatre was instrumentalised for the revolution, today it is ›instrumentalised‹ for various project goals, which one could simply see as the ›format‹ of our time. But one should be aware that there is also other, process-oriented theatre work and that the principles and processes of that work have indeed often been forged in such fraught political situations. The fundamentals of the work discussed in this book include sensory and intellectual openness, dialogic practice and an experimental attitude. It seems only natural to find links between these forms, in order to experience enrichment through lively exchange⁷. In the twenty-first century, the ›conditions of production‹ of the Theatre of the Oppressed, particularly in Europe, differ greatly from those at the time of its emergence.

Here, personal experience of military repression, murder and torture are usually not the direct impetus for choosing to do Boalian theatre – although profound refugee crises and the attempt to find adequate ways to respond have brought it close to the experience of many. People who employ the methodology may not have received an initial training in theatre arts in the traditional sense. Humanising educational goals, solidarity with oppressed groups, preventative work, self-awareness scenarios, the search for alternative forms of protest and rationally founded activism are predominant motivations. But many practitioners have at least one other occupation as supplementary income, such as in the fields of the arts, psychology, mediation, pedagogy or therapy.

In Applied Theatre, it is always damaging and deleterious to present problems in a simplified manner to make them easier to understand, thus tending to patronise people. This patronising attitude can be a danger for target-group or project-oriented theatre, which can often, even with the best of intentions, lose the ability to respond flexibly to the vitality of the community in which it is engaged, by accepting rigid guidelines (project budget, duration, underlying marketing strategies) which lead to top-down ›solutions‹.

Transfunctionality and transdisciplinarity are in many senses the norm, which brings both benefits and problems. ›Doing TO‹ and similar work almost always requires a complex of ethical, political and psycho-

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7   One place where this may occur in the future is the Jana Sanskriti International Research and Resource Institute (www.jsirri.org).

somatic choices. People who choose to do it, for however long and in whatever circumstances, need to confront critical existential and ethical, as well as economic and interpersonal, decisions.

The First International Joker Conference in Rio de Janeiro 2009, which Augusto Boal helped to plan, showed the wide spectrum of TO application. The subject areas ranged from pedagogy, work in political conflict zones, the situation of women, all the way to the topics of health and psychiatry and human rights work.

I understand the aim declared in the foundational statutes, to humanise humanity (see Chapter 5), as the search for dynamic peace.

1.6 Structure of the book

Part 1 charts the foundations of TO. Paulo Freire's work and the Declaration of Principles of TO are used to interrogate key aspects; the Latin American literacy programmes of the 1960s and 70s, which strongly influenced Boal's work, are also explained in terms of their relationship to TO. Boal's life and successive stages of development are set in context.

But instead of following Boal into exile, I turn in Part 2 to the theatre scene in Colombia and examine the work of two prominent movements which have strong connections with TO: Creación Colectiva and Participatory Action Research. The intention behind this is to offer a platform from which to engage with developments in TO in Europe. TO is positioned as an art form within revolutionary theatre practice, as a form of sociological research, a politics and a pedagogy. In this context too, Rodolfo Kusch's work on indigenous peoples in the context of postcolonial studies has provided a new perspective on Latin America, opening up questions of praxis in participatory work which have considerable bearing on TO.

The main thrust of Part 3 is the transfer of TO to Europe and the quest to ›translate‹ Boal's methods into another context. The body serves in many respects as the vehicle to enable this. Work on the body as the only concrete locus of human being is a guiding principle. In this context the research and teaching of Moshé Feldenkrais serves as a thread to bring the fragments of Boal's work back together as a working whole.

Part I
Histories, Methodologies, Ethics

Chapter 2: Freire and Boal

2.1 Updating the Term – Theatre of the Oppressed

The term Theatre of the Oppressed has its origins in the revolutionary agit-prop theatre of the Latin American continent, the ›Teatro de Agitación‹ (cf. Casa de las Américas, *Teatro Latinoamericano de Agitación*, 1972). Augusto Boal's arsenal of methods, which aims to transform, to empower and to humanise, adopts the same name and retains it into the 21st century; its presence is now worldwide and its application ranges across a wide variety of contexts, but it retains the imprint of its Latin American heritage, which has made it particularly alert to the nuances of work within diverse systems of governance.

More detail about the Latin American context in the 1960s and 70s is found later on in this book, particularly in Chapters 3 and 6. In this brief introduction it is worth reminding readers that these were decades of political turmoil all over Latin America; military dictatorships seized control of Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Brazil and Uruguay; armed struggle and violent revolt often resulted, accompanied by equally violent repression, fuelled by competing narratives and in the shadow of Cold War conflict. Some of Boal's accounts of his own experience of this figure in Chapter 3.

Latin American history is characterised by colonialism, paternalism and consequent dependency; Dependency Theory (as articulated especially by André Gunder Frank and Eduardo Galeano) is not uncontested, but retains its core validity, particularly in light of the influence of the USA in Latin America[8] and its (the USA's) refusal to enter into any sincere renegotiation of relations. Wolfgang Dietrich writes:

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8   For example, through the *Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation*, formerly known as Escuela de las Américas or School of the Americas; as well as John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress – with its misleading name, which Barack Obama recently tried to revive.

> The history of America is marked by a long-term structural, material domination by northern elites over the southern periphery, which these elites consider as their manifest destiny, natural, morally just, civilizing and progressive, even though its exploitative character is easy to verify... this principle of governance follows the economic cycles and prerogatives of the capitalist world system, and its global political guidelines. Consequently, the choice of method is between military violence, economic pressure and (unequal) international legal agreements. But the only thing which changes is the external appearance, not the strategic rationale (Dietrich 2007: 16).

Boal reads this shift in the formal configuration of the principle of rule as follows:

> We Latin Americans, who live in countries characterised by dependency, victims of economic, political and cultural imperialism, must react to this fact; victims of imperialism, we can also be its destroyers, if we transform ourselves into its most fully embodied enemies. (...) Our dance is a social act.[9] (Boal 1975: 13)

And:

> The military dictatorships went away: economic dictatorships took their place. The tenebrous Latin American night, tired of darkness, turned to dawn. But before daybreak, there come the shadows of a new night. Globalisation has already been invented, to create unemployment, and destroy the minimal rudiments of social security – always the first victims of economic repression. Witches and demons tend their cauldrons. Day has not yet broken... and already it is night. Theatre is light, it is the dawn. In times like ours, we need to reaffirm our identity: we must not let ourselves be globalised, robotised. Let us be who we are. I know that my nose is large, my ears are different sizes: but I know that that person is me! I will not surrender! (Boal 2001: 313–4)

This passage mirrors not only Boal's passionate fight against oppressive rule, but also his internalisation of the world; making himself equal to the oppressed population, he fights for his survival; he and all oppressed populations/people wish to be who they are, taking possession

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9   All translations of citations from Spanish and Portuguese, unless otherwise specified, initially into German by the author, and subsequently into English by the translators.

of their ›self‹, conceived of as both a physical/personal and a collective entity.

The visions expressed in *The Will to Meaning* (Viktor Frankl: Frankl 1988), *The Courage to Be* (Paul Tillich: Tillich 1952) and liberation movements (in pedagogy, psychology, philosophy and theology) underpin this ›social dance‹ and emerge as ›theatre as martial art‹.

Although people often do not want to describe themselves as ›oppressed‹ nowadays, Boal's claim is still viable. If anything, oppression, violence and inequality are more prevalent than in the 1970s. However, the homogeneity of discourse and economic and political systems closes off alternative imaginaries and stifles thought and action which might produce different kinds of relation and communality. Though we hear of natural catastrophes (which often result from human interventions like atomic testing, fracking and climate change) and of militant conflicts, we are scarcely moved by a film such as *Let's Make Money* (2008), in which ›economic hit man‹ John Perkins confesses to having worked for the consulting firm Chas. T. Main for 11 years, economically manipulating so-called ›developing countries‹[10].

Yet embedded in the pedagogy and practice of the (Freirean) literate body are the seeds of proactive responsibility and agency. Freire and Boal's methodologies for a personal and communal praxis of liberation still have relevance.

Pedagogy and theatre are political activities: to practice them means being politically active. Boal and Freire left an extensive repertoire (Boal calls it ›arsenal‹) of methods, theories and praxis for personal and collective reconstruction. Their tireless work, their lives in exile, their utopias, situate their pedagogy and their theatre as an interface of oppression and liberation. From them one can learn that nothing is carved in stone, that all books have yet to be written and that we must embark from where we are and go to where we could be, in the way we would like to be according to our actual capacity and abilities. In Part 3 of this book, this aspiration will enter into dialogue with the recent paradigm shift in neuroscience and its impact on pedagogy.

The lives of both Boal and Freire were marked by their endeavour to change the world. Both received accolades throughout the world and

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10   The revelations of the ›Panama Papers‹ (2016) about offshore tax-avoidance operations merely underline the prevalence of this practice.

were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, which neither was award-
ed. Their hope for the world was probably the most rebellious element
of their activity. Both advanced literacy: Freire in the classical sense
of the word on a political-emancipatory level, Boal through the lan-
guage of theatre. In 1996, Boal presented Freire with Rio de Janeiro's
medal of honour, comparing him in his speech to the inventor of the
wheel and to Newton, because he ›helps people to find out for them-
selves, in a Socratic way, what lives within them‹ (Boal 2005: 128). This
self-awareness leads to a virtually irreversible turning point in one's
own attitude: the human being goes from being the object to the sub-
ject of the story.

In his message on World Theatre Day 2009, Boal said:

> When we look beyond appearances, we see oppressors and oppressed peo-
> ple, in all societies, ethnic groups, genders, social classes and casts; we see an
> un-fair and cruel world. We have to create another world because we know
> it is possible. But it is up to us to build this other world with our hands and
> by acting on the stage and in our own life.

> Participate in the ›spectacle‹ which is about to begin and once you are back
> home, with your friends act your own plays and look at what you were never
> able to see: that which is obvious. Theatre is not just an event; *it is a way of
> life.*

> We are all actors: being a citizen is not living in society, it is changing it.
> (Boal 2009/02/26) [italics added]

Boal and Freire share the goals of political alphabetisation, liberation
and the achievement of human dignity; both their pedagogies involve
the recognition that oppression we encounter on the outside needs also
to be confronted within: this is the origin of every autonomous emanci-
patory action and attitude.

Pedagogy, education, art and politics are interwoven with each oth-
er. A ›consciously non-oppressive‹ future cannot be designed without a
clear understanding of the past and the present.

2.2 The relevance of Pedagogy of the Oppressed for TO

Boal and Freire first met in Brazil in 1959[11] and again in 1960, were active in the same popular cultural centre (Centro de Cultura Popular in Recife), but never worked together. While in exile, they met and visited each other several times. Paulo Freire and his first wife Elza visited Boal a few times while he lived in Portugal from 1976–1978. TO is based on Freire's principles of transitive, democratic and dialogical pedagogy[12], but has also been (and continues to be) nourished by other influences. Boal (1931–2009) repeatedly described John Gassner (1903–1967), José Augusto (Boal's biological father), Paulo Freire (1921–1997) and Nelson Rodrigues (1912–1980) as his fathers (Boal 2005: 129).

In the context of this book there are at least three key indicators highlighting the need to examine Boal and Freire's relationship as people, as well as the interconnectedness of their work and its resonance for the 21st century:

- The Peruvian literacy project ALFIN to which Boal was invited in August 1973, is considered one of the pivotal moments of development of TO. Following his collaboration in ALFIN, in several books and essays Boal describes his experiences there as fundamental to his further work (among others in *Teatro do Oprimido*).
- Later he calls ›his‹ theatre the *Theatre of the Oppressed* and justifies this as follows:

In Peru,[13] I wrote *Técnicas Latino-Americanas De Teatro Popular* (*Latin American Techniques of Popular Theatre*) and *Categorias Do Teatro Popular* (*Categories of Popular Theatre*). Theatre of the Oppressed did not yet have that name. Why the title? Booksellers argued that no one would buy a book called *Poéticas Políticas* (*Political Poetics*). Poetry or politics? I changed it to *Poética*

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11 According to Baraúna and Motos, p. 79; according to Boal in *Legislative Theatre* it was 1960.

12 Although Freire has been subjected to trenchant critique, by Martin Stauffer (Stauffer 2007) and others, in terms of discrepancies between his ideology and his actual practice, there is no doubt that his influence on Boal and the development of TO is highly significant.

13 The information Boal gives on his books' places of origin is apparently also contradictory according to his biography. He wrote virtually ›everywhere‹, then published repeatedly and in various, always different places.

do Oprimido (*Poetics of the Oppressed*) in homage to Paulo Freire. Another rejection: which shelf should it go on? Anyone flicking through it would realise their mistake. Theatre? No one would open it, they would think it was poetry. When I pronounced Teatro *do Oprimido* for the first time, it sounded strange. Still today, for some, it sounds like *Deprimido* (Depressed), although it is about uprising, about what you consider worth struggling for, about being happy. Imagine if I had called it *Theatre of Happiness, Theatre of Revolution, Theatre of the Invented Future* – pretentious. It stayed as it is, and now I like it: *Theatre of the Oppressed!* (Boal 2001: 311)

The Declaration of Principles of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2003) did not explicitly state that Freire's pedagogy represented an important foundation and served as an ethical basis for TO as a universal human rights theatre. But as early as 1998 Boal wrote in his book *Legislative Theatre*:

Paulo Freire invented a method, his method, our method, the method which teaches the illiterate that they are perfectly literate in the languages of life, of work, of suffering, of struggle… ›For me to exist Paulo Freire must exist.‹ (Boal 2005: 128–9)

In his earlier books he repeatedly stresses the meaning of learning and of pedagogy for his work. The subject of conscientisation of change and liberation was the leitmotif, and the theatre his love, with whose help he dedicated his life to creating ›a better world‹. The theatre and its many forms were meant to serve the people; the *Theatre of the Oppressed* however, was meant to be *their* theatre. In the Spanish edition of *Teatro del Oprimido,* in the interview with Emile Copfermann, Boal points directly to the roots of TO in the popular culture movement, for which he gives Freire the credit:

It was never our objective to take the path of a counter culture [like Tropical-ism]. We stood elsewhere. I was deeply connected to Paulo Freire's Popular Culture Centre (CRPC) in Recife: He was taking care of the alphabetization, while I attended to the theatre; this was the first centre. The second was in Rio, created by the national student union. Subsequently, others, thou-sands, founded specific centres: Centres for the Favela residents, Centres for metal workers, for women, for students, for workers, for farmers. Freire was of considerable importance for this movement (…) The Theatre of the Oppressed has its roots in the popular culture movement. (Boal 2009b: 263)

In the German edition of *Theatre of the Oppressed* and *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* he tells translator Henry Thorau in an interview about his time with the ›Theatre of Artists‹ and the time ›afterwards‹[14]:

> I do however believe, that I can have a great effect with the theatre work I do now. In me, and in every other person, there is also power to create change. These abilities are what I wish to release and develop. (Boal in Thorau and Spinu 1989: 159)

In the same interview, in 1989, he discusses the centre he was planning in Paris, in which pedagogy and liberation would constitute the educational focus alongside acting:

> We will have three departments there. In the first we want to prepare actors for their vocation. The second department focuses on education, pedagogy. We want to call the third department *Centre Dramatique de Récupération des Mutilés par L'Éducation Autoritaire [Centre for Dramatic Arts for the Rehabilitation of Those Mutilated by Authoritarian Education]* (...) In the third department of our centre we will strive to liberate and develop those oppressed abilities, which have been deformed and/or suppressed. (ibid: 168)

In his speech for Freire, 1996, Boal said:

> Paulo Freire, in a way, ›de-complicated‹ teaching. (...) Freire created something simpler, more human than the complicated authoritarian forms of teaching which placed obstacles in the way of the learner. With Paulo Freire, we learned to learn. In his method, over and above learning to read and write, one learns more: one learns to know and to respect otherness and the other, difference and the different. My fellow creature resembles me, but he is not me; he is similar to me, I resemble him. By engaging in dialogue we learn, the two of us gain, teacher and pupil, since we are all pupils and all teachers. I exist because they exist. To write on a white sheet of paper one needs a black pen; to write on a blackboard the chalk must be a different colour. For me to be, they must be. For me to exist Paulo Freire must exist. (idem)

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14   Boal clearly distinguishes ›the theatre‹, the art of acting for the proscenium, i.e. learned acting, from the Theatre of the Oppressed. Cecília Boal confirmed this in a conversation with the author in Rio de Janeiro, 2012. The one had very little to do with the other, in his view. When he was active for TO, his primary objective was the transformation of society. Yet he was also active for the ›other‹ theatre.

Freire simplified and humanised the learning, not just the teaching, process, just as Boal did. It is precisely this which we speak of today in terms of process-oriented learning, process-oriented theatre work, as well as low-threshold learning processes, the pertinent strength of TO, because it is integrative, it is theatre for all people, by all people. Herein lies the radically democratising nature of all TO processes, based on the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and a form of experiential practice, rooted in direct somatic learning. In his 2005 interview, with Baraúna and Motos, Boal describes how fluid and dynamic the influences of Freire on his (Boal's) work were, and that author and method are always mutually conditioned:

> The influences occur in a dynamic way, we cannot reduce an author to the influences he receives, as if we were dealing with a mathematical equation. (Baraúna and Motos 2009: 98)

Baraúna and Motos elaborate:

> For Boal the Theatre of the Oppressed incorporates the methodology of Freire and the suggestion, that every person constructs their knowledge in freedom and autonomy, an open method, so that the individual may find their way freely. (idem)

This will be explored further in Part 3. Learning in freedom and autonomy, thus in dignity, brings us to both Feldenkrais and consequently to results in educational research. With reference to the learning process, Boal says to Baraúna and Motos: ›We all should make theatre, to find out who we are and to discover who we can be one day.‹ (Baraúna and Motos 2009: 87)

And on a personal note: ›The result was, that I understood, that making theatre and teaching are not mutually exclusive: I discovered my double vocation as an artist and a teacher‹ (ibid: 87).

›We learned to learn‹ signals the radical nature of the Freirean pedagogical endeavour which Boal took on wholeheartedly, both in terms of a collaborative and activist approach to knowledge and of positioning theatre process as a way of embodying and materialising its effects.

> From 1995, the annual *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (PTO) Conferences have been held in the USA. Their mission statement is as follows:

> To challenge oppressive systems by promoting critical thinking and social justice. We organize an annual meeting that focuses on the work of liberatory educators, activists, artists, and community organizers. (www.ptoweb.org)

The University of Omaha, Nebraska, hosted the PTO Conference from 1995–1998. The initiator of the 1995 PTO Conference was Doug Paterson, who is still a member of the conference board. As of 1999, the PTO takes place in a different US state each year. It represents the largest and most continuous international platform for Boal and Freire.

Thus it is necessary to discuss Boal in his multifaceted nature: as artist, author, pedagogue, political activist; to consider him on just one level would be insufficient. Boal, the greatest ›Joker‹ of all, calls freedom the ›place‹ where his theatre hides, when it is not clear from its actions at first glance. In his way of life, the stages of life and of theatre come together in the same space.

2.3 Biographical overlap between Boal and Freire

Boal and Freire went through similar phases in their lives and moved in similar circles of the intelligentsia of Latin America, both during their time on the continent and during their time in exile. Beginning with their investment in ideas of democratisation, their life stories also united them (persecution, exile, return and later awards).

2.3.1 Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal shared many periods in their lives, with an age difference of just ten years; they had a large joint framework of orientation. Both were active in the revolutionary movement Movimiento Popular de Cultura (MPC) of the nineteen sixties, which carried out considerable political as well as linguistic alphabetisation in both the city and countryside.[15] The Arena Theatre of São Paulo, together with Boal, promoted several groups (Nucleus I, II and III), whose job it

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15 Freire is named as a co-founder of this organisation (cf. Stauffer 2007: 160) and led the adult education projects as well as the research department. In 1963 he was appointed President of the National Commission for Popular Culture by President Goulart.

was to attract an audience from the oppressed population. The MPC was supported by the populist President Goulart and the National Student Union. It led to the formation of numerous CPCs (Centros Populares de Cultura, see below: Part 3). Boal worked with the nuclei of the Arena Theatre in Recife, Freire in Rio Grande do Norte. They were engaged in the same project (since the University of Recife was tasked with the training of ›Alfabetizadores‹), but had no direct contact with one another at the time. It was during this time that the first so-called ›Círculos de Cultura‹ (discussion circles), emerged in Recife, which were great sources of inspiration for Freire's alphabetisation work. Though it is not possible to reconstruct precisely how contact between Freire and Boal occurred at the time, it is clear that Freire's writings were well-known and trend-setting within the revolutionary awareness-raising scene.

According to Baraúna and Motos:

> Freire was the first Brazilian pedagogue who described the illiteracy problem as a social problem, which should be solved through a sweeping process of societal mobilisation. The 2nd National Conference of Adult Education (Rio de Janeiro, 1958) was the launchpad of the popular movement in Brazil. (Baraúna and Motos 2009: 24)

The two years in which the CPCs existed were marked by extraordinary productivity, in the form of numerous publications, films and plays. Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, one of the important dramaturgs of the Arena Theatre, founded the CPC of Rio De Janeiro. The greatest challenge to the work lay in the authoritarian relationship of the ›cultural activists‹ (intellectuals, artists and students) with the oppressed, disadvantaged masses. This was certainly a formative time (1962–1964) for the then 31-year-old Boal, as is evident from the interview with Copfermann. The CPCs were immediately banned after the military coup in 1964; Freire's activities were categorised as subversive. Freire was incarcerated for 72 days and fled, though not immediately, into exile for 16 years, from which he returned in 1980 at the age of 59. He first went to Bolivia and then to Santiago de Chile, where he lived from 1964 until 1969. His first book *Educación como práctica de la liberdad* was published there in 1965, as well as *Pedagogía do Oprimido* (between 1967 and 1968) in Portuguese. In 1969 he was appointed to teach at Harvard (1969–1970), which he cut short due to the call of the World Council of Churches to Geneva, where

he lived from 1970–1980. During his years in exile he gave lectures in Cuernavaca (Mexico), where he founded the CIDOC (Centre for International Documentation) in 1960 together with Ivan Illich. He was active as an educational consultant for various governments in the global south, especially in Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. In Geneva, together with other exiled Brazilians, he founded the educational institute IDAC. In 1980, a year after once again receiving a Brazilian passport, he returned to Brazil and taught at the University of Campinas and the catholic University of São Paulo. Allegedly, he had already joined the Brazilian Labour Party (Stauffer 2007: 164), which he co-founded in 1979 while still in Geneva. He was appointed Secretary of Education to the municipality of São Paulo in 1989, a mandate which he relinquished after almost two years. Freire was married twice: for 42 years with his first wife Elza and later to his former student Ana Maria Araújo. Both made substantial contributions to his work.

2.3.2 Augusto Boal

Following the military coup of 1964, Boal's Arena Theatre went into its fourth period of creation: the most celebrated production was *Arena Conta Zumbi* (1965) (Babbage 2004: 11). The years that followed were marked by a perpetual struggle to find opportunities for expression in a situation growing ever more life-threatening. This escalated to regular police raids on the theatre, destruction, kidnapping and bombings; though the most awful years were between 1968 and 1971. Despite the danger, Boal travelled clandestinely to Cuba for one month in 1968. At this time, belief in the Latin American revolution was spreading across the continent, as was the growing terror. In his book *Hamlet and the Baker's Son,* Boal refers to this time as ›The Theatre's Guerilla War‹ (Boal 2001: 264). In 1971 Boal was arrested, locked up for three months and tortured. He was released after great international protest (by Arthur Miller, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, Peter Brook, Richard Schechner and Ariane Mnouchkine, among others) and an intervention by his brother Albertino. During his incarceration he was put in the painful situation of watching his divorced first wife relearn to walk in the prison hallway, after having been tortured[16]. Many others, like Anísio Teixeira (1900–1971),

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16 Information about the impacts of dictatorship, torture and exile on wo-

prominent Brazilian lawyer, educational reformer and intellectual, who died in unexplained circumstances, did not survive.

Boal's exile lasted from 1971 until 1986.[17] These 15 years led him first to Argentina (1971–1976). Due to his isolation as a Brazilian artist in Argentina, most of his time was spent travelling (to the USA, Mexico, Columbia,Venezuela, among others). In 1973, the year in which Salvador Allende was overthrown, Boal was invited to Peru, a circumstance leading him to describe this year in *Hamlet and the Baker's Son* as ›a decisive year in my life‹ (Boal 2001: 305). From 1976 until 1978 he lived with his family in Portugal, and then in Paris. Invitations from Sweden, Germany, Italy, Norway, Austria, Belgium and elsewhere followed. Boal taught teachers of the Freinet Movement, trade-unionists and professional actors. In Paris he started the CÉDITADE Centre,[18] the leadership of which he later passed on for the sake of his work abroad.

In 1986 he returned to Brazil with his family, who had followed him wherever possible. There he joined the Workers' Party and became City Councillor in Rio de Janeiro (1993–1996) and founded the CTO-RIO in 1996 as a registered Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). Boal remained a tireless global traveller, but his focus was now on Brazil and the basic work in schools, psychiatric institutions, jails and cultural centres. He would have readily become Cultural Minister under Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, but Gilberto Gil was chosen for the position. However, he also dedicated himself to the spreading of his ideas worldwide. Although the International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation (ITO) was never formally founded, it represents an informal, world-wide, predominantly internet- and social media-based, solidarity network of TO practitioners.

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men's lives in this period is relatively hard to come by. To symbolically remedy this void in awareness I would like to point to a publication by a women's collective of the time: *Memórias das mulheres do exílio*, Volume II, edited collectively by Albertina de Oliveira Costa, Maria Teresa Porcinuncula Moraes, Norma Marzola and Valentina da Rocha (1980 Lima: Paz e Terra). This book also contains a contribution by Paulo Freire's first wife Elza.

17 Though he could have returned as of 1979, the family decided to return later.

18 Centre d'études et diffusion des techniques actives d'expression [Centre for the Study and Diffusion of Active Techniques of Expression]

2.4 Awards and Works

According to Stauffer, Paulo Freire received 28 honorary Doctorates; according to Baraúna and Motos it was 36. Boal allegedly received 20 honorary Doctorates (Stauffer 2007: 164; Baraúna and Motos 2009: 99). Together they were awarded the Doctor Honoris Causa in 1996 from the University of Omaha, Nebraska. Freire was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993, Boal in 2008; neither of them ultimately received it. In 1994, UNESCO awarded Boal for his work with the Pablo Picasso Medal and recognized the *Theatre of the Oppressed* as a *Method of Social Change.* The Prince Claus Award (2007) and the nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize were the most significant awards for Boal. While the awards he received up until the early 1980s were recognition of his artistic work, mostly in Latin America, he later received recognition for his pioneering and peace-building work in diverse societal areas (Peace and Democracy, Youth Work, Drama in Education, Lifework etc.). In March 2009 the International Theatre Institute (ITI) made Boal the Ambassador of that year's International World Theatre Day.

Boal published roughly 20 books[19]. In 1980 he had already published 14 works, of which five were theoretical. Freire wrote over 50 books, according to Baraúna and Motos; Stauffer cites 38 publications in his bibliography. The works of Freire and Boal most frequently translated are *Pedagogia do Oprimido*[20] and *Teatro de Oprimido* (which has been translated into at least 25 languages)[21].

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19   The number cannot be pinpointed; the indications are contradictory, particularly concerning his plays.

20   This book, published in New York in 1970, had by 1974 already been translated into Spanish, Italian, French, German, Danish and Swedish and because of the English edition, it spread across Africa, Asia and Oceania (cf. FREIRE, Paulo, *Pedagogy of Hope*, First South Asian Edition, Continuum, London, 2005 (1992): 103). First edition 1967/68 in Portuguese in Chile. The translations vary; some contain material which is not found in others; as of 2015 no integral translation of the first handwritten manuscript has been published.

21   By 1980 *Teatro do Oprimido* had already been published by houses in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Lisbon, New York, Milan, Frankfurt, Stockholm, Mexico, Denmark, Greece and again in Mexico (cf. *Stop: c'est magique!*, 1980, inside back cover). First Edition 1974 in Portuguese, translation into

In summary, one can say that both protagonists undoubtedly belonged to the Latin American intelligentsia and avant-garde and were dedicated to improving and guiding the destiny of their countries, through education and increased consciousness of equality on a professional level. Their high international profile afforded them the privilege of support and solidarity in times of crisis and a high degree of recognition for their life's work. Together with their contemporaries, they were responsible for the ›Denunzia‹ of human rights violations and for the exposure of structures perpetuating violence. Along with other intellectuals and researchers (among them the sociologist Darcy Ribeiro, a friend of both Freire and Boal) they contributed to the writing of a ›new‹ historical narrative of Latin America. While Freire was predominantly active as a philosopher, Boal the activist enriched the liberation movement with the aesthetic dimension of somatic learning and the process of coming to terms with the past (as his life and his work demonstrate, in particular the piece *Murro em Ponto de Faca* [Running onto the Open Knife]).

Freire and Boal's international work was marked (and enriched) by their Latin American heritage, which particularly sensitised them to systems of governance. They were part of a circle of people who wanted to understand human nature, and thus studied, learned and became creatively involved in the active devising of their reality. The foundation for this process is the discovery of individual and collective identity.

Chapter 3
State Politics in Latin America 1960–1980

3.1 Historico-Political Perspectives of State Politics

In this section I will address human suffering, which is universally root-ed in human history and affects all people. To do so also exposes the underlying logic and actions of institutions motivated by state politics, which spread violence to further their economic advantage in ways too numerous to discuss here. It is nearly impossible not to come into con-tact with it in some form or another. I therefore begin this section with a collection of quotes on the subject of violence and its effects on various continents and societies and in different epochs.

> *Torture*
>
> Torture is a hateful process. Like love-making, it is done naked. The *pau-de-arara*, straightforward and popular (in both senses of the word), is used even today for common prisoners throughout Brazil: anyone who says otherwise knows they are lying. Electric cables are attached to fingers and ankles; the electricity runs through the body assisted by the saltwater in which the pris-oner is bathed at the beginning of the session: later on, salty sweat takes over the job. The electric current varies in accordance with the rheostat and the anger or haste of the operators. The body is hung by the knees on an iron pole running under handcuffed hands which in turn are crossed under the knees, taking the weight of the tortured person who is effectively tied in a knot. In the beginning the pain is bearable. Then it is not. The fingers be-come violet balls of blood not circulating. Cries resound in the solid silence, death wishes. (Boal 2001: 290)
>
> The boundaries of my body are also the boundaries of my self. My skin sur-face shields me against the external world: if I am to have trust, I must feel on it only what I *want* to feel.
> At the first blow, however, this trust in the world breaks down. The other person, *opposite* whom I exist physically in the world, and *with* whom I can exist only as long as he does not touch my skin surface as a border, forces his own corporeality on me with the first blow. He is on me and thereby

destroys me. It is like a rape, a sexual act without the consent of one of the two partners. (…) If no help can be expected, this physical overwhelming by the other then becomes an existential consummation of destruction all together. (Améry 2007: 81)

Trauma

Nothing is (…) abolished, no conflict settled, no memory turned into mere recollection. What happened, happened. But *that* it happened, is not so easy to accept. I rebel: against my past, against history, against the present, which allows the unfathomable to become frozen historically and thus outrageously distorted. Nothing has scarred, and what should have been healed in 1964, breaks open like a infected wound. Emotions? Whatever. Where is it written, that exposure has to be emotionless? The opposite seems true for me.

Exposure can only do its duty justice, if it does its work with passion. (Améry 1988: 44–5)

I do not want to close my eyes. I want to live, I don't want to die. The past is not extinguished, if forgotten: it hides, like ulcers. That is why I write, that is why I speak – I want to wrench it out of me! To bring it to the light of day. (…) Theatre is desire, bodily struggle, personal defence. Theatre, if it tells the truth, proffers a quest for oneself, oneself in others and others in oneself. It proffers the humanization of humankind. This cannot be done without struggle. Today, theatre is a martial art! (Boal 2001: 313–4)

I was in Finland and they told me, it was the country with the highest suicide rate in Europe. For me, suicide is the final expression of previous torture, the person committing suicide is someone who has been tortured, who prefers death to the endless agony. There is also torture here in Europe: why else would there be so many suicides? (Boal 1990: 91)

Massacre

The first British Tank Unit to arrive at BB[22] was Anti-Tank Battery of 63 Anti-Tank Regiment … The scene which met the First Comers beggars description. There were appr. 50,000 people in the camp of which about 10,000 lay dead in the huts or about the camp. Those still alive had no food or water for about seven days, after a long period of semi-starvation. Typhus, among other diseases, was raging … filth everywhere… the air was poisoned … (Lasker-Wallfisch 1996: 97)

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22   Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

Conquista

The Spaniards cut off the arm of one, the leg or hip of another, and from some their heads at one stroke like butchers cutting up beef and mutton for market. (...) Vasco ordered forty of them to be torn to pieces by dogs (...) Some Indians they burned alive; they cut off the hands, noses and tongues, and other members of some; they threw others to the dogs; they cut off the breasts of women (...) (Todorov 1984: 141)

A Central American Example[23]

The most visible signs of the ›dirty war‹ were mutilated corpses that each morning littered the streets of El Salvador's cities. Sometimes the bodies were headless, or faceless, their features having been obliterated with a shotgun blast or an application of battery acid; sometimes limbs were missing, or hands or feet chopped off, or eyes gouged out; women's genitals were torn and bloody, bespeaking repeated rape; men's were often found severed and stuffed into their mouths. And cut into the flesh of a corpse's back or chest was likely to be the signature of one or another of the ›death squads‹ that had done the work, the most notorious of which were the Union of White Warriors and the Maximiliano Hernández Martínez Brigade. (...)

At about eight o'clock, ›various of the men who had been gathered in the church were lifted off the ground and decapitated with machetes by soldiers,‹ according to the Tutelare report. ›The soldiers dragged the bodies and the heads of the decapitated victims to the convent of the church, where they were piled together.‹ It must have been at this point that the women in the house across the street began to hear the men screaming.

Decapitation is tiring work, and slow, and more than a hundred men were crammed into that small building. After the initial beheadings – it is unclear how many died inside the church–the soldiers began bringing the men out in groups, and it was from one of the first of the groups that Domingo Claros had attempted to escape. (Danner 1993)

›Disappearing‹

Rio de Janeiro, October 1975: This morning he left the house and was never seen alive again. (...) We are in Luna, when Ary delivers the message: they faked his suicide, he says. (Galeano 1982: 79)

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23 According to UN reports, the massacre of El Mozote was one of the most violent war crimes in Central America. Some 900 civilians were murdered there by government soldiers in 1981. The Journalist Mark Danner reports extensively on his website www.markdanner.com.

At the Arena they kidnapped Norma Bengell as soon as she came off stage. A few days later she was set free in Rio de Janeiro – she had been kidnapped by the army. (...) On stage, actors worked with their finger on the trigger – really! (Boal 2001: 267–8)

Kosovo

Some 14,000 people remain unaccounted for in the countries that make up the former Yugoslavia – nearly half of the total number who disappeared in the decade since war broke out in 1991. Between 1991 and 2001, a total of 34,700 people were reported missing due to enforced disappearances or abductions in the region. The majority of their relatives are still waiting for justice. In a briefing published today on the International Day of the Disappeared, ›The right to know: Families still left in the dark in the Balkans', Amnesty International calls on the authorities in the Balkans to investigate enforced disappearances – crimes under international law – and to ensure the victims and their families receive access to justice and reparations. (Amnesty International 2012-08-29)

Dehumanisation

 (...) The loggers were buying wood from the hands of the Indians (Guajajara) and found a little Gwajá girl. They burned the child. Just to be evil. She is from another tribe, they live in the woods, have no contact with whites, are polecats. (Global Voices Online 2012/01/10)

Some Christians encounter an Indian woman, who was carrying in her arms a child at suck; and since the dog they had with them was hungry, they tore the child from the mother's arms and flung it still living to the dog, who proceeded to devour it before the mother's eyes (...) (Todorov 1984: 139)

Home

Those who know exile, have learned certain life-answers, and even more life-questions. One of these answers is the initially trivial realization, that there is no return, because the reentry of a space is never a recovery of the time lost. Among the questions however, which sits so to speak, in the exile's neck from day one onwards and never leaves him, is one which I attempt in this essay – (...) to elucidate: How much home does a person need? (Améry 1988: 60)

I believe, that we are some kind of Indios without a tribal community. (...) an Indio, who leaves his tribe and lives with another tribe for over ten years, is a wanderer between two worlds. He neither manages to integrate into the new culture, nor can he return to the old one. I believe, this is also what happened to me: today I am an Indio without tribal community. (...) In a sense we artists form a Diaspora culture. Hundreds, yes thousands of Latin Americans live in Europe in Exile. (Boal 1990: 98)

The State Machinery

As one example of many institutional establishments who use violence to enforce economic interests, the *School of the Americas* or *Escuela de las Américas* should be identified here. This military training facility for Latin American soldiers was founded in 1946 by the USA. However, due to the many protests, it closed down only to be reopened after a short hiatus in 2001, under a new name: *The Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation*. It is the most renowned institution of this kind and is described as a training camp for terrorists. One of the dictators and war criminals who emerged from it was the Guatemalan president Rios Montt (1982–83) (cf. www.soaw.org)

Former Panamanian President, Jorge Illueca, stated that the School of the Americas is the ›biggest base for destabilization in Latin America.‹ The SOA have left a trail of blood and suffering in every country where its graduates have returned. For this reason the School of the Americas has historically been dubbed the ›School of Assassins‹.

Since 1946, the SOA has trained over 64,000 Latin American soldiers in counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence and interrogation tactics. These graduates have consistently used their skills to wage a war against their own people. Among those targeted by SOA graduates are educators, union organizers, religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor. Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, ›disappeared,‹ massacred, and forced into refugee [sic] by those trained at the School of Assassins. (www.soaw.org)

Boal's stated goal for his theatre was the ›humanisation of humanity‹. He was also concerned with overcoming the violence within us, within our history and the history of our communities; this is the challenge for us all.

3.2 Dependency Theory

It is important to position the genesis of a method politically and historically, yet the task is not so simple as it may seem. Firstly, one must consider the historical narrative and its authors: whose history, written by whom? What purpose does this contextualisation serve? The writing of history *itself* is already a political act. The way in which history is viewed, from which perspective, is likewise a relevant factor.

There are those who believe that violence is a constant and unavoidable component of human history. Augusto Boal, Darcy Ribeiro and Eduardo Galeano do not share this view.

This book addresses two similar versions of this line of thought: that of the writer Eduardo Galeano, on *Dependency Theory*[24], and what I perceive as *the indigenous perspective*.

Galeano was a contemporary and friend of Boal. His book, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, presents a trenchant critique of the contemporary situation. His theory accurately reflected the spirit of the age and was convincing for a whole generation of students because, unlike alternatives, it focuses on the atrocious living conditions of majority-world inhabitants which many politicians refuse to acknowledge. Dependency should not be viewed as something set in stone, unchangeable and forever directing fate, but as an inauspicious starting point within an unequal power dynamic, which needs to be corrected (Galeano 1997/1973). Like Galeano, Marx and many other thinkers, Boal's perception of this situation is initiated from the political and economic end of the spectrum of ›dispossession‹ (Harvey 2014), since he lives through and experiences the 1960s context of the manifestation of violence by colonialist practice visited upon indigenous populations and economically and socially disadvantaged strata (themselves created by pre-capitalist practices of segregation, domination, exploitation etc.). So he starts from and expresses a Marxist analysis of the function of capital in the dispossession of humanity and the earth.

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24 Dependency here means the dependence of many countries on a few dominant industrial countries, who determine the economies of the dependent nations. Foreign businesses, as well as foreign banks, control the politics and livelihood of the population. This disadvantage, established since the time of colonisation, has meant that there was never space for self-determined political and societal configuration.

The history of the Latin American continent is marked by violence and the dominance of foreign interests; in the last century this took the form predominantly of the influence of the USA, in their fight against what they saw as the threat of communism in Latin America. Add to this the staging of reality by the media, the political apparatus and the perspective of scholarship and historical narrative.

In 1968 in Brazil the situation was:

> Between 1964 and mid-1968, fifteen auto and auto parts factories were swallowed up by Ford, Chrysler, Willys Overland, Simca, Volkswagen, and Alfa Romeo. In the electronic sector, three important Brazilian concerns passed into Japanese hands. Wyeth Laboratories, Bristol Meyers, Mead Johnson, and Lever Brothers gobbled various laboratories, reducing national production of drugs to one-fifth of the market. (Galeano 1997: 217)

In addition, chemicals and petro-chemicals, as well as metal factories, were also sold. A parliamentary commission examining the situation came to the conclusion that in 1968, 40% of the Brazilian capital market was dominated by foreign capital. The commission also found that 62% of foreign trade, 82% of shipping, 67% of air traffic and 100% of both automobile production and tyre production was in foreign hands – the list seems endless. Companies from the USA and Germany led the ranking of new ownership. The report was never made public by the military regimes.

Testimonies of former ministers confirm the disadvantage suffered by Brazilian capital on all levels: worse interest rates for loans, special foreign exchange prices for international investors etc.

The minister responsible at the time, Roberto Campos, explained his world view to the investigative commission on the transactions between Brazilian and foreign companies:

> Obviously the world is unequal. Some are born intelligent, some stupid. Some are born athletes, others crippled. The world is made up of small and large enterprises. Some die early, in the prime of life; others drag themselves criminally through a long useless existence. There is a basic fundamental inequality in human nature, in the condition of things.
> The mechanism of credit cannot escape this. To postulate that national enterprises must have the same access to foreign credit as foreign enterprises is simply to ignore the basic realities of economics (…) (Campos in Galeano 1997: 220)

He explains the world as though he were explaining it to children: the poor are poor, just because they are. The activities of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) further exacerbate this situation.

> The therapy makes the sick man sicker, the better to dose him with the drug of loans and investments. The IMF extends loans or flashes the indispensable green light for others to extend them. Born in the United States, headquartered in the United States, and at the service of the United States, the Fund effectively operates as an international inspector without whose approval U.S. banks will not loosen their pursestrings. The World Bank, the Agency for International Development, and other philanthropic organizations of global scope likewise make their credits conditional on the signature and implementation of the receiving governments‹ ›letters of intention‹ to the allpowerful Fund. (Galeano 1997: 221)

The evidence for the merciless exploitation and subjugation of a whole continent is seemingly endless. The connections are obvious and at the same time readily comprehensible: cornered governments, corrupt military regimes, repugnantly unscrupulous capitalism: the crimes of exploitation necessitate and feed off each other. The North wins, the South loses. On the 1970s in Argentina, Boal's first land of exile, Galeano writes:

> The great majority of kidnapped and disappeared people in Argentina are workers who performed some union activity. The limitless popular imagination keeps hatching new forms of struggle – the ›Sad Faces Workday,‹ the ›Angry Faces Workday‹ – and solidarity finds new channels for the escape from fear. (1997: 285)

The Uruguayan President Aparicio Méndes said in 1977:

> We are saving the country from the tragedy of political passion (…). Good folk don't talk about dictatorships, don't think about dictatorships, and don't claim human rights. (1997: 305)

Towards the end of *Open Veins of Latin America* Galeano writes:

> In these lands we are not experiencing the primitive infancy of capitalism but its vicious senility. Underdevelopment isn't a stage of development, but its consequence. Latin America's underdevelopment arises from external development, and continues to feed it. A system made impotent by its function

of international servitude, and moribund since birth, has feet of clay. It pretends to be destiny and would like to be thought eternal. All memory is subversive, because it is different, and likewise any program for the future. (285)

In those decades, Latin America was a playground for the war games of imperialism and the heroic resistance which they gave rise to.

The events in Cuba (Revolution 1959, Bay of Pigs 1961) and the charisma of a Che Guevara promised ›light at the end of the tunnel‹. The international civil rights movements, women's movements, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, the liberation movements in African nations (Amílar Cabral, Julius Nyerere), Vietnam, the Cultural Revolution of Mao Tse Tung, Liberation Theology in general, were also cause for hope and resistance. The people fought back. Participants of the revolutionary ›groups‹ came from all strata of society, among them many students, workers, blacks, former colonialists and women.

In 1974 the Carnation Revolution ended the Portuguese dictatorship; Franco held on until 1975. With the exception of Peru (1968–1975 revolutionary government of Juan Velasco Alvarado), the military took over in most Latin American countries. Chile: 1973–1990, Pinochet; Argentina: 1976–1983 military junta; Brazil: 1964–1985 military dictatorship; Guatemala: military dictatorships since 1954, and in 2012 again, a president was elected whose participation in massacres has still not been ruled out. The bloody and complex history of the Central American countries El Salvador and Nicaragua is relatively well known. Haiti, the only example in history which at least temporarily succeeded in having a free black state, pays for this historic ›presumptuousness‹ to this day (decades of reparation payments to France for its independence, dictatorships, civil war conditions, exertion of foreign influence by the World Bank and the USA). In South Africa *apartheid* dominated and the East-West conflict provided the backdrop to all this.

In *Hamlet and the Baker's Son* Boal writes:

Eritrea is here, Sierra Leone is here, Haiti has always been with us: even when people ›merely‹ die from hunger, a silent death, without bursts of gunfire – death whispered is not peace!
Peace is an incessant, dynamic search. Reality is war, divided humanity! Peace is a dream. We want the dream, we want peace (...) Peace, yes; passivity, never! (Boal 2001: 303)

Boal includes the whole world in his thinking, knows the circumstances of violence and takes part in the attempts to overcome them. The reality is that war has many faces. Bombs and grenades are not even necessary: the capitalist system is lethal enough. The time spent in exile and the global, polycentric (rather than ethnocentric) approach Boal took made him a world citizen. At the same time he was a close observer of the cultural practices of the different ethnic groups of Brazil. He identified the trajectories of social change in himself, in his immediate surroundings and in the global context. If at first he was primarily known for his artistic work, later on it was the values for which he stood which characterised the stages of his work. Each shift of ruling structures towards democratisation was a glimmer of light, each expression against it a confirmation. The downsides were all too familiar.

Carlos Zatizábal once said to me in an interview that one must always put art before activism, since art is able to survive, while activism inevitably comes to an end. Boal knew that his work was above all buying time, to enable learning processes, to open spaces for reflection, and through communication, to save many from self-destructive heroics. In *Hamlet and the Baker's Son* he writes the following, entitled *Dreaming, they were killed:*

> It was this way, dreaming, that many leaders were killed. The desire for freedom was so great, so sincerely felt, that they were blind to the hazards of the rapids, the inclemency of nature, the firepower of the uniformed enemy. They were tortured, assassinated in cold blood. Killed in combat – according to the armed forces: 1968 was the beginning. Worse was yet to come. (Boal 2001: 70)

Boal wanted to live and always go on living. That is what he wished for his work and for his vision of humanisation. His theatre was not a theatre of short-lived heroes, nor of provocation (in comparison to *Living Theatre*), not a theatre of accusation, but a theatre of common struggle, a joint (creative) intellectual exercise with the audience, the workshop participants, the passers-by etc. For Boal what was important was survival and the development of a sustainable, peace-oriented artistic dynamic. He opposed sensational heroism just as much as dogmatic representation of ideologies.

3.3 The Indigenous Perspective

In my understanding, the indigenous perspective sees the world as one, thus also postulating a unity of human being and nature; the capitalist system is largely foreign to it (see Ribeiro 1971, Todorov 1985, Galeano 2008), constructed as it is as an ›umbrella of constitutional rights and laws founded on principles of individual rights to private property guaranteed by the state‹ (Harvey 2014: 58).

For me the indigenous perspective represents, on a global level, the ›untested possibility‹, Freire's limit-situation, which in moments of existential crisis (not merely economic crisis) would be best able to open up unexpected, unthought-of possibilities.[25] For Boal as for Ribeiro it was more than just a tragically unrealisable utopia; as Brazilians and researchers they knew the indigenous communities, among them the groups of Guaraní in particular, who inspired them (e.g. through their rituals, their sense of community, the absence of competition and their world view).

In *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other,* Todorov describes an episode in which a judge in 1570 publicly decreed from his podium that ›if there should be a lack of water to water the lands of the Spaniards, then they should be watered with the blood of the Indians‹ (Todorov 1982: 172). How does this stance differ from that of the crude oil producers, who permanently poison the earth and water systems of the Niger Delta[26] with their activities and rob the people of their livelihoods? We have more or less lost the ability to keep in mind all the interconnections of the world we inhabit. These reflections aim to bring us closer to the possibility of thinking the un-thought of and imagining the unimaginable.

During the last century, the fundamental structures of exploitation and discrimination have not changed. Various forms of racism continue to operate. The prisons are full of black disadvantaged youth and adults,

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25 On the back cover, Galeano admits to being a Dinosaur who continues to believe that humanity is not condemned to egotism and the obscene pursuit of money – and that socialism is not yet dead because it has not yet happened.

26 Cf. http://platformlondon.org/2011/10/03/counting-the-cost-corporations-and-human-rights-abuses-in-the-niger-delta/

drug deaths in Brazil likewise predominantly affect those with dark skin and those who come from the Favelas. Afro-Brazilian religions are discriminated against and continue to fight for recognition, the languages of the indigenous peoples are rarely taught. When I said to a taxi driver that I was going to visit my (white) friend, who speaks Guaraní, he replied: ›No one speaks Guaraní.‹ This was April 2012. Historical consciousness varies from individual to individual. During my research trip in March/April 2012 a middle-aged Brazilian woman said to me: ›The dictatorship was not so terrible. My father was a musician, there were just a few songs he was not allowed to sing, that was all really.‹ Later I met a woman whose Austrian-born parents (from Eisenkappel/Železna Kapla in Carinthia/Koroška) returned to Austria from Brazil in the 1960s for ten years, for fear of communism. History is thus always a question of perspective.

To return to Latin America, to this day slavery is still practised in Brazil as in other parts of the world[27]. People of differing colour are still not treated equally. The majority of indigenous ethnic groups and communities are just as threatened as they ever were (see BBC documentary at www.youtube.com/watch?v=51WVVFHzuLE). *The Tribunal Popular Da Terra*[28], which I attended from April 20th to 22nd 2012 in São Paulo, discussed the following issues: The Belo Monte dam project (with major international corporate involvement, including Austrian engineering), the forced resettlements for the World Cup 2014 and the situation of the Guarani Kaiowás, who are severely threatened by farmers as well as loggers and have the highest suicide rate among the indigenous peoples of South America (cf. Boal 2009: 104) (see also http://amazonwatch.org).

The Climate Alliance/Alianzia del Clima is a network of European cities and communities, who have partnered with indigenous peoples of the rainforests in the Amazon Basin. The indigenous partners are

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27 Cf. UN report at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed_norm/ declaration/documents/publication/wcms_144676.pdf; and http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-politics/brazil-fights-modern-day-slavery/#

28 The Tribunal Da Terra is a coalition of Brazilian popular movements, anti-capitalist collectives, workers' movements, unions and representatives of Quilombola-Communities, among others. The programme of the event can be found at gwww.revistareciclarja.com/news/a20hah22h04h-programaçãohdohtribunalhpopularhdahterra/

represented by the Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca del Amazonas (COICA), the umbrella association of indigenous organisations from the Amazon region. They published their standpoint in August 2011 in the *Mandate of Manaus*, of which I reference excerpts here (the entire document can be found in Appendix 2):

> The indigenous people and nature are one, therefore we must reduce deforestation and keep the forests alive, guarding their many benefits such as fresh water, biodiversity and climate for the survival of all life. All we are asking for is to leave us in peace so we continue with our mission.
> An end to »Belo Monsters« type of projects in Brazil, Guyana, Peru (Marañón, Pakitzapango), Bolivia and in the world! No to a Rio+20 which will condemn the people and life in the Xingu!
> No to the motorway to be built on the indigenous territory Isiboro Secure in Bolivia, brother Evo Morales, defend your people's interests not BNDES's (Brazilian Development Bank)!
> An end to the oil destruction in Ecuador (Yasuní), in Peru (Datem) and in other countries! No to the impositions of IIRSA [Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America], like the Manta-Manaus Interconnection Road, which will destroy the Napo River!
> Action and Solidarity with the plight of the indigenous people of the Amazon and the world! Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana, ratify Convention 169!
> We, the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon Region, walking on the path of our ancestors, ask the world to open their hearts and dreams and join us in our journey for life and for all humans.
> *Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Organisations of the Amazon Basin – COICA and the member organisations of the COICA from nine different countries of the Amazon Basin* (Mandat of Manaus http://www.indigene.de/manaus.html?&L=0)

This declaration protests against a politics of life-threatening consequence. The circumstance which Todorov addresses, in which indigenous peoples favour the exchange with the world over exchange with people, reveals ways in which things can be rethought and redirected for the well-being of all; and is echoed in Slavoj Žižek's demand that we end our dominion ›over every living thing that moves on the earth‹ (Žižek in Finburgh 2016: 206). It concerns nothing less than the basis of our existence, our life and limb. Todorov's statement:

The exemplary history of the conquest of America teaches us that Western civilization has conquered, among other reasons, because of its superiority in human communication; but also that this superiority has been asserted at the cost of communication with the world. (Todorov 1984: 251)

will occupy us in various later stages of this book. A sustainable literacy programme must include the ability to communicate on all levels.

The Tuvan author Galsan Tschinag demands that we, as humanity, acknowledge that we are approaching the end. And he knows what he's talking about: his people number only roughly 3,000 and will die out in the next 50 to 100 years. In a lecture he gave in the City Library, Vienna in 2012, he said: ›You play prosperity and we play exigency.‹ David Harvey notes that the oligarchs of capitalism ›do not know how to listen to the plight of the world because they cannot and wilfully will not confront their role in the construction of that plight‹ (Harvey 2014: 292). Eduardo Galeano calls the first chapter in his book *The Open Veins of Latin America:* ›Mankind's poverty as a consequence of the wealth of the land‹. ›Deep‹ and ›dark‹ ecological perspectives make clear the need to recognise that ›nature‹ and the human are not separate, and that we are part of the ecology which we construct. By contrast, the mind-set of ›capital circulation and accumulation‹ (Harvey 2014: 8) constructs land (and labour) as a commodity which can be ›objectified, pulverised and broken away from ... embeddedness in the broader flows of cultural life and living matter‹ (ibid: 58). And ›[a]lienation from nature is alienation from our own species potential‹ (ibid: 263).

Darcy Ribeiro, the ethnologist who was part of Augusto Boal's inner circle of friends, and later Cultural Minister of the State of Rio de Janeiro, was a leading researcher of indigenous cultures in Brazil. The ›civilisational process‹ (cf. Ribeiro, 1971) is characterised by its global (not ethno- or euro-centric) approach, by its strong cultural and historical differentiation and by the absence of a linear progression, which means that rise and fall are possible, the outcome of history is open.

We are those who are no longer what they were, without having become those who we could or wished to be. Since we don't know who we were, when we were innocently that [indigenous peoples, B. F.], and thus know nothing about ourselves, we don't know who we will be. (Ribeiro 1986: 32)

The tone of this quote strongly recalls discourse prevalent in the 1980s

on the quest for the lost ›identity‹ of Latin America, most prominently represented by Octavio Paz in his book *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (first published in 1950).

A new dimension of this work is opening up for the next generation of TO practitioners, particularly those in the European realm: is it possible that we are trapped in our euro-centrism? Is it possible that we tend to believe to know what ›the right solution‹ should look like? Is it possible that we are compelled to face up to criticism? And if so, from whom? The closer we get to Boal, the more easily we can be seduced by the longing to likewise define the world as our home. Not because a political regime drives us from our country, nor because we lack interest in our roots and hold home in low esteem, but because we can gain a greater appreciation for our own people, world view and customs from our relationship to those of others. And perhaps a new insight emerges from these encounters. TO is awareness theatre. The messages of the indigenous First Nations People, or the Original People (povos originários), have long been delivered to us. The conflicts and challenges of the globalised world obviously affect everyone.

Here is Galsan Tschinag's prediction on this:

Just as the new knowledge is not enough on its own, the old knowledge is likewise not enough. If you join the two together, one is perhaps more likely to come closer to the philosopher's stone, to the water of life. (…) Self-discipline, decency and knowledge – all in the original sense – are required, should we wish to withstand the onslaught of the globalised day and age. To be a nomad it is no longer enough to live a simple and unencumbered life. What matters is the commitment, loyalty and courage to live the plain, traditional way of life. (…) What matters is the ability to recognise events approaching, to seize them and if possible shift them towards the better. (Tschinag in Gleiss 2012: 25–6)

This impels us to agree with the early Aung San Suu Kyi, who wrote in the Foreword of the UNESCO publication *Learning To Be*:

The true development of human beings
involves much more than mere economic
growth. At its heart there must be a
sense of empowerment and inner
fulfilment. This alone will ensure that

human and cultural values remain
paramount in a world where political
leadership is often synonymous with
tyranny and the rule of a narrow elite.
People's participation in social transformation
is the central issue of our time.
This can only be achieved through the
establishment of societies, which place
human worth above power, and liberation
above control. In this paradigm, development
requires democracy, the genuine
empowerment of the people.
(Aung San 2002: 0)

By juxtaposing these quotations from different historical periods in a non-linear way, we can see that they apply to contemporary realities, not just to isolated moments from different contexts. The cycle of violence scythes through time, the stories of many lands and the ossuaries of many minds, be it in ›The Americas‹, the Middle-East, Europe or the African continent. What is needed is peace – the kind of peace Part 3 will explore through an encounter with the work of Wolfgang Dietrich. On the meaning of Augusto Boal's work he says:

> The theatre of the oppressed does not present images of the past, it creates models for future action. Participants in Boal's theatre must acknowledge that the subject of the play refers to a future event that will take place. (...) I am interpreting Boal's intentions within the progressive, idealistic, and revolutionary context of his era. I would not view this form of theatre as a literal tool of conflict transformation, but rather as a weapon. However, I do consider its political perspective crucial and correct and, according to which, conflict energy cannot be diminished by the play – instead, changes in the conflict come from the practice of creating alternative choices. If the transformative intention of twenty-first century conflict research were to take the place of the revolutionary intention of the 1960s, then nearly all of Boal's methods would apply. (Dietrich 2013: 144)

This position is the springboard for the following attempt to trace out the developmental trajectory of TO. To this we should add the specific dimensions of Boal's vision of the embodied necessity of practice for

both political and personal transformation. Part 3 will explore this more fully. But an astute and developing recognition of the dynamics of the individual body as receptor, transmitter, collaborator and co-creator has been present throughout Boal's trajectory, as subsequent sections will demonstrate. Learning to recognise what we experience, what we have been constructed as, and what we might become is a politics of the body which has to begin in the body of each individual. That is the lesson of the theatre and its gift to those who want to use it to explore new social compacts. Without this embodied dimension, intellectual and ›revolutionary‹ aspiration remains ethereal.

What Boal intuited in this work was the necessity for a politics which is personal, psychosomatic, validatory, relational and collaborative. We are what we do, what we know and know ourselves to be, what we share and what we create together.

For Augusto Boal however at this point in history, going into exile was by no means the end of fear and persecution – in the notorious *Operation Condor*[29], the regimes of nine Latin American countries, backed by the USA, collaborated in the 1970s and 1980's to hunt down left-wing opposition groups and their supposed members. Even in France, critical voices were mysteriously silenced, among them friends of the Boal family (Boal 2001: 303).

3.4 Shades of Marx

In light of the above discussion of the Latin American context and the perceived necessity to respond to colonialist structures, dictatorship, repression and disempowerment, and on a personal level to imprisonment, torture and an ubiquitous threat to both personal and aesthetic spheres, the Marxist impetus for much of Boal's thought is unsurprising. This is the case for many social and political movements of the time, as well as for key thinkers identified in this book (e.g. Freire, Galeano, Fals Borda, Dietrich). Perhaps the chief marker of this is Boal's framing of TO as a praxis to transfer the means of theatrical production to the people; but much in the construction and operation of the methodologies

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29 http://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/Operation-Condor-Cross-Border-Disappearance-and-Death-20150523-0031-html; http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36403909 (current news)

is profoundly imbued with a vision of the redistribution of power and the promotion of collective agency. This book acknowledges in many places the material and collective focus of Boal's work, not least in its assessment of his debt to Freire; at the same time it seeks to point to other fundamental strands of engagement with individual bodies, volition and vision. It is not germane to my intention to debate in detail Boal's place within classical Marxism or in relation to new approaches to it. But it is important to note some dimensions.

Sanjoy Ganguly has written and spoken much about his view of Boal and Marxism; he seeks to clarify the distinction between Marx and the derivative applications and deformations of his thought. For him, Boal's assimilation of key features of Marx's thought bears strong similarities to the views of Indian thinker Vivekenanda in relation to ›the people‹ and their inherent intellectual potential. India exhibits a number of features similar to those in Latin America in the 1970s, not least the continued existence of a large mass of disadvantaged people (officially classified, for example, as ›Special Castes‹ and ›Other Special Castes‹) who nevertheless are not by any means a single entity but belong to numerous ethnic and religious groupings and social castes/classes. Further, one can point to the existence of a numerically small but intellectually powerful Communist caucus and a wide range of activist and ›mass‹ movements; and, in the case of West Bengal, to a long period of State rule by the CPM (Communist Party of India: Marxist). In the latter case, what claims to be Marxism manifests, for Ganguly, as a structure of oppression by a Party organisation whose populist rhetoric was juxtaposed by neo-liberal policies and a ruthless retention of power. Ganguly argues that, as with the so-called Marxist power blocs of the USSR and Eastern Europe, very little remained of Marx. His experience of cultural activity in this context confirmed that it was seen as an adjunct or service of a propagandist kind, and provided the impetus for his development of a quite deliberately distinct form of engagement which used theatre practice to work *with* rather than *for* the oppressed (Ganguly 2010).

Ganguly highlights and shares Boal's concern with any form of oppressive ›culture of monologue‹, which he sees as intrinsic to the mindset of global capitalism. Within such a dominant system, debates and questions have surfaced regularly in the TO movement across the world about the ethics and politics of the positioning, funding and operation of activist theatre practice. They also played a significant role in the

fragmentation of the movement which Boal himself founded in France (see Poutot 2015). In arguing for an extension of the case for what Ganguly calls ›internal revolution‹, this book in no way wishes to sideline the importance of the more ›external‹ dimensions, but seeks to frame the debate of the relationship between the two spheres more cogently.

Chapter 4
Key Concepts of PO and TO in response to the situation

4.1 Oppression

In *Theatre of the Oppressed* Boal identifies the Poetics of the Oppressed as opposed to Aristotelian Poetics of Oppression (Boal 1998: 119). Over 112 pages, he moves from a critique of Aristotle's system of tragedy as a form of oppression, to reflections on virtue and honour in Machiavelli, Hegel and Brecht; to a discussion of whether the term ›figure‹ should be seen as representing a subject or an object; to whether humans are constituted by thought or vice-versa and whether humanity is capable of being changed; and to a critique of the concepts of *empathy*, *osmosis* and *catharsis*[30]. In the second part, more focused on practice, he gives examples of how a people's theatre – in the case of the ALFIN Project in Peru and of the Arena Theatre in São Paulo – can be reconfigured; and describes the first (no longer extant) model of the Joker system:

> In the beginning the theater was the dithyrambic song: free people singing in the open air. The carnival. The feast. Later the ruling classes took possession of the theatre and built their dividing walls. First, they divided the people, separating actors from spectators: people who act and people who watch – the party is over! Secondly, among the actors, they separated the protagonists from the mass. The coercive indoctrination began![31]
> Now the oppressed people are liberated [sic] themselves and, once more, are

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30 In the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, *empathy* and *osmosis* are evaluated as mechanisms which serve to subjugate the viewer to the fictitious reality (cf. Boal 1998: 113–115). *Catharsis* (ibid: 106) robs the viewer of the ability to take action.

31 Much of this ›theatrical history‹ is extremely tendentious and, as Milling and Ley point out, invokes a ›foundation myth‹ of ›original unity, freedom and openness‹ (Milling and Ley 2001: 147).

making the theater their own. The walls must be torn down. First, the spec-
tator starts acting again: invisible theater, forum theater, image theater, etc.
Secondly, it is necessary to eliminate the private property of the characters
by the individual actors: the ›Joker‹ System. (Boal 1998: 119)

Boal's critique here identifies the oppressed as passive, powerless, qui-
escent spectators who have ceded their agency to the actors on stage
who act for them[32]. Secondly, Boal explains that TO is not a theatre of
different social classes, nor of the proletariat, nor feminist theatre, nor
theatre of different ethnic groups, because oppression exists within all
of these groups as well. TO is however *also* their theatre, but not exclu-
sively so. Thus the best definition for TO according to Boal is therefore,
that it is ›a theatre of the oppressed classes and also the oppressed with-
in these classes‹ (Boal 1980: 25).

Here Boal applies a Marxist perspective to his analysis of the rela-
tionship of stage and audience in Greek tragedy, or rather in Aristotle's
account of this. He interprets Aristotle's model of *catharsis* as coercive,
an encouragement to the (oppressed) audience to relapse into passivity
and to admit their own lack of agency by empathising with the submis-
sion of the protagonist to ›higher powers‹ and to decrees of propriety
in attitude and behaviour. Many people have argued that this is a re-
ductive account[33] – and it could well be, since it deals with one dimen-
sion of Tragedy but ignores others[34]. The number of reworkings of the
plays themselves (by e.g. Corneille, Racine, Giraudoux, Anouilh, Sartre,
Brecht, Wertembaker etc.) suggest that there is more ambivalence about
the relationship of protagonist and higher (human or divine) powers
than Boal implies. But Boal has an agenda: to construct a theory which
can point to a new modality of agency for spectators, in line with the

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32   In TO by contrast the *oppressed* are potentially capable of action; they are
     distinguished from *victims*, who do not believe themselves to be so.

33   Milling and Ley see Boal's reading of Aristotle as an a-historical, inaccura-
     te and inconsistent ›process of amalgamation, synthesis, reformulation
     and ultimately misrepresentation‹ (2001: 152); they describe his definition
     of Aristotelian poetics as ›a fantasia‹ (ibid: 153).

34   Boal himself also later used *catharsis* in the sense of ›the removal of
     blocks‹, as Adrian Jackson notes in his Introduction to *The Rainbow of De-
     sire* (Boal 1995: xxi).

perceived political needs of the times and places he is operating in (as Chapter 8 on Latin American theatre practices at the time makes clear). He is not attempting to critique the totality of the notion of *catharsis*, or Aristotelian thought, or Greek Tragedy (though he does tend to permit the impression that this is the case); he may indeed be latching on to and conveniently extending an essentially Brechtian (and itself nuanced and somewhat reductive, but dialectically vigorous) proposition. Here as elsewhere the Marx in Boal is pragmatic, ethically-inflected and to a degree opportunistic: it is nonetheless comprehensible and perhaps at least as true to Marx as other more strident claims to materialise his vision. Other commentators on the contemporary challenges to TO reflect that a dogmatic or rigidly systemic approach is scarcely compatible either with the most radical and generative level of Marx's thought or with the Principles articulated by Boal himself.[35]

For Boal the definitions *oppressed* and *spectator* are virtually synonymous. Dialogue occurs between two subjects. In the context of dialogue, the term *spectator* is not an obscenity, because listening to and looking at each other is indispensible for it to function. The obscenity begins when dialogue changes into monologue and one partner specialises in speaking whilst the other is the listener, when only one of them transmits information and the other merely receives it and obeys it. That's how the division into subject and object occurs. This division, which exists in all human relationships, is reified in theatre:

> This relationship which appears to be a dialogue but in reality is a monologue, exists in all spheres, such as those between teacher and pupil, father and son husband and wife (or vice-versa), NCO and soldier, and so on. It is sanctified in the relationship between *actor and spectator*. Here monologue achieves its apogee because a *social code* is transformed into a ritual and from there into a *rite*. (Boal 1980: 26) [italics in original]

He also describes the process of objectification as a difficult and complex procedure, since the oppressed retains the impulse for dialogue, for participation, and is subjected to a form of repression, to an imposed atrophy, whilst the desire for participation continues to exist in a suppressed form. And that desire is what is ›sacred‹ for Boal:

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35   This paragraph added by translator (RY).

This subversive factor is ›sacred‹ because it is this suppressed desire which all true people's theatre must stimulate, develop, enliven, ripen and nourish. (27) [italics in original]

That is the ›mission statement‹ of his theatre: strengthening the desire of the oppressed to take part in and shape their reality, so that intersubjective relationship may occur. He draws explicitly on Freire's description of the oppressed in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, when he writes:

An oppressive, authoritarian society counts on the oppressor-oppressed relationship to establish and maintain itself. The boss oppresses the foreman, the foreman oppresses the worker, he oppresses his wife, who oppresses her kids … This chain of oppression must be reversed: against the oppressor, not in support of further oppression. If the oppressed becomes an oppressor to others, s/he reinforces the oppressive structure of the society. But when, on the contrary, s/he directs her energy against the oppressor, s/he initiates the unravelling of this fabric of oppression. That is the task of the Theatre of the Oppressed, a profoundly democratic task from the bottom up. (27–8)

Doctors do not cure all by themselves; learning does not come solely from teachers, nor theatre from artists. There is a distinction between ›calling‹ and ›profession‹; human beings are all called. Boal demands a comprehensive vision of humanity, which recognises all human capacities. That is the freedom he speaks of from the 1980s in Europe.

In his book, *Education: The Practice of Freedom,* Freire defines ›being oppressed‹ as synonymous with being categorised as ›the people‹. The oppressed, according to his definition, are those who live without the minimal conditions necessary for the exercise of their rights as citizens and without access to the cultural capital of their society (Freire in Baraúna and Motos 2009: 84). In the first chapter of his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire explains in depth the phenomenon of the oppressive oppressed, which is important for Boal. The terms ›de-specialisation‹, ›dialogue‹ and ›becoming conscious‹ will be discussed further below.

4.2 Oppressors

In conversation with the author of a universally-known north American comic, I accused him of being a colonialist of the mind. He was astonished

and replied that he drew pictures without thinking about who might see the result. His cartoons were instantly translated into eighty languages and he never considered the readers! That is precisely the attitude of the colonialist. You don't need to think. That's the way it is. You express the self-evident perspective, which is that of the USA. (Boal 2009: 261)

In this context oppressors are like Russian dolls, with a smaller one always hidden inside the next size up. If Boal talks about colonialists in an interview with Copfermann in 1976, it's because 1492 really was a key date in human history. Nothing was the same after that. As Tzvetan Todorov puts it in his book *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*:

> Even if every date that permits us to separate any two periods is arbitrary, none is more suitable, in order to mark the beginning of modern era, than the year 1492, the year Columbus crosses the Atlantic Ocean. We are all direct descendants of Columbus, it is with him that our genealogy begins, insofar as the word *beginning* has a meaning... Since that date, the world has shrunk (even if the universe has become infinite), ›the world is small‹, as Columbus himself will peremptorily declare ...; men have discovered the totality of which they are a part, whereas hitherto they formed a part without a whole. (Todorov 1984: 5)

Boal is in the first instance always a Latin American and his critique of the USA is not merely ›ungrateful resentment‹ of the country he ›was allowed‹ to study in, as he was reminded many times. It is based on historical and political fact and is not directed against those individuals living in the USA, but towards oppressive systems and institutions. The ›cultural invasion‹ of US mass-media and the ways in which it has impacted the thinking of people in Latin America and served as a tool to break their culture of resistance can be strikingly traced in the publications of the Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman, who ›discloses the links between politics and culture, between Ronald Reagan and Mickey Mouse, between the development theory of experts and popular culture for children‹ (Dorfman 1996: 116).

Boal's critique of Aristotle charges him with being the founder of manipulation and domination in claiming that poetry and politics are completely separate:

He tells us that poetry, tragedy, theatre have nothing to do with politics. But reality tells us something else. (…) all of man's activities are political. And theater is the most perfect artistic form of coercion. (Boal 1998: 39)

Boal then goes on to deconstruct the systematic oppression integral to the genre he loves, which consists in the elevation of the ›bourgeois artist-high priest, elite artist, the unique individual (…) the star‹ (109); to this he opposes the (Brechtian) individual for whom art is immanent, something which can be neither bought nor sold, just like breathing, thinking and loving. Boal's interpretation of Aristotelian poetics as the basis of a repressive culture serves as the ground on which to erect his model of theatre as a means of humanising humanity by liberating the oppressed – who have been deformed by their oppression, as understood by Freire – *not merely from external oppression but also from the oppression within themselves*. The unequal balance of power between the countries of the North and South, is mirrored in the relationships of its inhabitants and those of TO-practitioners, who have to negotiate the conflictual energies of this field. The transcultural character of TO in the 21st century creates an opportunity to work on this issue as well.

The oppressive oppressed, whom Freire dubs ›sub-oppressors‹ (Freire 1970a: 27), are the first to be confronted by themselves in TO practice. Questions of solidarity, of ›switching sides‹ and the underlying motivations for the work are difficult to avoid here. Theatre transforms those who want to use it to transform. Freire describes the oppressors as follows: ›Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons …‹ (ibid: 37). He characterises oppressors as violent tyrants, who scorn, cannot love, instigate terror, deny humanity and conversely portray the ›others‹, the oppressed, as wild, subversive, ill-willed, barbaric, devious and warmongering (Freire 1970a: 38). Freire sees oppressors as unable to free themselves in their own right, since they themselves are ›de-humanized‹ by the act of oppressing. Their lost humanity can only be restored to them through the struggle of the oppressed (idem). In a time of globalisation, of studies on the ›ecological footprint‹, long after Gandhi's famous declaration ›There is enough for every man's need, but not for one man's greed‹, Freire's lines still have the taste of bitter medicine:

Conditioned by the experience of oppressing others, any situation other than their former seems to them like oppression. Formerly, they could eat, dress, wear shoes, be educated, travel, and hear Beethoven; while millions did not eat, had no clothes or shoes, neither studied nor traveled, much less listened to Beethoven. Any restriction on this way of life, in the name of the rights of the community, appears to the former oppressors as a profound violation of their individual rights – although they had no respect for the millions who suffered and died of hunger, pain, sorrow, and despair. (ibid: 39)

Freire's remedy is to rediscover the true meaning of the people's being, to change the course of life, to found a new mode of life.

4.3 People and the People's Theatre

Boal defines the term ›People‹ in *Técnicas Latinoamericanas de Teatro Popular* as follows:

Population is the totality of inhabitants in a country or a region. ›People‹ is more restricted: it includes only those who sell their labour. ›The people‹ is a generic designation which includes the workers, the peasants and all those who are temporarily or occasionally associated with the population, like students for example or other groups in some countries. Those who belong to the population but not to the people are the owners: the big land-owners, the bourgeoisie and those who support them – civil servants, local officials and, in general, everyone who thinks like them. People are ›the people‹. ›Population‹ also includes the ruling classes. (Boal 1975: 17)

Thorau identifies Boal as the first Latin American theatre theorist who interrogates and defines people's theatre in such a way as to foreground and differentiate the perspectives of the people and the ruling classes:

Two perspectives: the first reveals a world in perpetual transformation, with its shifting contradictions, as the ever-evolving march of humanity towards freedom. It shows that people have been enslaved by work, by habits and traditions, and that they are capable of changing their situation. Everything is always in the process of change, and this change should be harnessed.
The second perspective shows, in complete contrast, that, as the result of long historical development, humanity has arrived at the best of all possible worlds, i.e. the current system, in which the ruling class occupy themselves with land and the means of production, while the rest do the work with God's blessing. What a difference in the way of seeing life and the world! (Thorau 1982: 73)

So to be able to practise people's theatre requires the adoption of an appropriate perspective which, as Thorau indicates, Brecht characterises as the ability to imagine ›a world in development and to be developed‹ (Thorau 1982: 74).

4.4 Boal's model of people's theatre

Boal proposes the following four categories for people's theatre:

i) Theatre from the perspective of the people and for the people: ›Theatre from the transformative perspective of the people, who are simultaneously its target audience‹ (Boal 1975: 19).

This theatre, performed at workers' gatherings, in the workplace, on the streets and squares and in circus arenas, was made up of three subgroups: propaganda theatre, didactic theatre and cultural theatre. Propaganda theatre (until 1964 in Brazil), which for Boal also included the theatre of the CPCs, the People's Cultural Centres, took imperialism as its main theme. Didactic theatre was not only concerned to mobilise, but also tried to convey theoretical and practical lessons. Cultural theatre involved the practice of traditional dance, song and spectacle, as long as these had not been appropriated by the bourgeoisie for their own purposes.

ii) Theatre from the perspective of the people for a different audience: examples given by Boal in this case are Sartre's *Les Mouches* [*The Flies*] and Picasso's *El deseo atrapado por la cola* [*Desire Caught by the Tail*]. He describes it as theatre in disguise, which needed to be deciphered by its audience and which aimed to combat the regime in power. The target audience in this case represents ›the silent majority‹, that proportion of the population which in terms of their social position is close to the people but which maintains the status quo, enjoys a few privileges and may be able to be persuaded to reflect on their situation.

iii) Theatre which adopts an anti-people perspective[36]: popular, dumbing-down and manipulative theatre, which avoids important issues and is endorsed by the ruling classes. In this category Boal names soap operas, movies in which well-behaved slaves appear, deft housewives are glamourised, good-natured peasants and peace-loving workers are shown. Boal:

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36   In Thorau's translation this becomes ›Folklore‹ (Thorau 1998: 23)

> Let us always keep in view the fact that the mere presence of the people is not enough to classify a play as people's theatre (...) In assessing the quality of the play the content and the approach to the topic are important. (Boal 1975: 43)

iv) His fourth category is Newspaper Theatre, a theatre of the people for the people. This is the beginning of the move to hand over ›the means of production of theatre‹ to the people, so that they could create their own theatre in the face of the oppressive circumstances and pitiless censorship of 1968. In 1975 Boal speaks of 40 to 50 active groups in Brazil, who specialised in developing corrected versions of history, the Bible etc. using Newspaper Theatre. Boal drew up this list in 1975, which means that it was by no means the last word, particularly as far as the last category was concerned. Here he describes people's theatre in general as a theatre of the oppressed. His 1974 book *Theatre of the Oppressed* lays out the political and theoretical foundations of his work.

Freire calls his pedagogy ›a pedagogy which must be forged *with* the oppressed and not *for* them (whether [that relates to] individuals or [to] whole peoples‹ (Freire 1970: 30). Thorau believes that ›do povo‹ and ›com o povo‹ (›of the people‹ and ›with the people‹), two concepts from the populist period, were key for Freire and for Boal and became fundamental signifiers for both *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *The Theatre of the Oppressed*.

4.5 Status and Authority

Of course we have to ask, who is this person Boal, who is a theatre activist who clearly does *not* belong to the people? Boal repeatedly addresses this in his writings, both in his autobiography and his interviews. The earliest mention I can find is in his interview with Copfermann 1976:

> Why do I go on writing? Because I look for contradictions, for sure. I am someone who has always worked for people's theatre and created theatre for the people. *But ok, I do not belong to the people, I don't come from the proletariat.* I have never gone hungry and if I did, I could find the money to feed myself. I have never had serious health problems. No. *I come from the petite bourgeoisie of the middle class*, but all my ideas were different from those of the middle class: in Brazil, I made theatre for the agricultural workers, for

women – without being a woman, without being a member of the proletariat, without being an agricultural worker. I believed it was necessary to show them all my vision of the world, an anti-bourgeois, anti-patriarchal vision. I showed it to them in order to help them. But a much better way to help them is to give back to them the means of production of theatre (…) I acknowledge, I am not a woman, I show the proletariat, women, agricultural workers, my techniques (…) and my vision. But my vision alone cannot replace their will to liberate themselves. (Boal 2009: 250) [italics added]

In the foreword to the German edition of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* two years later, he says:

I know, like all the others, I was an artist bound up with his own rituals of theatre, his own prejudices and the usual lies. And I began to despise the old relationship between actors and spectators, just like any subject-object relationship (…) after long and continuous exchanges with many people in many countries, from different cultures, under different circumstances, I know that I haven't discovered the truth. I haven't got my hands on the philosopher's stone, I simply know a few techniques which can help me and my spectators to begin to track down the truth – the techniques of the Theatre of the Oppressed. (Boal in Thorau 1989: 7–8)

The implication that you track down your own truth contains important insights about the potential of this theatre; we are all, to different and scarcely comparable extents, influenced by the systems of governance which have socialised us and which only too often come back to surprise us with the revelation of our own blind spots (cf. Bourdieu). Freire describes the problem as one of ›uncontested importance‹:

›… the fact that certain members of the oppressor class join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation, thus moving from one pole of the contradiction to the other. Theirs is a fundamental role, and has been so throughout the history of this struggle. It happens, however, that as they cease to be exploiters or indifferent spectators or simply the heirs of exploitation and move to the side of the exploited, they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people's ability to think, to want, and to know. Accordingly, these adherents to the people's cause constantly run the risk of falling into a type of generosity as malefic as that of the oppressors. The generosity of the oppressors is nourished by an unjust order, which must be maintained in order to justify that generosity. Our converts, on the other hand,

truly desire to transform the unjust order; but because of their background they believe that they must be the executors of the transformation. They talk about the people, but they do not trust them... Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth. Those who undergo it must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were. (Freire 1970a: 42–3)

The problem of *uncontested importance* can certainly be seen as relevant to Freire himself, as well to Boal and nearly the entire PO and TO. Even though these *converts*, the *beneficiaries of the exploitation*, usually claim biographical experiences of oppression, they are nonetheless privileged enough, to be able to fall back on their inheritance and strive to use it as a resource, which inevitably isolates them from the people. Who among them truly lives in community with the people? Even guerrilla fighting separates the artist-activists from the labourers and land workers:

This guerrilla warfare, the need to defend ourselves, was isolating us from the worker and peasant people we had been seeking. We were penned in our corral, we and our audience, fellow members of the middle class. (Boal 2001: 271)

An uncompromising confrontation with ourselves inevitably precedes a deep solidarity with others. Only someone who knows who they are, can take a position. Converting to the people brings with it a repositioning in society.

For the time being however, the question of being in solidarity remains open. What seems important here is that Boal admits, in the second text above, that the theatre also helps him in his own introspection, and thus he finds himself in the same boat as the people with whom he works.

4.6 Limit-Situation and Theatre on the Edge

In *Stop: c'est Magique!*, Boal describes TO as a ›Teatro-Limite‹ (Boal 1980: 23). Just as TO is a meeting place and in some ways also a synthesis of popular culture and culture *for* the people, moving precisely along this edge, it also moves along another border, that between fiction and reality. He talks about an extraordinary power and explosivity of both Invisible Theatre and of Forum Theatre due to the space in which fiction and reality meet. Both forms of theatre are no longer plays, they are theatre that has become reality, which requires everyone involved to as-

sume the same responsibility and risk-taking as for any other authentic, real action (1984: 24). A third limit touched by TO (the most interesting for this work), is that of person and character, who, for example, melt into one during Forum Theatre.

> These identities, these limits (actor-character, fiction-reality) are, according to me, a main reason for the extraordinary potential of the Theatre of the Oppressed. This is because the Theatre of the Oppressed is not theatre for the oppressed: it is their own theatre. It's not a theatre in which an artist interprets a role of someone who he is not: it is the theatre in which everyone, whoever they are, represents themselves (this means organising and reorganising their lives and analysing their own actions) trying to discover the possibilities of liberation. If, during this process, a participant discovers something new, he thereby becomes both the analyst and the object of analysis. (1980: 25)

On the level of subjective theatre (see Declaration of Principles, pp. 293–5 below), each person becomes their own authority.

It is only later that Boal uses the term ›Metaxis‹ for these areas and intersections. On this Armin Staffler writes: ›Reality is something, where I experience or achieve an effect. Theatre is a reality‹ (Staffler 2009: 40). Freire also recognises this Limit-Situation, as Anna Araújo Freire points out in the supplementary notes to *Pedagogy of Hope*:

> For Freire, human beings, as beings endowed with consciousness, have at least some awareness of their conditioning and their freedom. They meet with obstacles in their personal and social lives, and they see them as obstructions to be overcome. Freire calls these obstructions or barriers ›limit-situations. (In Freire 2005: 181)

For Freire, people accept the borderline between limitation and freedom differently. Some take the line as something which cannot be overcome, while others see it as something which they do not want to overcome. Or they see it as something which should be overcome. When people find themselves challenged by limit-situations, they want to solve these problems in a ›trusting and hopeful‹ atmosphere. For this purpose, they distance themselves from the problem, in order to confront themselves with it, analyse it and overcome it.

Freire calls this act of overcoming the ›Limit Act‹. Each intervention in a Forum Theatre performance can thus represent a ›Limit Act‹, but

also every process-oriented workshop situation has this potential for the participants. The perception of the ›untested feasibility‹, is something which penetrates people's consciousnesses and shows them that the realisation of change is possible (2005: 181).

In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire summarises:

> In sum, limit-situations imply the existence of persons who are directly or indirectly served by these situations, and of those who are negated or curbed by them. Once the latter come to perceive these situations as the frontier between being and being more human, rather than the frontier between being and nothingness, they begin to direct their increasingly critical actions towards achieving the untested feasibility implicit in that perception. (1970a: 83)

In this regard, the *Theatre of the Oppressed* reveals itself to be a laboratory in which a new experience of the self and its possibilities can occur, stimulating actual change through somatic experience.

Freire refers in his definition of the limit-situation to the Brazilian philosopher Alvaro Vieira Pinto (1909–1987), who does not define them as impassable boundaries, at which possibilities end, but as real boundaries where they truly begin. Within the field of pedagogy, *liminal* pedagogy is located within *critical* pedagogy. The educational anthropologist Peter McLaren (1988) gives the example of teachers who can free themselves from distinctions of status and authority and see themselves as agents of social transformation with compassion and faith in the learners. This altered form of teaching creates a context in which liminal dimensions of learning may be perceived (McLaren 1988).

Liminality in this context is understood as ›homogenous societal disposition‹, in which participants' distinctive societal features are temporarily ineffective, since they (the participants) are removed from the social structure to which they belong, for the duration of the time spent working together[37].

Here McLaren refers to texts of Victor Turner and Richard Schechner on the differences between ritual and theatre, which attribute the separation of participants into actors and audience to the theatre. The term liminality was originally coined by Arnold van Gennep in 1908, in

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37   This disposition is effective both in TO and Feldenkrais work. Cf. McLaren 1988: 165.

describing rites of passage. The liminal always refers to a *betwixt and between*. One no longer belongs to the society in which one is raised and has not yet arrived at one's new destination. Turner, who dedicated extensive study to liminality and its importance for ritual, performance and theatre, described the liminal as, among other things, a place of meaning, a cutting-off point between different, established cultural orders (Turner 1982: 41).

This pinpoints the dynamic of change as a fulcrum of new modes of learning and being. In order to locate how this operates in Boal's work, I have examined a range of fundamental situations and positions which were influential in the development of TO, with particular reference to the historical and political context of Latin America in the 1960s and after, and to the links between Boal and Paulo Freire. This enables me to go on to discuss the founding principles of TO, which arose in and from these contexts and the experiences which mediated them, but were quite consciously articulated in order to extend the remit of TO practice both methodologically and historically.

Chapter 5
The Declaration of Principles of TO with Freirian commentary

5.1 Major clauses

The founding principles of TO were drafted by Augusto Boal with Julian Boal, Luc Opdebeeck and Ronald Matthijssen in November 2002. They were drafted in Paris and later formulated into the existing version, which was first published in January 2003 on the ITO website. In the various translations one can find errors or points at which the meaning is unclear. My intention here is to recall the original impetus – the struggle against dictatorship and fascism – and to provide a frame and an ethical orientation to the TO movement which has grown to such an extent that it is now difficult to perceive as a single coherent entity.

Consequently, I will examine the statement of principles from a Freirian perspective: Boal must presumably have interrogated Freire's pedagogy (as well as many other currents of thought) in a similar way through theatrical lens, as part of his quest to make his *Teatro Popular* more effective in the service of humanity (all humanity, not just the elusive ›people‹) and of human rights. I predominantly use Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Cultural Action for Freedom* and *Education, the Practice of Freedom*, as these are most closely connected to the developmental history of the Theatre of the Oppressed. I assume that Boal was familiar with Freire's later works, on the basis of his statement in *De Freire a Boal* 2005, that TO and PO are two ›vasos comunicantes‹ (communicating vessels) (Baraúna and Motos 2009: 97).

The Declaration of Principles comprises a preamble, four parts and 20 paragraphs. In the following I demarcate the text of the declaration in italics.

Preamble

§ 1   The basic aim of the Theatre of the Oppressed is to humanise Humanity.

§ 2   The Theatre of the Oppressed is a system of Exercises, Games and Techniques based on the Essential Theatre, to help men and women to develop what they already have inside themselves: theatre.

If therefore the aim is to humanise humanity, this means that humanity is at present ›dehumanised‹, or that our potential as human beings, that which makes us ›whole people‹, is not being fully tapped, and that we are living in an inhumane world. In his Foreword to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1973, German translation), Ernst Lange clarifies the goal of becoming fully human in the light of the fact that humans are ontologically programmed to develop through action and reflection as a result of coming to terms with the environment and entering into dialogue with others; in this way they continually surpass themselves and change themselves and their world.

> To exclude it [the human being, B. F.] from the praxis of transforming the world is to exclude it from interpersonal communication. Robbing him of language and thus denying him dialogue means preventing praxis. (…) the ›cultural invasion‹ by the oppressors, who take speech and praxis away from the oppressed, is thus a kind of genocide, killing the humane in the human, but thus also a suicide, social suicide by the oppressors: they too are beings of dialogue, and by denying others dialogue, they destroy their own future. The rule of one over another is the destruction of the humanity of human beings. Only by destroying this dominion can ›development‹, the humanisation of humans, be achieved (Lange in Freire 1973: 20).

In *Education, the Practice of Freedom* Freire adds:

> To be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world. It is to experience that world as an objective reality, independent of oneself, capable of being known. (Freire 1976a: 3)

The human being denied dialogue, due to power relationships at various levels, is robbed of his language and can therefore no longer describe his own reality, which then prevents him from taking part in the shaping of society.

To perceive oneself and one's reality anew (according to one's own, individual understanding), inspires people to explore and change the world.

> Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects. (ibid: 85)

5.2 Essential Theatre

§ 3 Every human being is theatre!

Since people do not exist apart from the world, human life is based on relationship to the world (ibid: 66). Each person acts in the world and simultaneously observes him/herself doing so (Boal 1995: 13), meaning s/he is agent and observer of his/her action at the same time.

§ 4   Theatre is defined as the simultaneous existence – in the same space and context – of actors and spectators. Every human being is capable of seeing the situation and seeing him/herself in the situation.

As Freire puts it:

> Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world. In these relations consciousness and world are simultaneous (…)

and he glosses Sartre, when he writes ›I cannot exist without a *non-I*‹ (Freire 1970a: 63). That is to say, consciousness and world are interdependent.

Both Boal and Freire spoke of the differences between humans and animals.

> (…) of the uncompleted beings, man is the only one to treat not only his actions but his very self as the object of his reflection; this capacity distinguishes him from the animals, which are unable to separate themselves from their activity and thus are unable to reflect upon it. (ibid: 78)

Animals exist in an ›ahistorical‹ world, they encounter stimulation, but not challenge, do not take risks and make no decisions, nor do they

have responsibilities. Their instinctual-drive-world will never become a meaningful ›symbol-world‹. In contrast, people not only *live,* but *exist. Existence* is seen as a historical progression, constantly re-creating and transforming, a precursor of ›becoming‹. Here, *life* also simply means survival (ibid: 79). The human being is thus a being in a continuous process of change, understanding and reflecting upon itself, as well as on the world in relation to itself. These attributes are brought to the fore by theatre, as exemplified by the following four paragraphs.

> §5   *Essential theatre consists of three elements: Subjective Theatre, Objective Theatre and Theatrical Language*

> §6   *Every human being is capable of acting: to survive, we necessarily have to produce actions and observe those actions and their effects on the environment. To be Human is to be Theatre: the co-existence of actor and spectator in the same individual. This is Subjective Theatre.*

> §7   *When human beings limit themselves to observing an object, a person or a space, momentarily renouncing their capacity and necessity of acting, the energy and desire to act is transferred to that space, person or object, creating a space inside a space: an Aesthetic Space. This is Objective Theatre.*

> §8   *All human beings use, in their daily lives, the same language that actors use on the stage: their voices, their bodies, their movements and their expressions; they translate their emotions and desires into Theatrical Language.*

In the following four paragraphs Boal defines the processes and effects of *Theatre of the Oppressed:*

> §9   *The Theatre of the Oppressed offers everyone the aesthetic means to analyze their past, in the context of their present, and subsequently to invent their future, without waiting for it. The Theatre of the Oppressed helps human beings to recover a language they already possess – we learn how to live in society by playing theatre. We learn how to feel by feeling; how to think by thinking; how to act by acting. Theatre of the Oppressed is rehearsal for reality.*

As de-humanised (or at least partially de-humanised) beings, deformed by contradictions and internalised oppression, we need adequate means that support us in our pursuit of humanity. Analysing our past in the context of our present, means gaining awareness or consciousness of our historical contingency and outgrowing fatalism (Freire 1970a: 79–82), as well as acquiring a creative understanding of the world as a pro-

cess of change and transformation. We create our future, by recognising that our past has been marked by action and suffering, at the hands of a ruling authority; by then overcoming it and beginning to devise our lives humanely. We learn to be human, to recover our language, by fully exploiting our sensory as well as intellectual resources, and thus taking part in reality as whole people, not as objects, who passively tolerate, endure and observe.

> ∫10   *The oppressed are those individuals or groups who are socially, culturally, politically, economically, racially, sexually, or in any other way deprived of their right to dialogue or in any way impaired to exercise this right.*

Boal's maxim ›When dialogue becomes monologue, that is oppression‹, comes from Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (cf. 1970a 76; 159). Dialogue, as already described in this chapter, means to place oneself in relation to the world, to co-create, to change the world with one's own existence, adding one's talents and dreaming one's dreams. In dialogue human beings become capable of shaping the world such that community life is both possible and enriching. The key to overcoming ruling power dynamics, which have emerged from an unconscious past, is to become conscious of and to name them.

> ∫11   *Dialogue is defined as to freely exchange with others, as a person and as a group, to participate in human society as equal, to respect differences and to be respected.*

Because they are not fully aware of their past, these forms of dialogue enable the oppressed to perceive and respect the diversity of society, in the process of reclaiming their sensory and intellectual resources; thus they are multidimensional conscientisation processes. The respect for the diversity of others alludes to the contradiction inherent in the potential of the oppressed to become oppressors. The characteristics of the oppression experienced scar the oppressed with aggression and self-abasement, passivity and emotional dependence, which in turn leads to violence. Freire and Boal are aware of the lengthy process of conscientisation necessary to overcome these characteristics, as well as the danger of the oppressed believing that they can bypass their oppression by becoming oppressors, or rather, oppressing in a different place from that of their own oppression (for example, engaging in domestic violence, while fighting politically against oppression).

§12   The Theatre of the Oppressed is based upon the principle that all human relationships should be of a dialogic nature: among men and women, races, families, groups and nations, dialogue should prevail. In reality, all dialogues have the tendency to become monologues, which creates the oppressors – oppressed relationship. Acknowledging this reality, the main principle of Theatre of the Oppressed is to help restore dialogue among human beings.

Though it may seem obvious, this paragraph is not only important because it expresses that the work will never be finished (cf. Driskell 1975: 74), but also because it makes clear that TO is universally relevant. Here I will examine the tendency of all dialogues to again transform into monologues, particularly in the context of its meaning for TO practitioners. The objective and subjective circumstance of oppression shapes its outer and inner preconditions. Just as Freire demands change in society alongside conscientisation, Boal demands action on and beyond the stage, in real life. In his endeavour to humanise, the human being struggles against both internalised structures of authority and their manifestations in society. That means:

> The oppressed's consciousness is one that is controlled and estranged (…) The ambivalence of this consciousness, the sickly mixture of suffering and pleasure in the oppressor, of love and hate for those in control, must be revealed and unravelled. Otherwise the liberation will always be superficial, the subjugation of the human being will persist beyond the political-social revolution, and rulers will be reborn among the slaves (Lange in Freire 1973: 21).

At best, the ›liberated human being‹ remains a construct of the mind, since the oppressed, once they have internalised the ruling power structures, tend to hide behind others rather than use their language, of which they have been robbed. At the same time, others, sublimating their oppression, consider themselves to be an avant-garde, creating another level of monologue. In this way, internalised power structures remain operative throughout society and become even more effective. The predominant educational aim of PO, the ›relational-work of the human being in the world‹, can thus never be exhausted. This naturally applies to the realm of emancipatory theatre work. On this Lange writes in the translation of Freire's book (1973):

Without dialogue, without expelling rulers from the consciousness of the oppressed, by a patient problematisation of the contradictory factors in experience of oppression, there can be no organisation of the masses to promote their liberation, no reliable communion between revolutionary leaders and the masses. A revolution without a pedagogical basis must fail.

It must also fail, because not only the oppressed have internalised the condition of being controlled. Their revolutionary leaders also suffer from a similar ambivalence. Usually they come from the upper class. They are much better informed and their political consciousness is far ahead of that of the masses. The temptation to manipulate the oppressed in the name of revolution, in order to speed up the process, is therefore exceedingly high. Revolutionary leaders are tyrants in waiting. It is not only a question of expelling the oppressors from the consciousness of the oppressed, but also about ejecting them from the consciousness of the avant-garde. And both can only be achieved through the ›communion‹ of the leaders with the masses, in dialogue. The masses do not reach political maturity without the leaders. The leaders however, do not reach revolutionary humility without the masses. (Lange in Freire 1973: 21)

Therefore, as it says in paragraph 12: *The Theatre of the Oppressed is based upon the principle that all human relationships should be of a dialogic nature.* This principle refers to all processes within TO: the processes within theatre or activist groups and the processes between these groups and their spect-actors or audience, such that a built-in safety-loop is inherent to the process of dialogue, helping the jokers, artists, activists, to become conscious of the controlling mechanisms within themselves, by exposing them to critical feedback from their environment. This intensive involvement of actors of all kinds in dialogical processes increases their opportunity to confront their own blind spots and thus to develop. As one colleague noted: ›I don't know if the Theatre of the Oppressed is capable of changing the outside world, but I know that it has changed me.‹

Thus, if destruction of the concept of power is fundamental to the humanisation of humanity, then likewise all actions in the service of emancipation must avoid using any methods of control (ibid: 176). This requires a basis of trust in humanity and in its inherent potential. What Lange calls ›fear of the people‹ or ›lack of trust in the people‹ permits excuses, under which authoritative leadership styles can again be implemented. Such an approach often manifests in a ›bureaucratisation‹ of processes, be it in the form of group leadership or of living in a col-

lective. The consequent need to re-establish dialogue among people, as Boal states in paragraph 12, pertains to all relationships within emancipatory artistic work. TO will have to account for the fact that the world and humanity must be reclaimed over and over again. As Lange points out, the human being develops through endless alternation between action and reflection and must continuously test the limits of his/her humanity by probing its boundaries (ibid: 102).

A frequent false assumption of TO is that it is critical of artistic functions, like that of directing or leadership. A function is not authoritarian of itself, what is important is the question of *how* it is carried out and lived.

5.3 Freirian Decoding of Paragraphs 9–12

i) The humanisation of humanity means a continual engagement by the individual with her limits and her environment, in order to make sure of her humanity and to change herself and the world.

ii) To exclude the human being from interpersonal communication, to rob her of her language, is to obstruct her in the practice of transformation of the world and thus of development.

iii) The rule of human being over human being equates to the destruction of humanity; it must be overcome.

iv) The Theatre of the Oppressed offers aesthetic means through which people may reclaim their speech and analyse their past (as action and suffering produced by control) in the context of their present, so that they may create a happier future.

v) The key to overcoming controlling and oppressive circumstances lies in perceiving and naming them.

vi) The Theatre of the Oppressed recognises the tendency for dialogue to become monologue, and makes its primary task the continual re-establishment of dialogue among people.

vii) Because oppression is able to inscribe itself into the consciousness of the people, the Theatre of the Oppressed is aware of this predominant tendency towards ambivalence. Political maturity and humility go hand in hand.

viii) Trust in the life-affirming creativity of people is requisite for leading TO processes.

In paragraphs 9–12 of the Declaration of Principles, Paulo Freire's fundamental ideas and theories are manifest.

True liberation is reached by humanising, by re-establishing human capacity for dialogue with the environment. An education as practice of control (banking system of education) means excluding people from communication and represents a violation of human rights (the right to education and the integrity of the person). Humanising humanity means alphabetisation of the people in the language of life, which is already inherent to them. Through analysis of generative themes (Freire 1970a: 83–84) – the examination of the person and his relationships in the world – education is created. This leads to a ›de-specialisation‹, which undoes the separation of the people into active subjects and passive objects. Dialogue, on all levels of human collaboration, works against conditions of control, ends cultural submission and destroys the myth of an ignorant people. Action and reflection release the people from loss of their language and inability to act and lead them to an education as a praxis of freedom.

TO can be seen as a school of life. Amid all the contradiction of today's (globalised) world (shaped in the past by revolution and opposition), the oppressed rehearse their capacity for relationships in the theatre, in order to humanise themselves through dialogue.

5.4 Principles and Aims of TO

Paragraphs 13–16 describe the principles and aims of TO.

> §13   The Theatre of the Oppressed is a worldwide non-violent aesthetic movement which seeks peace, not passivity.

Describing TO as a *movement* marks a ›will to meaning‹ and entails a cycle of action and reflection, in which this movement towards humanity resides. TO is not just a method and does not simply demarcate a period of creation by Augusto Boal, in the same way that the pedagogy of Paulo Freire is not exhausted within his theoretical writings, before it is and was consequently and sustainably applied. Boal's aesthetic notion will be elaborated on in Part 3 of this book. The idea of peace as active is reminiscent of Wolfgang Dietrich's concept of ›dynamic peace‹ (Dietrich 2012: 148).

§14 The Theatre of the Oppressed tries to activate people in a humanistic en-
deavour expressed by its very name: theatre of, by, and for the oppressed. A sys-
tem that enables people to act in the fiction of theatre to become protagonists,
i.e. acting subjects, of their own lives.

Boal's slogan ›The *Theatre of the Oppressed* is a rehearsal for the revo-
lution‹ was later revised to ›The *Theatre of the Oppressed* is a rehearsal
for reality.‹ (Notes of workshop, Vienna 08/04/2008). Rehearsal aims to
transform the *status quo*. Revolution and reality are interchangeable,
real learning is revolutionary and manifests change. Within the ficti-
tious rehearsal of actions the protagonists orientate themselves in re-
lation to the action in reality. In the introduction to his essay *Cultural
Action for Freedom*, 1970, Freire writes:

> Experience teaches us not to assume that the obvious is clearly understood.
> So it is with the truism with which we begin: All educational practice im-
> plies a theoretical stance on the educator's part. This stance in turn implies
> – sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly – an interpretation of man and
> the world. It could not be otherwise. (...) If, for animals, orientation in the
> world means adaptation to the world, for man it means humanizing the
> world by transforming it. (...) The action of men without objectives, whether
> the objectives are right or wrong, mythical or demythologized, naive or crit-
> ical, is not praxis, though it may be orientation in the world. And not being
> praxis, it is action ignorant both of its own process and of its aim. The inter-
> relation of the awareness of aim and of process is the basis for planning ac-
> tion, which implies methods, objectives, and value options. (Freire 1970b: 5)

Emancipatory pedagogy and art are purposeful, empowering and trans-
formative.

> In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seek-
> ing to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become in turn
> oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both.
> This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to
> liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. (Freire 1970a: 26)

In this light it is important to bear in mind:

§15   The Theatre of the Oppressed is neither an ideology nor a political party,
neither dogmatic nor coercive and is respectful of all cultures. It is a method of

analysis and a means to develop happier societies. Because of its humanistic and democratic nature, it is widely used all over the world, in all fields of social activities such as: education, culture, arts, politics, social work, psychotherapy, literacy programs and health.

In order to truly bring about happier societies, a new cultural climate is necessary. Freire writes: ›In alienated societies men oscillate between ingenious optimism and hopelessness‹ (Freire 1976a: 13). If you ask around, this reflects today's widespread attitude of resignation: ›We are all at the mercy of globalisation‹. In a changing society another force comes into play, which Freire describes as follows:

> Entering the world, they perceive the old themes anew and grasp the tasks of their time. Bit by bit, these groups begin to see themselves and their society from their own perspective: they become aware of their own potentialities. This is the point at which hopelessness begins to be replaced by hope. Thus, nascent hope coincides with an increasingly critical perception of the concrete conditions of reality. Society now reveals itself as something unfinished, not as something inexorably given; it has become a challenge rather than a hopeless limitation. (idem)

In a society which considers itself to be ›unfinished‹, one's own responsibility and creativity has space. Human beings can conceive and realise themselves in the abundance of their resources and can live to the full. The much-lauded ›happiness‹ can only be discovered, if people experience their relationship to the world as vital (cf. Sir Ken Robinson, http://sirkenrobinson.com.).

The first (2002) draft of the Declaration of Principles reads: ›It is only a method of analysing and rebuilding society.‹ The ›re‹ in rebuilding is reminiscent of ›Re-volution‹. The international character of TO gives rise to a further dimension of the way in which this theatre facilitates freedom. The deployment of this work within the international context is riddled with challenges, in the endeavour not to reproduce ruling power structures.

§16   Theatre of the Oppressed is now being used in dozens of nations around the world, as a tool for the making of discoveries about oneself and about the Other, of clarifying and expressing our desires; a tool for the changing of circumstances which produce unhappiness and pain and for the enhancement of what

brings peace; for respecting differences between individuals and groups and for the inclusion of all human beings in dialogue; and finally a tool for the achievement of economical and social justice, which is the foundation of true democracy. Summarizing, the general objective of the Theatre of the Oppressed is the development of essential Human Rights.

This is probably the most comprehensive paragraph of the Declaration. It addresses the realms of healing, peace work, psychotherapy, racism, discrimination, exclusion/inclusion and conflict-capacity as well as the desire to change unjust social orders. If one were to replace the phrase ›circumstances which produce unhappiness and pain‹ with ›unjust social order‹, one would come fairly close to Freire. An unjust social order also engenders what Freire calls ›false generosity‹

> Any attempt to ›soften‹ the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed the attempt never goes beyond this. In order to have the continued opportunity to express their ›generosity‹, the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this ›generosity‹, which is nourished by death, despair and poverty. (Freire 1970a: 26)

Julian Boal addresses the generosity of oppressors in his text on the definition of oppression (Fritz 2012: 100–108) and gives an example from the patriarchal structure, into which we are undoubtedly born and of which we must first become conscious. In a video recording from the CTO-Rio's archive, Augusto Boal defines TO as a theatre of human rights.

The last four paragraphs of the Declaration of Principles relate to the International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation and its recognition of the previously analysed principles. The complete Declaration of Principles can be found in Appendix 1.

On the endless and seemingly inexhaustible personal engagement of Augusto Boal, I cite Paul Tillich:

> [T]hat which concerns us ultimately must belong to reality as a whole; it must belong to being. Otherwise we could not encounter it, and it could not concern us. Of course, it cannot be one being among others; then it would not concern us infinitely. It must be the ground of our being, that which determines our being and not-being, the ultimate and unconditional power of being. (Tillich 1951: 21)

I think unscathed humanity could be the object of Augusto Boal's unquenchable passion.

5.5 Other key concepts

These examples demonstrate the need to further explore and expand Freirian concepts on the *human being* which are relevant to the praxis of TO.

Dilemma/Contradiction/Divisiveness

Both TO and the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* posit the world as an unfinished world and the human being as an unfinished being. Freire often refers to the dilemma of the oppressed, the contradiction arising from the split within himself. From this Boal evolves his Forum Theatre method. By physically juxtaposing the oppressed protagonist with an antagonist while devising the piece of forum theatre, the contradiction unfolds as play. The methodology he outlines in his book *The Rainbow of Desire* addresses these contradictions. Now how does this dilemma, this contradiction manifest? It does not help to simply want to be ›a good person‹. Solidarity, since Che Guevara, means to take the same risk (Gerassi 1968: 112–119; Boal 2001: 194). Just as radically, it is not enough, according to Freire, to show generosity, while maintaining the oppressive mechanisms which enable one to be in the position of generosity. One must enter into the situation of those, ›with whom one is solidary‹ (Freire 1970a: 31).

> The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account. (ibid: 30)

The internalised ›order‹ (cf. Bourdieu) of a patriarchal world gives rise to a dilemma in which one must first ›find‹ oneself after becoming conscious, in order to realise that the perpetual conflict with the outside is something deeply human and ultimately irresolvable, and requires a space for discourse and dialogue, where relational work to strengthen one's own identity is possible. Only then can one, as Dietrich writes, discover the ›still mountain lake‹ (2012: 16), the inner peace, deal with the external contradictions and find one's own answers in the form of one's own life journey. This division is expressed as psychological disorders, addiction, (self) hatred and war. A pedagogy and a theatre willing to take on these contradictions must be conscious of this disposition and should find a way of dealing with them. One such way lies in the principle of action and reflection as praxis of freedom. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is:

> (…) a pedagogy which must be forged *with*, not *for,* the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come the necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. (Freire 1970a: 30) [italics in original]

A divided person needs a strengthening of being, from which he can draw the power for change.

> The central problem is this: How can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation? Only as they discover themselves to be ›hosts‹ of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy (…) The pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanisation. Liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one. The man or woman who emerges is a new person, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanisation of all people. Or to put it another way, the solution of this contradiction is born in the labor which brings into the world this new being, no longer oppressor no longer oppressed, but human in the process of achieving freedom. (ibid: 30–31)

In light of these excerpts one can see what one already knew, but can only properly understand through praxis: the goal of the exercise is to get beyond the exercise. This is the reason that I advocate using the

term ›discipline‹ to characterise TO. In societies without the ›obvious characteristics‹ of oppression (armed force, military regimes, dictatorship, among others) and exploitation (slavery, sweat-shops, deforestation, among others) and in which great material wealth is prevalent, the TO method is often in danger of inhabiting an illusory world in which contradictions are supposed to have been dissolved. Freire speaks of ›false perception‹ (ibid: 34) and the need to make ›real oppression more oppressive still by adding to it the realization of oppression‹ (33); he cites Marx in order to correct distorted understanding, which ultimately only leads to denial of the circumstances and a defence of the ›understanding‹ class. In Europe and in other parts of the privileged minority-world, we do not like to see ourselves as oppressors nor as oppressed, another facet of the dilemma. Freire here signals the requirement to keep contradictions in mind, to problematise rather than to seek for solutions: and as Ganguly puts it, TO is not a problem-solving situation but one which seeks to expose contradictions[38].

Political Power

Manipulation, submission, depository education, paternalism, anti-dialogic action and mythologisation of the world are established ways of alienating people from reality and increasing passivity, powerlessness and resignation. In a process of ›depositing myths‹ (ibid: 120) everyone is led to believe that they are free and able to shape their lives as they wish (common myths of this kind are altruism, equal access to education, free choice of workplace, the ability to move freely in the world, human rights, choice of partner, a functioning healthcare system, democracy and so on). The old recipe of *divide and rule* has never gone out of fashion; every action which might create cohesion and unity among the people is stymied (cf. ibid: 122). In TO praxis, programmes with a predetermined theme or in the service of a predetermined outcome[39]

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38 ›It is important both in Forum theatre and in other forms of TO to understand that TO is not a problem-solving session, we cannot solve all the problems of our life on stage. Seeing TO as a problem-solving session narrows down the whole politics of TO.‹ (Ganguly 2016: 51)

39 E.g. those aimed at a ›target group‹ such as the disabled, refugees, women etc.

may inhibit the possibility of understanding a problem in its entirety. Very few organisations (outstanding among them Jana Sanskriti) are consistent enough in their principles to reject such project proposals, since these often offer much needed interim funding. The media helps to preserve power in the hands of ruling classes and groups. The terrorist becomes a freedom-fighter and vice-versa, as required. A few months or years later everything is exposed, usually without consequences (see the piece by Frida Modak in ›América Latina en movimiento‹: www. alainet.org., on President Obama's visit to Latin America in March 2011).

In this scenario, modernisation and development are two diametrically opposed ideas. Only a society which has forged its own identity (as ›a being for itself‹: Freire 1970a: 142) can develop; societies dependent on world powers and global economic institutions, and those which are divided, cannot. When development is imposed and prescribed from the outside and only benefits corporate global power, manipulation, invasion and the imposition of monologue occur. The political power of the oppressed lies in their radicalisation, in the concurrence of word and action, and, as Freire writes, their ›*boldness*‹ (1970a: 157), which forces the people to perceive their lives as a condition of permanent risk. The power to change in the confrontation with the world does not come from the ›wanting to please‹ of those who fit in, but from the independence to stand up for oneself. This is where true authority emerges, in the face of imposed authoritarianism. Here, freedom emerges, a freedom which cannot arise without one's own authority. We must become the *owners of our own labor* (164), if we wish to act in dignity and autonomy.

Consciousness/Awareness and Conscientisation

Consciousness/Awareness and/or conscientisation are central ideas in both PO, where they are clearly named and described, and in TO, where they are embodied, and in which the protagonist's desires and suggestions for solutions are collectively sought. This focus is also found in the Feldenkrais method, where an entire catalogue of methodology is called: *Awareness Through Movement.* Freire calls his conscientisation process *Conscientização.* In today's world of project proposals the talk is of ›Awareness-Raising‹. The subject seems as old as humanity itself. On *Conscientização* Freire writes:

> Whereas banking education anaesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the *submersion* of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality. (Freire 1970a: 62) [italics in original]

The idea refers to the epistemological process, based on personal, individual desires, attitudes and actions, societal and class-specific structures, and to the fact that these can be ›un-covered‹ and changed via thorough analysis. It is a process of demythologising the narratives of a society, of unveiling.

Boal addresses this demythologisation in his report on the ALFIN project (*A People's Theatre Experiment in Peru*) in Thorau's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (German edition) (Thorau 1989: 41–66).

Freire's goal is to assist people to learn to recognise causalities and reach a critical understanding of reality (Freire 1976: 44). Magical awareness (see Boal's *Stop: c'est magique!*) on the other hand, accepts things ›as they are‹ and attributes superior powers to them, which one must submit to, leading to fatalism, passivity and resignation.

> Critical consciousness is integrated with reality; naïve consciousness superimposes itself on reality; and phonetical consciousness, whose pathological naïvité leads to the irrational, adapts to reality. (Freire 1976: 44)

The level of awareness determines the mode of action. As soon as people recognise and perceive challenges, they can understand them, develop possible means to respond to them. At this point Freire writes, ›critical understanding leads to critical action, magic understanding to magic response‹ (idem).

In the face of this magic the human being as spectator is a non-re-creator, an ›empty‹, passive being, in which one can deposit content (Freire 1970a: 57). Here Freire cites Sartre's concept of a ›digestive‹ or ›nutritive‹ education in which teachers ›fill‹ their students with allegedly important knowledge (idem)[40].

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40 Cf. also Piaget's critique of the view of children as ›empty vessels‹ to be filled with knowledge.

Liberation is Praxis, is Action and Reflection

For Freire, praxis is a concept which he uses to refer to thinking, learning and behavioural patterns, in which theory and practice are not separate, but understood as an interdependent and inseparable entity. Theory is rooted in action and the action embodies the theory. Action and reflection are the foundation of all human activity, in which reality transforms.

> Authentic liberation – the process of humanisation – is not another deposit to be made in men. Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it. (ibid: 60)

The world, understood as a world-in-process in perpetual development and change and not as a static reality, is the foundation of problem-posing education (ibid: 61). Neither words alone nor action alone can be a healthy basis for a life-affirming praxis, namely world-creation. In an unfinished world, this is the impulse for life and ultimately for love of the world, whose existence is bound up with the human community. Boal's ›Have the courage to be happy!‹ refers, in my opinion, to this fundamental insight. It demands the courage to demystify reality, to confront the given circumstances and contribute what you can, to shape the world. Thorau describes Boal's theatre as a theatre which has the means to foreground the transformability of the world and does not deliver finished images of it (Thorau 1982: 60). Praxis is a form of action and reflection in dialogue.

Cultural Invasion and Thinking

The concept of ›cultural invasion‹ can be traced to the historical *Conquista*. The taking over, subjugation and imposition of cultural substance by one group on another, having studied the subjugated group and exploited them for their own advantage, is familiar to us as the concept of ›negative globalisation‹. In Freire's time this re-emerged as a shadow of the colonialisation that had ›only just‹ been shaken off. At the same time, it is also a reflection of the actual interference by the global power of the USA in the fate of the Latin American continent and the attempt by David to thwart Goliath on the cultural level. Cultural action is historical action, Freire writes (1970a: 161), and Boal agrees, as

his teaching of using theatre as politics shows, and as is practised in India by Jana Sanskriti. In Sanjoy Ganguly's presentations he always refers to Freire, when he speaks of the people being numbed so that they no longer think.

Independent thinking is a kind of thinking that creates problems, because it intensifies people's personal incompatibility with their surrounding reality and thus unsettles it. Thought can only arise in unity with action (cf. Feldenkrais – see Part 3):

> [T]he investigation of thematics involves the investigation of the people's thinking – thinking which occurs only in and among people together seeking out reality. I cannot think *for others* or *without others*, nor can others think *for me*. Even if the people's thinking is superstitious or naïve, it is only as they rethink their assumptions in action that they can change. Producing and acting upon their own ideas – not consuming those of others – must constitute that process. (Freire 1970a: 89)

Action and reflection open up spaces in which consciousness can arise; this revelatory perception unlocks dammed up energies and frees the potential which the world needs and has always needed for problem solving.

> Humankind *emerge* from their *submersion* and acquire the ability to *intervene* in reality as it is unveiled (...).
> Every thematic investigation which deepens historical awareness is thus educational, while all authentic education investigates thinking. The more educators and people investigate the people's thinking, and are thus jointly educated, the more they continue to investigate. Education and thematic investigation, in the problem-posing concept of education, are simply different moments of the same process. (ibid: 90) [italics in original]

What Freire describes here as investigation is the same as that which occurs in the theatrical process; within the artistic process of creation everyone acts as investigators of history and reality and of the connections between entrenched narratives and the conclusions based upon these, which usually hinder a happier future (see below, Chapter 8: Creación Colectiva).

> In cultural invasion, the actors draw the thematic content of their action from their own values and ideology; their starting point is their own world, from which they enter the world of those they invade. (ibid: 161)

Just as the writing of history reflects the history of its authors, euro-centrism, patriarchy, post-colonial structures and omnipresent business interests are manipulative. Freire and Boal call for independent, political historical narrative. Cultural invasion however also occurs through mass media and social media. Its agents do not themselves, as in the age of the Conquistadores, conquer and subjugate in such an overt way; but they nevertheless operate a version of colonialism in which the receivers are reduced to passivity and treated as objects, whilst believing themselves to be liberated. Freire counters the concept of cultural invasion with the concept of cultural synthesis; in the latter case, the foreign agents do not come in order to teach or impart something, but in order to ›get to know the world of the people with the people‹, without the ulterior motive of exploiting them.

> Cultural synthesis is thus a mode of action for confronting culture itself, as the preserver of the very structures by which it was formed. Cultural action, as historical action, is an instrument for superseding the dominant alienated and alienating culture. In this sense, every authentic revolution is a cultural revolution. (…).
> Cultural synthesis (…) does not mean that the objectives of revolutionary action should be limited by the aspirations expressed in the worldview of the people. If this were to happen (in the guise of respect for that view), the revolutionary leaders would be passively bound to that vision. Neither invasion by the leaders of the people's world view nor mere adaptation by the leaders to the (often naïve) aspirations of the people is acceptable. (ibid: 161–163)

Firstly, this means that committed action in support of the vitality and humanisation of humanity can respect existing values and, if it takes the form of sensitive guidance, open up spaces for new creation. Secondly, it means that the dimension of ›revolutionary‹ action, or in the context of TO, the sustainability of the theatrical intervention, is in large measure dependent on the consciousness of its actors. Thus if, as Freire writes, the wish of the people goes no further than a pay rise (this is often seen in Forum Theatre pieces addressing gender issues), then it would be wrong to only support this demand; just as it would be wrong to strive for goals that might be much more ambitious (e.g. guaranteed basic income). The solution, Freire says (ibid: 163), lies in the synthesis. One must respect the demand, but also question its significance and sustainability.

Cultural invasion certainly constitutes a violation of human rights (freedom, dignity, education and so on):

> (...) cultural invasion is thus always an act of violence against the persons of the invaded culture, who lose their originality or face the threat of losing it. (...)
> In the last analysis, invasion is a form of economic and cultural domination. Invasion may be practiced by a metropolitan society upon a dependent society, or it may be implicit in the domination of one class over another within the same society. (ibid: 133–4)

Though the triumph of one people over another may temporarily seem like a victory for many, ultimately it is always a loss for humanity. Even the ›success‹ of large-scale projects like major dams which claim to provide extensive benefits may often risk both human life and the loss of cultural property. Cultural invasion also works in less obvious ways: social convention is subject to ›shifting baselines‹ which may reposition and redescribe the status and value of groups, social relationships and practices – including those which impact on the natural environment – in less obtrusive but ultimately devastating ways[41].

Manipulation/Divide and Rule

As noted in the section on political power, the tactic of divide and rule is a frequent recourse. Where people are subdivided into ›legal‹ and ›illegal‹, ›sick‹ and ›healthy‹, ›normal‹ and ›disadvantaged‹, ›gifted‹ and ›average‹ and the world into first, second and third, there are no limits to the manipulation of thoughts and the actions resulting from them. Freire:

> All the actions of the dominant class manifest its need to divide in order to facilitate the preservation of the oppressor state. (125)

When people experience themselves as incompetent, unworthy and unwanted and cede the responsibility to the ›experts‹, they also cannot

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41   cf. the work of Daniel Pauly and Randy Olson in the USA (on marine ecological systems) and Harald Welzer in Germany (Welzer 2012, on the consequences for conflict of climate change).

realise their full potential or activate the resources required for problem solving. This leads to dependencies. All capabilities are inherent in all people. Neither Freire nor Boal claim that this means everyone can do everything to the same degree of excellence. But there is nobody who cannot do anything.

> One of the characteristics of oppressive cultural action which is almost never perceived by the dedicated but naïve professionals who are involved is the emphasis on a ›focalized‹ view of problems rather than on seeing them as dimensions of a ›totality‹. (122)

And so the challenge, especially nowadays, is to be careful and thoughtful in the planning of a project and its parameters, and in hiring, involving and inspiring others for it. ›False‹ consciousness often sneaks into ambitious undertakings and the complexity of the context can easily be underestimated in the course of grant writing, or when accepting a commission.

> In order to divide and confuse the people, the destroyers call themselves builders, and accuse the true builders of being destructive. History, however, always takes it upon itself to modify these designations. (127)

Manipulation of course can be employed to any aim. Freire himself was also accused of being a populist. The issue seems to be that independent thinking and consciousness can only be developed in dialogue. This consciousness allows us to understand that we are one with the world. Dialogue is what keeps us together in the long term.

> Dividing in order to preserve the status quo, then, is necessarily a fundamental objective of the theory of antidialogical action. In addition, the dominators try to present themselves as saviors of the women and men they dehumanize and divide. This messianism, however, cannot conceal their true intention: to save themselves. They want to save their riches, their power, their way of life: the things that enable them to subjugate others. Their mistake is that men *cannot* save themselves (...) either as individuals or as an oppressor class. Salvation can be achieved only *with* others. (126–7) [italics in original]

Alphabetisation

Here I draw on the contribution by Francisco Weffort, in Freire's *Erziehung als Praxis der Freiheit* (*Education as the Practice of Freedom*), 1977.

The alphabetisation efforts in Brazil in the early 1960s (up to 1964) preceded both Freire's and Boal's main works. The control of language, which at the start of the invasion of the Latin American continent was usually the prerogative of the Catholic missionaries, had always been a means to an end. Just as theatre has also been appropriated by diverse ideologies, alphabetisation is no different. Peoples who are not ›documented‹, who appear not to possess a literary tradition or written grammar, are most commonly disregarded and have their rights curtailed.

Alphabetisation and theatre are not good or bad *per se*. What is important is the sense in which *development* is understood. The alphabetisation movement in Brazil was one of the greatest endeavours for cultural democratisation. Its goal was to mobilise the masses and increase the involvement of the people in elections, by enabling them to exercise their right to vote. Within a short time its success led to the planning of 20,000 Culture Circles across the country, which should have alphabetised some two million people (Weffort in Freire 1977: 95). This posed a threat to the ruling class and was immediately prohibited after the first military coup in 1964.

What were the features of this alphabetisation? Learners were respectfully called ›alphabetisands‹ and not ›analphabetics‹ (ibid: 91). Because it was assumed that every person already possesses knowledge, alphabetisation was viewed as a supplementary mode of communication and a further contribution to consciousness raising.

As opposed to previous practices, learning processes were to be closely related to the life situations of the learners. Teatro Popular (see Chapter 8) also took this to heart after the Agitprop phase. The principal goal of alphabetisation is to deliver ›a training in independent thought and in social and political responsibility‹ (ibid: 98).

Above all alphabetisation was an endeavour for democracy. Language and history are means to power creation. Freire assumed that telling one's own story[42] (and performing one's own story in the theatre)

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42   This line of thought by Freire and his followers overlooks the presence of the (indigenous) Oral History, which has existed in communities throughout time.

contributes to empowerment, which in turn allows people to go their own way, autonomously and consciously. According to Freire, the word has two dimensions, that of action and that of reflection. ›There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world‹ (Freire 1970a: 68). And he argues that words become inauthentic when their ›constitutive elements‹ are split apart; words without action become verbalism, an empty babble and conversely too little reflection leads to mere activism, that is ›action for the sake of action‹. ›To exist humanly, is to name the world, to change it‹ (ibid: 69) – in order to then rename it in a new act of action-reflection. Life is change.

Generative Themes

Freire chose the term ›generative theme‹, because it makes other potentially important themes and actions accessible. The cultural agents in the alphabetisation process did not use their intellectual advantage in order to convey ›complete‹ knowledge in line with the banking-concept. Instead, together with the oppressed, the affected, the disadvantaged people and the masses, they sought out so-called ›generative themes‹, which revealed the structures of violence and control in the system, in order to analyse them; from this deconstructive activity they drew the impetus to act and inspire action, by guiding people to the ›place‹ where they could discover their own motivation for action. The aim of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* is likewise the disclosure of oppressive structures, their analysis and the search for alternative modes of action. The artist, as someone who knows how art is produced, merely uses their knowledge and mastery of the artistic means, to foster the process of production.

Coding

Following the choice of themes, the research teams looked for contradictions, which emerged from these complex themes in the lives of the alphabetisands. The next step was to ›package‹ these so-called codes. These codes were sketches or pictures, but also word sequences, which could later be presented for joint analysis (Freire 1970a: 95). In the decoding process which followed, the participants revealed their knowl-

edge about the world and, over the course of several cycles of reflection and exchange within their group, came to a ›perception of their previous perception‹ (ibid: 96).

The coded situation is a representation of the cultural and historical context of the lives of the participants in the alphabetisation process. By decoding these situations, they study and critically reflect upon the political, cultural, social and economic structures which determine their reality. This leads to an encounter with the previously mentioned limit-situations, which reveals possibilities of where and how to effect change in one's own reality. One further result of the coding and decoding work is that ideologies that affect our life can become clearly visible. In line with the original Freirian idea, Augusto Boal seizes upon these stages of work, transposing them onto Image Theatre as well as other processes used in the development of Forum Theatre pieces (cf. Fritz 2012: 96). Alternation of action and reflection is central to Image and Forum Theatre. The work of ›excavating‹ the ideological substructure of complex and contradictory themes of lived experience can be seen in methods such as the *Rainbow of Desire*. Boal's work is one of the few examples of how Freirian educational work is still used in the modern day in its multidimensionality. Boal's theatrical approach adds the factor of embodied knowledge to Freire's method.

Experts

The age of the polymath is long gone and we are used to studying, teaching, living and thinking in terms of specialisation. Boal and Freire's rejection of expertise is based on the rejection of the passivity of the many and the rule of few. We are deceived by our belief that only a limited number have ability and scholarship at their disposal, thus giving away our independence and autonomy (to craftsmen, doctors, artists, among others) and allowing them to make decisions in our stead. No one knows everything and no one knows nothing, says Boal (2005: 128) and it is necessary to be aware of this imperfect human perfection, such that everyone may learn from everyone. In a speech for Paulo Freire, celebrating his award of Rio de Janeiro's Medal of Honour, Boal said:

> Paulo Freire invented a method, his method, our method, the method which teaches the illiterate that they are perfectly literate in the languages of life,

of suffering, of struggle, and that all they need to learn is how to translate into marks on paper that which they already know, from their daily lives. In Socratic fashion, Paulo Freire helps the citizenry to discover by themselves that which they carry within them. (ibid)

Ganguly interprets this as follows:

Boal is in agreement with Freire regarding these two things. We can remember Vivekenanda here again, saying more than 100 years previously that ›education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man‹[43]. (Ganguly 2010: 62)

Thus, it is necessary to be aware that every person can reach perfection within himself or herself, that every person is equipped with natural talents. The separation made by the banking concept of education, into educated and uneducated, is tendentious. This applies in general to any arrogance towards people. The *Theatre of the Oppressed* and the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* advocate for the implementation of human rights: ›All people are born free and equal in dignity and rights.‹

Thorau, the first German Boalian scholar, sees this as particularly relevant to theatre:

Like Freire, Boal is concerned to remove the separation between ›expectadores‹, ›observers‹ and ›atores‹, ›actors‹, between observers and those who take action. Hereby, the ›ownership of the role‹ introduced by the ›ruling classes‹ is also to be done away with (...) By this Boal refers not only to the stereotyping which reduces the actor to main and supporting roles, but rather, that which reduces human beings to ›extras‹, to mere functions. ›Role‹ not only stands for role in the theatre, but for the societal and vocational role in the most comprehensive sense. (Thorau 1982: 70)

According to Boal, specialisation leads to hypertrophy of those vocational and social capabilities which are in demand and to the atrophy and stunting of those which society deems undesirable (idem.). De-specialization would enable the reversal of the resulting process of stultification. In his workshops Boal repeatedly said: ›Every person can act, EVEN the actors!‹ Like Freire and Illich, Boal sees specialization as a means of oppression. And in this regard, Thorau emphasises: ›De-spe-

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43   Which is of course also a Platonic position.

cialization does not mean well intentioned amateur theatre, but rather, the release of each individual's dramatic, interpretative, creative abilities …‹ (Thorau 1982: 173).

If one considers Boal's creative trajectory, it seems that at the end he returns to issues that occupied him at the beginning. Describing one's own life, using all the languages of life, was present during the ALFIN project. In the *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, which Boal used extensively in his work in Brazil during his last years, he returns to this original goal of alphabetisation of the people and rejects intransitive, indoctrinating education which robs people of creativity. Human beings must regain awareness of their capabilities[44].

Subject/Object

Both Freire and Boal set their sights on recalibrating the relationship between rulers and those who are ruled (e.g. teachers and students, artists and observers). A subject-object relationship should become an intersubjective relationship. The subject which acts (the oppressor, in the old system) and the object which is acted upon, should become subject-actors (revolutionary leaders) and actor-subjects (the oppressed); they discover themselves anew in and through an interaction which seeks to change reality; in contrast, the old, oppressive system sustains a reality in which the oppressed are designated as objects within it (Freire 1970a: 116, n. 10). The rejection of the concept of teacher/student and audience/artist coincide for Freire and Boal. Both wish to undo this separation and create a democratic-dialogical learning environment. For Freire, these terms later became teacher-student and student-teacher and for Boal they became Actor and SpectActor (Boal 1998: 154). Thorau addresses these themes in depth and cites numerous examples of Boal's vehement advocacy to the change from observer to agent (Thorau 1982: 64–9). In *Theatre of the Oppressed* Boal comes to the following conclusion:

> ›Spectator‹, a Bad Word! The spectator is less than a man and it is necessary to humanize him, to restore his capacity of action in all its fullness. He too

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44 The work of Dorothy Heathcote in the UK (›mantle of the expert‹) and Viola Spolin in the USA is evidence of parallel currents of thought and practice linking drama and education. (RY)

must be a subject, and actor on an equal plane with those generally accepted as actors, who must also be spectators. (Boal 1998: 154–5)[45]

He also summarises his theoretical considerations, which take issue with what he sees as Aristotle's poetics of the oppressed, in which audience members should cathartically cleanse themselves by passively observing their flaws (*hamartia*). Boal points out that Brecht went a step further and exposed the world as a subject, susceptible to change, because the conscientisation of the audience is allowed, but even in this case the plot remains the privilege of the artists. The poetics of the oppressed is in essence the poetics of liberation:

> The spectator no longer delegates power to the characters either to think or to act in his place. The spectator frees himself; he thinks and acts for himself! Theatre is action. (Boal 1998: 155)

On the same page one finds Boal's famous line: ›Perhaps theatre is not revolutionary in itself; but have no doubts, it is a rehearsal of revolution.‹

Attitude

People's motivations to enter the field of emancipatory education are various. There is however *one* great difference in approach: between education workers who see the work as work, and those who consider it a calling, even if it is work. It is no simple task to evaluate processes and those who carry them out, since ›interventions‹ always depend very much on circumstances and context. It is also thus for Boal. He sought spaces and ways in which to manifest his life's task and found them wherever they opened up to him. Many TO practitioners suspect that he carried a profound spring of spirituality and inspiration within him. Sanjoy Ganguly begins most of his talks with a story about the ›correct‹ attitude. He too seems inexhaustible in his dedication to this work. So what sort of attitude is this? Freire answers as follows:

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45 Like some of Boal's other arguments with Aristotle, this could be seen as opportunistic. As Jacques Rancière has pointed out, spectators are rarely entirely passive and aesthetic experience is rarely entirely satisfied with keeping them in this state (Rancière 2009). (RY)

> Someone who cannot acknowledge himself to be as mortal as everyone else still has a long way to go before he can reach the point of encounter. At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages; there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know. (Freire 1970a: 71)

In this quote Freire gives evidence of a kind of spirituality, which is significant for many of those who work with people effectively. He identifies the humility necessary to open up spaces for the unpredictable to occur and enable vital transformation; and adds the following thought from Che Guevara:

> Let me say, with the risk of appearing ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality. (Gerassi 1968: 398)

Creation can therefore only arise from an approach guided by a deep love for human beings, the world and life itself. Creation is ›the task of responsible subjects‹, an act of courage in humility, which does not label people as knowledgeable and unknowledgeable. Even the possession of the knowledge that human beings are possibly alienated from themselves is no reason to give up the conviction that ›the power to create and to transform‹ yearns to be ›reborn‹. Hope is therefore a prerequisite of dialogue. The vision of humanity is born from the quest of the incomplete human being for community with other people. Dialogue without hope becomes hollow, sterile, bureaucratic and tedious (Freire 1970a: 71–4). In the film *Playing for Change,* Ganguly says ›We must romanticise optimism.‹ Words and deeds must agree. False love, false humility and weak faith cannot lead to world-changing deeds. Freire, citing Mao Tse Tung, warns us that revolutionary leaders and cultural workers can also fall into the trap of acting and deciding for the people, not being guided by the needs of the masses, but by their own wants and ambitions (1970: 94). Humility, love, wisdom and hope are potent antidotes to the traps of societal narratives, into which cultural workers can fall. Dialogue inevitably counteracts the myth that the people are ignorant.

Testing action and untested feasibility

›I know that I know nothing.‹ This statement could be used to describe Freire's precondition for ›real consciousness‹. He writes:

> Real consciousness implies the impossibility of perceiving the ›untested feasibility‹ which lies beyond the limit-situations. But whereas the untested feasibility cannot be achieved at the level of ›real [or present] consciousness‹, it can be realized through ›testing action‹ which reveals its hitherto unperceived viability. (1970a: 94)

No theory could better emphasize the potential of *Forum Theatre*. The theatre as a rehearsal of reality can be revolutionary for its protagonists, by bringing them to and beyond their limit-situations, without the actual dangers of life, outside the theatre, posing a threat to them. Only after meticulous action and reflection is the decision made, as to how the story should continue in real life. The limit-situations must be transcended, because beyond them lies the untested feasibility. Because consciousness, like life, is in an enduring flow, this leads to a continuous expansion and development of human beings. Freire calls this the ›perception of previous perception‹ and the ›knowledge of previous knowledge‹. Translating the ›curriculum‹ for the theatre would then be to develop a strategy which would include Forum Theatre tours, audience interventions, implementation of the outcomes in direct action and so on. The transformation people experience through action in a concrete situation results in a happier state of being. Freire suggests that research and education should complement each other. It is their job to prove their effectiveness at experiencing and communicating the complexity of a continuously transforming reality. To ›discover each other ... in a situation‹ allows people to intervene in reality (1970a: 90).

Culture of Silence

The term ›culture of silence‹ indicates anti-dialogic action and is a tool of a pedagogy of fear. On a psychological level it leads us to trauma therapy. Freire established the term ›culture of silence‹ in the context of colonialisation. In *Cultural Action for Freedom* Freire writes:

> (...) there is a fundamental dimension to these societies resulting from their colonial phase: their culture was established and maintained as a ›culture of silence‹. Here again, the twofold pattern is apparent. Externally, the alienated society as a whole, as a mere object of the director society, is not heard by the latter. On the contrary the metropolis prescribes its word, thereby effectively silencing it. Meanwhile, within the alienated society itself, the masses are subjected to the same kind of silence by the power elites. (Freire 1970b: 3)

For Freire it is important to point out that this culture emerged from a historical context, and that various levels of consciousness are associated with it.

> We will first study the historical-cultural configuration which we have called ›the culture of silence‹. This mode of culture is the superstructural expression which conditions a special form of consciousness. The culture of silence ›over-determines‹ the infrastructure in which it originates. Understanding the culture of silence is possible only if it is taken as a totality which is itself part of a greater whole. (1970b: 32)

The culture of silence is not something prefabricated and superimposed by a foreign hand, nor does it spontaneously emerge arbitrarily. ›The fact is that the culture of silence is born in the relationship between the Third World and the metropolis‹ (idem). Here, the metropolis stands for the invading world from Europe, as well as the city centre, from which culture is transported to the periphery. In order to understand the culture of silence, one needs to analyse the relationships between those with a voice and those dependent on the voice of the others.

> (...) understanding the culture of silence presupposes an analysis of dependence as a relational phenomenon which gives rise to different forms of being, of thinking, of expression, those of the culture of silence and those of the culture which ›has a voice‹. (ibid: 35)

In subject-object relationships the culture is always one of silence, this is applicable to all dependent relationships in which one speaks and the other is silent, or must be silent.

> The dependent society is by definition a silent society. Its voice is not an authentic voice, but merely an echo of the voice of the metropolis – in every way, the metropolis speaks, the dependent society listens. (34)

Latin American history is branded by the injury imposed by the violent ›Conquista‹. This is an injury once described as ›the greatest wound in human history‹[46], the effects of which reach far into the present day.

> Latin American societies are closed societies characterized by a rigid hier-archical social structure; by the lack of internal markets, since their econo-my is controlled from the outside; by the exportation of raw materials and importation of manufactured goods, without a voice in either process; by a precarious and selective educational system whose schools are an instru-ment of maintaining the status quo; by high percentages of illiteracy and disease, including the naively named ›tropical diseases‹ which are really diseases of underdevelopment and dependence; by alarming rates of infant mortality; by malnutrition, often with irreparable effects on mental facul-ties; by a low life expectancy; and by a high rate of crime. (ibid: 35–6)

We can however, also assume that most other regions of the world ex-hibit the features of this culture of silence[47].

Transitivity

›Real education is transitive or it isn't education at all‹ (Boal 1998: 266).
But what is this transitivity, which, in its sub-divisions (semi-tran-sitive, naïve-transitive, critically-transitive) seems closely akin to the Kohlbergian stages of moral development? Freire writes:

> As men amplify their power to perceive and respond to suggestions and questions arising in their context, and increase their capacity to enter into dialogue not only with other men but with their world, they become ›tran-sitive‹. (…) Transitivity of consciousness makes man ›permeable‹. (Freire 1976b: 17)

Freire differentiates naïve transitivity, characterised by simplification of problems, by sentimentality towards the old days, by underestimation and overestimation and by the domination of polemics over dialogue,

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46   cf. Galeano 1973

47   Examples in my own country, Austria, would include the lack of histori-cal reflection of the Second World War, the history of partisan resistance in Carinthia, forced resettlement, the acknowledgement of mass graves from the First and Second World War.

from critical transitivity, characterised by deep analysis, discussion and interpretation, which strives to create coherent argumentation and dialogue, discarding the old not simply because it is old and valuing the new not just for its currency. A transitive human being is in a continuous state of dialogue between person and person, person and world and with his/her spirituality. Only critical transitivity leads to true democracy. Therefore, this transitivity is defined by ›permeability towards people and the world‹ (1976b: 17–18).

This chapter has laid down the basic parameters for pedagogical and theatrical engagement with the situation of the oppressed; the next chapter examines some of the forms this engagement took for Boal in Latin America as he began to test these parameters in action.

Chapter 6
Boal's Early Practical Work in Latin America

6.1 Concrete Experience Number I – The ALFIN-Project

Between 1940–2001 there were five different alphabetisation campaigns in Peru:

1944–1956: *alfabetización tradicional;*

1957–1969: *alfacetización funcional;*

1970–1978: *alfabetización integral* (ALFIN) using Paulo Freire's method;

1980–1990: *alfabetización multisectorial;*

1996–2001: *alfabetización del Ministerio de Promoción de la Mujer y Desarollo Humano* (PROMUDEH).

In 2002, the Ministerio de Educación resumed responsibility for *alfabetización*. The alphabetisation plan from 2006–2011, was named Programa Nacional de Movilización por la Alfabetización (PRONAMA). The issue is one of the greatest challenges for the continent, and its significance extends across centuries[48].

There is varying information on language diversity in Peru. Travel guides refer to approximately 15 language families and some 43 different dialects. Boal speaks of 45 different languages just in the province of Loreto in North Peru, and 41 dialects of the two most important original languages, Quechua and Aymara. In the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* the Andean-equatorial language group is listed as comprising approximately 250 languages and many subgroups (Crystal 2000: 234). Since there has been a drastic acceleration of the dying out of languages, exact numbers are difficult to pinpoint. The sheer dimension of language diversity, the weight of which Boal felt while working in Peru, was certainly impressive and contributed significantly to the development of his ›Image Theatre‹.

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48 Current information on educational programmes for the entire Ibero-American realm, as well as for the individual countries, can be found on the website of *Organización Iberoamericana para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura*.

The founder and director of the ALFIN-Project, which commissioned Boal's collaboration, was Alfonso Lizarzaburu, who now lives in Paris. He authored two publications on the ALFIN-Project (Lizarzaburu 1976 and 1985).

Boal later said the following about this time, in an interview in Europe with Copfermann:

> The government had brought 120 people to Lima for the literacy project which I was invited to participate in: they were supposed to work there for a month. When the government realised that we were not prepared to act as their messengers, they withdrew their support. In fact they went further and did everything possible to stop the project. But in spite of everything there are still groups out there working. The important thing is that these experiences don't belong to anyone, they are not the property of any single individual, what's important is that they should be taken up by the people for whom they are intended. (Boal 2009: 254)

International development politics identifies alphabetisation as one of its most important educational goals[49]. However, these goals are essentially political. The quotation above reflects the problematic nature of educational and cultural campaigns in Latin America in the second half of the 20th century, namely, that they risked becoming the plaything of ›powerful governing cliques‹ and ›revolutionary leaders‹, as Freire puts it. Education, understood as a means of fostering autonomy and conscientisation, poses a threat[50]. Paulo Freire's education campaign ›Movimiento de Cultura Popular‹ (MCP), was banned in 1964. At a time when those who could not read and write were not given the right to vote – Laschewski speaks of two million people – they were considered a potentially critical force (Laschewski 2011: 21).

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49 See also the Millenium Development Goals of the United Nation's UNESCO program Education for All (EFA) and the goals of the Conférences Internationales sur l'Education des Adultes (CONFINTEA).

50 It is worth noting that many non-governmental organisations in Latin America are active in the field of popular education, but often they are not given recognition. One of the largest and most impressive movements in Brazil is the activist Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), which has an international reputation. The alphabetisation programme they initiated began in 1993.

Freire also experienced the instrumentalisation of his method by some governments: the first large alphabetisation project he coordinated (Angicos Project) was financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which then accused him of incendiarism and agitation (idem). Following the ban, the military regime deployed the Movimento Brasileiro de Alfabetização (MOBRAL), which Boal identifies as a project teaching an alphabetisation of submission (Thorau 1982: 60). Others however in various ›popular culture movements‹ attempted to promote human rights, under multifaceted, complex and not infreqeuently life-threatening circumstances.

6.1.1 Pedagogy of the Oppressed: Stages of Educational Intervention

According to Freire, in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, there are two fundamental stages to every educational intervention. These stages are relevant for working with TO as well, since they set the essential parameters of the work:

> In the first [stage], the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. (Freire 1970a: 36)

In both stages, a situation must be established in which a confrontation with the ›culture of domination‹ is possible. Thus in the first stage, a situation must be created in which the people are able to understand the world in a new way. In the second stage, the ›myths‹ affecting a society and its members must be dispelled. This principle of the two stages is found in TO work as well (firstly when they participate as spectators who may then intervene in Forum events as ›spectactors‹; then as practitioners, ›jokers‹ and/or activists who extend the work ›beyond the stage‹). They also recur in the work of Moshé Feldenkrais (see below, Chapter 11), although this deals primarily with the first stage, leaving the second up to the empowered person him/herself.

Educational intervention according to Freire consists of five phases (Freire 1976b: 49–52); only after these have been completed does the real language teaching begin:

- In the first phase, a research team lives in a region for a prolonged period of time, using interviews, conversations and observations to ascertain the fundamental problems, lifestyle habits and traditions of the region and its people. In Freire's case this stage also includes recording and analysis of relevant vocabulary.
- In the second phase, ›generative themes‹ and ›generative words‹ are derived using precise linguistic criteria. Here it is important to note that the ›generative words‹ must be given visual form through drawings or photographs.
- In the third phase, the generative themes are ascribed to life-situations and visually represented (›coding‹). The ›generative words‹ should then refer to the situation of the coding, so that a direct connection is made to the life-situation. ›The codings represent familiar local situations – which however open perspectives for the analysis of regional and national problems‹ (Freire 1976b: 56). Boal transfers this process into his Image Theatre work.
- In the fourth phase, guidelines for discussion are established, forming the basis upon which teachers or coordinators are trained to guide learning processes in so-called cultural circles.
- In the fifth phase, phonetic discovery cards are made, with which the learners can construct additional words (ibid: 59). This procedure corresponds to bodily/somatic ›vocabulary‹-development in TO or even the Feldenkrais Method, which enables an extension of the capacity to undertake action.

What was particularly challenging and important for Freire was the vital need to get the co-ordinators to engage in a transformation in thinking which could initiate ›a mentality of dialogue, which had been utterly absent in our own training and education‹ (ibid: 57).

6.1.2 Boal's Assignment in ALFIN

Boal was invited and commissioned by the ALFIN-Project to train 120 *alfabetizadores*, future coordinators of cultural circles in Lima, in the methods of theatre, so that they could become multipliers. On this he writes:

> In Peru there were no professionals in the group: there were 120 people, 120 alphabetisands, none of whom had ever done any theatre; four or five

of them had seen theatre or some other kind of spectacle, that's all. (Boal 2009: 256)

ALFIN's point of departure was that everyone has the ability to express themselves, just not in all languages. Every language is irreplaceable, learning a new language opens up different possibilities of perceiving reality, and because languages complement each other, it is possible to reach a broad understanding of what can be considered ›real‹ (Boal 1998: 121). The aim of the ALFIN-Project was to alphabetise in both the mother tongue and Spanish, by ›involving all languages‹ of art, like theatre, puppetry, photography, film and journalism (ibid: 120–155). For Boal, theatre counted as another language, which everybody has the basic capacity to practice, and learning it would help the *alfabetizadores* and the *alfabetizandos* to discover new meanings in addition to the new language, and support the development of their life and learning experience (ibid: 43).

> What I propose to do here is to relate my personal experience as a participant in the theatrical sector and to outline the various experiments we made in considering the theatre as language, capable of being utilized by any person, with or without artistic talent. We tried to show in practice, how the theatre can be placed at the service of the oppressed, so that they can express themselves and so that, by using this new language, they can also discover new concepts. (1998: 121)

That's how Boal begins the story of what he calls his experiments with People's Theatre in Peru (1998: 120). While the motto of the previously-mentioned MOBRAL-Project was ›A Person Capable of Reading is more Valuable‹ (Laschewski 2011: 24), the activists around Boal believed that every person should be respected, it was simply necessary to convince them that ›an additional language‹ could be of use to them. The co-ordinators of ALFIN came from the regions in which the alphabetisation was to take place: urban fringe zones and slums, villages, workers' settlements in the mountains, bilingual areas (indigenous mother tongue and Spanish). 20% of the participants had no Spanish (Thorau 1989: 42). There were other artists besides Boal involved in the project. Ester Liñares, who used the language of photography in her artistic contribution to alphabetisation, inspired Boal a great deal – he took up her approach again much later in his work with the *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*.

6.1.3 The sequence of theatrical intervention

Boal makes clear in his text on the ALFIN-Project, that for him the body was the first word of the theatrical vocabulary. This is quite often overlooked nowadays, especially in short TO seminars and workshops. Boal writes:

> We can begin by stating that *the first word of the theatrical vocabulary is the human body, the main source of sound and movement.* Therefore, to control the means of theatrical production, man must, first of all, control his own body, know his own body, in order to be capable of making it more expressive. Then he will be able to practice theatrical forms in which *by stages he frees himself from his condition of spectator and takes on that of actor,* in which case he ceases to be an object and becomes a subject, is changed from witness into protagonist. (Boal 1998: 126) [italics added]

The 4-Phase-Scheme, which Boal developed during the ALFIN-Project in the 1970s[51] and later published (*Theatre of the Oppressed, Técnicas Latinoamericanas de Teatro Popular, Games for Actors and Non-Actors, who want to say something through Theatre,* ›Una experiencia de teatro popular en el Perú‹), is used to this day in process-oriented TO work:

1. Getting to know the body
2. Making the body expressive
3. Learning the language of theatre
First step: Simultaneous Dramaturgy
Second step: Image Theatre
Third step: Forum Theatre
4. Theatre as discourse (Teatro Jornal [Newspaper Theatre], Teatro In-

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51   The ›Rainbow of Desire‹, ›Legislative Theatre‹ and ›Aesthetics of the Oppressed‹ methods did not exist yet, or at least only rudimentarily. Boal stopped using ›simultaneous dramaturgy‹, to the benefit of Jonathan Fox, who was introduced to it in a seminar given by Boal and thereafter claimed and developed it for himself, calling it ›Playback Theatre‹ (cf. Video, Archive material CTO-Rio). (However, Fox claims he encountered Psychodrama first, had read Boal and Freire, but did not take a Theatre of the Oppressed workshop or meet Boal until much later. He had founded the first Playback company in 1975.)

visível [Invisible Theatre], Teatro Fotonovela [Picture Story Theatre], Quebra de Repressão [Break the Repression], Teatro Mito [Myth Theatre], Teatro Julgamento [Legislative Theatre], Rituais e Máscaras [Rituals and Masks]).

The first step, ›getting to know the body‹, encompasses the goals of the whole of TO. All exercises and games are *in themselves* aimed at liberation, alphabetisation and conscientisation. This ›intimate‹ encounter with oneself through the body and in the company of others, delivers both a collective and a uniquely individual experience, which is either shared by its actors in collective reflection or kept to oneself. The games make work-related or social ›deformations‹ visible and help to correct them; they make people aware of their limits, by leading players to their *situaciones-limites* (limit-situations), but not primarily on a bodily level. It is not a question of acrobatics or arbitrarily engineered dangerous situations. Rather, it is a matter of mental and physical experiences, in which dogmas and moral values are playfully turned ›on their head‹. The many judgements and rules of conduct handed down to people over the course of their lives leave their traces in our behaviour and the way we interact with our bodies. Boal calls these ›defomações‹ (deformations) (Thorau 1982: 83). Awareness about one's own condition, about the ways in which one senses and believes, which are ›inscribed‹ in the body, emerges through the process of games and exercises, before going on to expand the possibilities of bodily expression; the person, now endowed with new vocabulary (alphabetised), can move on to the next step in communication. ›Oppression is visible in its consequences, in the distortion, automatisation and mechanisation of movements‹ (idem). Boal even speaks of ›muscular alienation caused by work‹ (ibid: 83–4), which is clearly intended as a criticism of capitalism. De-specialisation results in ›regaining a wholeness of body‹. Participants are drawn into playing theatre without being aware of it (85): play is an acquisition, a readjustment, an unfolding of ›dormant‹ talents; and it is also a proof that we are all artists. We can be those who act and those who play at the same time and we all have the same potential to be active in theatre and in life.

Play which leads to the making of plays also prepares its players, easily and without prejudgement, for participation in active life.

> If someone is capable of deconstructing his own muscular patterns, he will certainly be able to develop patterns which reflect other jobs and other social classes than his own. He will have gained the capacity to embody characters other than his own. (Boal 1976: 40)

These criteria identify fundamental aspects of Boal's trajectory of practice from the individual to the collective body and clearly signal his recognition of the essential political dynamic of an embodied pedagogy.

Awareness through doing, both of one's own habits and patterns of movement and of those of others, generates a kind of non-verbal knowledge in the body, which often leads to recognitions which are not available solely by intellectual means (cf. Feldenkrais). According to Boal, roles and functions tend to produce the same way of using bodies, they have their masks, their stock of movements, they have a typical *habitus*[52], which can be analysed and examined not in the first instance in order to be rid of it, but in order to become conscious of it and be able to use it.

Since action, sensitivity, emotion and thinking are bound up with one another, it is possible to access and dissolve patterns which are linked to suppressed memories and desires. All the exercises and games can be carried out by actors and non-actors. They derive mainly from the time when Boal was running his acting school in Brazil (1956–71) and are based on Stanislavsky, Brecht and Strasberg (›emotional memory‹). They bring together Latin American and Portuguese children's games, fitness exercises, others which include elements of encounter-group work and sensitivity training, Yoga exercises, psychodramatic mirroring techniques, narrative exercises; in Thorau, bioenergetic body-work, Feldenkrais's ›upright gait‹, Gestalt techniques and Gurdjieff ›dissociation exercises‹ also get a mention (Thorau 1982: 171–2). Boal was open to many influences and always eager to learn and extent his repertoire. He drew on:

> Exercises which developed sensitivity to self and others or which enhanced the sense of space; games for orientation and co-ordination, for improving group cohesion; improvisation games, social role-plays and acting exercises to develop characters (...) The arc spans from unlearning to learning anew,

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52   cf. Österlind 2008: 71–82; the concept derives from Bourdieu.

> from reconnecting with ways of moving and behaving and interacting to the unfolding of one's own expressive capacities. (Thorau: 172)

The games and exercises can be used individually or in a variety of sequences; many serve different functions.[53] Phases 1 and 2 of the four phase scheme are both cumulative and mutually supportive; they are not ›merely‹ a preparation for acquiring theatrical discourse, but rather an integral part of the process of becoming aware of oneself and becoming empowered through theatre. Moreover, everyone who changes and grows may also inspire others – or irritate or confuse them – and thus open up further avenues for learning.

The third phase is called ›Theatre as Language‹ and consists of Simultaneous Dramaturgy (now rarely used), Image Theatre and Forum Theatre, which many practitioners describe as the kingpin of TO techniques. Whilst in the case of Simultaneous Dramaturgy the actors play out what is narrated and described to them by others, Image Theatre presents a non-verbal dialogue, in the course of which dominant features of a group or individual situation are depicted. Images, according to Boal in his workshops, are always polysemic and derive from reality, experience and imagination. In Forum Theatre adjunct players intervene in a scene which represents a concrete situation of oppression. In all these modes communication takes place by other than verbal means and thus opens up space for the unexpected, that is to say for experiences and information which lie outside usual patterns of thought. In the fourth phase, having become literate in the language of theatre, participants can then go on to work on their own problems and issues through theatre.

If we place Boal's first two phases within Freire's step one, they are dedicated to ›revealing the world of oppression‹. Phases three and four (Boal) align with Freire's step two: a pedagogy for everyone in the process of permanent emancipation. Boal uses body-work to understand the world in an unaccustomed way; armed with this instrument, the somatic sensorium of the body, people can confront the narratives of society. By ›releasing through play‹ the effects of oppression inscribed in the body, the meaning of those narratives is also superceded. As Boal said on many occasions: ›the action of transforming transforms.‹

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53   For further possibilities see Fritz 2012.

6.1.4 The Languages of Theatre

Against the background of Peruvian linguistic plurality Boal writes that it was easier for participants in the ALFIN project to see the alphabetisands not as people who could not express themselves, but as people who just did not have the ability to do so in one particular language. All languages are forms of expression, but there are also many other ways of communicating (Boal 1976: 37).

> Command of a new language reveals a new way of understanding reality and of sharing this knowledge with others. Every language is absolutely irreplaceable. All languages complement each other to produce perfect and comprehensive knowledge of reality. (idem)

The language of the people (the indigenous languages) and the Spanish language should be seen as of equal value. Castilian Spanish, although historically the language of conquest, here becomes a unifying national language.

> The government isn't forcing anyone to speak Spanish, on the contrary, they are trying to show that just as agricultural workers are attempting to reclaim the lands which previously belonged to the big landowners, so it's possible to acquire the language which is predominant throughout the country. Alphabetisation works through two languages: the original mother-tongue – so that every culture, every ethnic group can develop further – and Spanish, so that the people can exercise power across the state. (Boal 1975: 87)

For Boal, the value of the ALFIN project lay in carrying out his experiment to interrogate whether theatre, without reference to accepted cultural criteria, could serve as a language for all people.

Using the body as the starting-point to engage with the value of humanity and, in a shared space of experience, to operate a kind of Ur-democracy, helps to overcome the gap which inevitably exists between alphabetisands and trainers. The theoretical and ideological justification for getting everyone to discover the languages of theatre is at the basis of TO theory; it is summarised in Boal's essay ›Una experiencia de teatro popular en el Perú‹ and described fully in *The Theatre of the Oppressed*:

> In order to understand the poetics of the oppressed, you have to take note of its main aim: to transform the people from the passive state of a spectator in

the theatre to that of a subject, an actor, someone who changes the course of the dramatic action. I hope the difference is clear: Aristotle proposes a poetics in which the spectator accords power to the character, who acts and thinks for him; Brecht proposes a poetics in which the spectator gives power to the protagonist who acts for him, but retains the right to think for himself, often in opposition to the character. The former gives rise to ›catharsis‹, the latter to ›conscientisation‹. The poetics of the oppressed proposes action in its entirety: the spectator empowers the character neither to think nor to act for him; on the contrary, the spectator assumes the role of the protagonist, changes the dramatic action, explores ways of finding a solution, discusses proposals for change – in short, he trains himself for real action. In this case it may be that theatre is not revolutionary in itself, but it is certainly a ›rehearsal‹ for revolution. The liberated spectator moves on to action. It doesn't matter that the action is fictional. What's important is that it is an act. (Boal 1976: 38)

In summary, the aims of Boal's work in Peru were to hand over the theatrical means of production, so that they could be used to:
- become aware of one's oppressions
- analyse and understand the mechanisms of society, of oppression and of one's own behaviour
- recognise the ideological tenets of the dominant culture in terms of their material expression in one's personal context, and
- be able to relate these back to the larger context (all workers, etc.)
- achieve participation in social process and shape reality according to one's own vision (of happiness)

At the beginning of the TO process stands work on the body. In *Stop: c'est magique*, Boal writes:

I say again and again that the exercises are already the Theatre of the Oppressed, they are an integrative part of a whole. They are not just warm-ups which ready you for something which will come *later*: they are the beginning of a process which builds up over a number of sequential, continuous stages. (Boal 1990: 33)

In *Theatre of the Oppressed* Boal includes his Chart of Various Languages: every language has its own form of expression, vocabulary and sentence structure, by means of which reality is mediated, manifested and transformed. For Boal, theatre is not just one language among many, but ›the sum of all imaginable languages‹. Theatre has

Communication of Reality	Substantiation of Reality	Transformation of Reality
Language	Lexicon (vocabulary)	Syntax
Spoken-written	Words	Sentence (subject, object, predicate, etc.)
Music	Musical Instruments and their sounds (timbre, tonalities, etc.), notes	Musical phrase; melody and rhythm
Painting	Colors and forms	Each style has its syntax.
Cinema	Image (secondarily, music and speech)	Montage: splicing, superimposition, usage of lens, traveling, fade-in, fade-out, etc.
Theater	Sum of all imaginable languages: words, colors, forms, movements, sounds, etc.	Dramatic action

The following line added by Birgit Fritz

Body	Widest sense of body language	Analysis and extension of the same

the potential to help people to make use of all the possible modes of expression within their compass and in so doing also to liberate themselves from the histories inscribed in their bodies, which may in some cases significantly mark them. This is emancipatory theatre; in hindsight, it's worth noting that it was in the first instance a way of enabling reflection.[54]

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54 ›At that time we made a mistake in thinking that theatre equated to the goal: revolution. We didn't realise that it is just a more extensive means of

In contrast to the ›complete‹ bourgeois theatre, the theatre of the stars, which sells art as a product, TO is a theatre of the people. Boal wants to create a theatre which doesn't reproduce the past but rather serves as a rehearsal for the future (Driskell 1975: 74). ›It's a theatre as »language that can be used by anyone«‹ (idem).

In a 1982 essay, theatre scholar Rosa Luisa Márquez from Puerto Rico analyses Boal's understanding of how to rescue language and communication with the theatre methods he developed in Peru. She demonstrates how language can become a source of misunderstandings, a means of control, an inadequate instrument for self-defence or a trigger for aggression, as a result of the frustration of not being able to express oneself. When people are once again in the position of being able to define their world through thoughts and words, they begin to change it. She quotes Freire: ›Nobody liberates anyone, and nobody liberates themselves on their own. We liberate ourselves communally‹ (Márquez 1982: 221).

The search for community characterises Boal's work throughout the world. His theatre brings people together, they may be inspired by it to look for ways of acting together. Building on Freire's concept of codification, which enables alphabetisands to get some distance on their experiences and examine them critically, Boal works with the polyvalency of image to achieve the same goal. To some extent this is similar to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (idem).

6.1.5 Wider goals of alphabetisation

Alphabetisation through theatre comprises many learning goals which are not apparent at first sight. Some possible goals which may or may not be desired, which spring to mind when one examines emancipatory theatre work, are:
1. the realisation that everyone can work creatively/be creative
2. it isn't necessary to consume what others produce, we can produce ourselves
3. art is available as a form of communication
4. it can be used to analyse personal situations and communal realities
5. everyone can think

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communicating.‹ (Interview with Abel Solares, 2011.)

6. it isn't necessary to be dependent
7. it's possible to construct the present and the future, and even the past
8. the body is a doorway to understanding how things are
9. art is a means to come into communication with others, to integrate oneself with the world
10. the range of our possibilities of thought and action can be increased
11. ›deformities‹ can be made visible and healed
12. ›habitus‹ can be amended
13. everyone is capable of dialogue

One organisation has taken up the issue of alphabetisation from the 1970s: UNESCO. In 1972, the goals which Freire and his students had set themselves were translated into a worldwide programme. Brazil was one of the founder members of UNESCO, which dates from 1946; at the end of the 1960s most of the Latin American states were members.

In 1972 the Learning to Be programme was declared a priority. The driving force behind this was Edgar Faure, then French Minister of Education. He identified the danger of alienating people through the development of new technologies, which risked ushering in a process of dehumanisation. In order to locate development within people rather than machines he drew up the basic principle that the goal of development was the continual realisation of the potential of the human being, in all his/her societal roles as individual, family member and member of society, as citizen and producer, inventor of techniques and creative dreamer. The Faure Report targets the complete deployment of all human possibilities of development, specifically in respect of memory, understanding, comprehension, aesthetics, imaginative ability, communicative ability and physical capacity[55].

Critical voices included Majid Rahnema (1924–2015), an Iranian Minister and diplomat, who bases his view on the definition of UNESCO's International Consultative Liaison Committee for Literacy: ›Literacy is not the simple reading of a word, of a set of associated symbols and sounds, but an act of critical understanding of men's situation in the world‹ (Rahnema in Bataille 1976: 166). According to him, mass alphabetisation programmes are only justified when they are not a goal unto themselves, but rather a way of helping people to change their circumstances. Johann Galtung (1930*), acknowledged as one of the found-

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55 See UNESCO 2002, Foreword.

ers of Peace Studies, is of the opinion that alphabetisation, which was thought very highly of in the 1970s and 80s, would actually alter very little. That view is surprising at first sight, but Galtung suggests that the world would only change if everyone were autonomous, critical and constructive and thus likely to act together from a comprehensive and inclusive perspective. This recalls Freire's educational goal of conscientisation.

The scholastic paradigm, essentially vertically conceived and applied to individuals, moves the learner from one stage of learning to the next, acquiring certificates and passes; it charts the map of social status, which right from the beginning is divided into good schools/bad schools (implying a similar hierarchy for the teachers who work there), centre/periphery, better opportunity/worse opportunity: it results in a social distinction between ›thinkers‹ and ›workers‹. A school system which is constructed in accordance with the tradition of European post-Renaisssance and post-Enlightenment thought and attuned to the needs of industrial capitalism is rigged from A to Z. It can be seen as a mechanism which every year processes millions of young people and turns them out either as graduates equipped with an arbitrary qualification or as ›drop-outs‹[56]. The whole structure is held together by the myth that education is the way by which those who are industrious, talented and ambitious can achieve greater mobility in life[57]. But what use is all this education if national and international labour markets develop in a different direction; if countries with a higher level of GDP outsource their production to other countries and only place value upon ›advanced‹ qualifications (but cannot or will not fund as many jobs), whereas countries which produce raw materials become production economies and lose all their more qualified citizens to a brain drain towards the North? We know that what Galtung foresaw in 1976 is valid still today: asylum seekers with doctorates are landing up as taxi-drivers, housemaids or on the street in Europe.

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56 Cf. Sir Ken Robinson (www.schooltube.com)

57 This may be seen as a part of what David Harvey calls ›capital's strategy to infect social reproduction with consumerism‹ (Harvey 2014: 197): the workforce is required to pay for the ›privilege‹ of acquiring the qualifications to work.

> [O]nly few can engage in geographical mobility in order to convert school-ing into social mobility – for the majority this is not possible. (...) Conse-quently, major contradiction will develop: sooner or later the hungry and angry masses of the Periphery countries will join hands with the educated élite without meaningful jobs and get out of the division of labor and into some pattern of local, national and collective self-reliance. In that case, the Periphery countries will have much to gain, and so will the Center countries which will have to rediscover the primary sectors inside their own countries and overcome the contradiction between that type of work and a pattern of schooling that has emerged whereby several of these countries have be-tween one-third and one-half of the age cohort in tertiary education. In all probability this formula, self-reliance, will also contain some of the basis for a cure to the overdevelopment of the Center countries, just as self-reli-ance seems to be the new word for the development of the underdeveloped countries. (Galtung 1976: 94–5)

Today as much as in the 1970s, TO represents a different way of learn-ing which builds on life-experience, draws from practice and promotes the ability to undertake reflection and deal with conflict. Moreover it matches insights in contemporary brain-research which suggest that learning is inevitable and on-going, it is an essential part of the human make-up. Pedagogy, which underpins and supports these processes, has to operate in a fraught zone of conflicting political and intellectual in-terests. Boal and his trainers had to contend with a similar situation in Peru, even though the ALFIN Project had been initiated by a ›revolu-tionary government‹. Even Freire had to admit in hindsight that alpha-betisation programmes were never as neutral as they appeared to be at first sight.

Finally, language use needs to be related to meaningful action if it is to be important. If it only leads to empowering people to behave in prescribed ways, there is little motivation to translate it into action. My own experience growing up speaking one language in a dual-language region of Austria suggests that alphabetisation has to work in both di-rections. Only then is really democratic and full exchange of knowledge possible. Every language conveys a world-view, a history and a sense of destiny and only by recognising these underlying values can proper communication occur[58].

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58   Cf. UNESCOs ›Lifelong Learning‹ which involves four stages: Learning to

The urgent need for literacy education in the 1960s and 70s arose in response to the seizure of power by totalitarian regimes, which however also meant that it led to dogmatism on the part of leftist movements for liberation.

6.2 Concrete Experience no 2: the CPCs, 1960–64

The story of the Centros Populares de Cultura (CPCs) represented a brief window in time, a unique opportunity for Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal to start to build momentum towards mobilising the masses. During this time Boal was able to observe what could occur when a few people wanted to influence the destiny of their country with the best intentions; how such undertakings might most usefully be organised; which prerequisites are useful; what can be considered counterproductive and prone to reproduce the oppressive dominant system.

Boal writes in his autobiography:

> I did not invent the Theatre of the Oppressed by myself, in my house, nor did I receive it as tablets of stone from God: it was in the interaction with popular audience that TO was born, little by little … it created itself by a process of exchange. (Boal 2001: 339)

It was during the time of the CPCs that he began to interrogate and think about transforming both his theatre practice and his political commitment. Freire was commissioned to undertake adult education work with the MCP (Movimento de Cultura Popular) in the north-east; Boal, who directed Arena Theatre from 1955–1970, found his path during this phase of ›radicalisation of the form and social activist function of theatre‹ (Papke 2000: 205) which occurred at the beginning of the 1960s under the Goulart regime. In 1963 Freire was appointed National Commissioner for People's Culture by President João Goulart. From July 1963 alphabetisation groups started work throughout Brazil. Following Goulart's deposition by the military coup of 31st March 1964, the literacy programme was immediately halted and the CPC's were banned (Stauffer 2007: 160).

Frances Babbage writes:

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know, Learning to do, Learning to live together and Learning to be.

> An important dimension of Arena's work – one somewhat marginalised by the four-phase history – was the effort to develop popular audiences among the disempowered sections of the population. The campaign to ›take theatre to the people‹ was not unique to Arena, but was associated with the wider *Movimento de Cultura Popular* (Movement of Popular Culture or MCP), an important initiative launched in the early 1960s during the populist presidency of João Goulart and backed by the National Students' Union. Numerous Centres of Popular Culture (CPC's) sprang up in cities and the countryside (the CPC in Rio was founded by Oduvaldo Vianna Filho (1936–74), one of Arena's best-known dramatists). The CPCs shared aim was one of ›consciousness-raising‹, but using popular art-forms which, it was hoped, would make the educational content of the work understandable and entertaining.‹ (Babbage 2004: 16–17)

In a very short but intense creative period a large number of publications, films and plays were produced, but the gulf between theory and practice threw up a host of problems. The CPCs were mostly run by intellectuals, students and artists, who had great difficulty establishing a relationship with the disadvantaged groups they wanted to work with. Boal describes this in his autobiography (Boal 2001: 192). The famous story of Virgílio, where Boal was alerted to the dangers of propagandist theatre (Boal 2001: 194) arises from a tour in north-east Brazil and marked a turning point in Boal's life. The play *Waning Moon and Dangerous Path,* a collage of texts by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, compiled and directed by Boal, was the trigger for this realisation. Boal writes about this time:

> The company was made up of a professional troupe, who only did theatre work, and smaller groups of ›shock troops‹, Nucleus 1, 2 and 3. They set up projects which extended beyond theatre. I mostly worked with them. Before 1964, Arena created theatre for the people: we performed in the streets, on lorries, in the circus, with the support and the approval of national and regional governments of the left, in the north east of Brazil. Up to 1964 we were even supported by the police ... (Boal 2009: 237)

Up to 1964 theatre work was extensively supported by the government, but then it was forced to go underground, and individuals were hounded down even in the Latin American diaspora in Europe (including through Operation Condor).

There was a clandestine theatre in Brazil, not reported in the Press ... when

something is clandestine, that's really how it is, you can't find any public mention of it ... Many people come to Latin America looking for people's theatre and can't find anything ... you have to know where to find the real people's theatre, which people were doing it; and this is in fact the most interesting theatre of the period. (Boal 2009: 239)

Christian Papke describes the time before 1964 as one in which theatre was more or less entirely used in the service of politically-motivated alphabetisation. There were cultural exhibitions, courses, lectures, films; theatre included plays inspired by Brecht and Chinese revolutionary drama. Public venues were used as widely as possible. The theatre was slick, making skilled use of improvisation, able to react swiftly to quotidian political events. It drew audiences from all over: students, trade unionists, passers-by; but the weak point was that the actors came from a different social milieu and never really got close to the audience, although they were always attempting to. Boal describes this period critically in *Hamlet and the Baker's Son*: ›Now we met the people! Viva the people! How should we teach them what they know better than us?‹ (Boal 2001: 194)

Boal directed one of his own plays (*Revolução no América do Sul* [*Revolution in South America*]) and one he had contributed to (*Eles Não Usam Black-Tie* by Guarnieri) for the CPCs in Rio, but never joined the organisation and remained loyal to Arena Theatre. There is very little documentation about the many CPCs in Brazil. Julian Boal's book *As Imagens de um Teatro Popular* (J. Boal 2000) tells the story of the Rio CPCs from December 1961 to April 1964, which may be considered representative of the activity of the folk culture centres; so I draw on this in relation to this learning period for Augusto Boal.

The CPC plays aimed at mobilising the masses and creating scenes depicting Brazilian reality for a people who would not be idealised, but confronted with problems and challenged to overcome them. These plays were often extremely didactic and tried to show problems, causes and ways of overcoming them. Function was more important than form. Carlos Estevam Martins, another of the founders of the CPC of UNE (National Union of Students), believes that:

In truth there was little room for artistic work and the tendency was for the artistic level to sink each time – not in so far as content was concerned, but

> in terms of form. It's important to underline that this conflict runs through the history of the CPCs. People came to the CPCs because they were artists or because they aspired to an artistic career, and they entered into this adventure of the CPCs because they believed that it was possible at the same time to be an artist and to make art for the people. That means either that you try to educate people politically by using art to arouse political consciousness, or if that doesn't work, you go back to doing theatre for the elite. (Martins in Boal, J., 2000: 22–3)

Since artistic expression was less important for the politically-motivated members of the CPC than the messages which they wanted to disseminate, they turned to well-known folk-art forms and packed them with the ›best-possible‹ ideological content (idem). After the end of 1962 other members of the CPCs came up with a different concept of art.

The requirement of the time was that in revolutionary art all the values of the contested society should be excluded, because popular culture was so pervasively conditioned by the dominant classes that it simply reproduced their values. Folk art was perceived as indelibly marked by the passivity of the oppressed. Therefore revolutionary art needed not only to initiate a new form of discourse, but also carve out for itself a new profile free of this stamp. The CPC productions incontestably garnered great success with academic audiences, but the majority of performances in the *favelas* or in factories turned into fiascos (Martins in Boal J. 2000: 24). There was no success either in setting up further CPCs in the relevant communities, unless these were affiliated to the workplace or the Communist Party. Groups who were unsympathetic to the nationalist cause could not be reached. The attempt to turn the people into a revolutionary class failed. According to J. Boal, possibly because of a lack of time or funding, or perhaps because the image the CPCs had of the people was not accurate (see also Papke 2000: 207).

The terms ›people‹, ›proletariat‹, and ›nation‹, as well as ›Brazilian reality‹, ›People's groups‹ or ›classes of the people‹ (*classes populares*) crop up continually in the political discourse of the CPCs, and also in artistic discourse after 1958. Julian Boal questions the meaning of these terms and describes Brazilian society of the time as highly fragmented, with strongly codified relationships between the different groups. The sheer size of Brazil, with its regional, cultural and intellectual differences, is more conducive to diversity: think of the distinctions between the inhabitants of the Amazon region, the north east, Brasilia and the cities

of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In the CPC productions the people, in reality an extremely segmented entity, was supposed to recognise itself as the protagonist. But the people, made up of workers, peasants, farmers, the ›Lumpenproletariat‹, in short of a whole range of disadvantaged groups, declined to do so; all the more so because the CPC workers themselves, in marked contrast, were in a much more favourable situation, since they came from the middle class, were mostly students and closely allied to the Communist Party. The CPC activists maintained a ›vertical‹ relationship with their audiences which they justified by the belief that the great masses had failed to understand the fight for independence and needed to be ›educated‹. The plays thus frequently descended into caricature and didacticism.

The people were expected to learn the language of the CPCs, since otherwise they would reproduce the alienated anti-revolutionary discourse of the oppressors. Since the CPCs did not concern themselves with learning anything from the ›others‹ and ascribed the role of mass-educators to themselves, their contribution became just as populist as the version propagated by the state which they wanted to combat. J. Boal identifies this as a moment at which the oppressed feels bound to adopt the language of the oppressor.

These developments have to be understood in the political context of the time and in recognition of the sense that there was an urgent need to change the world and to change Brazil, as well as in the light of the high degree of political tension then existing in Latin America. The CPCs were a failure and only succeeded in erecting structures identical with those they sought to combat, but precisely because of this and above all because this phenomenon of speaking for others and having good intentions occurs again and again, they are worth examining. The committed and honest enthusiasm of many people in an attempt to change the political and social landscape of a country is not in question. Precisely for this reason the events surrounding the functioning of CPCs are worth studying, according to J. Boal (J. Boal 2000: 121-6). For Augusto Boal this period was the second experience, comparable with fieldwork, which inspired him to develop further his ideas of a theatre for change. The draining away of the revolutionary impulse into an ultimately ignorant claim to speak for others and a judging of people by artists, however good the intentions behind it, could not be the way to real emancipation of the people.

6.2.1 Forum theatre in the context of the CPCs

In his book on the life of the CPC of UNE, Julian Boal includes an analysis of how the later development of Forum Theatre possesses the capacity to avoid some of the problems which arise from the gross simplification inherent in the assumption that the public is not able to understand its own reality and liberate itself on its own.

In particular, the requirement that Forum Theatre should proceed from a concrete situation which affects the audience by virtue of its resemblance to problems facing them, ensures a much more democratic point of departure. Building on this, the goal is to understand the wider context and to analyse and work to amend the social structures which underpin it.

In this way the problems of verticalism and directive/didactic theatre are avoided. The fact that there are different ways to find solutions or that different suggestions can be explored provides the public with critical distance and time for reflection. By opening up a range of possibilities, Theatre of the Oppressed achieves Brecht's desire to create a political theatre which does not pacify doubt but rather intensifies it. On the other hand, the hierarchy which derives from the class difference between the theatre activists and the people they work with may still persist (J. Boal 2000: 26). The TO view is that only those who suffer from the same kind of oppression should have a role in making the play. But how then can solidarity between classes be achieved? J. Boal concludes that the problem of different classes understanding each other and sharing the same perspectives, and of ›intellectuals‹ helping the ›disadvantaged‹ without operating in a paternalistic fashion has yet to be resolved. Gayatri Spivak's notion of ›unlearning privilege‹ may be a step towards this (see below, Part 2: Overview).

6.3 Concrete Experience No. 3: Boal's Periods of Creative Development

The theatre produced by Boal and his team during these twenty years is by no means the *only* Brazilian theatre. There were many streams flowing into this vast geographical region during these two decades. Boal's first theatrical experiments were as a young man in Brazil: in Rio de Janeiro he wrote plays about the people in his neighbourhood, mainly

workers and Afro-Brazilians. He wanted to help them to improve the circumstances of their life and his way was do it by writing plays. He worked with the Black Experimental Theatre (Teatro Experimental do Negro, TEN) of Abdias Nascimento[59]; some of his plays about the life of black people were performed. One of his experiments concerned the Nagô mythology and Candomblé or Umbanda, part of the spectrum of Afro-Brazilian religion identified by Hubert Fichte. He wanted to use Nagô mythology and its gods in the theatre – though he regarded it as mythology whereas its practitioners considered it reality. From 1953 to 1955, whilst doing a degree in chemistry, he studied playwriting and modern drama in New York with John Gassner and Mort Valenci. He was influenced by the Actors Studio and the methods of Stanislavsky. He describes this time in the USA in detail in his autobiography. In 1956, at the age of 25, he joined the Arena Theatre. Questioned about his major influences in an interview with Driskell, he singled out Bertolt Brecht, from whom he took a sense of the responsibility of the artist to change reality, and the Brazilian circus.

His time at Arena ends with his arrest by the military police and the subsequent exile in Argentina. He describes the creative period of the Arena work in *Theatre of the Oppressed* as follows: in 1956 the realistic phase began. In this phase, Arena Theatre wanted to be everything which the Teatro Brasileiro de Comedia (TBC), with its cloned version of European mainstream theatre and its star system, was not: above all Brazilian (Boal 1998: 159–66).

The stage at Arena was round; its audience was drawn from the middle class. The Arena team started its own playmaking Laboratory and studied Stanislavsky. It's true that they chose to work on foreign plays, for want of Brazilian scripts, but they interpreted them from a Brazilian point of view. Later, in their Seminário de Dramaturgia, they started writing their own plays as well. The second phase, designated as ›photographic‹, began in 1958. It aimed to show Brazilian life in close-up. In this phase only Brazilian authors were produced; anyone who had anything to say about Brazil was welcome. The most successful play of this period was Gianfrancesco Guarnieri's *Eles Não Usam Black-Tie* (*They Don't Wear Tuxedos*). Boal's contribution to this phase was the play *Rev-*

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59 1914–2011, founder of TEN, human rights activist, later political official in Brazil.

olução na America do Sul (*Revolution in South America*), which shifted the Arena style towards the less naturalistic landscape of satirical comedy, circus and farce. From 1962[60] a phase of nationalising the classics began: texts were treated from the perspective of their relevance to the Brazilian situation. Work with musicals began in 1964: the most important was *Arena tells about Zumbi* (1965), which attempted to disrupt all received theatrical conventions.

According to Babbage, the sequence Boal sets out here did not correspond exactly to reality, since many decisions were taken on financial grounds and a lot of comedy and farce also occurred in the first phase. The desire to build on the great success of Guarnieri's *Eles Não Usam Black-Tie* encouraged the production of other national authors; the work of the Seminário de Dramaturgia and the phase of musicals lasted throughout the 1960s (Babbage 2004: 11). Arena's work became a touchstone for new Brazilian theatre. *Arena tells about Zumbi*, jointly written by Boal and Guarnieri with music by Edu Lobo, was to be the most successful work that Arena produced (Papke 2000: 215). It played in São Paulo alone for 18 months and went on tour to Buenos Aires, to Nancy (France), Mexico, Peru, twice to the USA and also to Austria, where it was however not understood in the 1980s and flopped, as it did in Portugal in a degraded folk version.

The importance of this play for this book lies in its disturbance of theatrical convention by:

- breaking the link between actor and character: all actors played several roles
- the collective narrative style, to which the audience could also contribute
- stylistic eclecticism, using elements of farce, melodrama, musical and documentary theatre; the audience was continually challenged to reorient itself to new situations
- the use of music to create atmosphere and emotional mood

Swopping roles always occurred at points where there was an emotional shift for a character, or a new situation. So the actor took on a new social mask which seemed predestined to represent that specific emotional condi-

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60   According to Babbage; Boal doesn't give a date.

tion,[61] because this kind of *máscara social* (social Masque) contained a host of overlapping social, emotional, historical and political perspectives on the same character. (Papke 2000: 217)

Boal developed his so-called Joker System from this innovative model, which otherwise had little impact on the Brazilian and international theatre scene. Boal writes:

Zumbi destroyed conventions, all the ones it could. It even destroyed what must be recovered. It destroyed empathy. Not being able to identify itself at any time with any character, the audience often took the position of a cold spectator of consummated events. And empathy must be reconquered – but within a new system that will incorporate it and make it perform a compatible function. (Boal 1998: 166)

Boal's attempt to deconstruct conventional theatrical modes stems from this period. After 1967, Arena was increasingly threatened by censorship and military force. In 1968 it staged *Feira Paulista de Opinião* (*What People Think about São Paulo*), which invited artists to declare their position vis-a-vis the ruling system. In the following years Arena artists, among them José Celso, Flávio Império and Augusto Boal were arrested and tortured. Later, when Boal went into exile, the Arena team broke up and the theatre was closed down.

Boal was also under threat in Argentina, where he did some Invisible Theatre work with the Machete company; some of his friends were hunted down in exile. He left with his family for Portugal. During this period his writing and work were characterised by the fight against death. In an interview for *Le Monde* in 1976, he said:

We are not poor victims, but soldiers who have lost a battle, and are obliged to retreat into exile. We are still alive, we are still working: we are showing that we exist. (1976: 235)

In exile, Boal wrote the plays *Murro em Ponta de Faca* (*Running onto an Open Knife*) and *Suicida com medo da morte* (*The Suicide's Fear of Death*). With his partner Cecilia Thumin-Boal he developed the introspective method of the Rainbow of Desire; on his return to Brazil in 1993 he created Legislative Theatre. In *Hamlet and the Baker's Son*, he writes:

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61   This practice inspired later work with the Rainbow of Desire techniques.

The TO did political events, it was politics; it withdrew into the intimacy of internalised oppressions, it was psychotherapy; in schools, it was pedagogy; in the cities, it legislated. The TO superimposed itself onto other social activities, invaded other fields and allowed itself to be invaded. Where was the theatre?

It was in the exercise of liberty. This is the major coherence informing my work. I have exercised and defended the freedom we must have to be ourselves, and to allow others to be themselves. All my life I have been in search of peace – never passivity! (2001: 316)

Summary of Part 1

Part 1 has positioned the origins of Boal's life and work ideologically and historically, and highlighted the influence of the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, beginning with an overview of the relationship between Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Theatre of the Oppressed (Chapter 2).

Chapter 3 describes the repressive context of State politics in Latin America in the 1960s-1980s, in which the work of Boal and Freire incubated. It also opens some parallels to similar situations elsewhere in the world and includes discussion of the place of Marxist thought in the evolution of Boal's methodology. Chapter 4 then analyses how Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal developed their respective systems in response to these conditions. Chapter 5 locates the Declaration of Principles of the Theatre of the Oppressed (1963) as fundamental to Boal's purpose; analysis reveals its strong foundation in Freirian thought, which also conditions much of Boal's contribution to the Peruvian ALFIN literacy project. Chapter 6 describes further examples of Boal's creative development in the context of the Brazilian Centros Populares de Cultura (CPCs); the wider spectrum of Latin American revolutionary theatre is addressed in more detail in Part 2.

TO is a system of games, exercises and techniques which together constitute what Boal calls ›essential theatre‹. They arise from a specific historical context (Cold War, Cuban Revolution, visions of revolution in Latin America, Liberation Theology, dependency, dictatorship, exile and pursuit); they have specific goals (the creation of a society in accord with human rights, democracy, peace, national autonomy, recognition of multiplicity, happiness, striving for self-awareness and

self-determination, throwing off the yoke of government by foreign powers).

The tools it uses are analysis (of the global and personal situation), emancipation (from dependency), reclamation (of personal creativity) and dialogue; all these are achieved through the practice of essential theatre work. TO's outstanding premises are the recognition of diversity, the significance of dialogue, the rectification of powerlessness and the practice of freedom. The apparently ›given‹ scenario of an unjust and frightening world needs to be changed on stage and in life. The oppressed, in becoming the agents of their own transformation, can fulfil the Brechtian injunction to view the world not ›as it is‹ but as in process of ›becoming‹.

As Boal points out in the quote above, TO could operate as politics, psychotherapy, pedagogy, legislation and other social activities. From the perspective of this chapter, it could be said to be roughly one third theatre and two thirds pedagogy; it aims to transform both zones and as such its process is inherently a politics. It also functions as a ›limit act‹, a discovery of unexplored possibilities: the recognition that people can be more than they have previously believed and been aware of is a stage in humanisation which also brings with it the understanding that they can expect more from life than they had been granted before. Freire's belief that ›existing means becoming‹ (a very Sartrean concept too), Feldenkrais's invitation to ›make the impossible possible‹ and Boal's encouragement to ›have the courage to be happy‹ together point to the emancipatory potential of this kind of work, which can be seen both as a knowledge revolution (›knowledge reform‹, *pace* Galtung) and as the groundwork to a new mode of behaviour. Moving beyond the status of victim is itself a revolutionary act which implies the rejection of domination – either through internalised oppression or by political and social structures – and of the myth of the ignorance of the mass of people.

There are four levels to Boal's undertaking:

- teaching and transforming theatre skills and acting process
- creating a space for people to tell and write their own stories/histories
- stimulating people to active engagement with the realities of their life
- promoting dialogic and communal learning strategies

All of these raise issues about power relationships, class alignment

and roles between teachers/facilitators/organisers and learners/sub-jects. Some of these will be addressed in Part 2 (Chapter 7) in the context of ›participatory research‹; others have been a frequent focus of ongoing discussion in the TO community, for example at PTO Conferences in the USA. The key issue here is Boal's intention to ›transfer the means of theatrical production‹ to the people and Freire's desire to convert ›leaders‹ to members of the people.

Boal's original intention was to assist people to become clear about their own situation and to signal the first steps towards finding a response to political repression. The changes necessary to impel this shift have to occur first and foremost in the body and to operate as voluntary acts. This realisation conditions the ethical and political dynamic of the developing methodology; it is also reflected in his early revisionary theatre practice (*Arena tells about Zumbi*) and his theoretical positioning vis-a-vis conventional theatrical models. I will take up further aspects of this with reference to the context of revolutionary theatre in Latin America in Part 2 (Chapter 8).

**Part II
Parallel Practices: Participatory
Action Research and Creación
Colectiva**

Overview: Aims and Methods

Latin American countries in the period 1960–1980 exhibit a shared investigation by intellectuals, artists, researchers and political activists of what it means to be human. This is reflected in similar requirements and goals and in the theoretical underpinning of their methodology, applied to widely differing fields such as mass education, art, sociology, anthropology and the politics of social change. The questions were: Who are we as a society? As a culture? Where are we going? Where have we come from? What do we want? How do we relate to each other? How do we conceive, research and experience the world?

The quest was for a new form of research, of reporting, of education, of the arts and of politics for social and cultural transformation. Fundamental issues of individual and societal identity are at stake.

A world characterised by the poverty of the many and the riches of the few cannot claim to be a ›perfected‹ world, it must be a work in progress. So how do actors in this context use their imagination and their ideological vision (a mixture of traditions, political and cultural notions and desires), to begin to sketch out the world as they would like to see it? In the Introduction to his *Historia doble de la Costa*, Orlando Fals Borda insists that ›I will stick by my defence of the value of using imagination and ideology as research tools: even Einstein recommended this and followed his own advice‹ (Fals Borda 1979: xx). This part of the book develops these hints of a theatrical research method against a theoretical and historical backdrop.

Fals Borda's challenge to existing methodology is to rethink it by positioning scholarly investigation within a political optic. The European parallel to this is to be found in the Sartreian concept of committed literature (cf. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*; Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*), dating from the early 1940s. Both positions raise the issue of what the present and future might more positively look like and lead to questions about the sustainability of development, about deep ecology and about re-establishing ›healthy‹ systems. But how should health be defined? Can societies heal? What does a healthy individual look like in a sick world, a world shaken by wars, exploited and poisoned by multinational interests? And what kind of input can committed scientific work make in the face of such challenges?

For me, Aaron Antonovsky and Moshé Feldenkrais offer some in-

spirational thoughts in the context of individual and global health. In his book *Salutogenese* (1997), Antonovsky lists the following factors with reference to health:

- You must be able to understand the world you live in.
- Your world must be one which you can influence.
- Your action must be meaningful.

Moshé Feldenkrais asks what health is, and answers:

- You must be able to overcome shock and trauma.
- You must be in a position to make your own decisions and to recognise when decisions are not your own.
- You must be in a position to do things in different ways, to recognise and be able to follow your dreams.[62]

That means that the intention to change any situation depends initially on accepting and exploring the *status quo*. From this act of conscientisation, in Freire's sense, we acquire autonomy and dignity in our situation, experience ourselves as the subject of our own history and thus are able to integrate ourselves anew into the social weft.

Healing needs to be understood as ›working against the lies‹, as preparedness to confront the existing situation. Overcoming the past and developing an anti-imperialist, anti-patriarchal educational practice come under this heading.

What is also important here is for the ›North‹ to be open to and prepared to learn from the ›South‹ as a first principle. As Boal points out in his letter to Henry Thorau, only one side of the ›dialogue‹ has traditionally operated and the South had to learn from the North, never the other way round. One possibility of reversing this is indicated in Gayatri Spivak's concept of ›Unlearning Privilege‹:

> Unlearning one's privileges by considering it as one's loss constitutes a double recognition. Our privileges, whatever they may be in terms of race, class, nationality, gender, and the like, may have prevented us from gaining a certain kind of Other knowledge: not simply information that we have not yet received, but the knowledge that we are not equipped to understand by reason of our social position. (Spivak 1966: 4)

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62 Feldenkrais, Moshé, Amherst 1980, 7th August, DVD 25.

If, following Freire – as discussed in Part 1 – I understand learning as a combination of teaching and learning, then this conjunction also implies an unlearning of the previously learned. This is an automatic result of the ability to engage in dialogue and to listen, since when we really listen, then what we hear (read, feel, see and so on) replaces what we previously thought. Francisco Varela describes this kind of learning as ›risk-rich learning‹, because it leads to learning to see ourselves anew. If we think we know who we are, then we run the risk of boxing ourselves into known concepts and images. Risk-rich learning is learning against the grain of common sense, against the taken-for-granted nature of knowledge and against the predisposition to accept norms and generalisations.

If we ›unlearn‹ our privileges, then we have to work to earn them back; and this process, which ideally should never cease, is one through which we grow. We learn to give up the belief that the world we were born into is just the way it appears to us (as a continuum); as we get older, our understanding goes on increasing. We give up being certain about our supposed needs and desires, what we think we are competent at, and what kinds of power we hold. We learn how we are perceived, what positions we adopt in the world. In this resides a potential for healing, because we can become strong enough to give up things, points of view, judgements and so on which have previously stood in the way of healing.

There is much to learn from Gayatri Spivak in the context of emancipatory educational practice, because all too frequently the complexity of the situation outwits all the best intentions and, as Spivak also incidentally shows, there is a constant need to be alert to the possibility that one's actions achieve precisely the opposite of what one intends to provide as nourishment. This book can also be seen as an attempt to learn from the South: in examining PAR and Creación Colectiva as two methods which arose at approximately the same time as Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed on the same continent, I want to signal the possibility of an extended geomorphological repositioning of Boal's theatre practice. The essential insights derived from this comparison are then explored for their potential transferability to the European, and ultimately global, context in Part 3.

Participatory Action Research (PAR), as developed by Orlando Fals Borda, addresses the social relations, living conditions, history and des-

tiny of the various population groups in Colombia. Like TO it travelled round the world in the second half of the previous century and is still practised to a considerable extent on all continents. It sees itself as an altruistic movement and is made up of a large network of practitioners who together work for the humanisation of academic knowledge. Its multidisciplinarity and openness to other research approaches means that its working methodology brings together many domains of knowledge and fields of application[63]. In the sphere of art this usually means theatre, music and photography. This book goes on to compare the demands and challenges of this scientific methodology with the artistic work of TO and Creación Colectiva.

Creación Colectiva and the work of Enrique Buenaventura and Santiago García are representative of the revolutionary resistance theatre of America (and the Caribbean) which, drawing on the existing structures of theatre, sought answers to the theoretical questions outlined above. Like TO, Creación Colectiva aimed at a transformation of society, at the inclusion of the audience and at thematising the daily challenges posed by the violent circumstances of life in, in this case, Colombia.

Comparison with these methods will allow TO to be situated within the tradition of committed science and art, which attempts to effect social change in various parts of the world; and to extend the theoretical, ethical and aesthetic framework within which ›applied theatre‹ work is located. A short discussion of Rodolfo Kusch's characterisation of ethnic and social strata in the territories he calls ›América‹ and his concept of *mestizo* consciousness then serves to open up alternative modelling of ›the people‹, which has implications for each of the three forms of work considered.

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63   This approach is also reflected in the contemporary field of transdisciplinarity, see Nicolescu 2002.

Chapter 7
Participatory Action Research

7.1 What is Action Research?

> AR is social research carried out by a team encompassing a professional action researcher and members of an organization or community seeking to improve their situation. AR promotes broad participation in the research process and supports action leading to a more just or satisfying situation for the stakeholders. Together, the professional researcher and the stakeholders define the problems to be examined, cogenerate relevant knowledge about them, learn and execute social research techniques, take actions and interpret the results of actions based on what they have learned. AR rests on the belief and experience that all people – professional action researchers included – accumulate, organize, and use complex knowledge constantly in everyday life. (...) Because it is a research practice with a social agenda, AR involves a critique of conventional academic practices and organizations that study social problems without trying to solve them. (Greenwood 1998: 4)

In the *Handbook of Action Research* the following definitions, among others, can be found:

> (...) action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in the participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason and Bradbury 2001: 1)

> Knowledge is always gained through action and for action. From this starting point, to question the validity of social knowledge is to question, not how to develop a reflective science about action, but how to develop genuinely well-informed action – how to conduct an action science. (Torbert in Reason and Bradbury: 1)

> Participatory research is a process through which members of an oppressed group or community identify a problem, collect and analyse information, and act upon the problem in order to find solutions and to promote social and political transformation. (Selener: idem)

Participatory Action Research (PAR) in the South[64], has particular characteristics which owe a great deal to Freire. What follows is a short overview of why they offer a telling parallel in the context of this study. Information has mainly been derived from the *Handbook of Action Research*, which was first published in 2001 and represented the most inclusive and complete collection of work by experts in the area; it was updated in 2008.

- PAR is carried out by those who initiate it and by the community which wishes to alter its reality (in the case of TO, this means actor-activists and spect-actors). It is concerned with relationships between subjects.
- It requires and supports actions which are communal and which lead to a future which is more acceptable. Its goal is the humanisation of humanity.
- The problems to be addressed are defined collectively (cf. Freire and Boal: codification).
- Relationship is democratised.
- AR starts from the premise that all people possess complex knowledge about their own circumstances. It stands against exclusive claims to expertise by the ›learned‹.
- It is a research praxis with a social agenda; it is critical of academic behaviourism, which studies problematic or challenging realities without attempting to alter them (cf. Feuerbach's theses). Here too there is a parallel to TO.
- AR is a form of consciously humanistic research. It is always concerned with linking three elements: research, action and participation. It is a form of research which ›generates knowledge claims for

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64   At the International Symposium on Action Research and critical thought in Cartagena, Colombia in 1977, a distinction was made between AR in industrialised countries and in ›developing‹ countries (the ›third world‹). ›South‹ in this context referred principally to the countries of Latin America, although there were also contributions from Papua New Guinea etc.

the express purpose of taking action to promote social change and social analysis‹ (Greenwood 1988: 6).

Its expressed goal is ›to increase the ability of the involved community or organization members to control their own destinies more effectively and to keep improving their capacity to do so‹ (idem). That means empowerment.

It makes use of all methods of sociological research (questionnaires, statistical analysis, interviews, focus groups, ethnography etc.), both quantitative and qualitative, so long as everyone involved agrees to them and there is no oppression in the way the methods are used (ibid: 7). Like Augusto Boal's demand that there can be no TO without direct action, Greenwood states that in the case of AR: ›we believe that action is the only sensible way to generate and test new knowledge‹ (ibid: 6).

AR aspires to a democratisation of knowledge acquisition, strong links with communities where the work is done and the use of strategies to make them more self-reliant (see also Galtung 1983), either by enabling them to realise their potential or achieve political demands or simply by involving citizens in the research process (Greenwood 1988: 8). AR possesses a methodology and tools, but it is not an autonomous discipline and is used by experts in a range of fields. It has a strong historical, philosophical and ethical basis and is closely allied with a variety of reformist movements (see ibid: 9).

Both in terms of its history and as a model PAR is relevant to this book. Its current status and application would require further study. Helmut Moser noted difficulties and challenges in practical application in 1978, particularly with reference to issues of distance and participation on the part of the researchers and of the relationship between theory and ›Common Sense‹ operating in the location under investigation (Moser 1978: 173–189). It is incontestable that PAR is seen as very time-consuming and difficult to finance and thus seems better adapted to small-group applications.

Recently there has been a growing tendency to claim that the idea of participation is inherently tyrannical, because it is in a position to exert further oppression on already exploited, oppressed and marginalised people in claiming that participation is ›empowering‹ (and thereby constructing them as powerless) (Cooke and Kothari 2001). A similarly contested concept which is allied to this is that of ›social capital‹, which uses scientific criteria to measure informal relations between people.

The politics of development sorts things according to three relatively crude paradigms: modernisation, dependency and participation (see Servaes 1996 and Waisbord 2000). The modernisation paradigm was questioned by Paulo Freire, among others, because it assumed the continued imposition of western modes of knowledge upon the so-called ›third world‹ (what I refer to as the majority world): a ›top-down‹ model. For Freire, people needed to be able to act independently and not simply consume other people's ideas. This ›bottom-up‹ model targets participation, through which people contribute to their own development and acquire a sense of ›ownership‹. This is also one of the fundamental concepts of Participatory Action Research.

Criticism of projects which aim at participation is partly focused on their failure to reverse power structures (cf. Cooke and Kothari above; Rahnema below). In this scenario participation is essentially illusory and the power to decide and to control remains in the hands of those who had always possessed it. In the course of time it became clear that the cloak of participation was all too often a way of allowing outside interests to disguise their true intentions, at the cost of local stakeholders. In this way projects and initiatives tended to result in weakening or even victimising the target groups.

A further characteristic of this kind of ›participation‹ is that it creates *ad hoc* instances of authority which have not been elected by anyone, which claim status as partners in the participatory process and thereby establish new and undemocratic hierarchies of power.

Jules Pretty's (1995) typology of participation reads as follows: manipulative participation; passive participation; participation in response to advice; participation on the grounds of material factors; functional participation; interactive participation; and self-motivation. The progression is from non-participative through weak participation to fully participatory. These forms of involvement, initiated by organisations and also by individuals, point to a plethora of resultant complications and questionable outcomes (www.summer.ucsb.edu/rmp/2010Sample-Papers/Economics.pdf).

In the Handbook *The Applied Theatre Reader*, edited by Prentki and Preston, Majid Rahnema discusses participation and links it with Orlando Fals Borda (see below) and PAR. Although he does not in the least refute the noble intentions of the pioneers of PAR and also gives positive examples, Rahnema is critical of the long time-scale of these

projects. He raises the question of whether those who were supposed to be empowered actually possessed no power or whether in the majority of cases their power was not recognised. They would then be in the position of being devalued once again and their power would be supplanted by the values of European or US leftist movements and traditions. He warns of the danger of allowing the end-point of participation to degenerate into a deceitful myth or even a dangerous instrument of manipulation (Rahnema, in Prentki and Preston 2009: 144). Furthermore he points to two developments in which the outstanding creativity of grassroots movements allowed them to devise new forms of leadership and to stimulate participation. In the first of these, the ›animators‹ really learned to listen to ›their‹ people and to pay attention to the roots and the world of the shared culture. Armed with this knowledge, they were in a position to draw strength from their own tradition and to experience a socio-cultural regeneration (ibid: 145). The second model is that of genuine grassroots movements replacing all modern methodologies, project briefs, organisational schemes and funding methods by traditional modes of interaction and leadership. He writes:

> As a rule, the necessity for a spiritual dimension, and for the revival of the sacred in one's everyday relationships with the world, seems to be rediscovered as a basic factor for the people's space. Wherever the spiritual dimension has been present, it has, indeed, produced a staggering contagion of intelligence and creativity, much more conducive to people's collective ›efficiency‹ than any other conventional form of mass mobilization. In the above mentioned grassroots movements, this dimension has served as a most powerful instrument in reviving the old ideals of a livelihood based on love, conviviality and simplicity, and also helping people to resist the disruptive effects of economization. (idem)

So for him, participation means to live differently (in the sense of independently) and to create new relationships. He stipulates above all that people should create ›inner freedom‹, which means again learning to listen and to share without fear (of being weighed down by judgement, evaluation and prejudice). In this way people can not only free themselves but also contribute to the society and the striving of all for a better life. External freedom without this inner freedom is shallow and hollow. ›For change to happen and to make sense, it should represent

the open-ended quest and interaction of free and questioning persons for the understanding of reality.‹ (ibid: 146)

If these preconditions are absent there is a danger of superficiality, lack of sustainability and of the illusion that valuable participatory work is being done. On another level, Rahnema warns against the danger of people's movements being co-opted: as soon as they reach a critical mass, they are swallowed up by the dominant powers and become ineffective. A way of countering this would be to reconfigure the participatory ideal as qualities like care for others, sensibility, kindness and compassion and to support it with regenerative activity like learning, relating to others and listening. These qualities cannot be bought or co-opted (idem). These demands and suggestions bring Rahnema close to Rodolfo Kusch, who accused left-wing liberation movements of neglecting the strength of the people and their own roots (see below, this chapter, for more on Kusch).

From my own experience I would like to add that ›participation‹ can also mean people from ›outside‹ taking part in processes which are specific to a particular region. They can also be empowered by this by encountering worlds they could not have envisaged before. They learn by at least temporarily unlearning, in Spivak's sense, the cultural prejudices they brought with them and by opening themselves to new perspectives.

7.2 The History of Action Research

Although many influences feed into Action Research, its beginnings are usually associated with the work of Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) and the concept is credited to him. Lewin, who was strongly affected by the Second World War and later emigrated to the USA, was involved with group dynamics, Gestalt psychology and experimental social psychology. He researched ways of constructing social experiments to produce specific outcomes[65]. His experiments were conventional in form and characterised by authoritarian control. Later he worked for the *Industrial Democ-*

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65 During the Second World War the American government wanted to persuade housewives to cook tripe instead of beef, so that the more expensive meat could be reserved for the army. Lewin set up courses on cooking tripe and then investigated the effects on women of incorporating this new practice into their repertoire.

racy Project in Norway, which aimed at improvements in working conditions (with the goal of increasing profit, but also of making working processes more democratic) (Greenwood 1988: 17).

His model of social change had three phases: firstly, breaking down existing structures (unfreezing); secondly, altering them (changing); and thirdly, integrating the new structures into a permanent system (locking). In addition he played a leading role in the development of so-called T-Groups, which even now are seen as a model for most self-help groups.

Lewin's idea of change as a temporary intervention, after which a stable social order can be re-established, was very influential in the early years of Action Research, especially in the USA; nowadays, however, it is regarded as a restrictive and erroneous position, a form of social engineering (see ibid: 18). Contemporary writers see Action Research as a continuous and participatory learning process, in no sense a short-term intervention. This process should lead to the strengthening of long-term learning potentials and help participants to acquire increased control over their own situation.

Among Lewin's slogans were the following: ›Nothing is as practical as a good theory‹; and: ›The best way to understand something is to try to change it‹ (ibid: 19).

Practice and theory go hand in hand here and ›good‹ theory proves itself by a successful outcome. Lewin made a significant contribution to the application of science to address genuine needs. The role of the researcher altered from that of a distant, uninvolved observer to that of an active, involved problem-solver. Although Lewin's ideas gradually withered in Norway, they spread from Sweden and the USA to Canada, Japan and ultimately to the rest of the world under the title ›Sociotechnical Thinking‹ (ibid: 25).

7.3 Second and Third Generation Action Research

Reason and Bradbury describe new approaches to Action Research in the 21st century. They situate the roots of AR on a broader basis (than that of Lewin's work) and describe its subsequent developments along a number of different trajectories. Amongst these they include the critique of positivist science and popular belief in science, influences from Marxist thought (the need not just to understand the world as it is, but

to change it), Gramscian theory, the pedagogic work of Freire (Reason 2001: 3), gender studies, feminist praxis of conscientisation, and even spiritual influence from Buddhist mindfulness and so on. AR is fed by many streams. As diverse as its roots are its spheres of application in different regions of the world (Community Development, healthcare, education, medicine, social work, psychology, business and so on).

Contemporary Action Research also adopts a participatory view of the world (ibid: 11). With Gregory Bateson it argues for a revolution in thought which involves a rethinking of the whole business of learning (ibid: 4) and the end of the Modernist paradigm. The world is not organised in a linear fashion, scientific method cannot exist separately from life, there is no absolute truth and purely rational plans are doomed to failure. The positivist world-view has had its day (Reason 2001: 4). AR argues for a co-operation between sciences and art. As Maturana also confirms, it is scarcely possible today to postulate a reality independent of the observer; rather, our world is constructed in and through our awareness of it (radical constructivism) (Maturana 2008: 259). Postmodern and poststructuralist approaches demystify the myth of modernity but fail to erect an alternative perspective in its place (Reason 1998: 6). To avoid being overwhelmed by a sense of rootlessness and meaninglessness, it is necessary to provide a world-view which can put this situation in perspective. The writers I have cited suggest that this should be based on a participatory orientation (idem).

The production of knowledge also strengthens existing power bases; so Action Research is also concerned with the question of how language can be used to bring about democracy at all levels. The emerging world-view is systematic, holistic, feminine; it builds on relationship, and bases itself on experience: ›our world does not consist of separate things but of relationships which we co-author‹ (idem). This participatory world includes people and societies as component parts of the world, a world which is at once human and also ›everything which surpasses the human‹; and as embodiments of what this world brings forth as a collective act (ibid: 7). According to Reason and Bradbury, this participatory approach is in conflict both with the positivism of Modernism and its postmodern constructivist alternative; but it can relate to both and integrate them:

> [I]t follows positivism in arguing that there is a ›real‹ reality, a primeval givenness of being (of which we partake) and draws on the constructionist

perspective in acknowledging that as soon as we attempt to articulate this we enter a world of human language and cultural expression. Any account of the given cosmos in the spoken or written word is culturally framed, yet if we approach our inquiry with appropriate critical skills and discipline, our account may provide some perspective on what is universal, and on the knowledge-creating process which frames this account. (ibid: 7)

From this it follows that it is possible in certain circumstances to accept insights from positivist scholarship and integrate them into a more fully human context. The results of scientific investigation in medicine, for example, need not be left on one side: doctors can work out diagnoses and appropriate responses in conjunction with patients, researchers and inhabitants can solve ecological problems together.

Our world is much bigger, more complex and intricately connected than previously assumed. Spirit and matter cannot be thought separately; humans are both independent and attached to others and to the whole of creation. Development of humanity and the cosmos occurs in tandem. As a part of the whole we are also actors within it: this signals the significance of praxis (ibid: 8).

A participatory world-view is an expression of a political standpoint and a theory of knowledge (relational knowledge, reflective knowledge and representative knowledge: ibid: 9):

This political dimension of participation affirms peoples' right and ability to have a say in decisions which affect them and which claim to generate knowledge about them. It asserts the importance of liberating the muted voices of those held down by class structures and neo-colonialism, by poverty, sexism, racism and homophobia. (idem)

Knowledge and power are inextricably bound up with each other. In face of the destruction of the ecosystem and the perspective that human beings are the sole rulers of the earth, Reason and Bradbury, picking up on Freire, demand a pedagogy for the privileged, so that they can learn how to handle power and how to place their status at the service of participatory relationship, so as to possess power *with* others and not *over* them.

The goal of Action Research is to use research to lead towards fulfilment in life; the participatory world-view invites people to find out together what shape this might take.

> Participatory consciousness is a part of a re-sacralization of the world, a
> re-enchantment of the world. (...) Sacred experience is based in reverence, in
> awe and love for creation, valuing it for its own sake, in its own right as a liv-
> ing presence. To deny participation not only offends against human justice,
> not only leads to errors in epistemology, not only strains the limits of the
> natural world, but is also troublesome for human souls and for the *anima
> mundi.* Given the conditions of our times, a primary purpose of human in-
> quiry is not so much to search for truth but to *heal,* and above all to heal the
> alienation, the split that characterizes modern experience. (Reason 2001: 10)

and they quote R. D. Laing, who writes:

> [T]he ordinary person is a shrivelled, desiccated fragment of what a person
> can be (...) What we call normal is a product of repression, denial, splitting,
> projection, introjection and other forms of destructive action on experience
> (...) It is radically estranged from the structure of being. (Laing, in Reason
> 2001: 11)

This leads us back to the beginning and the reflections of Antonovsky
and Feldenkrais [see p. 149–50 above]. Only when we are capable of rec-
ognising that we are a part of a whole can we be in a position, even in
times of crisis, to relate to the world. We have to find ways of making
the world comprehensible to us (as only we can comprehend it, in the
constructivist sense), so as to be able to act in it to create meaning. Con-
structing links between the individual, the society and the cosmos is
what Laing calls construction of humanity: the expression of an active
existence (idem).

7.4 Important Aspects of Action Research

> *Can you love or respect the people and assist their/our*
> *Inquiry without imposition of your will*
> *Can you intervene in the most vital matters and yield*
> *To events taking their course*
> *Can you attain deep knowing and know you do not*
> *Understand*
> *Conceive, give birth and nourish without retaining*
> *Ownership*
> *Trust action without knowing the outcome*
> *Guide by being guided*

Exercise stewardship without control
attributed to Laotse (c. 550 BCE) (cit. ibid: 420)

I want to highlight three aspects of Action Research which promise to be particularly important stimuli for themes I develop later. They extend the concern with attitude and perspective which strongly marks TO work which aims to avoid being a flash in the pan of passing relevance.

7.4.1 Knowledge and Power (how to proceed)

In their contribution to the *Handbook of Action Research*, Gaventa and Cornwall discuss the difficulties of exercising power and, as a development from this, how power has been and can be thought of in the context of PAR.

If in its early stages PAR was considered a way of bridging the gulf between the powerful (governments, the rich, organisations, institutions) and the power-less (the oppressed, the poor, the marginalised and their grassroots movements), it later acquired legitimacy by being taken up by large and important players like the World Bank. This raised questions about co-option and about how far it was really possible to operate efficiently in ›new‹ areas and on a larger scale. ›Knowledge, as much as any resource, determines definitions of what is conceived as important, as possible, for and by whom‹ (Gaventa and Cornwall in Reason 2001: 72).

Acquisition of knowledge changes the parameters of what can be thought, what can be imagined and ultimately what is possible. Freire's concept of the process of becoming conscious, which PAR adopted, is described in detail in Part 1. In this sense, PAR challenges power relations and demands transformative action. The definition of knowledge is modified by the recognition that the knowledge of ›simple people‹ is of equal value to academic knowledge. Although acknowledgement of so-called informal knowledge has increased somewhat in Higher Education Institutes in Europe, there is still a long way to go before that from more distant cultures is admitted. The danger also exists that those involved with variously configured projects in the fields of art, social and educational development or research may, for a variety of reasons, reflect the opinions and positions of dominant groups (cf. Gaventa and Cornwall 2001: 75). In positive cases PAR can work to solve problems and insights derived from it can lead to new possibilities of action. In negative cases it can result in power relations being exacer-

bated and pressure being put on people who are dependent on others (e.g. the World Bank). As a result of the ›mainstreaming‹ of recognised methodologies, many institutions and organisations make participation an ›obligatory requirement‹ for financial support, which often leads to a bizarre situation. In spite of this the hope remains that new avenues may be opened up. In the world of theatre for example there are very good accounts of Legislative Theatre projects which resulted in scrutiny, change and innovation with regard to laws (e.g. Agora in Wales, see www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.php?nodeID=45).

Gaventa and Cornwall mention the following points which need to be taken into consideration in any application of PAR, in order to realise its potential for change in the direction of participation (2001: 78):

- The importance of organisational and institutional change and preparedness to change on all levels
- The importance of personal attitude and behaviour
- The importance of taking things slowly (that also means not allowing oneself to be governed by bureacratic criteria)
- access to social groups and regional resources
- construction of vertical lines of communication and networks (co-operation by all actors on all levels)
- the importance of documentation and accountability

Power structures affect all people and are found at all levels. PAR is not conceived of as only a tool put in the hands of the less powerful against the powerful, but as a selective implement capable of creating new possibilities on many levels for different people. In a globalised world in which everyone is linked to everyone else, access should be as complete as possible. A project in Colombia, which ›creates‹ power, in a striking way, is the COAMA (Consolidation of the Amazon Region) Project, which is associated with the holder of the *Right Livelihood Award* Martin von Hildebrand (www.coama.org.co). Between 1986 and 1990 the Colombian government handed over 20 million hectares of rainforest to indigenous groups as communal land. More than 250 indigenous communities, made up of 22 different cultural groupings, received the means and the support to exert their right to manage the ecosystem of the rainforest according to their own cultural norms and priorities and to construct a joint mode of living.

7.4.2 A humanistic approach (who we are)

John Rowan (Rowan 2001) discusses the humanistic stance of PAR (especially with regard to the concept of consciousnesss, in terms of its various levels and of the ideologies associated with them) and in this respect emphasises Ken Wilber's (1996) concept of the development of a ›centaur self‹ in contradistinction to the egoic self. This concept relates to different interpretations of consciousness and to the experiences which move people from one level to the next. A transpersonal orientation leads to a different kind of experience, essentially a mystical experience of the self. Wilber calls this ›the complete bodymind unity‹. It involves a ›leap into one's own self‹, the acceptance of the responsibility to ›be oneself‹ and not to defer responsibility for one's own life to others.

Stanislav Grof (holotropic breathing and transpersonal psychiatry) developed the definition of the term ›transpersonal‹ as: ›experiences involving an expansion or extension of consciousness beyond the usual ego boundaries and beyond the limitations of time and/or space‹ (Grof in Reason 2001: 114). To be able to see oneself in this totality and as part of the world is a precondition for meeting others.

Another prerequisite is the capacity or rather the desire to see the other as human; it is Abraham Maslow who establishes the necessary criteria. As researchers it is necessary to overcome the paradigms of true and false and recognise that there are many ways and possibilities. This demands a gift for holistic appreciation, which permits us to see the whole person and not merely isolated aspects. Rowan quotes Maslow:

> Any clinician knows that in getting to know another person it is best to keep your brain out of the way, to look and to listen totally, to be completely absorbed, receptive, passive, patient and waiting rather than eager, quick and impatient. It does not help to start measuring, questioning, calculating or testing out theories, categorizing or classifying. If your brain is too busy, you won't hear or see well. Freud's term ›free-floating attention‹ describes well this noninterfering, global, receptive, waiting kind of cognizing another person. (…) This is different from the model way in which we approach physical objects, i.e. manipulating them, poking at them to see what happens, taking them apart, etc. If you do this to human beings, you *won't* get to know them. They won't *want* you to know them. They won't *let* you know them. (Maslow, cit. Rowan, op. cit.: 116)

Dialogue, courage, spirituality as consciousness of the whole human being and knowledge through experience, rather than through observation are other important distinguishing features of successful research. Feeling at ease with both simplicity and complexity, being able to put things in abstract terms but also to understand, and discovering the value in things are needed. Humanistic psychology requires people to be seen as people. That means that the researcher is never excluded from what is being brought to light. We bring to our work not just ourselves in all our individuality but also our social sphere, and we need to think honestly about how this affects our work (ibid: 121). Rowan asks for a serious engagement with issues of research ethics. Theatre praxis which credits itself with working for humanity should not shirk from them.

7.4.3 The relationship between Systemic Thinking and AR (what binds us together)

Robert Louis Flood focuses on the relationship between AR and Systemic or Systematic Thinking, which arose in the 20th century in reaction to reductionism. This approach is marked by the view that the world is systemic, in other words everything is linked to everything else and the whole is bigger than its parts. Understanding something means not breaking it into parts but learning to grasp it as a whole. Because of the systemic linkage all the parts influence each other mutually. Different schools of systemic thinking focus on cybernetics, applied system thinking, the socio-ecological perspective, Soft-Systems-Thinking, Critical-Systems-Thinking, Total-Systems-Intervention etc.

Systemic Thinking contributes to a deep appreciation of human existence in its entirety and may open up spiritual dimensions (ibid: 141). It postulates that we can never know everything, that there is no sense in trying to be in control and predict everything that can happen. To strive to achieve control and certainty about the future is ultimately harmful to humanity, because it isolates us, instead of allowing us to be aware of ourselves as part of a dynamic interconnectivity[66]. Systemic

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66 In contrast, Freirean and Boalian practice aim to stimulate the capacity to operate a dynamic of relationship which moves beyond a possessive/acquisitive model of knowledge. This is further exemplified in Part 3 below

Thinking provides a basis for PAR work.

> [A]ction Research carried out with a systemic perspective in mind prom-
> ises to construct meaning that resonates strongly with our experiences
> within a profoundly systemic world. If systemic thinking delivers on this
> promise, then people may at last sense of our existence on the Earth that
> we belong here, together, perhaps not in idyllic harmony, but at least with
> thoughtful tolerance. (Reason 2001: 143)

7.4.4 Action Research in the South

> If you've come to help me you're wasting your time. But if you've come
> because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.
> (Watson in Reason: 430)

According to Greenwood, action research in the ›global south‹ follows
the principles of Freire, Budd Hall and Orlando Fals Borda. The latter
is seen as the founder of AR in the South. He left his University posi-
tion with its dogmas and restrictions for involvement in direct action in
small rural communities in Colombia. His PAR had a declared orienta-
tion towards liberation and was focused on the world of the poor and
the oppressed.

The overriding premise of his research was the intention to promote
the education of the people; it was morally and politically inflected by
liberation theology/philosophy and by Marxism. Since everyone has
the fundamental right to life in freedom and dignity, it was necessary
to be clear about why they were not able to experience this. Helmut
Ornauer (1978) describes the situation of Latin America in the 1970s
as characterised by monstrous polarisation between the poor and the
rich, between the ›uneducated‹ and the educated and by the absence
of a middle stratum in the European sense. Military force and the con-
centration of power in the hands of the few maintained this inequality
of influence. There was not the slightest question of consensus, even
in countries which claimed to have a formal democratic constitution.
There was also virtually no organised structure of representation of the
interests of the people, the masses. Thus there were quite specific con-

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by the discussion of Feldenkrais, Lederach, Welsch and others.

ditions under which all research and action took place. For activists engaged in AR in the South this meant never losing sight of the realities of power and oppression, and only claiming to achieve social change when power structures had been altered and replaced by more liberal models.

Research in general and sociological research in particular acquired a bad reputation in Latin America in the 1960s, because it concentrated on limited areas of society and was not able to make a very significant contribution to social process overall. In addition, the scandal over the proposed Camelot Project in Chile attracted a lot of attention: research financed by the US government and military sources was chiefly intended to gather information which could be used to block the development of Communism. Researchers from both Americas were supposed to be involved. But before things got that far, Johan Galtung's refusal to participate exposed the scheme as a scandal and prevented it from going ahead (Galtung 1968: 115–141).

Researchers in Latin America wanted to free themselves from dependence on centres of capitalism (even in the fields of research and teaching). This was in contrast to the linear belief in progress which underpinned what they characterised as Northern sociology, which assumed that ›developing‹ countries should necessarily follow the Northern example and aspire to its model of well-being. Things were further exacerbated by the fact that wide differences in class and education between researchers and the ›poor‹ often produced an insuperable gulf which frustrated the goal of non-hierarchical communication. This distortion, rooted in capitalism, blocked the desired aim of conscientisation, and researchers from the city were often considered to be spies.

To overcome this, strategies derived from Marxism and Trade Union practice were invoked as an aid to mobilisation. According folk knowledge a privileged position was a key strategy in re-establishing the dignity of all human beings. The desire to preserve the interest of elites and their grip on power was the principal cause of poverty and so-called ignorance. The role of the researchers was by and large that of a catalyst or facilitator, aiming to restore respect for human beings and their rights. There is a link here to contemporary ideas of ›development of the people‹; it resembles the current concept of ›capacity building‹ and adult education. In the long term, only a radical amendment of the distribution of power could and can reduce poverty and oppression in the South.

> From the southern vantage point, international development projects, whatever marginal changes they may create in poor countries and poor regions, are not the road to meaningful social change. The only serious answer to poverty and oppression is a serious alteration in the distribution of power. This sharp and unshakable political focus characterizes southern PAR approaches (Greenwood 1998: 176)

According to the perspectives highlighted by Greenwood *et al*, the key elements relevant to poverty and exploitation in Latin America, Africa and parts of Asia are now as then class struggle, the means of production, exploitation of labour and asset stripping by international capitalism. After analysing the distribution of wealth and the major risks resulting from this, it is the job of PAR researchers to try to stimulate public discussion as a means of consciousness-raising and mobilisation.

> Their [southern PAR practitioners', BF] premise is that local knowledge of the situation is authentic, detailed and valuable, an idea that many external organizers, who are sure they know what is good for ›the people‹, routinely ignore. Southern PAR processes begin with a challenge that is initially addressed by bringing together groups of local people to discuss and analyze their situation. From these analyses emerge agendas for research and social change, but these agendas are the joint product of the outsider and the local people. (Greenwood 1998: 177)

The dialogue between researchers and relevant sections of the population leads to interaction which can change the perspective of both parties. Those who come from outside learn about the specifics of the context and can adjust their previously abstract understanding. The locals, on the other hand, may ultimately be enabled to translate their awareness into forms of action which they would previously not have identified. The interplay between the two groups may open up new vistas including possible modes of direct action. Since ignorance combined with profound poverty is one of the main weapons of oppressive systems, this kind of interchange often includes the provision of information for the local populace, in order to give people confidence in their own abilities, so that they can examine their own situation, understand it and change it. This often occurs in the face of considerable opposition from local political and business interests. Research is a weapon in the service of struggle here.

The role of the researcher is a complex one, situated both within and outside the process. As someone from a privileged position who has freedom of movement, s/he may be seen as a representative of the oppressors. If those who are oppressed by it challenge the system, s/he may be viewed by the authorities as an instigator, a revolutionary or a terrorist. This is often a dangerous situation for the researcher.

Many researchers were faced with the choice either of going underground and continuing to support the political struggle, waiting it out in the hope that a more liberal regime might come to power, or going abroad and observing things from afar. None of these choices allowed them to continue their work. Colombia in the 1970s was just one more Latin American country in which this kind of research became impossible.

7.4.5 Orlando Fals Borda (1925–2008)

The ›high-carat‹ (as Ocampo López put it) Colombian sociologist, historian, educator, political thinker and humanist Orlando Fals Borda is also recognised as the founder of sociology in Colombia. He studied empirical sociology in the USA, and later commented:

> During those days we believed that human improvement could be gained mainly as an orderly, systematic process of social engineering, or simply left to destiny. Our heroes were Emile Durkheim [whom Boal also refers to frequently, BF] and Paul Lazarsfeld.
>
> Fieldwork patterned on the natural sciences' distinction between subject and object was a potent ideal, and advanced statistics was a required course. In short, we were formed within positivist frames of reference. (Fals Borda 1995)[67]

Later he returned to Colombia to do fieldwork and wrote his dissertation on rural life in the Colombian Andes, which is a source of information on both archaic rural and industrial urban society. As Director of the Ministry of Agriculture he was influential in founding many ›Juntas de Acción Comunales‹ as a peace-initiative. In 1959 he established and

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67 Fals Borda, Orlando ›Research for Social Justice: Some North-South Convergences‹, Plenary Address, 1995 online: http://comm-org.wisc.edu/si/falsborda.htm (accessed 26. 12. 2012)

was the founding Dean (1959–67) of the first Latin American Faculty of Sociology in the National University, which produced a new school of sociology. In 1962 he co-authored a book on the Colombian Civil War, known as the age of *La Violencia*. This stirred up strong opposition from the political right, who were depicted as complicit with the ruling forces. He committed himself to political action along with his colleagues Camilo Torres, other priests, sociologists and left-wing activists. Camilo Torres died in 1966 during an action in support of the Ejercito de Liberación Nacional (ELN). For Fals Borda this was an additional reason to do everything in his power to work against an unjust and illegitimate system.

In 1976 he left his university post for a variety of reasons and committed himself to grassroots work in the region where he grew up on the Atlantic coast. He worked on educational materials and developed his own version of action research, the Investigación Acción Participativa (IAP, or PAR in English), for the ANUC (Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos – Association of Rural Workers), one of the biggest agricultural workers' movements in Latin America, similar to the MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – Landless Rural Workers' Movement) in Brazil. This model was brought to international attention particularly through two conferences in Cartagena (1977 and 1997). His comprehensive research activities attracted the attention of the regime of Turbay Ayala (1974–1978) and he and his partner were accused of providing weapons for the revolutionary movement M19 and arrested (Fals Borda was politically active for M19 later on, after it had transformed itself into a democratic movement). He received numerous awards for his work. For the Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA: Organisation of American States) he functioned as Adviser in Brazil. In 1985 he founded the Instituto de Estudios Políticos e Relaciones Internacionales (Institute for Political and International Studies), and was active there as Professor until his death. Along with García Márquez and Santos Calderón he edited the left-wing journal *Alternativa*, which was a beacon of investigative and enlightened journalism. Fals Borda's most famous work is the four-volume *Historia Doble de la Costa* [Double History of the Coast] (1979–1986), a study of the indigenous and afro-Colombian population of the Atlantic coast. His motivation was particularly to tell the unwritten story of these regions of his country. The proposals and demands he outlined also appear (in the form of demands

for land redistribution as the basis for participation) in the Colombian Constitution of 1991. A further major focus of his research was the study of revolutionary movements in Latin America, in which he investigated the role of anti-elites and counter-elites in bringing about social change, as well as the dynamics of guerrilla movements.

He opposed intellectual colonialism and supported the development of an independent Latin American scholarship and intellectual autonomy. Insights from beyond the continent should be considered impartially and sorted into those which were useful for the Latin American context and those which were not. With Luis Eduardo Mora Osejo he published *El manifiesto por la autoestima en la ciencia colombiana* [Manifesto for self-esteem in Colombian scholarship] (2001). Together with his wife, the sociologist María Cristina Salazar, he devoted himself to translating the tenets of Investigación Acción Participativa, particularly for school and educational use, because he saw this as the ground on which freedom could be developed. In 1997 the IAP was also included by the Colombian government in school projects as a peace-building tool. According to Ocampo López, IAP promotes creative thinking through active, investigative learning. Fals Borda's calls for teachers to be researchers and his active learning methods bring him close to Paulo Freire, who was also a personal friend.

Until his death Fals Borda worked to strengthen the political left in his country; he wanted to bring about a ›socialismo razial‹ [grassroots socialism]. Moreover, he assisted in the founding of the Frente Social y Político [The Social and Political Front], from which emerged the Polo Democrático Alternativo [Alternative Democratic Pole], whose Honorary President he became.

In 2008, shortly before his death, he wrote a penetrating text with the title ›Pueblos Originarios y Valores Fundantes, La Nación Multicultural y Multiétnica‹ [Indigenous Peoples and Fundamental Values, the Multicultural and Multiethnic Nation], in which he argues for a return at last to the resources of the continent so as to acknowledge the values and strengths of the many peoples who ›were still there‹ (*los pueblos originarios*) and who: construct societies built on solidarity; do not plunder natural resources immoderately; believe in sharing not accumulating; oppose the unhealthy features of capitalism; and till the land along with the poor Spanish agricultural workers who have populated the continent and who contribute the work of their hands. From these

people Latin America needed to learn political and human dignity and ultimately develop its own national ethos along with radical democracy and ›grassroots socialism‹. This would restore to the earth its value, not as a place to plunder but as the foundation of life. With the knowledge and wisdom of the people, the knowledge of the possibility of ›another‹ kind of life and an organisation of labour which would benefit everyone, a new nation could be developed building on its own strengths.

7.4.6 Fals Borda and Participatory Action Research (IAP/PAR)

> We say no to the glorification of money and death. We say no to a system which allocates value to people and things in such a way that those who have the most are considered the most worthy; we say no to a world which spends two million dollars a minute on armaments whilst every minute thirty children die of hunger or fatal diseases (...). Poverty increases in order that wealth may increase; the weapons which protect those riches increase the wealth of the few, which ensures the poverty of the many; and in the midst of all this, loneliness also increases. We say no to a system which provides neither food nor love, which condemns many to hunger for food and even more to hunger for embraces. We say no to lies: the dominant culture claims that the poverty of the poor is not the consequence of the wealth of the rich, but a poor orphaned child (...). We say no to fear; no to the fear of the word, nor to the fear of action, no to the fear of being. (Galeano 1992b: 118)

Participatory Action Research, like liberation theology, the Pedagogy of the Oppressed and the many Latin American methods of people's theatre, was born of a direct and urgent need to bring to an end the imperialist exploitation and domination by small elite groups of a great mass characterised by poverty and subjected to abuses of power. Its models included ›successful‹ revolutions in Cuba, China, the Soviet Union and Vietnam, from which it was hoped to extract useful conclusions and stimuli for the transformation of society. The overarching goal was a change in the power structure, so that the power of the ruling class could be muted and an active and peaceful alternative introduced. The empowerment of the masses was to be anchored in a revaluation (by the people themselves) of indigenous knowledges, establishing them on the same footing as other avenues of knowledge. The dignity of the people would also be re-established in this way. The key players were steeped in Marxist-Leninist ideology and the ideas they referred to bore the stamp

of Marx, Engels, Lukács, Gramsci, Hobsbawm and others. Fals Borda's essay ›On the problem of researching reality in order to change it‹, in the 1978 publication edited by Moser and Ornauer, takes its inspiration from Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach.

His fundamental demand to scholarship was:

> (Theoretical) study and (practical) action must be bound together, so as to work against the conditioning of dependency and exploitation, which has characterised and conditioned us with all its degrading consequences and mechanisms of oppression. This can be clearly seen in our culture of imitation and poverty and in the lack of social and economic participation which our people exhibit. (Moser 1978: 177)

Fals Borda viewed his work and that of his contemporaries as the privilege of a generation which was able to experience and influence a process of social change. He thought it was the responsibility of scholarship to discover how to negotiate these changes in order to contribute to a better life. The specific context of a geographical zone in which over decades ›there was an attempt to set in motion consciously revolutionary changes which later failed, or took an unexpected, mostly completely contrary, direction‹ (Fals Borda 1978: 79) gave IAP its special operational character. I will take up some reflections from Fals Borda's text which are important for the further development of my argument in this book.

According to Fals Borda (1978), the need to develop a specific framework appropriate to the context of the work was a precondition for research. European or US sociological paradigms were scarcely viable because they were modelled upon realities which were irrelevant to the Colombian situation. The ›continual, unceasing concern to understand‹, to keep going back to the beginning, which corresponds to the ever-renewed challenges posed by life, makes it imperative to link together knowledge and action – theory and praxis. Since all knowledge is partial and subject to change, it must also constantly be subjected to dialectical scrutiny.

The role of the researcher in the research process and in interacting with the ›research base‹ presents a further major challenge. The researcher must be able to be the subject and object of their own research, ›to emphasise one or the other role alternately during the process so as to achieve both closeness to and distance from the group which is the subject of the work, and to alternate action and reflection‹ (ibid: 85). At

the same time it is necessary to balance working methods, loyalty to the people one is working with, and the demands of the situation and the time available. All of this has further consequences for the way in which the researcher understands whom they are working for and who will benefit from the research. The activity of research becomes a form of political work and its outcomes have political resonance. This raises questions about the relationship of the researcher with the people and organisations they are working with. In tune with the language of his times, Fals Borda describes the techniques of sociological knowledge as ›weapons in the service of of the politicisation and education of the masses‹ (ibid: 86)[68].

Techniques which exhibit an inherent bias towards the dominant class are to be avoided unconditionally. Methods which are employed should be constructed so as to be accessible to the people and increase their chances of participation. For Fals Borda, analytical tools should be selected according to their ›relevance to the real needs of the base, not to those of the researcher‹ (ibid: 86). Real change is the change from ›things in themselves‹ to ›things for us‹. This realignment of reality in line with the needs of the base is the real goal of the work, in which sociological research acquires a Freirian consciousness of its purpose. The world is no longer accepted for ›what it is‹, but understood as the result of historical processes, which can be influenced and amended. This includes a questioning and interrogation of ›traditions‹.

Different kinds of knowledge should be given equal value. Fals Borda agrees with Gramsci that the ›prejudice‹ that philosophy is something very difficult, because it is the preserve of particular categories of intellectuals, should be debunked (ibid: 99). Folk knowledge should be recognised as representing wisdom. The outcome of AR could lead to a rehabilitation of the intellectual and creative capacities of the people in their own eyes and in those of the researchers.

The danger of idealising and romanticising the people should also be avoided. Fals Borda emphatically rejects ›proof‹ of commitment in the form of ›hand-wringing and the adoption of a Franciscan lifestyle so as to claim parity with the poverty of inner-city slums and the misery of rural hovels‹; he also rejects ›masochistic identification with »the peo-

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68 There is a strong correlation here with Boal's description of theatre as a weapon of revolution.

ple« as an insult to human dignity rooted in a petit-bourgeois mindset‹ (ibid: 98).

The IAP-led project of ›critical revision of history‹ (96) was very successful. Official history from the perspective of the dominant elite omitted (and continues to omit) the history of the people (and their resistance). Information obtained from the research base led to changes in ownership and the re-establishment of rights of oppressed groups (96). This historical knowledge compiled through the IAP was to be passed on to a broader spectrum of people from the base to enable them to reconstruct their own history. That was the revolutionary intent. This process of handing on was envisaged as ›systematic‹, culminating in the cascading of the techniques themselves, but also including cultural means (theatre, music, pictures, publication of books in simple language, illustrated texts, the establishment of alternative newspapers and so on)[69].

In Colombia the notion of the ›cultural weapon‹ as motivation for mass mobilisation was not widely taken up at first, but when news of its success in Vietnam began to arrive (cf. Boal 1975: 164), similar projects (mainly using music) were set up. In addition to this, self-initiated research was to be promoted and some suitable people were given training so that they could carry out projects without the help of experts.

Feuerbach's theses were the major paradigm for a critical understanding of sociological knowledge: intellectual knowledge and action together as a means to achieve the goal of transforming the world (Fals Borda 1978: 94). Praxis became the chief criterion of understanding (cf. second thesis) and praxis always signified ›political action for structural change in society‹ (idem).

Familiarity with language and words was seen as valuable in specific senses. On the one hand, words contain the potential to reproduce the past, on the other hand they can only represent an approximation of existing reality[70]. Their value lies in the fact that they can give ›a basis for the representation of reality‹ (Fals Borda 1978: 89). As a means of explaining experience they are limited, and hence a ›dialectical method‹ alternating action and reflection is seen as preferable.

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69   Fals Borda founded the newssheet *Alternativa*, the publishing house *Punto de Lanza* and the IAP research journal *La Rosca*, among other things.

70   Compare Boal's preference for building narratives through images created with bodies.

To obtain more specific understanding it is necessary to ›round out facts with tendencies‹. Here too there is a strong link with Boal, who considers that dialogue has a tendency to turn into monologue.. That is to say, there are no immovable facts set in stone, but only events in motion. A situation can only be understood by taking into account the history of the circumstances which make it up.

Although the goal was political activism, lack of the necessary means prevented the organisation of significant social change by the base communities. PAR activists mainly functioned as individuals, research groups were unable to organise among themselves and only too often were suspicious of each other. There were some intellectual advances, but they did not have far-reaching effects (Fals Borda 1978: 104–5).

The question of how committed intellectuals could be integrated into the proletariat was not solved by PAR either (ibid: 106). The intellectuals retained ownership of their knowledge and they had no other recourse but to ›put their knowledge at the service of the people‹, by inserting it into the process of social emancipation. They handed on their knowledge to the base as an ideology: Fals Borda criticises this as ›the most sinister historical manifestation of dogmatism, mimesis‹ (107).

The vision of a ›proletarian knowledge‹ is thus also not fulfilled. Fals Borda writes:

> It seems as though the historical and social situation of the Colombian masses is not yet at a point where an adequate store of scientific and cultural phenomena representing the interests of the working classes (rather than those of the bourgeoisie) can be compiled and built on, so that they can accept responsibility for their actions as historical subjects capable of seeing and understanding the reality of the present in order consciously to construct their own history. We should not have given way to illusions about the real people we were working with, although there was always a tendency to idealise them. (108)

In summary, one can say that the nub of the challenge which IAP posed to the research community was a thorough rethinking of their function and position in society. This brings to mind the challenges Freire threw out for dialogic relationships, for useful and usable analysis of events and for the involvement of everyone in the work process (109). Any knowledge obtained was in part a result of reinvigorating folk sources; evaluating it required the incorporation of different interest groups.

Through their work, researchers necessarily adopted a political stance, and their relationships to the work with base groups and to political organisations needed to be maintained over a long-term. The only way of pursuing strategies was through political organisations, and without this, revolutionary theory could not be turned into revolutionary action. Moreover, this was important in the attempt to create a basis of public opinion.

For the programme, political organisations on their own were not the whole story: a rapprochement between politics and art was also envisaged. Fals Borda's principal work provides an example of this interrelationship of science and art, or perhaps art as scientific knowledge and scientific knowledge as art.

7.4.7 Science and Art in ›Historia Doble de la Costa‹

An interesting parallel to Augusto Boal's *Zumbi*, which broke many traditional theatrical conventions, is provided by a similar undertaking from Orlando Fals Borda. In his four-part monumental work *Historia Doble de la Costa* (1979–1986) he uses an artistic trick to demystify scientific language, in line with the demands of IAP. The text is composed of two parallel strands (A and B) arranged on facing pages. On one page he writes in a scholarly style, serious, well documented, methodological and theoretical, whilst on the other he adopts a story-telling mode: anecdotal, colloquial, essayistic, autobiographical and fictional. It's up to the reader to choose whether to read one book after the other or to follow both strands in parallel. Fals Borda has however opted for the parallelism: the language in which he calls on living people as witnesses and enters into dialogue with them is no less important than the one in which he provides references for citations and gives explanations for the social phenomena which are described in the anecdotes. Gonzalo Cataño comments:

> Like the Latin American literary avant-garde of our era – which set its sights on disrupting narrative form by mixing the most disparate genres and forms of artistic expression (music, painting, poetry and prose) in order to heighten the effect of rhythm, space and time – he strove to overcome the traditional sociological mode of reporting. He opted for a form of presentation using two voices: the one on the left-hand page is anecdotal, colloquial

and descriptive; the one on the right-hand page is scholarly, that is to say well-documented, theoretical and methodological. The first is brought to life by living people with whom the author enters into dialogue; and the second comprises the sources, historical explanations, legends and occurrences which those interviewed drew upon. This creates in the reader the sensation of a counterpoint, of note against note, of voices from the past and voices in the present discussing problems which are painful for them and on which they disagree passionately. And, like his earlier works, *Historia* contains drawings, maps and photographs which awaken a feeling of solidarity with a culture which, at the end of the twentieth century, is resisting being swept away by violence, by the brutal assault of the urban world. In summary, one can say that the work is an homage to the inhabitants of the coast, and that the author has found the right words to do justice to the poor of the region and to their culture, which expresses itself in music, in the ways they relate to each other as a community, and in verbal exchange. (Cataño 2008: 90)

The possibility of getting close to depicting reality depends on ›using all possible means to the full‹, as Fals Borda demands. Art and creativity are indispensable elements in this process, particularly since language cannot be relied on unconditionally.

In a lecture entitled ›Descolonización de la Historia? El caso de la novela histórica en la región norteandina‹ [Decolonisation of History? The case of the historical novel in the North Andean Region] (König 2005: 33–58) the historian Brigitte König examines literary and historical texts from Colombia with respect to the rewriting of history in the historical novel. According to her, the existing asymmetry between centre and periphery in the country, in which the centre uses its control of written culture to dominate the unlettered periphery, is the real cause of the ›enfermedad histórica‹ [sickness of history], not the fact that writers of the period 1949–1992 were so obsessed with Latin American history:

The authors diagnose a kind of ›sickness of history‹, a kind of distortion of life by history, manifested in inadequate consideration of national and social events and by a mythification and glorification of the national heroes of Independence. As a result the new historical novel is reacting to this sickness and at the same time displaying the desire of the society, or at least of some groups within it, to say that it is sick and tired of the conservative discourse of official, traditional historical writing. Thus new Latin American

historical novels represent a counter-discourse to the official, affirmative version of history and its historical myth-making. (König 2005: 36)

König refers to Carlos Fuentes, the well-known Mexican author of the novel *Terra Nostra* (1975), in which he uses artistic montage to interweave the Mexico of the present with its colonial history. In accepting a prize for the novel in 1997, he said:

The gigantic task of contemporary Latin American literature consists in giving voice to the silences in our history, in using truth to contest the lies of our history (...) (ibid: 36)

Fals Borda's view of the problem of historical writing was as follows:

I aim to tell the history which has not been told, because things which were uncomfortable for the ruling class and the oppressed classes were veiled or avoided. (...) Therefore this technique does not result in a final or absolute version of history. But official history is also neither final nor absolute, not even that which historians from the ruling classes produce. Each generation of researchers constructs its own interpretation of the same few facts, according to their own experience, that is to say according to the bias of the social class or group to which they belong. For that reason the criticism of history is a never-ending and limitless task. (Fals Borda 2002: 55B)

In *Historia Doble de la Costa* Fals Borda comes close to creative artistic writing, and makes it clear thereby that artistic work can have a public dimension in showing that culture can be a form of research and an investigation of how a society thinks.

7.4.8 The Condition of Sensitive Thinking

Another of Fals Borda's concepts which shows how close he is to artistic modes is ›sentipensante‹, the condition of sensitive thinking, as he calls it. He links it with the process of ›combinar la mente con el corazón‹ (combining mind and heart) (Cataño 2008: 88).[71] Fals Borda didn't invent the concept of sensitive thinking: he says in a 2007 video that it was explained to him by fishermen from San Jorge. They told him that they

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71 We find something very similar in Sanjoy Ganguly's definition of the most important stance towards work.

worked with their hearts but also made use of the head. And when both were working together, they were ›sentipensantes‹, people who could act with the wisdom of understanding and feeling together.

The concept was later taken up by Eduardo Galeano (see above); and in 2009 a book appeared in the USA entitled *Sensing/Thinking Pedagogy*, by Laura I. Rendón (Rendón 2009). Equally relevant is the fact that Boal's use of the term ›pensamento sensível‹ was inspired by the expression ›sentipensante‹. I will come back to this in the chapter on aesthetics.

7.4.9 Looking forward to the twenty-first century

TO and IAP have spread in spontaneous and unplanned ways in the last forty years; groups became aware that these approaches were relevant to their interests, researchers and artists opened their awareness to their potential value, as did people associated with movements in different regions.

In the introductory text in Reason and Bradbury's *Handbook of Action Research*, Fals Borda locates the situation from which his work began in the seventies with the realisation that science is never neutral[72], it always adopts a position vis-à-vis political events.

The intellectual journey which sprang from the recognition of the need for a new kind of historical writing and the urgent need to apply and use it in the poorest and most disadvantaged regions of the world, led to the development of a science of action and participation. The World Congresses of 1977 and 1997 in Cartagena were important platforms for exchange and the creation of networks. There were similar developments in IAP in India, Mexico, Colombia and Tanzania. Underground organisations helped to make Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), still banned at the time in Brazil, accessible to the academic world.

The student revolts of 1968 led to questioning established scholarship, taking up committed positions or engaging in anarchist revision, along with the rise of structuralist and deconstructionist theory. Accepted truth paradigms, including some in the scientific and academ-

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72 A position which goes back to quantum mechanics at the turn of the 19th/20th centuries.

ic domains, were challenged. University models of knowledge were to be complemented by folk knowledges. Activist social researchers saw themselves as a movement. They regarded colleagues who appealed to the notion of academic neutrality as supporting the dominant system – according to their perspective, scholarship demanded an ethical consciousness. Thus those involved in Action Research wanted to secede from colonialist models and develop new standards of judgement which would enable them to carry out their work in line with emancipatory tenets. International influence was drawn from Freire, Camilo Torres, Mahatma Gandhi, Julius Nyerere, Carlos Mariátegui and Samir Amin. Action Researchers sought to bypass excessive and technocratic reliance on data production by direct involvement, intervention and insertion in social process; by rooting research in praxis they strove to chart an almost utopian horizon which offered the possibility of justice, communication and cultural awareness. Under the leadership of Budd Hall a network for Action Research was established, extending from Toronto to Dar-es-Salaam: it published the specialist journal *Convergence*.

To use Gramsci's term, Action Researchers became ›organic intellectuals‹, who identified themselves with the communities they worked in and sought to overcome all tendencies towards authoritarianism. They devised techniques like ›systematic–restitution‹ and the ›devolution–technique‹ in order to improve communication and develop new forms of report-writing – depending on the level of literacy of the populace they were working with. So as to reinterpret elitist versions of history they drew on oral tradition and collective memory. They created cultural maps and illustrated books, and used cassette recorders to compile tapes of stories. In moving towards combining ›hard facts‹ with more ›cortex-based‹ interpretation incorporating fantasy, literary and artistic modes, they drew inspiration from the writers of ›magic realism‹ (Julio Cortázar, Alejo Carpentier, Gabriel Garcia Márquez and Eduardo Galeano) and developed a dual-language system.

Outcomes demonstrated success and proved that the spirit of research can be satisfied by modest and simple ways and means and achieve positive change in people's lives. This resulted in a sense of empathy and was instrumental in combating any arrogance on the part of the researchers. Experience (*Vivencia*) showed that it was possible, using a careful and sensitive approach and ensuring symmetry in relationships, to listen to what was being said by voices from different cul-

tural backgrounds and understand the value of discourses which were framed in different cultural syntaxes. At the 1977 symposium Action Research as a whole was declared a *Vivencia*[73], which was an essential step in terms of progress and democracy. It was identified as not only a methodology but also an attitude to life, and those who used it became sensitive-thinking persons. Building on this, many different ways of understanding the world better, changing it and enlivening it anew were mooted. The eight following international meetings of action researchers assessed the world as it was and sought altruistically to find ways out of the contemporary state of insecurity. Many academics, entrepreneurs, experts, development practitioners and others became aware that they needed alternative strategies and increasingly looked for them – and still do so – in the methods of IAP. This is not unproblematic: it may sanction other forms of hierarchical goal-setting. The goal of IAP then and now is personal and social progress, as well as the articulation of protest against political injustices. Fals Borda quotes Immanuel Wallerstein, who proposed the idea of ›two modernities‹: the modernity of technology and that of liberation. This symbiotic pair forms the central paradox of our modern world order, a system of historical capitalism threatened by both moral and institutional collapse[74]. Millions of people live imprisoned in this modernity, demanding emancipation and the ending of the oppressive morality which thrusts the world into poverty and suffering (Fals Borda in Reason 2001: 31–2).

However, activism on its own is never enough. Fals Borda demands the addition of the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, wisdom and judgement, along with the sense of decency which is required to attain the good. Action Research does not just mean a search for knowledge acquisition, it includes a transformation of attitudes and ways of seeing and it ultimately produces change in the value system, the personality and the culture. It is an altruistic process and puts itself at the service of

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73 The term might perhaps better be rendered as ›lived immediacy‹, or ›life-experience‹.

74 Harvey notes that capital constructs an ecosystem which is ›functionalised, engineered and technocratic …, privatised, commercialised and monetised, and oriented towards maximising the production of exchange values … through the appropriation and production of use values‹ (Harvey 2014: 261).

humanity. At the second World Action Research Congress in 1997, those present agreed on a set of ethical principles of their new knowledge paradigm – in conjunction with the commitment to praxis and phronesis which they had already undertaken. Future requirements were framed as follows by the Congress:

- Multidisciplinary and institutional change: Action Research is open to co-operation with quantum physicists well as with artists, biologists and others and aims at comprehensive approaches. IAP, whose radius of action has long extended to many other research areas, among them medicine, business, history etc., leads to many studies and publications as well as a wide variety of applications. At the same time there is a danger that the method may be taken over and used for purposes contrary to its intended goals. This can scarcely be prevented, but should and must be limited as much as possible by improved training and rigorous scrutiny.
- Aims which are generally seen as achievable – so-called pilot projects – should be avoided as they often lead nowhere and damage the chances of carrying out long-term sustainable interventions.
- Deconstruction of any tendency to impose a uniform global model: the global trend towards uniformity damages individual cultures as well as nature and is driven by so-called development agencies. This should be countered by working on a regional level. Questions about how to oppose the machinery of development and self-destructive capitalism are yet to be answered.
- Research, education and political action: these must work together to bring about social justice and a form of progress which is nourished by a new humanism and assists the growth of democracy (Reason 2001: 33).
- Minimisation of conflicts, force and repression: IAP is capable of revealing the causes of poverty and its consequences as generated by economic systems. The challenge is to go beyond theory to find practical means of combatting this and making a contribution to a different, more humane and less self-destructive world.
- The development of an ethnogenetic, emancipatory ethos: this is perhaps the most challenging but also the most important task of Action Research. It is an attempt to work against the prevailing ethos of insecurity. It needs a strong conceptual basis, alternative scientific paradigms, precisely formulated discussion and effective deci-

sion-making, in order to turn proposals into praxis and thus validate them.

With reference to the twenty-first century, Fals Borda summarises:

> The need to construct an altruistic ethos for heterogeneous forms of cultures, times, spaces and peoples implies a world-wide effort to combine intellectual, political and economic resources from North and South, East and West. For a while, our concern for knowledge, power and justice and their relationships grew independently in our respective regions. Now those parallel developments have had an important consequence. We are merging with additional competence.
> Our tasks as participatory scholars and practitioners seem to be more clear. In the last analysis, the effect of P(A)R work carries a liberating, political accent world-wide. The rising universal brotherhood of critical intellectuals – women and men – tends to construct open pluralist societies in which oppressive central powers, the economy of exploitation, monopolies and the unjust distribution of wealth, the dominance of militarism and armamentism, the reign of terror, abuse of the natural environment, racism, and other plagues will be proscribed. On these vital issues many of us appear to be like one, as we concur on insisting about the humanist utilization of science, knowledge and techniques. Such now appears to be our global commitment. (Reason 2001: 34)

With this declaration Fals Borda closes his Introduction to Reason and Bradbury's book on Action Research. As a practitioner of the applied emancipatory and research-oriented theatre methods of Augusto Boal, Fals Borda's reflections seem to me to be of great relevance for global TO work, because it is precisely these challenges which are faced every day and which, under the pressure of committed active involvement, all too frequently receive too little theoretical discussion and reflection.

Fals Borda's four rules for field work and scientific reporting in IAP, which he outlined in a speech to the Southern Sociological Society in 1995, can also be applied to practical TO work:

- Do not monopolize your knowledge nor impose arrogantly your techniques but respect and combine your skills with the knowledge of the researched or grassroots communities, taking them as full partners and co-researchers. Thus, fill in the distance between subject and object.
- Do not trust elitist versions of history and science which respond to dominant interests, but be receptive to counter-narratives and try to recapture them.

- Do not depend solely on your culture to interpret facts, but recover local values, traits, beliefs, and arts for action by and with the research organizations.
- Do not impose your own ponderous scientific style for communicating results, but diffuse and share what you have learned together with the people, in a manner that is wholly understandable and even literary and pleasant, for science should not necessarily be a mystery nor a monopoly of experts and intellectuals.

In this way Participatory Action Research and Theatre of the Oppressed work may become ›a purposeful life-experience and commitment combining academic knowledge with common people's wisdom and know-how‹ (Fals Borda 1995: 3–4).

An example of PAR in Latin America will be found as Appendix 3 (Lykes' project with Mayan Ixil Women).

7.5 Summary and Evaluation

What is at stake here is a new mode of scholarship which does not bear the hallmark of the USA or Europe, but is tailored to the context of Latin America. Key issues are autonomy and independence, identity and responsibility. Its research contexts are characterised by unequal distribution of power and great human suffering, which means that practitioners are motivated by strong humanist traits. Change requires a recognition of the *status quo*, an awareness of self in the world and in society. From this comes the strength and power to shape the world to one's own creative vision. The transition from modernity to postmodernity opens up new fields of play, new ways for humans to understand themselves and their activity. Action Research and its Colombian variant, PAR, is a continuous presence throughout these processes of change; other methods, movements and initiatives also have to take up the challenge posed by the changing times to rethink and adapt their paradigms. If they do not manage to achieve this, their relevance is reduced and they slowly die out. Democracy and participation are desirable goals but have to be seen as distinct and flexible, otherwise they risk being manipulated and turning into their opposites. Criticism of participation as an obligatory component of projects has increased, particularly in the wake of mainstreaming by organisations like the World Bank.

Classical Action Research is signed up to social change – it is research to be applied. It is legitimised by the researchers' commitment to place themselves at the service of humanity and accept all consequences of this, even in terms of their personal lives. These lives provide the evidence for the effectiveness of the research. They are more eloquent than the published claims of well-intentioned institutions about the noble goals of their projects.

The broad outlines of the demands of AR closely match those of Freire and Boal: subject-to-subject relationships, humanisation of humanity, democratisation of relationships, goal-oriented research and the rejection of expert status. The goal is empowerment of (disadvantaged) people; the means include all reasonable methods of sociological research and other relevant disciplines (for example art, psychology, pedagogy). The history of AR goes back to Kurt Lewin, whose *Industrial Democracy Project* stipulated the recognition that research must prove itself in praxis: theory on its own is not sufficient. Contemporary AR demands a participatory perspective (both as theoretical basis and as political stance) and a praxis of learning, unlearning and learning anew. Like Freire it views the world as dynamic. Its world-view is systemic but it is consciously aware of parallel approaches and situations which it attempts to integrate. One interesting demand from current proponents is for a pedagogy of the privileged which would enable them to learn to share power. Another is for a ›re-enchantment‹ of the world, a shift towards ›indigenous‹ perspectives and strategies as opposed to exploitative models.

The most noteworthy of the many complex implications of AR in relation to its political positioning appear to be its reflections on power and knowledge, its humanist stance and the importance of systems thinking in its processes. Research should not be seen as a tool with which the poor can fight the rich, but as a means of establishing new kinds of relationship and working on many levels simultaneously. It is also important for it to avoid being co-opted by the powerful and to continually re-examine its goals through incorporating processes of self-reflection. Different forms of knowledge should be given equal weight. A capacity for transpersonal awareness should ensure a humanist approach to research which sees people as human beings (rather than as objects of research, material or data). This should also apply to the researchers themselves. A good level of self-awareness and the ability

to give undivided attention are essential. Systemic thinking promotes a recognition of being connected and accepting joint responsibility for the process. The whole is larger than the sum of the parts, as the saying goes. From that we can derive that no-one knows everything and no-one knows nothing.

Action Research in the South is strongly conditioned by existing militarisation and urgent need for change. Circumstances can only change when power structures change: that was the watchword in the 1970s. On one hand research was a matter of life and death, in so far as it was perceived as a threat to those in power (or alternatively led to exile, guerrilla activity or the life of a *Hombre Hicotea*[75]); on the other hand it risked being requisitioned by the imperialist powers and used to manipulate the populace, thus acquiring a bad reputation (cf. the Camelot Project). Researchers who did not belong to the same social class as the groups of people for whose benefit they were working faced complex challenges, yet nevertheless achieved positive results for the most part. Orlando Fals Borda, regarded as the pioneer of Colombian sociological research, pursued his goals on all possible levels (as University professor, field researcher, politician, editor, historian and educator). Right up to his death in 2008 he was actively involved in the attempt to formulate a new historical narrative for his country. His work was influenced by Marxist thinkers and his constant focus was to research reality in order to change it. For him research was a form of politics. However, his expressed desire to establish a proletarian form of knowledge, a knowledge which the base could claim as its own, was not realised. What did change was the attitude of researchers and the way they organised and viewed themselves. In his four volume work *Historia Doble de la Costa* (1979–86), Fals Borda presents the outcomes of his research in a form which aims to come closer to reality. He uses a double-column format which brings together the discourse of the researcher and the voice of the people of the Atlantic coast. He thus demonstrates that artists can do research and that researchers can be artists. Both paths lead to knowledge and understanding. His term *sentipensante*, as applied to the

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75 According to the fishermen of San Jorge, Icotea turtles swim when there's water and bury themselves in sand to wait out periods of drought which may last for months. (Fals Borda online interview, www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbJWqetRuMo)

research process, makes a case for a mode of research which can ›think sensitively‹.

The *Handbook of Action Research*, published at the beginning of the twenty-first century, recounts the developments and debates in Action Research during the previous decades. The *Handbook* shows that AR consists of a widespread network of researchers who confront the many complex challenges of their practice at regular conferences, reflected in inspiring reading. AR, as it is described here, is not only a political positioning but also a way of life, as in Gramsci's idea of the organic intellectual. International developments have been carefully noted and where possible integrated into existing processes; the most important of these is *Vivencia*. The postmodern age brings new demands but the ideals remain the same. A combination of activism and Aristotelian *phronesis* is seen as the way to a better world. AR (like TO moreover) seems principally to change those who commit themselves to it. It is an altruistic movement and aims to develop an ethnogenetic and emancipatory ethos in scholarship. In this regard small, well-considered and unhasty steps have proved the most successful.

Brinton Lykes's project with the Mayan women (see Appendix 3) is an example of this kind of work. Under demanding conditions, women from the community reconstructed their own history and achieved a new degree of self-awareness and new capabilities. As in the case of successful TO work, the facilitator becomes less important as the project goes on. Since the outcomes of successful PAR are continually recalibrated through participation of all involved, there can be no single recipe for what they should look like. A few important premises of PAR are as follows:

- They educate themselves about the historical context of the place and the people with whom they are going to work.
- Researchers are invited by a community, they never impose themselves on one.
- The selection of applications and also the research methods are agreed jointly with those who issued the invitation.
- Over the course of the research the inviting community begins to own the research methodology.
- All outcomes are fed back into the overarching structure of the community at different stages so that new steps for the improvement of the situation can be planned on this basis.

- During the process researchers alternate between acting as aides and participants, to further the process. Ultimately they become redundant.

The PAR researcher brings to the research context a particular stance and form of understanding, that is to say one which is committed and partisan (in favour of the group they are working with); it is accompanied and bound together by a centaur-consciousness and a participatory world view based on transpersonal sensibility, as opposed to the ego-allure of a capitalist mindset.

This method of operation is found precisely in the theatre movement Jana Sanskriti in West Bengal. Its membership is a nexus of intersubjective relationship. The issues they engage with arise from the needs and demands of those affected by them. Decisions about how to proceed are taken collectively. In the process of collective work the situation is analysed and the outcomes of the analysis are fed back into the community at large. From this, further steps are decided. The process always involves both action and reflection. Those involved ›own‹ the situation, so to speak, they arrive through the process at a point from which they can construct their world as ›a thing for us‹, instead of a ›thing in itself‹.

The strengths of these TO processes are multiplied by continual application. What in the case of Jana Sanskriti is in fact decades of experience, plus the tightly-knit and enduring members' community and their mutual care for each other, results in long-term change in the life of all involved above and beyond any economic factors. If financial support is offered, it is considered carefully in the light of the context of the work and of its consequences. Furthermore, precise documentation of the work and publication of this evaluation is also seen as important.

Chapter 8
Latin American Theatre Practices

8.1 Observations on the theatre history of Latin America and the development of the Teatro Nuevo

This chapter outlines the political and theatrical contexts in which Boal's work began; it illustrates the concerns which theatre practice faced and the forms which were developed in response.

8.1.1 Introduction

In many Latin American countries modern theatre takes shape at the beginning of the 1950s. Heidrun Adler writes:

> Until quite late in our century Latin American society imitated the European model; its theatre was therefore also an imitation of European theatre. As long as the mother countries had not achieved political independence, there was no possibility of establishing any cultural autonomy. Apart from folk theatre, which harks back to Spanish as well as American traditions, there was no serious national theatre in the different countries of Latin America. (Adler 1991: 7)

Descriptions of Latin American theatre suffer markedly from the adoption of eurocentric criteria of orientation and classification. In order to escape this and invoke a Latin American poetics, I turn to the Chilean critic Juan Villegas.

In his book *Historia multicultural del teatro y las teatralidades en América Latina* [*The multicultural history of theatre and theatricality*], Juan Villegas assesses theoretically the most important tendencies in the discourse and dramaturgy of Latin American theatre. He argues for a contextualisation of the phenomena of theatre in Latin America, that is to say, for a way of interpreting them which takes into account both the conditions of proliferation and reception and the socio-political, economic and anthropological background. Latin American theatre is above all a discursive practice whose roots and effects are political.

> We understand theatre as a discourse. That is to say, a communicative act between a sender and a receiver in a specific situation, in which the sender uses a plurality of signs (verbal, gestural, visual. auditory, cultural, aesthetic etc.) in order to construct a social imaginary and to communicate a message to the receivers. We add that theatrical discourse employs codes which have a high degree of legitimacy within the cultural space of the potential audience. (Villegas 2005: 15)

To be theatrically literate (to possess ›theatrical competence‹) implies that the audience is familiar with the theatrical and aesthetic codes of the relevant system. So the relationship between producing and receiving bodies is important. With respect to the renewal of Latin American theatre in the 1930s and 1940s, audience expectations deriving from a Europeanised theatrical competence played a major role. Villegas stresses the fact that cultural ›objects‹ validate social concepts which serve the interest of the producers (Villegas 2005: 17).

For Villegas, this concept of theatricality is key to the analysis of theatrical texts and to plotting their position and function in theatre history (ibid: 18). It is a discourse which constructs the world and makes it visible. According to Villegas there is a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate forms of theatricality (for example, that which is legitimated is allowed to conserve its product in museums). The representation provided by this ›legitimate‹ theatricality is never to be seen as a reproduction of reality, but rather as the deliberate construction by the producers of their version of reality (19).

A theatrical text is a scenic practice based on a dramatic text (the playscript) which constructs a spectacle in accordance with the aesthetic codes legitimised by a specific cultural system. It is a mode of discourse which elaborates an interdisciplinary communicative act by means of all relevant and legitimate kinds of sign available within that historical and cultural context (20–21).

Renewal of theatre history is ongoing, driven by cultural and political aims. The writing of history is a narrative act which reflects the value system of the writer. The need for rewriting can be traced back to the emergence of new social groups who seek to acquire a position of influence or a place in the history (23–4).

In western culture the receiver expects objectivity, a story which is close to the truth (even if that doesn't quite happen) and a respect for the appropriate codes of representation (language, documentary evidence,

indication of sources, organisation by period and so on). Every culture has its own way of representing history. Critical revision of theatre history and the introduction of new models of representation means that certain texts are perceived as key works in the definition of the canon. The selection of this corpus is thus the central problematic of any model of theatre history and of considerable social and political importance.

> History is nothing but a selection of texts considered important from within a cultural tradition. This position leads to the omission of texts which are not considered to fit into or are not acceptable within this tradition. This difficulty can only be overcome by questioning the *corpus* of both the critical discourse and the theatrical discourse. A critical discourse conscious of neither its ideological base nor its cultural dependency has produced a partial history which privileges texts which display a European aesthetic and sit comfortably in ideological terms with the centres of power. At the same time huge amounts of theatrical text-production are automatically discriminated against and marginalised. (24)

In order to view Latin American theatre discourse in a more rounded perspective, Villegas proposes the following categories: hegemonic theatre discourse, marginal theatre discourse, restricted theatre discourse and oppressed theatre discourse (26).

Latin America, as a long-standing plural system of co-existing cultures, has a shared history of colonialisation from the arrival of the Europeans in 1492. The three major population groupings, which also do not form a single unit, are the indigenous peoples of Latin America, tribal groups from Africa and groups from Europe[76].

He proposes that Latin American theatre has to be seen as a cultural object whose transformation and development is bound up with that of the political domain and inscribed in the conflict zones of social forces.

With reference to theatrical production, Villegas identifies four major categories, each linked to a particular time-period:

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76 In this context Adler quotes Darcy Ribeiro, who divides the population of Latin American into two groups: *pueblos testigos*, the descendants of the great American cultures, who survive in small groups and have retained to this day some features of their cultures; *pueblos nuevos*, the rural masses of the colonised countries, descendants of the Indians and Blacks, uprooted by forced labour systems and robbed of their original characteristics. (Adler 1982: 115)

- The pre-colonial cultural system, i.e. all indigenous religious and cultural rites and scenic practices, ranging from everyday activities to great ritual events.
- The colonial system: theatre as a discourse of power and legitimation during 300 years of colonial history.
- Bourgeois theatre in the 19th century, when the social model shifted from colonialist to republican and theatre was used in the service of nation building and supporting national unity.
- The modern period in which the middle class dominates cultural production, a situation which is challenged in the second half of the 20th century by marginalised groups, agricultural workers and other activists.

Villegas's cultural-historicist perspective provides a useful corrective to a Eurocentric view of Latin American theatre[77]; his perspective is largely validated by Adler (see above) and by Ecuadorian theatre historian Franklin Rodrígez Abad, who suggests that any consideration of Latin American theatre should be rooted in an essentially Latin American structure of thought (see also below, Rodolfo Kusch). For Abad, Latin American theatre is characterised by its embedding in the historical and material circumstances of the continent and in its quest for freedom; it is multilinguistic, multi-ethnic and multinational (Abad 1989: 5). He also insists that theatre is context-specific, so the New Latin American Theatre of the post-1960s is not comprehensible without an awareness of its revolutionary context; and urges theatre to move beyond comfortable locations, though he is dubious about the aesthetic quality of some of the politically-oriented and collective work which emerged.

These perspectives help to position Latin American theatre of the 1960s onwards as a discursive practice with political causes and goals. Its dramaturgy is a conscious materialisation of sites and systems in which hegemonic struggles against marginalisation are played out. All this leads usefully into a consideration of new Colombian theatre and the work of Enrique Buenaventura.

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77   There are however some gaps in his scheme: his use of the semiotic model is somewhat simplistic; he relies on a conventionally Marxist model of class division which fails to account for cultural elements which transcend this; he is blind to gender issues.

8.1.2 New Colombian Theatre

I am going to turn now to the specific situation of theatre activism in Colombia, in order to identify similarities and differences in working conditions with those in Brazil experienced by Boal and to see what the consequences were for what may, in the widest sense, be called politically motivated theatre work.

Claudia Montilla calls the period between 1959 and 1975 the time of action for modern theatre in Colombia (Teatro Novo or Teatro Nuevo). Colombia has a rich theatre history and was particularly strong at cultivating audiences (Montilla 2004: 86). The context for the development of the Teatro Nuevo was the ›Time of Violence‹, which Montilla dates from 1948, in which violence was used as a political weapon to an almost unspeakable degree. Indeed, it was in evidence even before this date. In *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel García Márquez has provided a fictional treatment of the massacre of Macondo (1928): the United Fruit Company treated its banana plantation workers as slaves and in response to a protest collaborated with the army to slaughter more than a thousand of them. Werner Hörtner describes Colombia's situation as one of civil war, in contrast to other Latin American states, in which independence from Spanish (or Portuguese) colonial power was pursued through similar military means. Conflict between guerilla groups (the best known being FARC and M-19), paramilitaries and militia left many traces and wounds which compromised social development and made it extremely difficult to elaborate common social and political goals (Hörtner 2006: 60).

The artists of the *Generación de la Violencia* included the writer Gabriel García Márquez, the painter Alejandro Obregón and also the theatre people Enrique Buenaventura and Santiago García. The publication of the artistic journal MITO in 1955 marked a phase of artistic exploration influenced by European teachers, among them Brecht and Stanislavsky.

In 1977 Eduardo Márceles Daconte wrote an essay in the *Latin American Theatre Review,* in which he quoted the Guatemalan dramaturg und critic Manuel Galich: ›Colombia es hoy la vanguardia del teatro hispanoamericano.‹ (›Colombia is the avant garde of hispanic American theatre today‹) (Daconte 1977: 91). He identifies the causes of this revival of the Colombian theatre scene as on one hand lying in the upsurge of underground theatre movements in response to the fascist regime,

particularly in the way in which they were forced to become formally innovative in order to escape the threat of repression; and on the other hand the enhanced presence, as a consequence of the same situation, of a burgeoning commercial theatre which lacked any kind of impact and provided no artistic stimulus. In neighbouring Latin American countries courageous and important theatrical initiatives were springing up in the face of politicised militarisation: Daconte names Guatemala, Costa Rica, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Peru. At this point in time Cuba was a uniquely privileged exception in respect of theatrical freedom.

Many revolutionary groups were interested in the power of theatre as a form of communication with the people. This also helped to prevent Colombian theatre becoming ›consumable theatre‹, as Galich puts it in Daconte (1997: 91). However, the concentration on political theatre did, as in the case of people's cultural centres in Brazil, lead to a reduction in aesthetic quality. The flowering of theatre can also be traced to the tradition of theatre festivals in Colombia, which took place annually from 1957 to 1967 (*Festival Nacional de Teatro*) and in which the pioneers of the period participated: El Búho, El TEC, CLETA – UNAM (Mexico); El Galpón (Urugay); Libre Teatro Libre (Argentina); Rajatablas (Venezuela); Cuatro Tablas (Peru); Teatro Escambray (Cuba); Teatro Campesino (Chicano Theatre Group/USA). This sequence of festivals was then succeeded from 1968 by the festivals of Manizales (*Festival de Teatro Universitario*) and replaced in 1972 by the *Festival Internacional de Teatro* (1972–1973).

From the middle of the 1950s, University theatre groups and Enrique Buenaventura founded a new professional theatre in Colombia. Carlos José Reyes and Santiago García (in Bogotá) also played a major role. New Colombian Theatre focused on the writing of Colombian history and the quest for a new audience. This was to be drawn from the proletariat and the middle classes. A new way of making plays was developed (Creación Colectiva), which involved the spectators by presenting them with recognisable situations, instead of Spanish costume drama which left them indifferent. This audience, which could now feel closer to what was being represented, also had the right to adjust scenes acording to its own interpretation, thus creating a new dynamic between the public and the artists (Daconte 1977: 93).

The group La Candelaria (with Santiago García), which emerged from ›La Casa de la Cultura‹, further developed this work. Creación

Colectiva represents a conscious engagement with the themes, the public, the social implications of the work; and also with denouncing and protesting against inequalities. It targets transformation of the established order. Santiago García democratised theatre further by his statement that every play was the work of a whole team of people (idem). This seems self-evident today, but in a period of authors' theatre it was not so at all. Creación Colectiva did not however intend to set itself up as a rival to authors' theatre, but rather to shift the balance of theatrical production from one person to everyone involved.

The New Theatre needed new actors:

> And moreover, if the objective is to confront theatre with the working masses of the country and with a public which every day is growing in numbers and becoming more demanding, actors have to be prepared to tour to more remote regions of the country and to work for longer periods. The New Theatre therefore needs a new training for actors. It requires actors who posess a well-established social conscience, who disdain the kinds of remuneration on offer from commercial theatre and are content with their station and happy to live frugally; committed to their vocation as militants of the revolution and conscious of the ever-increasing need to pursue the fight to bring about structural change in the country. (ibid: 94)

But spectators and critics also had a greater responsibility for ›their‹ theatre groups, and were required to support them economically and help them to become stronger.

8.1.3 The influence of Brecht

Enrique Buenaventura, who was a friend of Helene Weigel, was strongly influenced in his theatre practice by Brecht and by folk art. He published an article in MITO in October 1958 with the title ›De Stanislavski a Brecht‹ (Buenaventura 1958: 177–182), in which among other things he says: ›Stanislavski closes the circle of bourgeois theatre, Brecht opens the contemporary and future theatre‹ (180). In ›Brecht and the new Colombian theatre‹, in *Primer Acto,* 1990, he writes 32 years later:

> Brecht taught us much more [than the use of lighting, music, *Verfremdungs-Effekt* etc. (BF)]: theatre is not just spectacle, theatre is an event which forms part of the social, political, economic and cultural spectrum of our

age. He taught us to desacralize theatre and alerted us to the conflict be-
tween aesthetic discourse and the other registers of life. This is an issue
which impacts on both form and theme, and which raises questions about
the understanding of the role of art and its relationship with the public, that
is specifically about the practice of theatre. (Buenaventura 1990: 27)

Epic theatre provided a working basis for many Latin American authors.
Brecht's theory arises from his texts and was not ›a meta-text, which pro-
duces a text-object‹ (De Toro in Adler 1991: 89). On one hand the term
epic (or later dialectic) refers to the order of scenes, that is to say a way of
breaking up the sequence of events in order to disclose causation. On the
other hand it describes ›the contradictions inherent in social process‹.
Catharsis and empathy are replaced by the alienation effect, producing
a distance between both the actor and the character and between actor
and audience (ibid: 90). Theatre becomes a critical and dynamic social
event. ›The reality of the stage corresponds to external reality.‹ Epic the-
atre presents a new discursive practice suitable for a scientific age (91).
The Latin American theatre makers embraced this aesthetic model and
attempted to depict Latin American reality with all its contradictions
and to denounce it, as well as to initiate an impetus for change, in order
to rescue the public from its actual state of alienation (91). Brecht oper-
ates on two levels here: to deliver ideologically engaged art and to pay
attention to aesthetics – this is more than simple propaganda theatre.
Brecht's influence worked to change both the structure of theatre and
its mode of operation in society. It helped to usher in a new way of writ-
ing history, a way of foregrounding contradictions and a recognition of
the connections between subjectivity and objectivity. Dramatic syntax is
fragmentary, not linear (92) (the open structure of epic theatre). Contra-
dictions are not resolved, solutions are not proffered.

> This adoption [of epic theatre, BF] stems in our opinion neither, as in the
> past, from a concern for modernity nor from the desire to acquire a foothold
> on the territory of European literature, hedged about with so many isms;
> but rather from the need… to establish a balance between an acceptable lev-
> el of dramatic creation and the sociological problems which proliferate in
> contemporary hispano-american reality. (ibid: 101)

Aesthetic and ideological commitment underpin the decision to create
this New Theatre. When Brecht asks:

> How can the theatre be both instructive and entertaining? How can it be divorced from spiritual dope-traffic and turned from a home of illusions to a home of experiences? How can the unfree, ignorant man of our century, with his thirst for freedom and his hunger for knowledge; how can the tortured and heroic, abused and ingenious, changeable and world-changing man of this great and ghastly century obtain his own theatre which will help him to master the world and himself? (Brecht 1964: 135)

these are questions which fall on fertile soil in Latin America.

8.1.4 Buenaventura and the theatrical vision of the TEC

The new Colombian theatre movement begins in 1955 when Enrique Buenaventura invited the Japanese actor Seki Sano, then working in Mexico[78], to Colombia.

Sano provided the impulse for several theatre groups, principally student groups in universities. After a short while he was accused of Communist activity and had to leave the country, but the seed had been sown. The Escuela de Cali (Cali School) and later the Teatro Experimental de Cali (TEC) were started. Whilst it was still a school, not yet a theatre company, it began experimenting with paratheatrical models, with folklore and with texts by a few Colombian authors. The school's play *En la diestra de Dios Padre* was so successful, that the school was invited to the Festival of Nations in Paris in 1970. They used the impetus of this success to form themselves into the Teatro Experimental de Cali and become the first professional theatre in Colombia.

Right from the beginning the TEC focused on the national situation and on how to attract an audience from among the people. After creating a stir with two plays, the members of the company were expelled from the school and had to look for their own space. At the same

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78 Seki Sano (1905–1966), Japanese actor-trainer and political activist, plays a central role in Latin American theatre history. He lived from 1938 to 1966 in Mexico and spent time in the 1950s in Colombia. His artistic work was centred on the acting methodology of Stanislavsky, Meyerhold and Piscator. He was also interested in folk theatre with a basis in the analysis of social and political reality. Forced to leave Japan as a result of Communist involvement, his theatre was a ›theatre of the people, for the people‹. (See Tanaka 1994: 53–69).

time Santiago García in Bogotá was undertaking similar work. So two independent companies were established in Colombia. Simultaneously a large student theatre movement grew up. As in Brazil, lower middle class intellectuals ardently sought contact and communication with the people. A very lively scene developed with lots of experimentation, for example of Creación Colectiva, improvisational theatre, different forms of relationship, between actors and directors, between the audience and the theatrical text. The context of these developments was the revolutionary ideal in Latin American revolution which also strongly influenced Colombia (Buenaventura in Monléon 1978: 90).

Monléon, in conversation with Buenaventura, raises two questions which are still relevant for us today, and which TO practitioners also need to ask themselves: i) whether theatre methods intended to address the people run the risk of degenerating into a theatre for the expression of the guilt of the privileged middle classes (in this respect he further asks if theatre actually is a way of reaching ›the people‹ and if the latter has any interest in this kind of thing); ii) how it is possible to evaluate this New Theatre.

According to Buenaventura, the danger of becoming ›guilt-trip theatre‹ didn't occur in Colombia because there were many different groups who discovered New Theatre for themselves. This meant that it was less likely to be used as an instrument to manipulate the oppressed sections and more likely to be something which they made their own.

Buenaventura indicates that many workers' groups, second-chance learning groups, neighbourhood groups and trade union groups were formed: an impressive number of people who wanted to learn from the professional companies and to be in contact with them. As a result, there were seminars and exchanges between companies and these interest groups. The situation is markedly different from the one mentioned in Chapter 6 of the CPCs in Brazil in the 1960s, who were doing propaganda theatre. Colombian theatre practice was unique in the sense that from the beginning it operated in close proximity to the public and was always keen to engage in discussion with them.

> We do not tell the people what the national situation is; we are not doing missionary theatre. We offer the play as a means of investigation which we can all undertake, the public and us. The play gives some hints about this process and deals with problems which affect us all. Our work aims to invite

people to reflect on our reality, with the goal of finding ways to change it. (ibid: 92)

In answer to the question of how this New Theatre should be evaluated and analysed in terms of its characteristics, Buenaventura makes the point that process-oriented theatre should in any case not be seen as result-oriented. Festivals have sometimes produced some poor work, but in his view no process is bad of itself. If a play of this kind is reviewed in the press, the development process should always be discussed as well, not simply the end result in performance (ibid: 104).

A further significant difference from other Latin American countries is that in the period between 1955 and 1978, there was no major group of authors and no commercial theatre in Colombia, as opposed to Mexico and Buenos Aires, where independent theatre was effectively swallowed up by commercial theatre. According to Buenaventura, a second great European invasion, consisting of waves of immigration, took place in Cono Sur (Chile, Argentina and Uruguay). The European immigrants brought their theatre, their dramatists, their scenic practices with them, so that these countries – especially Argentina and Uruguay – were heavily influenced by European ideology. This cultural Europeanisation had its effects on the way in which theatre was understood. It affected the majority of intellectuals and the small middle-class segment of society, creating a problematic situation which required a form of cultural militancy in response.

Creación Colectiva in Colombia was started by theatre people like Buenaventura, Carlos José Reyes and Jairo Aníbal, who had not principally come to theatre by way of literature but directly through practice. So they were able to overcome the division between playwrights and plays, in a similar way to Boal's suppression of the divide between the audience and the stage in the name of democratisation. Buenaventura believed in a socialist world-view and saw certain kinds of organisation and discipline as indispensable for theatre work. But socialist principles were seen as a way of challenging the idea of cultural hierarchy in which someone has an idea and others are required to translate it into practice, in theatre and in society.

Collective theatre developed in Colombia from direct experience, from the dialogue between artists and the populace, via theatre. The unusual, new, in a way revolutionary thing here is to see theatre as a direct means of communication to and between people.

> I think that – among other things – theatre must fight to establish itself
> as a concrete form of communication, an essential mode of interpersonal
> communication. I believe that this is one aspect of our revolutionary pro-
> gramme: that is, theatre is inherently revolutionary in form, in the sense
> that it seeks to create relationship between people; such relationships can-
> not be established unless we all acknowledge each other as human beings.
> This expression is easy to understand from the context in which we work.
> We are in a situation in which millions of people are denied the right to be
> human (...) Theatre is one of the few forms of communication which work
> on the human level and which demand that humanity be recognised. (Bue-
> naventura in Monléon 1978: 95)

Monléon identified the danger that this new theatre might deteriorate
into a means of combating middle-class guilt when transferred to Eu-
rope. Some European groups adopted the working practices of ›collec-
tive creation‹ as a moral imperative. But since they lacked any direct
experience of confronting oppression in their own lives, their privileged
social condition prevented them from really understanding the opposi-
tions such a confrontation identified, unlike groups in Latin American
countries. How far this diagnosis is also valid for the transfer of TO to
Europe might be a topic for debate among European practitioners. For
Buenaventura, Colombian New Theatre offers a doorway into participa-
tion, into a kind of freedom which the old theatre, rooted in a commer-
cial structure, could never make available (ibid: 103).

8.1.5 Enrique Buenaventura the man

Enrique Buenaventura started working in theatre in Brazil with Her-
milio Borba Filho, who ran the Teatro del Estudiante de Pernambuco
(Students' Theatre of Pernambuco) and had links with Paulo Freire's
cultural centres. There is no evidence that Boal and Buenaventura knew
each other in Brazil, but Carlos Satizábal (Cooperativa Colombiana de
Teatro) specifies in his biography of Buenaventura that the Arena The-
atre was an important influence on the development of his theatrical
method. Buenaventura was an actor, a director, a dramaturg, a writer
and a poet, as well as being a vagabond, a cook, a sailor and an initi-
ate in Candomblé. He travelled and worked in many Latin American
countries, among them Argentina and Chile. His plays were produced
and acclaimed internationally. At first they acknowledged the existing

structures, but his work became increasingly more critical and as a result saw its subsidy withdrawn. So the form of his work changed. In 1968 he characterised his play *Los Papeles* (*Documents from Hell*) as ›a serious attempt by the TEC to … involve ourselves deeply in the life and death of our people‹ (Espener 1976: 44).

His goal was to identify the factors in contemporary life which might drive a social revolution; one of the key issues was to overthrow ›cultural colonialism‹ in order to help people to understand and engage with their own history. ›A country cannot construct its own destiny if it does not look back. It can't think about the future if it doesn't know or discuss its past‹ (Buenaventura 1976: 45).

The two main problems for Buenaventura, as for Boal (and Freire), are colonisation and dependency. But ›the colonialist, in imposing his culture upon us, also provides us with the weapons to free ourselves (from it). But to do this we have to make them a part of our experience‹ (ibid: 46). His solution therefore is ›people's theatre‹. Buenaventura had taken up this theme a few years before Boal's first publications and thus may have provided an important impulse for Boal, though there is no direct evidence of this.

The role of the audience is as important for him as that of the actors. Everyone who is present at the performance should be familiar with the context of the work, which means that it is important not to present work in countries where one is not familiar with the audience's situation.

Marília Carbonari, who spent several weeks with the TEC and Buenaventura in 2003, describes how after each performance, Buenaventura engaged in a forum process with the audience, answering questions and listening to their suggestions and comments. This practice had been initiated forty years previously by the TEC and for Buenaventura it was as important as the event on stage. The plays which were analysed served as stimuli for interrogating experience and enjoying a political discussion of issues which extended far beyond the borders of Colombia to the history of the continent which had been exposed to many forms of violence.

In collaboration with the TEC actors, Buenaventura developed over thirty plays and an internationally recognised method. Carbonari describes this as a theatre ›which insistently exposes the contradictions between official versions of history and the complex historical process-

es which determine our lives‹ (Carbonari 2000: 95). It is precisely this which makes his work relevant in the current situation.

8.1.6 The practice of Creación Colectiva

... a theatre where the public responds to the challenge of dreaming [a new] reality (Buenaventura and Vidal 2005: 0).

Enrique Buenaventura began developing his theatre methods and training his co-players in 1955 and worked untiringly at this for fifty years. As Jaqueline Vidal writes in 2004 in her preface to the 50th Anniversary publication *Esquema General*, the young TEC actors were experienced in the methods developed during this period, but had also continued to work with Buenaventura up to his death to evolve new forms. All the methods which had been hewed from practical work made up the tools of the trade which previously would have been the exclusive preserve of the director. But now every actor has the knowledge and understanding of the methods so s/he can play his/her part. Buenaventura says:

> Only when the methods are known by all members of the group and applied in truly collective fashion, can truly collective creation be guaranteed. (ibid: 1)

The need to develop a method arose as a prerequisite for equality of participation, since the creative involvement of everyone was a fundamental tenet of the work. The director's authority and right to the last word had initially been loosened by the need to accept the results of group improvisation in the construction of the final piece. This procedure was further extended until it developed into a radical alternative to the traditional role of the director. Improvisation became the starting point for creating a play. The group now had a direct dialogical and improvisatory relationship with the text without the mediation of the director. The resulting material (images, improvisations) however required some shaping – previously the job of the director. So it was necessary to evolve a further analytical stage of the work, which was to be carried out as objectively as possible.

A ›text‹ could take the form of a complete play but it could also be a simple plot outline, rather like the *lazzi* of Commedia dell'Arte or Roman Comedy, which merely outlined a structure of conflicts to which

the actors would then improvise, with or without words. The (first) analysis of the text had to take place at the start of the work in order to clarify the dramatic structure. Buenaventura believed that:

> A theatrical text is an analogy of social life[79], not a reproduction or reflection of it. So it has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis life. It presents a particular way of looking at society which works on a variety of levels. (idem)

That means that in *Creación Colectiva*, as in TO, the theatre process is a journey from the particular to the general and from the general to the particular.

In the first analysis, the text – which usually consists of a story and some characters – is read thoroughly by the group, so that it can be understood on a lexical level. Then the narrative process is analysed: the way in which time and space are treated, which characters have the majority of the action etc. The goal of the procedure is to isolate the story (the *fábula*) from the style of the play.

Fábula

The story which needs to be extracted is not identical with the one which is told in the play. It isn't the same as the argument or theme of the play. It goes beyond this, because it is not located within the narrow confines of the single play at hand, or the case which is being depicted, but extends to the furthest causes and consequences of that case. The causes and implications need to arise from the case at hand and not from outside, that is to say from within the text rather than from beyond it. The *fábula* establishes the relationship between the theme that is developed in the text and the social conflicts within which the text is ›inscribed‹ (Buenaventura and Vidal 2005: 3).

The *fábula* is however also less than the argument or theme or case which the play presents, because it leaves out the author's way of telling. It does not stick exactly to the dramatic structure, but organises the basic, determining factors into a linear sequence running from causes to effects. This is done in order to identify conflicting social forces and the causes of that conflict.

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79   Cf. Ganguly, who sees theatre games as ›social metaphors‹.

The conflicting forces are also to be found embedded in the play and in the social context within which it takes place. The cause(s) of conflict are directly inscribed into the play.
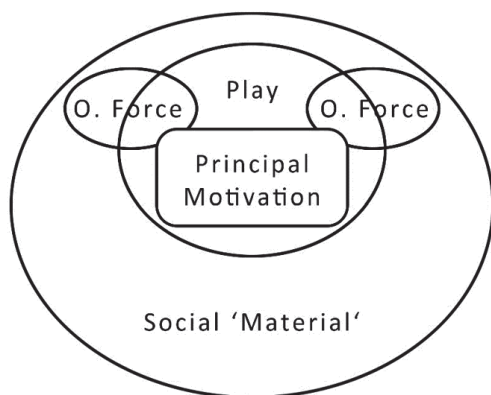
After this first theoretical analysis, which Stanislavsky called table-work, the group would progress to improvisations to develop the whole play.
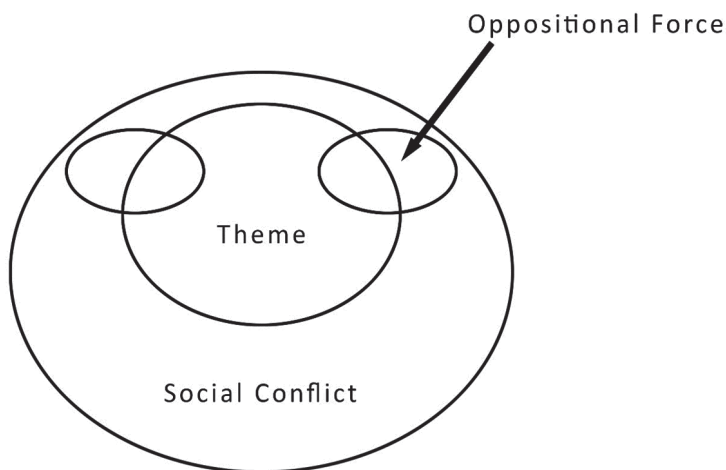
Improvisation

At first it was a question of putting a stop to traditional ways of working, so improvisation involved rather naïve procedures for actors to ›discov-

er themselves‹, exteriorise their unconscious reactions or find new ways to articulate the themes under consideration. Only later on did they discover analogy as a tool by which to explore more critical and creative approaches through improvisation.

Since the text represents an analogy of social life and has its own relatively autonomous structure, this makes it possible to engage in an artistic analysis of the social world in which it is embedded and to identify the ideology which underpins it. Actors relate to the text in the same way that authors relate to the social context, circumstances and situations: authors identify and focus on the conflict situations central to the work, and actors explore these in terms of how to manifest them in practice.

Analogy

By analogy, Buenaventura means a similar conflict to that depicted in the play. The analogous example must be chosen with care, because it needs to incorporate the contradiction contained in the scene. There is no guarantee of success, it only becomes clear in the course of the improvisation whether the analogy will serve the case. Buenaventura explains the need for this complex process by the following example: an actor is told that he has to play Hamlet, without knowing who Hamlet is. Only by gradually understanding the many small conflicts which make up Hamlet's character (as distinct entities, not as fragments of a whole) will he be able to succeed. A situation has to be set up for the actor which provides an analogous, concretely realisable conflict, so it needs to be well-chosen and clearly formulated. Several attempts may well be necessary.

Iconographic discourse

Buenaventura calls the process of creating scenes ›iconographic discourse‹, a form of language which is developed through imagery.

> The ideology of the group, the way it interacts with a particular audience, its behaviour in relation to society, everything which contributes to the way it thinks, its conceptual identity, all this informs and orientates the scenic language, structures the text and thus also the way in which the images are

understood, in terms of selection and sequence, since images have an autonomous life which can't be reduced to or translated as mere concepts. They are necessarily polysemic. (Teatro Experimental de Cali 1978: 331)

So the iconography of the work's structure is never independent of the ideology of the group. The play of improvisation, guided by clear principles and rules, can enable an interrogation of positions and points of view. When actors find analogies to aspects of the text from their own experience, they function as authors. The text is analysed in small groups, analogies are chosen and developed through improvisation. During the analysis the underlying pattern of conflict is laid bare. The original text is temporarily put to one side and then returned to later as a constituent of the ongoing dramaturgical development. During the working process the actors have two functions, they are *actors* and *actants*. As *actants* they act on stage without needing to concern themselves further with what they are doing. During improvisation they need simply to follow their instincts, without concerning themselves with the fact that they are being observed. When they regain the role of *actor*, then their task is to discuss what they have done, to analyse and evaluate it. But what they have done on stage should not be subject to discussion. They have to cultivate the ability to carry out both these activities simultaneously. Theory derives from practice and can and should not be generalised. Similarly it is necessary to understand theory in terms of its practical application.

A concrete example: an account of practice from 1977

In an article in the Latin American Review, Eduardo Márceles Daconte describes the working process used for *La Candelaria* under the direction of Santiago García (Daconte 1977: 91–97).

Daily work for the group begins with physical exercises in the morning, which serve as a warm-up, and to stimulate presence, mobility, voice-work and expressive ability. When all the company is ready there is a period of friendly conversation before the work starts in earnest.

What is at stake is the treatment of a historical chronicle, written by John Reed in 1917, about the Russian Revolution. As the process of developing this new play would be long and tiring, the company also needed to have access to a repertoire of available material which they

could perform to their audience during the developmental phase, so as not to lose contact with them.

The first stage is the analysis, in small groups, with the assistance of experts (historians, craftspeople etc.) of the script: the table-work. The second stage consists of the search for a working hypothesis. For this the group is divided in two. One of the sub-groups works on an improvisation. They go through the text looking for allegories; then they set up an improvisational analogy, that is to say they develop an improvised script of an analogous situation. From here they quickly go on to create an image: this has to be done swiftly and be mobile and dynamic. They then show it to the other sub-group, which reports on what it has seen and offers a critical commentary. The first group defends its choices and explains what it has done. The improvised scene and the critical commentary make up the two dialectical elements from which a provisional model of the scene can emerge.

Criticism is focused on both formal and thematic elements: is the scene artistically and ideologically effective? After this the second group proceeds to improvise the same scene. They go on doing this scene by scene. The groups move through the script improvising different versions of the same scene until they have completed the whole play. This work enables decisions to be taken which lead to a ›final‹ version, which however will not necessarily be the last. During this process the director listens to the discussions, tries to bring them together, draws conclusions from them and synthesises the outcomes in order to move towards a more resonant version.

This then is the work of structuring the drama, starting from the theme which was analysed and studied at the beginning and then incorporating ›paratheatrical‹ techniques, including psychodramatic work, in order to produce drafts of scenes which link together, have a discernible structure and allow further work on the characters.

The third stage, that of rounding things out, is the most difficult. During this phase the text is fully scripted, many aspects of the play are developed further and initial decisions about dramaturgy are made. The structure – the argument of the play and the narrative – are defined. The characters are elaborated and all other aspects of the play are brought together. Now, depending on the individual skills of group members, they are divided into groups to work on set design, text, music (which might mean making instruments) and other things as required.

The last phase (following much rehearsal and bringing all the elements together) is perhaps the most tricky, because it includes a first public presentation and is the time when all the inconsistencies, errors and misdirections become clear. So here the play is subjected to a further thorough revision. This stage is also defined as an initial forum. At this point the essence of the text is made visible as a set of defining images which are tracked scene by scene. The final performance text only emerges much later (perhaps after several performances): as opposed to the model of ›author's theatre‹, here the text has first to prove itself in and through performance.

The process thus moves from initial improvisation aimed at articulating the unspoken reactions/feelings etc. provoked in the performers by the text to a process of identifying the conflict structures in the material. Identification of conflict, analogous to that in society, is key to work on each scene. The group also builds up an iconography – a sequence of images which reflect their take on the play's material, which again is explored in practice so that they are part of the process of developing the structure as well as the content– they are *actants* as well as actors. The directorial role becomes to listen and collate the outcomes of this process.

Daconte compares the method of *Creación Colectiva* to *Rabinal Achí* (Guatemala), *El Güengüense* (Nicaragua) and the *Mahabharata* (India): forms derived from oral transmission of religious and mythological traditions. But he qualifies this by highlighting the conscious investment of *Creación Colectiva* in contemporary Colombian reality.

> But in Colombia, they are working in a concrete and experimental way on themes which have emerged from the quest for a method of play-creation which is capable of translating current needs, projecting an authentic and more humane version of our history and thus be accessible to a receptive and critical audience. (Daconte 1977: 96)

This method, which requires a high degree of group coherence as well as great discipline and commitment, has led to impressive and extraordinary pieces of theatre (ibid: 96).

8.1.7 The aesthetic theory of Creación Colectiva

A clearly defined method is a fundamental prerequisite for collective creation. During the working process it is important to find analogies for

social reality. In order to outline the *fábula* there must be a clear aware-ness of the social forces which determine it. Buenaventura describes the development of *Creación Colectiva* as a gradual process whereby actors and the whole team take on increasing responsibility for the functions of author and director, and perhaps also of other areas of production such as lighting, music, design and so on, in order to deliver character, dramaturgy and text. Improvisation is the basis for all this. But impro-visation demands a method which enables the text to be explored on as many levels as possible. The actors are collectively responsible for the whole process of creation. This equates to a right (and thus also a duty) which increases their sphere of competence.

For Buenaventura, dramaturgy consists of theme, mytheme and context. Theme refers to the text, the central axis on which the work of creating the play is based – including the work of scene-building. Mytheme (Lévi-Strauss) means the axis along which characters relate to each other and to events, including all the codes and languages which drive and cohere the narrative. Context is mediated through the story, the *fábula*, and consists of two subsidiary levels: intrigue and argument.

> Myth is a complex of poetic and political factors which deliver moral in-struction and ideological orientation. It predicates an understanding of na-ture which we can only access by opening ourselves to the mythical. If we are blind to it, then we are also blind to the riches of the human spirit. So an openness to the mythical is also a path to new understandings of literature. (Fischer, 2004: 0)

Myths arise unconsciously in human thought, yet they are major deter-minants in the course of history. Creación Colectiva is not concerned to validate myths which lay claim to the status of actual historical events, but rather to reconstruct history as objectively as possible, to open pre-cisely these myths up to analysis and to reveal them as modes of inter-preting history and of the way in which history is constructed (i.e. as a lexical political intervention). According to Lévi-Strauss, myths possess both historical and a-historical dimensions and are resistant to transla-tion, in the sense that they live on in spite of inadequate translations (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1955: 428–444).

The method of Creación Colectiva requires a technical understand-ing of the dramaturgy of social events, and thus always implies a his-torical perspective. Buenaventura is adamant that theatre has political

significance and considers that people who claim to be making a-political theatre would be likely to submit to political pressure and should be expelled from the world of theatre. For him, theatre does not emerge from myth but rather constructs it. The construction of history, of fiction, is a consequence of acquiring humanity, and that is why theatre is political: a politics which resides in its engagement with how human beings relate to each other.

> A theatre which does not concern itself with social relationships makes no sense. I regret that this is the case for commercial theatre, which is of no real interest. Its only aim is to entertain, in the most banal sense of the word: entertainment as a way of killing time. There are already enough murderers of time who persuade the public that they should not think, nor complicate life, and who only seek to stimulate them in the most superficially sexual manner. (Buenaventura in Carbonari 2003: 96)

Theatre serves as a rehearsal for life (›para ensayar la vida‹: Carbonari 101). Theatre reveals the links between thought, language and social structures. It enables us to comprehend how ideologies arise, to understand them as conscious and unconscious ways of animating and bringing together the individual, society and nature. Ideologies are not just different models of behaviour, they also shape the experiences and beliefs which give rise to these forms.

That means that human discourse, be it verbal or non-verbal, is always ideological. The best way to knowledge is through doubt. Buenaventura quotes Brecht's statement: ›of all certainties, the most certain is doubt‹ (Carbonari 2003: 97). It is ideology which transforms knowledge – which is the art of asking questions – into an art of giving answers. So it is important when examining any artistic or scientific discourse not to block out the ideological bias, but to take it into account and to recognise that it can never be entirely eradicated.

The meaning of Creación Colectiva's work resides in its awareness of the engrained mythological strand in humanity and society. This is in line with Freire's ideas, but differs from Boal's aesthetic in terms of the choice of the means. In Boal's case the central reference point is the body, whereas for Buanaventura it is the confrontation with the public. At first sight this looks confusing (because Boal's method also casts the public as the protagonist), but can be explained in reference to his experience of exile, which robbed him of any fixed context for his work.

8.1.8 Enrique Buenaventura and Augusto Boal

Augusto Boal (1931–2009) and Enrique Buenaventura (1925–2003) were without doubt two of the most distinctive figures of the revolutionary Latin American New Theatre. They came into contact with each other at Latin American festivals. Both were invited to the World Theatre Festival in Nancy and travelled extensively. Buenaventura had even studied with a Brazilian (Borba Filho) and was strongly influenced by his time in Brazil. Although both were actively engaged in seeking the liberation of Latin America, their approaches and strategies were radically different.

Heidrun Adler refers to them as follows in her *Political Theatre in Latin America*: in festivals and seminars ›at that time two defining concepts of a collective national theatre in Latin America emerge. Their protagonists are the Brazilian Augusto Boal with his group Arena Theatre and the Colombian Enrique Buenaventura with his company TEC‹ (Adler 1982: 112–3).

> The difficulties of working collectively are not solely to do with content, they are also to do with social factors. The actors have to frame their artistic development both as individuals and as members of the company according to the working ethos of the collective, and renounce any attachment to the ›star system‹. (ibid: 120–1)

In addition to these difficulties, according to Adler, there are further issues associated with the very demanding working practices, the dangers of falling prey to ›schematic content and blatant dogmatism‹, ›political capitulation‹ and ›waning revolutionary zeal‹, not to mention financial and other problems.

The different approaches of Boal and Buenaventura, both of whom were seeking the ›magic meeting place‹ between art and politics, are described by Kati Röttger in Adler's handbook *Theatre in Latin America* as follows:

> Boal's concept of theatre places the political function of collective theatre in the foreground and excludes its aesthetic components[80]... Buenaventura on the other hand constructed a theory of the New Theatre in a series of texts which explicitly rejects the ›misuse of theatre as a political instrument‹ and

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80 ›Excludes‹ is however contentious, as this book shows.

instead strives to develop a Latin American aesthetic and dramaturgy on the basis of Creación Colectiva. (Röttger in Adler 1991: 114)

The greatest contradiction lies perhaps in the fact that Boal had taken a stand against the dogma of the process of collective creation and in so doing denies this the potential of change which he accords to his own *Theatre of the Oppressed.*

> There are some naive ideas which are applied dogmatically. People have talked a lot about ›collective creation‹ and lots of groups have thrown themselves into the business of doing this. I think, if there is a collective which understands how to work as a team, long may it live! But it seems to me absurd and senseless to propose that *only* collective creation is good and everything else is bad. A collective of 10 stupid people will produce stupid things; one or 10 intelligent people will always be in a better position to produce something useful. Collective creation as a dogma is stupid; as a practice, it depends on who is doing it, though it can be very satisfying and fruitful. (Boal in Monléon 1978: 77)

Boal wants to hand over the means of theatrical production to the people, whereas Buenaventura and his company use those means to evolve different perspectives on themes. Buenaventura comes out strongly against the instrumentalisation of theatre for political ends and concentrates on developing a Latin American aesthetic and dramaturgy. Even when the economic situation of theatre groups becomes more difficult, the artistic factors always take precedence for him over everything else:

> But I always think that the dominant discourse must be the artistic. It is artistic quality which must determine the direction of the work, for without this it is worth nothing, even if it has the best political intentions. Above everything it is art which counts. (Buenaventura in Carbonari 2008: 98)

However, in his early work *Theatre and Culture* he describes the cultural industry as an oppressive mechanism which forces theatre workers always to keep up with the latest developments, so as to be able to make work for people who manage to find a bit of time alongside the tv, work and sleep and have some (dim) sense of a wider world. For this reason, many of them draw a sharp distinction between art and intellectual pursuits on the one hand and politics on the other.

Buenaventura does not think much of an approach which is exclusively concerned to make good art. Like Fanon, he believes in the virtues of revolutionary force, which is the only power capable of healing the gulf between the fear-driven colonised culture of the majority and the internalised cultural models of Europe and North America, between misery and productivity.

He describes theatre makers as more or less honest craftsmen who want to market their product and are then pushed by the system into being in conflict with it. However, that doesn't mean that they are now outside the system: ›to believe that we are outside the system when we only have serious differences with it is self-deception‹ (Buenaventura 1970: 153).

On the other hand, he criticises political theatre as follows:

> In our country, however, especially in university groups, there are ways out of the dilemma. The most common has been to do ›political theatre‹, to use the theatre as a form of political agitation. That way, you can kick and scream, you can scratch the skin of the system – but you continue to be its prisoner, you remain in its power.
>
> To let yourself be forced to either the pole of commercialism or that of agitprop only leads to eliminating any possibility of true artistic subversion, of undermining the system in its essentials: the consciences and conduct of its victims. (idem)

Buenaventura comes out clearly against going to the extremes of either commercialism or agitprop, since both render real artistic subversion impossible. He sees a possible way out in acquiring the means of artistic production completely and exchanging the product for things which others have produced. Such an existence on the fringes of the system would be very demanding, not just because the system would still exercise its influence from outside but also because its moral and psychological rules have been firmly internalised.

To produce theatre for the masses (*teatro popular*) means for Buenaventura to fall for another trick of the system and to contribute to the fragmentation of human beings by accepting the implication that people are not mature enough for freedom and they have to be prepared for it step by step, before they can participate fully in democratic process. He considers theatre which serves this function to have no sense.

And he speaks of cultural genocide perpetrated by imperialism, which has destroyed indigenous cultures in the course of the ›colonial adventure‹ and given rise to a mestizo (hybrid) culture which is in process of burying its own existence under the dual imperialistic avalanche of capitalism and the USA: indigenous culture is murdered and authentic folk art reduced to archaeology.

To give the different classes an awareness of their roles and bring them face to face with reality is not enough – the colonised needs to recognise that s/he carries within the seeds of the oppressor/exploiter/s he is seeking to fight. They need to be shown that good intentions alone are not an adequate basis for action.

Buenaventura doesn't want to use theatre as a means of communication or propaganda. His work is directed to all those who have been reduced to an amorphous mass by oppression, and aims to restore them to a healthy sense of who they are individually, which will help them to achieve the possibility of real solidarity. In distinction to Boal, who seeks to involve people physically in the theatre he creates, Buenaventura requires theatre to be complex, to achieve ambitious goals and above all to reach out to the bourgeoisie and to students as well as to workers and peasants: for everyone, if in different ways, is affected by the deformation of colonialism.

The only thing which can guarantee real creative freedom is ›the smallest establishment of a fact which can be wrung out of the most extensive documentation‹ (1970: 156). It is important to understand that creation does not mean invention. The TEC and its public created a model reality and began to develop a synthesis of the two Colombian cultures.

> We and the audience are creating a model reality, and only through that reality, in active proof of it, are we revealing ourselves to ourselves and to the public, just as we reveal the public to ourselves and itself.
> Our task in the theatre is to begin to synthesize the two Colombian cultures. And we must begin now, because in this period of acute and increasing contradictions we can weigh the life of imported art against the resistance from our buried cultural elements, we can see and show their traumatic cross-assimilation. If we do not work now to discover a truly artistic and truly revolutionary style, the problem of art in a future, different society will be reduced to vulgarizing the synthesis at the level of shallow ›popular art‹. (1970: 156)

Buenaventura, who had travelled throughout the continent for five years and lived in various countries, possessed an extraordinary and unusual freedom of thought and a spirit of adventure – although as far as I am aware this never exposed him to the kind of real physical violence which Boal had to experience; nor did Boal, following his release from torture, enjoy that degree of freedom since he had a wife and child to care for.

The distinction between Boal and Buenaventura was not a question of a difference in age but of their fundamentally different life-trajectory, the history of their respective countries and the way they saw the world. Nonetheless a closer comparison of their biographies and writings would be worth pursuing.

In the final instance, the work of Buenaventura and the TEC, in spite of the revolutionary manifestos, was not so much radical as craftsmanlike, disciplined and enduring (life-)art. Adler sums it up:

> The Latin Americans did not need Brecht to tell them that the strongest and most lasting effects are produced by works of art. Their daily work showed them that the dawning of consciousness which should be stimulated by political theatre is strictly dependent on the poetic quality of the play, and that comprehension is enhanced by aesthetic pleasure, which is more effective than the best argument (...) In the fullest sense of Brecht's demands, it is art which makes the world visible, comprehensible and governable. (Adler 1982: 164)

8.1.9 The Thought of Rodolfo Kusch

... whether we like it or not, man is half filled with things and half filled with gods, even in the 21st century and especially in América. (Kusch 2010: 171)

I want to include here a brief account of the perspective of Rodolfo Kusch. Like Buenaventura and Boal, and in line with the optic of PAR, Kusch is interested in how the ›people‹ of Latin America are categorised and thus accorded visibility. However, whereas for Buenaventura and Boal the term ›people‹ reflects the intention to realign hierarchies of class, Kusch, like other ›indigenous‹ thinkers, approaches classification from a different perspective: one which is not necessarily incompatible

with Marxist analysis (though Kusch would not agree), but which intends to open up the recognition of ›other‹ forms of knowledge. It thus also recognises that the ›people‹ are a profound resource endowed with a variety of intelligences, rather as PAR proposes.

Rodolfo Kusch (1922–1979) was an Argentinian thinker of German descent. His *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* was originally published in 1970 in Mexico and in 1973 in Argentina, during Boal's time there[81]; it was not translated into English and made available to a wider public until 2010. I want to take up some of Kusch's thinking in order to signal the relevance of what he calls ›border thinking‹[82] and ›mestizo consciousness‹.

Kusch, who could be seen as a forerunner to postcolonial studies, developed the idea of ›mestizo consciousness‹ in the 1970s, based on philosophical, rather than biological, criteria. He defined an ›American way of being‹ (Existentia Americana), by which he intended to refer to América (with acute accent on the e) as a collective term for the three Americas (north, south and the Caribbean), rather than the European-derived form. In so doing he wanted to raise questions and to signal that América possessed an ›aura‹, ›a metaphysic, a form of life that moves according to its own rhythm‹, as the English translation puts it (Kusch 2010: lv–lxxii). According to Kusch, European history was transplanted onto the history of this ›deep América‹ and the life-forms of those American peoples who refused to take this on were cast aside. So ›another‹ history existed alongside the European version. For Kusch, América is an ›historical essence‹ made up of languages, religions, cultures, life-patterns, possibilities of feeling and of subjectivity; geographically it comprises the Anáhuac (Aztec for the Mexican plain), Abya Yala (the Kuna Indians' word for the American continent) and Tawantinsuyu (the realm of the Incas). He characterised the European settlers as possessing an ›immigrant consciousness‹ which condemned them to an ›existence out of place‹, along with the consciousness of the ›colonial wound‹.

According to Mignolo, Kusch's particular achievement was ›to cut the umbilical chord of the coloniality of knowledge and being‹ (Migno-

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81 However, they probably moved in very different circles.

82 Cf. the later ›nomadic‹ thought and ›deterritorialisation‹ of Deleuze and Guattari.

lo in Kusch 2010: xviii). By focusing his observations on philosophical rather than scientific and genetic criteria, Kusch is able to give a name to what ›the language of revolution and emancipation‹ squeezes out, denies and does not or cannot see, since all its energies are deployed in struggle and resistance. Kusch, who was radically opposed to the left and to Marxism, claimed that ›popular thought‹ is not necessarily the same as ›the people's thought‹. For him, the definition ›people‹ is much broader than that which derives from Marxism and is in essence adopted by Boal (Boal 1975: 17–18). ›Popular thought‹ is a contradictory concept which doesn't include indigenous modes, but neither does it refer to bourgeois and certainly not to elitist thought. It purports to include the inhabitants of the country, but not all of them count as citizens – for Kusch this means Gauchos, Criollos, Mestizos and Zambos but most definitely not a coherent working class (essentially a concept derived from the European Industrial Revolution and not really tenable even there in periods of mass unemployment).

Kusch's thought is fuelled by the idea that it is strange and unusual to live together but inhabit different memory-scapes or ›territories‹, as indigenous understanding would see it. He constructs the indigenous as a self-contained and complete set of philosophical premises (Mignolo in Kusch 2010: xxv). He studied the histories of the Aymara, Quechua, Náhuatl, Tzotzil and Maya-Quiché languages; he declared that indigenous and European culture existed in the same state but not as the same nation; they were groups whose thinking differed radically.

Kusch's understanding of the concept of ›the people‹ is not linked to the Industrial Revolution; he talks of people who are experts at living in the steppes and on the plains, who have mastered the art of horsemanship and possess kinds of knowledge which don't fit into the usual European criteria. Kusch opposes the imperialistic pre-eminence of epistemology and welcomes the recognition of ›other‹ modes of thinking (Mignolo in Kusch 2010: xxx).

Living, in all its variety, is a mode of thinking. The good life[83] is not the same as the claim for the unceasingly ›better life‹ sought in the European context. Life can exist as *estar nomás*, as life which is sufficient unto itself. There are no doubt many ways of living and appreciating

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83   Cf. Acosta, Alberto y Esperanza Martínez (2009) *El buen vivir. Una vía para el desarrollo*. Abya Yala: Quito

life, but the fear of thinking and living autonomously is greater than the fear of thinking and living what is specified by others. For Kusch it is important not to be afraid of ›who you are‹. *Estar nomás* is a vision of life which resists the imperative of the mantra of progress, and this rejection is also a disengagement from external transplanted ways of thinking.

Kusch diagnoses the failure of the bourgeois democratic ideal along with that of Marxism, since there is ultimately no place for the people, *el pueblo*, in either of these systems. The indigenous peoples seek another way of being, another form of cosmic integration. Ideology seems to him to be too organised, too schematic and to a certain extent ›devoid of feeling‹ (Kusch 2010: 169).

Knowledge and religion and safe political ideology seek to construct the world as less threatening, as a good world, organised in a decent way. But what most people lack is an understanding of the dimension of feeling:

> An excessively visual world has hindered in him [western man, B. F.] the possibility of feeling and of a seminal outpouring of his feeling of the absolute... The crisis of the twentieth century rests in the failure to recognize that *I am the fountain of my possibilities*, the fountain that feeds everything else seminally, the cultural scaffolding that surrounds it all. (Kusch 2010: 169)

According to Kusch, the tendency of the Latin American middle class to identify itself with western culture is a major problem, because it confers on western culture a universal status, centred in Europe and with its most extreme development in the USA.

This position is driven by the need for a protective sense of security. By interpreting the good chiefly in economic terms, the middle class has, according to Kusch, become sterile and parasitical and accredited a western model of ›cultural and economic imperialism ... consisting of cleanliness, efficiency and rationality‹ (ibid: 121). It has thus refused to engage with the risk inherent in ›border thinking‹, and in so doing inhibited the possibility of access to other kinds of knowledge and potential. Kusch implies the need for a negotiation betwen the *ser* and the *estar*; and a further accommodation with *estar bien*.

Estar refers to the unstable, fragile relationship between the elements of the cosmos and the quest for stability. *Estar bien* describes a path for humans to follow so as to behave with respect towards a changeable,

unstable world. Community in this context indicates a habitat in a state of balance. Kusch associates *ser* with the western, the urbane; and with clear distinctions between subject and object, cause and effect. *Estar siendo* describes a kind of passivity, but one that is different from that which Boal aims to combat: it describes a way of being, which undertakes ›nothing‹, which understands itself as a living part of the larger world and does not try to control anything, which ›subjects itself‹ to something external to itself. *Estar siendo* is opposed to fragmentation and division. Being and possessing are seen as opposed to each other.

These perspectives suggest a flexible engagement with different modes of knowing and being, different ways of relating to surrounding ecologies. They are echoed in the Mandate of Manaus (see above, Chapter 3, and Appendix 2) and in the Law for the Rights of Mother Earth (*Ley de Derechos de la Madre Tierra*), promoted by Bolivia's first indigenous President, Evo Morales in 2010 (see Appendix 4).

8.2 Summary of Chapter 8

Theatre in Latin American countries up to the beginning of the 1950s generally followed a European model, due to successive waves of European immigrants who brought their theatre with them and wanted to see art which conformed to their image of what it should be, even in their ›new home‹. This attitude was enhanced by the colonialist assumption that the countries of the Latin American continent had not produced a culture of their own[84]. At best this was a kind of folklore. The 1950s saw a marked growth in independently conceived and produced theatre, which associated itself in the 1960s with revolutionary activism for democratisation. This was a unique period, rich in risks and possibilities.

Just as the PAR researchers took up the challenge of rewriting the history of their countries, the task here was to encompass and describe Latin American theatre history from within its own perspective and to demonstrate that it included a much wider understanding of dramatic art than the models derived from Europe. Villegas sees this as a discourse between senders and receivers using a rich variety of codes. At the same

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84   Previously various forms of European theatre had been employed for missionary and colonialist ends.

time it is a means of participating in hegemonic struggle. What's important here is the recognition that there are many different systems which co-exist and give rise to a similar plurality of experts. Theatre texts are models of scenic practice which derive their aesthetic validity from the particular cultural system in which they operate. Selecting a ›canon‹ of theatre history is a political and social act. This fact should not be lost sight of. The theatre scholar Abad, in a kind of parallel to Greek and Latin culture, calls for a Latin American theatre which reflects ›Latin American thought‹. Only by rooting itself in this kind of philosophical basis can Latin American theatre really liberate itself. In fact the emancipatory impulse of Latin American theatre, influenced by the specific demands of the context, produced specific aesthetic crises; in addition, years of resistance to military dictatorship left deep traces in the experience of many theatre people. It is now possible to situate this period of revolutionary, resistance-driven Latin American people's theatre within the previously ›repressed‹ spectrum of Latin American theatre discourse.

In Colombia, particularly as a result of the work of Enrique Buenaventura and Santiago García, a new Latin American form of creating plays, Creación Colectiva, came into being[85]. At the same time, the particularly violent period (›Time of Violence‹) of the Civil War (which lasted from 1948 to the 1970s), saw not only the development of PAR, but also the emergence of an artistic movement almost unique in Latin America. (Cuba, thanks to its political situation, was an exception in offering a particularly privileged location for artists.) Alongside Brazil, this movement functioned as an avant-garde.

The particular situation of Colombia, in contrast to Brazil, was that it had been largely spared the influence of commercial Europeanised theatre and also that it had few dramatists. The first characteristic of theatre work was that the plays were created principally from practical work during rehearsal. Theatre people saw themselves as in possession of significant social consciousness and revolutionary zeal, and wanted to use their art to improve conditions in their country. In this, they referred back to the ideas of Brecht, which offered a very useful basis for their work. Theatre approached the status of scientific work in terms of its importance and resonance.

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85 Today Patricia Ariza and the Cooperativa Colombiana di Teatro continue to develop Buenaventura and Garcia's model.

Enrique Buenaventura was a key figure in the development of the new theatre in Colombia. Right up to his death in 2003 he pursued his vision of theatre as dialogue, as a new form of communication with the public, with whom it sought to enter into a new kind of relationship. Theatre was to serve as a model for a new way of living which would relate the different realities of Latin American countries to each other. The new theatre was to stand for participation and offer a kind of freedom which commercial theatre could not aspire to, tied as it was to economic interests.

Whereas Boal's theatre work was interrupted by years of imprisonment and exile in a variety of countries, which meant that it had to adopt new forms, Buenaventura developed his work continuously over fifty years in his home country. At the forefront of it throughout was Creación Colectiva, a democratisation of the process of theatre production and a dialogue with and involvement of the public. Although the theatre work of Buenaventura and Boal subscribes in many regards to the same ideology, it emerges in strikingly different forms, to the extent that they were seen as representing two different ›schools‹. Boal spoke against Creación Colectiva, as a form of dogma, whilst Buenaventura objected to the instrumentalisation of theatre as a political tool. Nevertheless, both of them wanted to change reality for the better through their theatre work.

The Left in Latin America frequently overlooks the world view of the indigenous population. Most theatre activists and scholars are of European extraction and stuck in European habits of thought. The Argentinian thinker Rodolfo Kusch is a notable exception: he studied the indigenous culture of several Latin American countries. As early as the 1970s, in his book *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, he criticises the self-centredness and narrow-mindedness of activists who are blinded by their revolutionary drive to the specifics of the Latin American context. He identifies the co-existence of several models of historical consciousness and argues that the European immigrants need to develop a better understanding of their own situation as ›an existence out of place‹. By not focusing exclusively on scientific data, Kusch is able to intuit an ›alternative memory‹ of Latin America, which stands in opposition to European constructions. For him, *estar nomás* characterises a view of life which is opposed to the European development paradigm and in favour of a distinctive independent culture. In this way he comes

closer to Enrique Buenaventura than to Augusto Boal, whose thinking remains principally European; but may nonetheless present links to these understandings through its engagement with embodied practice.

These chapters have also distinguished a variety of *forms of politics*: i) marxist/neo-marxist analyses, including a glance at how Marxism was adopted and perceived during the 1960s–70s and to some extent afterwards in Latin America; ii) a politics of theatre (in Latin America in the 1970s) as oppositional praxis, in terms of process and practice, including new configurations of performance space and relationships to the audience, particularly in terms of participation and embedding in/distinguishing from social context; and in terms of revisions of methodology towards the interrogative, the dialogic and the interactive; iii) a politics of sociological and developmental intervention and research (PAR and allied activity). This will allow me to move on in the following Part 3 to further interrogate themes which have already been strongly mooted: a politics of the body which issues as aesthetics, as somatic and embodied praxis and as a politics of peace.

**Part III
From an aesthetic of perception
to autopoiesis**

The Meaning of Theatre

Theatre is the only place in the world, the last group means we still possess of directly affecting the anatomy. (Artaud 1993: 61)

Theatre certainly doesn't change the basis of things. Theatre is only an inspiration for those who practice it. At best the audience gets a bit of a lift from it. All the same one should not say: ›because I probably won't experience the results of this development, this revolution, I'll give up‹. Everyone should contribute their own drop of water and look whatever may be possible in the eye. (Ariane Mnouchkine)

What kind of theatre? (...) – to reinvent the past and to invent the future. Therein resides the immense power with which theatre is endowed. This is the theatre which fascinates me, and the method which I have developed and elaborated over the past 25 years, the Theatre of the Oppressed (...) (Boal 2005: 7)

The Meaning of Aesthetic

Aesthetics help those who attempt to move from cycles of violence to new relationships and those of us who wish to support such movement to see ourselves for whom we are: artists bringing to life and keeping alive something that has not existed. As artists, aesthetics requires certain disciplines from us. Be attentive to image. Listen for the core. Trust and follow intuition. Watch metaphor. Avoid clutter and busy-ness. See picture better. Find the elegant beauty where complexity meets simplicity. Imagine the canvas of social change. (Lederach 2005: 73–4)

The Meaning of Historical Reconstruction

The dead continue to live by way of the resurrection we give them in telling their stories. The past becomes part of our present and thereby part of our future. We act individually and collectively in a process over time which builds the human enterprise and tries to give it meaning. Being human means thinking and feeling; it means reflecting on the past and visioning into the future we experience; we give voice to that experience; others reflect on it and give it new form. That new form, in its turn, influences and shapes the way next generations experience their lives. (Lerner 2002: 211)

Overview

Parts 1 and 2, through a sort of geomorphologic study, sought to place the development of TO against the historical and political background of its Latin American origins, and to identify its basic principles and parameters as a pedagogy of resistance and realignment. The account of PAR and CC then enabled comparisons with other major scientific and theatrical methodologies in Latin America. This comparison reveals close similarities of conceptualisation, attitude and approach, as well as of processes and goals, which suggest dimensions in which the essentials of Augusto Boal's methodology are applicable to many contexts and levels of operation.

To illustrate this I present the main points in a table at the beginning of Part 3, which will then weave together the following areas: biographical reference to Boal's life, the capacity for autopoietic self-creation according to Maturana and Varela, Moshé Feldenkrais's somatic school of learning and the aesthetics of peace according to Lederach. Beyond this, I will examine in detail Boal's concept of theatre and his ›bequest‹, the *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*. From this, I hope, will emerge a vision of the global significance of Boal's theatre work, as well as an answer to questions posed at the beginning of Part 1; in particular whether the theatre of Augusto Boal can contribute to the sustainable development of healing and learning societies in the 21st century.

Chapter 9
A Comparison of TO/PAR/CC

9.1 Comparative table

There is a very strong degree of consensus across all three methods. They all adjust the criteria of practice in order to promote inclusivity and ownership. They aim to enhance human capacity by focusing on direct action and experience. They are flexible and context-specific. They share key understandings of process and concur in recognising the dignity in all people and identifying the joint goal of historical reconstruction on both individual and societal levels.

9.2 Extrapolation: tasks and methods: thoughts on the comparison between TO, PAR and CC

This comparative table is useful in signalling points of similarity and difference between these three forms of practice, which may all be said to be consciously performative and self-interrogative.

There are six areas of strong correlation, viz:
- humanistic goals (intention)
- orientation (context + process)
- world-view (world in progress)
- attitude towards participants.
- high level of self-organisation
- goal (reconstruction of history + re-establishment of identity)

All three systems reject the promotion of *ego* and any form of *stardom*.

They are thus highly consistent in terms of attitude and philosophy and the emancipatory vision they strive for. They also adopt a similar methodology in order to creating their working context.

They may all be said to aim to build a ›knowing‹ audience: TO and CC quite overtly as theatre practices; PAR in terms of the desire to ensure that all participants have input throughout and contribute to any

	TO	PAR	CC
Self-concept	Theatre as politics	Science and academic research as politics	Art with political consciousness and academic standards
Methodology	Dynamic system of games and exercises, alphabetisation through theatre	Scientific research method with committed approach, uses artistic means	Dynamic artistic method, relating to cultural anthropology and psychoanalysis, etc.
Intention	Humanisation/Subjective relationships Studying reality in order to change it, theatre for all people	Humanisation/Subjective relationships Studying reality in order to change it, posits a scientific model which includes the working-class	Humanisation/Subjective relationships No declared political goal, posits its own form of being, a model of a possible reality
Rejection of	Experts	Experts	Celebrity & sole authorship
Orientation	Context and process oriented	Context and process oriented	Context and process oriented
Participants	Everyone accorded the same dignity	Everyone accorded the same dignity	Everyone accorded the same dignity
Search for	Reconstruction of history and re-establishment of identity	Reconstruction of history and re-establishment of identity	Reconstruction of history and re-establishment of identity
Practitioners	All*, everyone who would like to contribute, who resonate with the method	Well-trained researchers with a developed mind-body consciousness	New, well-trained in acting methodology and theatre work
Societal level of action	All, though predominantly with the oppressed	Research in service of the oppressed	The community of actors and their audience
Description of the function	Context oriented, many case studies, great flexibility	Specifically and critically evaluated uses on/in various continents and contexts	Context oriented, continuity of development, importance of analysis, building up a ›knowing‹ audience

World view	Open world view, a world in progress	Open world view, a world in progress	Open world view, a world in progress
Relation of theory and praxis	Focus on direct action	*Vivencia*/Experience takes precedence	Praxis more substantive than theory
Challenges	When practitioners are not part of ›the people‹ (the oppressed), questions of solidarity	Researchers are rarely part of the group they study, problem of integration is only solved through study if invited	Precarious work and living conditions, outside the framework of commercial theatre
Danger	Tendency towards dogmatism Improper use	Time consuming, difficult to finance Improper use	Tendency towards dogmatism, activists not well trained in the method
Requirements	High level of self-organisation, financially and methodologically	High level of self-organisation, financially and methodologically	High level of self-organisation, financially and methodologically
Transcendence	Overcoming problems/of suffering	Development into thinking/feeling person	Recognition of mythical construction as part of social life, uniting different realities and ways of life
Unreached goals/The unfulfilled/ Utopias	Theatre as a rehearsal for revolution	The science of the proletariat	-

* TO was encompassing all societal levels, at the very latest by the time Legislative Theatre emerged.

changes in the research orientation and execution. In this sense they all therefore enter a claim for an extended understanding of what ›knowing‹ and ›knowledge‹ are – a new economics and politics of knowing, if you like.

What is common is the motivation to write history anew and to do so through a combination of pedagogy, intellectual exploration and art.

The differences are also instructive.

TO is different according to where it is done, who does it and why it is done; with CC and PAR these things are clearer (TO practitioners may be both oppressed and oppressors, experts and amateurs, paid or unpaid etc.; they may or may not have trained as TO practitioners). The TO community has not established a common system of qualification and demands less commitment than the other two: for CC you need to be a member of a group over a long time, for PAR you need to be a sociologist. For TO, one needs to be willing to create a community, a narrative, a reflexive body. This great flexibility in regard to who can use it is gained at the expense of the danger of a lack of sustainability and of the quality of the work. All three practices imply the need to work intensively, precisely and sensitively, but the kinds of time-commitment, the decisions about context and strategy, the methodology of evaluation may all have a less structured and more *ad hoc* quality in the case of TO.

Looking at the table there appear to be different levels of process-orientedness: CC doesn't want to be identified as politics but of course it also is! But they are all concerned to keep their process under review and to understand it as crucial to all the activity they engage in.

In CC, a group of people negotiate what they are creating among themselves through mutual critique by means of confrontation and dialogue; in the process they confront themselves as a group; the results of the initial stage are then open to further change. This is a kind of risk-rich learning. There is no issue about who is working with whom, because they are all involved in the same enterprise. They don't need to ›undo their privilege‹ (the privilege of wanting others to change) because they are themselves a part of the change. On the other hand, the process only applies to a limited and to some extent (self-) selective spectrum of people.

Largely because it *does* seek to operate across class and/or interest divides, TO faces the challenge of ›practitioners‹ not being a part of the ›people‹ they are working with because they don't conceive of themselves like that. It's a bit like the temptation to play god, which Augusto Boal did not altogether avoid, although he was rarely unconscious of it. To overcome it means understanding that we're all in it together: my liberation is bound to yours. You can't ask to be washed without getting wet.

PAR also has to take on board this separation, but it is very rigorous in the way it subjects itself to scrutiny.

There is much that each practice can take from others. The guiding aim is that each person should take responsibility for their own learning and not leave it to experts to shape the world.

The table suggests that comparative interrogation of the key modalities of a discipline and the processes it employs is productive. The book itself, in employing this method, is arguing for a form of transdisciplinarity which rests on the understanding that different kinds of knowing lead to different levels and forms of knowledge and open out questions and possibilities which more narrowly focused approaches might tend to overlook.

Chapter 10
History through the body

10.1 Theatre as Action

While I would like to write that the times are past in which a small avant-garde believed it needed to mobilise the masses, I am constantly bombarded by news about protests, appeals for crowdfunding, invitations for human rights watches, info-mails that – not unlike the denunciations of the past century – raise awareness of injustice and violence. New and old forms of protest mix with hunger strikes, occupations, public demonstrations, internet campaigns, protest letters and flashmobs[86]. Questions about committed action, opposition, protest and alternative models of communal living are being reframed. While on the one hand the economic world classically uses buzzwords like ›sustainability‹ and ›holistic‹ to drive profits, for many other people, ›living sustainably‹ and ›holistic consciousness‹ have a very different meaning. These goals also often involve a journey through painful experiences, destruction, sickness and loss, sometimes on a personal and often on a communal level, particularly where land-grabbing and rights to land, the important means of livelihood, are at stake.

In the European context, direct action, which TO calls for, is predominantly becoming a *Vivencia*, a joint experience from which formative insights emerge, so that they can then be transferred from the aesthetic into the societal (social) world. In a video excerpt from the archive of the CTO-Rio, Boal asks:

> What concrete actions have you carried out that really changed something? Something quite small or something very big. But if you have not changed the reality, then you have stayed in the theatre. We must tear down the walls

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86   Given the advance of social media, ›small‹ may be becoming less true; questions about agency and efficacy remain.

and go outside. You can use the theatre, but you must go outside. (Boal, no date: CTO Archive, Rio de Janeiro)

To recognise oneself in one's own history, one's own biographical background within the collective narrative of the community, means taking the first step towards change. So does witnessing one's own story, offering it and contributing to the rewriting of the collective history. Listening to the voices that previously could not be heard, means change. Leaving the house turns into coming out of ourselves and facing up to memories which we lacked the courage to confront previously. These experiences, which aim to expand agency, underpin a new orientation. Only once a reconstruction of history has taken place can action be sustained over the long term. Only then can the mists of guilty feelings, ignorance, societal mythologisation, emotional volatility, naïve fear and passivity begin to lift. The reconstruction of the past becomes the construction of the present and simultaneously confirms the resolutely context-oriented nature of the Theatre of the Oppressed.

10.2 On Destruction

When talking about creation it is important to acknowledge the historical presence of destruction. In the case of totalitarian regimes, this encompasses all societal levels and aspects of life. In Austria it manifested as the effects of National Socialism and the ensuing culture of silence. The life of Augusto Boal and his family was radically changed by the military seizure of power which marked the whole Latin American continent. In what follows I want to focus on two interpenetrating areas, the personal and the communal. As I interpret it, for Boal:

1. The personal is first and foremost the body
2. Community implies a shared history: the world

As both levels are inextricably linked with one another, Boal's attempt to come to terms with life requires a constant dialogue between the person in the world and the world in the person. Without wanting to artificially separate these areas, I want to try to approach them through passages from *Torquemada, Murro em Ponta de Faca* [*Running onto the Open Knife*], *Hamlet and the Baker's Son, Milagre No Brasil* [*Miracle in Brazil*]

and *Legislative Theatre*. The focus should remain on the ›body as a expe-
riential landscape‹ and container of memory, the destruction and resto-
ration of the social web, as well as the dimension of structural violence.

> The body and soul remember. The images do not fade! The voices keep
> shouting: they never shut up. (Boal 2001: 291)

In conversation, Cecília Boal said, in 2012, that TO as it exists today
was ›invented‹ in Europe, where he also wrote his major methodolog-
ical handbooks. But the experiences that led him to the methodology
and forms had their origin in Brazil. In *Hamlet and the Baker's Son* Boal
writes:

> Metaphorically, the Theatre of the Oppressed was born in prison. I like to
> say: in this kind of theatre, the citizen – in the present – studies the past
> and invents the future. The stage, the arena, like the cell or the prison yard,
> can be a place of study; and the theatre can be a fit instrument, a proper
> language for that discourse, that quest for oneself.(...) We political prisoners
> were our own educators: we came out better, more determined to reject the
> dictatorship. (2001: 298)

Boal was a tireless creator, and even during his time in prison he contin-
ued producing. He drew and wrote concealed messages to himself, then
passed them on to his mother when she came to visit and these later
formed the basis for his books. He wrote during his numerous travels,
during his exile in various countries, and gave workshops wherever he
stayed. In *Milagre no Brazil , Torquemada, Murro em Ponta da Faca* and
Hamlet and the Baker's Son, he seeks to come to terms with what oc-
curred. In the latter he calls the theatre a martial art, a self-defence, in
service of survival and the conquest of humanity (ibid: 314).

He began writing the play *Torquemada*[87] in February 1971, while still
a political prisoner in Brazil and finished it in November of the same
year, while in exile in Buenos Aires, where it premiered in June 1972 in
the Teatro del Centro.

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87 Named after the infamous Grand Inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada,
    during the reign of the Catholic King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella
    I (1420–1498).

> The play is a vivid, personal portrait of torture used for political purposes. It consists of a series of fragmented scenes depicting various types of torture – including arrest and imprisonment – the role of the torturers and the effect this insidious form of violence has on its victims. The entire work is held together by the presence of one character, Torquemada, whose name alone functions as a universal sign for violence and torture. Here, Torquemada, the historical symbol for repression, travels through time to represent a present day government or official entity that employs torture as a means of controlling real or imagined subversion. (Bisset 1982: 27)

In the face of the unimaginable, it scrutinises the gruesome regime, in an attempt to create connections between the horrors of the Conquista, National Socialism and similar atrocities. Judith Bisset, in her review of the play, draws parallels with the schizophrenia of soldiers in the Vietnam War, for example, with people who in one moment behaved humanely and at others cold-bloodedly and inhumanely. *Torquemada* is simultaneously a description of obliteration:

> Torquemada killed us, one after the other. Some died from bullets, others from cowardice. Some died in battle, others died of fear. In time they all died. And the whole land became a monstrous graveyard, where people left their houses and everyone lay down in their grave and those who were already dead started to decay, and those still to die became hard and stiff, and now they are all dead, stone-dead. The numbness of fear made the legs of each person stiff, and their arms, and all their limbs ceased to budge. The fear rose even higher, to the face, and the hardened faces stopped laughing and crying. (Boal 1972: 175)

The play was published and widely distributed by the Casa de las Américas, La Habana, Cuba, in the anthology *Teatro Latinamericano de Agitación*. Boal staged *Torquemada* at NYU in the same year as his release from prison.

> I directed Torquemada. I could not believe what I had been through. I needed to see it happen outside me, on stage, so I could see myself, separate myself from me. Me and the word, me and the actor. Only this way would I understand myself (...) I wanted to hear words I pronounced under torture (...) I wanted the actor to suffer what I had suffered, and I was jealous of the pain, which was mine alone (...) I learned that to make theatre is to dominate pain (...) I wanted to recreate myself. To be reborn. I did not want to admit

that the tortured person was me, that that scene had happened to me. (Boal 2001: 305)

After his torture, Boal made frequent use of psychotherapy, but he writes in *Hamlet* that this was never enough. He also had to write to get it off of his chest (2001: 295). The Brazilian theatre scholar Clara de Andrade considers *Torquemada* as catharsis of a trauma and quotes an interview with Boal from 1998, in which he says:

> There are things that one never forgets, that are for ever. This includes physical experiences. My knees for example. They still do not function well, because of the experience of torture. And of course the psyche (…) Now so many years have already passed – (…) almost thirty – and still, even with the time passed, many images come. And they come with unbelievable strength. There are things that one cannot switch off. (Andrade: 20)

Our bodies are places of memory. In addition to describing the ways experience is inscribed on the body in the passages above and in his plays, Boal was in contact with others who engaged with these dimensions in many ways. Maria Rita Kehl, a friend of Boal's and, like his wife Cecilia, a psychologist, was also an expert in the field of torture rehabilitation; she became a member of the Truth Commission implemented by President Dilma Rousseff in 2011. In this context too, his maxim ›have the courage to be happy‹, like Victor Frankl's ›Will to Meaning‹, testifies to the strength that is necessary to survive in the face of the unimaginable.

Among the great personal losses was the death of Boal's friend Heleni Guariba. Prior to her incarceration, she had worked with Boal and his wife in the Arena Theatre, was 30 years old and the mother of two children, when she was ultimately killed. When Boal was jailed, she had already been there for a year. In *Milagre No Brasil* he describes in several places how she instructed him in strategies to survive during torture. The play *Torquemada* is dedicated to her and he also mentions her in *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Boal 1998: 287) as well as in *Hamlet and the Baker's Son* (Boal 2001: 281, 287). In *Milagre No Brasil* he describes his meeting with her during his incarceration; there he calls her Maria Helena[88]:

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88   His first wife, whom he calls Albertina‹ in *Hamlet* (›Today I suffer that fragile image‹, 2001: 288), he still calls Manuela there. He met her during his

She was a wonderful friend, who had already endured incarceration, torture and near death in several places for over a year. A few months later she was released, weeks later locked up again, tortured and killed – her body disappeared and was never returned to her family. (Boal 1979: 19–20)

A few pages further on:

There is frequent talk of the suffering of the political prisoners in Brazil and never is enough said about it. Yet it is just as important to speak of the heroism with which these detainees confronted the repression. Maria Helena was one of these heroines. No one could ever squeeze even the smallest confession from her, nor the most insignificant information. No companion could blame her for even the smallest mistake. It is necessary to speak of suffering, but also of heroism. During these 10 years of terror, the Brazilian people continuously brought forth hero(ine)s. (ibid: 25)

In their circle of friends Heleni Guariba was perhaps one of the people closest to the Boals whom they mourned.

Boal describes how Heleni said goodbye, as she was led past his cell to be tortured and the other inmates sang a famous song, sung on such occasions: ›Minha jangada vai sair pro mar, vou trabalhar, meu bem querer‹. [My boat will go out to the sea, I will go to work, my love] [89]

In that moment I did not yet know that my friend would be killed only a few months later. Nonetheless, I was moved. And as she disappeared, I wept, without wanting to. A few tears fell into my hands. I dried my eyes with the fingers that María Helena had kissed, and sat down on the bed. Rapt in thought. My thoughts were so confused, as they are, when one thinks without exactly knowing about what. I stayed like that for a long while. Nothing else happened the whole morning. Silence reigned. A long silence. (Boal 1979: 26–7)

On the list of the ›disappeared‹ Brazilian political prisoners in the appendix of the documentation *Torture in Brazil,* Heleni Pereira Teles Guariba has the number 41 (Dassin 1988: 236). The year of her ›disappearance‹ was 1971, the year in which Boal was incarcerated.

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incarceration as well, and witnessed how she painstakingly had to learn to walk again after the torture.

89   *Suíte do Pescador* by Dorival Caymmi

Yet there were many others who disappeared, were tortured and subjected to persecution and threats to their lives. The social web fell apart. In Latin America, the so-called ›Operation Condor‹ was active[90] – a collaboration between fascists and the CIA, pursuing and killing leftist activists in the Cono Sur. Thus, even exile in a neighbouring country could not provide safety. In the USA and in Europe, the employees of the Brazilian foreign agencies kept an eye on the exiles. It was difficult to know where you stood and there was more than one suicide suspected of being staged.

Boal's texts and works are also always a work against fear, against what has been experienced and a creation in recognition of the many who were killed. When Paulo says in the end of *Murro em Ponta de Faca*: ›My comrades can no longer speak, but I speak. They speak, they speak with me, through me, when I speak, they speak‹ (Boal 1990: 78), then Boal himself speaks.

> My hands and my face are flecked with blood, but I survived, I'm alive. Somewhere there is me. Who knows, perhaps you don't see me. You don't see me (…) But I survived, I am here, and I can still speak, I speak a lot and pay attention to whether people hear what I say, shout, protest, do not keep silent. Even if one day I will be silent, listen to me. There is always someone who seeks from afar, sometimes from near, with blood on their face, but always in a clear voice, always one of us speaks, somewhere, from afar, from near. Even when I am silent, listen to me. Even when everybody's silent, listen to the silence, the silence that speaks. You are alive, listen. Listen! Do you hear me? Listen to the silence, listen. I am alive. Listen to me, listen to me. I am not silent. I am not silent. I am not silent. Listen to me. (ibid: 78)

As he mentions in several places in his texts, he ›is‹ simultaneously those who die and those who survive. In *Hamlet* he describes his days and nights after the torture, where he was closer to dying than living. Many of his exiled contemporaries chose death. The body becomes a battlefield of the torturer's unfinished work.

> I wrote *Murro* in Lisbon at a time when exiles were committing suicide. A tribe of solitary people, so together, in the same boat: so alone. Exile is half-

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90 Operation Condor was active from 1968 although only ›officially implemented‹ in 1975.

death, just as prison is half-life. The appearance of liberty masks ties of love broken by distance, moral parameters destroyed by the fight for survival, projects for the future contorted by time. Corroding within. Termites! The body an empty form. (...) I thought of death. I visited suicide locations. I remembered dead loved ones. Expected deaths and premature deaths. Painful deaths and accidental deaths. Natural causes and bullet causes. (...) Trips of work distanced me from those I most loved and cast me even further adrift from myself. I clung on to those who also wanted to hold on. There were not many of them. (Boal 2001: 306–7)

On a societal level, this period of Brazilian history affected large parts of Brazilian society, as well as a very long span of time (military dictatorship was in place for twenty one years). As in Austria, the archives were sealed for many decades. Until recently (2010), torturers could not be described as such and an amnesty declared by the military from the year 1979 is still in force[91]. In 2011, when President Dilma Rousseff assembled a Truth Commission, not only was there much opposition to it, but it was criticised for its tardy implementation. Dealings with the ›system‹ cannot be avoided even if they come late and are reluctantly conceded. Boal gives the following account:

The barracks referred to was one of the bleakest and most dreadful places in Brazil. It stood in Rua Tutóia. The torturers worked in three shifts, without interruption, day and night. The most brutal and beastly of them practised their trade there. And because the distance between the chamber in which they tortured, and the detainees' cells, was not so great, the latter were forced to hear their companions' cries of pain, day and night without pause. Sometimes the worst torture is to see someone being tortured. And there one could see – one was forced to – and hear. Twenty-four hours a day. (Boal 1979: 25)

Torture was used systematically, trained and taught during the time of the Brazilian military dictatorship. The role of the USA at the time was

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91 ›Despite some efforts, Brazil has not yet sought criminal accountability or robust truth seeking for the human rights violations committed by the former dictatorship (1964–1985).‹ International Center for Transitional Justice: https://www.ictj.org/our-work/regions-and-countries/brazil accessed 15. 8. 2015. And cf. https://www.ictj.org/news/ictj-welcomes-historic-final-report-brazil's-national-truth-commission

not insignificant, as a facilitator of this strategic, political ›measure‹[92]. One can also find indications of technological support from a number of European countries, including British, French and German collaborations. In *Torquemada,* Boal mentions the exchange of 70 political prisoners in return for the release of the Swiss Ambassador, who had been kidnapped by Guerrilla fighters. My research found that these 70 political prisoners were indeed released and flown to Chile where they were interviewed by Saul Landau, a dedicated documentary filmmaker. The resulting documentary, *Brazil – Report on Torture*, was also finished in 1971 (www.roundworldproductions.com). In it, the detainees themselves describe the torture methods in detail, as does Boal in his play.

In *Legislative Theatre* (1998), Boal recounts how, as a city councillor, he fought to preserve a building (the police headquarters in Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro) in which many people were previously tortured and murdered, in order to keep the past from being erased. This is one of the many passages in his work in which he speaks of the torture (Boal 2005: 150–52; 2001: 287–98). He needs to revisit the place where he was tortured in order to affirm his past and reconstruct it:

> I would like to re-see my past, to re-feel it, to re-live it. But the building, where episodes such (as) this took place, has been destroyed. In its place in São Paulo, they have constructed a supermarket. They have destroyed the memory. (Boal 2005: 152)

He appeals to his colleagues in the city parliament:

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92 While most of the torture was undertaken by Brazilians, the US had trainers teaching torture methods and some of the torture equipment was made in Texas and Louisiana. One famous case was that of Dan Mitrione, working for the US Agency for International Development, teaching refinements in torture techniques to Brazilian and Uruguayan interrogators. Mitrione was ultimately kidnapped by the Tupamaro guerrillas and executed, becoming the subject of Costa Gavras' movie *State of Siege*. The CIA mounted major cover-up operations to try to discredit the accusations against Mitrione, quoted as having said to his students: ›The precise pain, in the precise place, in the precise amount, for the desired effect‹. online: http://marinprogressive.wordpress.com/2011/01/14/torture-training-in-brazil/ (accessed 18. 8. 2016). See also above, p. 50 on The School of the Americas.

> I appeal to my colleagues who are, like me, involved in the business of making laws, just as I used to make bread. I appeal to them to allow for me to continue existing, so that a part of myself survives my death. (...) Do not destroy the Tijuca house. I beg you, I appeal to you. I appeal especially to those who do not think like me, to those of you not of my party, I appeal especially to those who think the opposite of what I think, I appeal to you, I beg you: let me exist. (...) Allow me to exist. And for me to exist, that portion of our past which is made of stone, must remain standing. Do not destroy the Tijuca house, do not destroy our past, do not destroy me. (2005: 152)

Not acknowledging people and their history means perpetuating the history of destruction. By not dignifying places and their meaning, societal narratives are created that do not correspond to reality, and thus give space to the ›madness‹. Where an acknowledgment of events is deemed ›not possible‹, there can be no correction at the societal level. The totality of Boal's work must be understood as a contribution to these things no longer being allowed to happen, even with the knowledge that they still occur elsewhere in other ways.

In the book *Torture in Brazil* (originally *Brasil: Nunca Mais*), it states in the introduction:

> It is our hope that all who read this book will make the sacred vow to commit themselves to struggle ceaselessly to sweep from the face of the earth the practice of torture and eliminate from humanity the source of torture, of whatever type, for whatever offense, for whatever reason. It is in this spirit that the project ›Brazil: Never Again‹ was undertaken. (Dassin 1998: 9)

10.3 Synthesis

> The Theatre of the Oppressed is the theatre of the first person plural. It is absolutely vital to begin with an individual account, but if it does not pluralise of its own account we must go beyond it by means of analogical induction, so that it may be studied by all participants. (Boal 1998: 45)

Boal's theatre functions on many levels, but they necessarily arise from the level of self-experience and the experiential level of ›I, in the world‹. On the level of self-experience, the encounter with oneself, the point of departure is work with the body (TO games and exercises). This is followed by working with scenes using further TO methods. In practice, these stages frequently merge together and it is therefore artificial

to separate them, but it is done here in order to clarify certain aspects.

As explained in the preceding sections, the reconstruction of the past is the most important element of any autopoietic theatre work in the 21st century. Yet this insight raises more questions than it delivers answers. In order to ›reconstruct‹ something, we need to believe that there is such a thing as a reality which we agree on. In the next section, I will address this through the optic of autopoiesis and the work of Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana. As we can see from the juxtaposition of the three methods TO/PAR/CC, the aspects of process-orientation and contextualisation are of great importance. Process-orientation helps us to act in a world that we understand as ›becoming‹. It opens the way to freedom of action and helps to combat passive resignation. Contextualisation turns us into researchers of our own circumstances, which usually need an initial appraisal beforehand, a further step towards a greater understanding of the world.

Furthermore, in aiming to reconstruct the past, the goal of reconstituting one's own identity emerges. This is not achieved in one move, but rather as a step-by-step process. If this self-creation does occur, it provides a firmer basis for a dynamic engagement with life than passive abandonment to given circumstances. What is at stake is feeling and recognising the freedom of choice, and ultimately, reclaiming dignity. On the bodily level our ability to recognise our potential corresponds to freedom of choice. Only once we are in full possession, or rather full awareness, of our possibility, can we free ourselves from external value systems, imposed on us, and make our own decisions that correspond to a more accurate image of ourselves. Here, the learning can most effectively be done through the body, which leads me to the body work of Moshé Feldenkrais.

Boal who, as Henry Thorau points out in his edition of the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, was very much in tune with his time, was familiar with contemporary experimental methodology; his game and exercise arsenal was enriched by all the influences of this particularly productive epoch (1960s and 1970s) in the area of therapy[93], art and schools of perception

93 Psychodrama was quite widely known in Brazil in the 1960s. Adam Blatner writes: ›Within the mental health professions psychodrama represented an analogy to these subtle forms of opposition and so it had a special appeal, which may have accounted in part for a rapid expansion of this

(Gurdjieff, Feldenkrais, Bio-Energetics, etc.). Boal was influenced by a wide range of ideas and creative approaches and attempted to condense them down to a simple, communicable essence accessible to all people. As a result TO literature today has generally failed to recognise the profounder effect of these exercises and tends to present them too often as warm-up games, entertainment, or in the worst case, ways of creating the illusion of participation. I use the Feldenkrais Method to help redescribe TO because Feldenkrais's main focus is on schooling perception and learning, two things that are of fundamental importance for Boal's transformative work. The journey begins *on the level of autopoietic play.*

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method. That was a dark period in Brazil's national history, because many citizens felt oppressed by the military government, every political meeting was forbidden and people were imprisoned for even being suspected of having anti-dictatorship opinions. Psychodrama became popular because in a sense it was a revolutionary tool disguised as a professional practice.‹ Blatner also links Boal and Freire's approaches to that of Jakob Moreno. http://www.blatner.com/adam/pdntbk/hxpdbraz.htm.
Boal's wife Cecilia was also a psychotherapist.

Chapter 11
Autopoiesis

11.1 Self-creation

For Artaud theatre is a study of human anatomy; for Boal it is a place of self-creation; for Schechner it is an art which demands the regeneration of the entire person; for Mnouchkine it changes the people who practice; for Vidal it is a place where one can dream reality: so theatre is analogous to a ritual of creation. It finds its equivalent in nature, biology, the findings of neuroscience, neuro-philosophy and psycho-philosophy. Life is communication, say Maturana and Varela (Maturana and Varela 1992).

Outside our own subjective reality, there is an objective reality upon which we can agree with others in a community, and beyond this an even bigger one, which we are only beginning to explore. It is important to mention that there has been a major paradigm shift in many areas of scientific research in the last ten to twenty years. Maturana and Varela signalled a key insight (radical constructivism) in clarifying that there can be no reality independent from us[94]. That means, if we are interested in existing with others, who likewise exist in their autonomous, self-creating reality, it is communication that makes community life possible. We also need the reflective feedback mechanism we receive by being members of a community in order to recognise ourselves. Theatre, and process oriented theatre work in particular, seem to me to be an appropriate place for this.

The recognition of autopoiesis and the autopoietic potential of each person is a foundation of applied Feldenkrais work. During my training as a Feldenkrais teacher I was able to experience, both in my own body and in the observation of others, this ›real event‹, this ›reorganisation of

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94 This position of course is closely analagous to recognitions in quantum physics at the turn of the 20th century and in structuralism half a century later.

the self‹ which happens autonomously. This dynamic is also operative in applied theatre work. At the ending of his extensive work *The Intelligence of Moving Bodies,* Carl Ginsburg writes*:*

> This is the critical message I wish to leave the reader: Technology can be intriguing and helpful. It can on the other hand backfire against the user. Our own system has inbuilt qualities and tools for development and problem-solving that we often have not tapped. These aspects of our existence work in unexpected ways and show the power of allowing rather than pushing the river. This is the gift of our biology and intelligence. It can yield to us only with openness and the intent to explore. The best solutions to our life problems may be those that we self discover. Here we require the training of our sensing, observing and acting. It takes more than just letting go even if this step is essential. It is an old empirical discovery in many cultures that was eclipsed with the rise of modernism and Western science. The success of many alternative therapies and processes, without necessarily recognizing the source, depend upon these aspects of our living possibilities. (Ginsburg 2010: 273)

The best known representatives of this line of thought and developers of the concept of autopoiesis come from Chile. The two neurobiologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela worked together, from the 1970s onwards, on a biology of human cognition. Their first joint book *Autopoeisis and Cognition: the Realization of the Living* was first published in 1973 in Santiago de Chile. They propose a view of cognition which does not understand it as a ›representation of the world »out there«, but rather as an ongoing bringing forth of a world through the process of living itself‹ (Maturana 1987: 9). Their science of ›neuro-philosophy‹ represents a systemic approach, which does not separate reality from cognition; rather, cognition is made the subject of observation. Autopoiesis is described as the fundamental mechanism of life. The human being is seen as existing in a world that he ›creates with others, i.e. a social world‹. Maturana and Varela's book *The Tree of Knowledge* first appeared in 1984. It encompasses questions on the origins of life, cell biology, the workings of the nervous system; and extends as far as social phenomena and ethics. Their deliberations provide the scientific foundation for an aesthetics of perception.

Maturana and Varela require that we use our cognitive ability to become aware of our cognition. This is itself, as Maturana writes, a dizzy-

ing challenge (Maturana 1987: 25). They state firstly, that ›every act of knowing brings forth a world‹, and secondly, ›*everything said has been said by someone*‹ (1987: 26) (italics in original).

This means that we must be aware of our own doing (because cognising is doing) and perceive ourselves as authors of our own realities. Varela and Maturana assert that cognition is rooted in our biological being (27). According to them, autopoietic organisation of cells is a characteristic of life forms, meaning that life forms are capable of reproducing themselves (47–8).

As autopoietic systems, people can only avoid loneliness if, through feedback, they create shared systems with others. This occurs by way of cognition:

> The *knowledge of knowledge compels*. It compels us to adopt an attitude of permanent vigilance against the temptation of certainty. It compels us to recognize that certainty is not proof of truth. It compels us to realize that the world everyone sees is not *the* world but *a* world which we bring forth with others. It compels us to see that the world will be different only if we live differently. It compels us because, when we know that we know, we cannot deny (to ourselves or to others) that we know. (Maturana 1987: 245)

All of this leads to an ethics:

> If we know that our world is necessarily the world we bring forth with others, every time we are in conflict with another human being *with whom we want to remain in coexistence,* we cannot affirm what for us is certain (an absolute truth) because that would negate the other person. (…) the only possibility for coexistence is to opt for a broader perspective, a domain of existence in which both parties fit in the bringing forth of a common world. (245–6)

On Maturana and the realm of language, Ginsburg writes:

> According to Maturana, there is a realm of interaction between people which we can call the realm of language. If we remain within this area, we can establish interactive connections between people, which we call lingual communication. Yet there is something peculiar about this communication. Over the course of their development, each person creates a particular cognitive field, informed by their past social interactions, which determines how this communication is then understood. The word, the sentence, the

units of communication, these give each person orientation within the realm they have constructed. During normal communication of this kind, no new organization takes place. One uses what one has already constructed as the point of reference. (Ginsburg 2004: 41)

In effect, this means that one remains in constructed thought patterns. Thus, where and how does development, i.e. learning, take place?

I want to try and answer this question using Carl Ginsburg's thoughts on the Feldenkrais technique, Functional Integration. In Functional Integration work, the Feldenkrais teacher accompanies a person through a somatic learning experience using touch.

Ginsburg describes Functional Integration as an empirical art form that proves itself in practice, although evaluative studies have not yet been done (Ginsburg 2004: 48). He identifies several insights that accompany the work of the practitioners. I concentrate here on those that also seem relevant for theatre work:

- The insight that self-organisation is an inherent capacity of living beings.
- The insight that learning cannot be prevented. As soon as the condition for new organisation and the creation of new situation are present the nervous system is ready to learn. Learning does not depend upon ›reinforcement‹ from outside. It is independent of the awareness of its outcome. It doesn't require repetitive practice. It only needs ›real-time‹, i.e. immediate, sensory feedback[95].
- On all levels cognition is tied to behaviour or action[96].
- Everything which increases the range of choice also extends the horizon of possibility.

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95 In the therapeutic context, Ginsburg cites Eugene T. Gendlin, who states: ›The essence of working with another person is to be present as a living being. And that is lucky because if we have to be smart, good, mature, or wise, then we would be in trouble (…) What matters is to be a human being with another human being, to recognize the other person as being there‹. In Ginsburg 2010: 265.

96 Here he refers to Piaget (1992) and to Powers (1973, 1977). In this context, one should consider the whole school of ›action oriented education‹, from Dewey to Kilpatrick (Learning by Doing), and from the reform pedagogy of Freinet (whose pedagogy Boal was very familiar with, he delivered Freinet teacher training in France) to that of Montessori.

- A supported system (person) can learn better and can more easily adjust to reorganisation and assimilation (in terms of improved circumstances).

When freedoms of choice and action are established, which are not usually present (absence of real danger, time pressure, judgement), the human system organises itself towards its optimum. This is the moment of liberation.

When we use these insights as an orientation for the theatre work of Augusto Boal, we recognise ourselves as witnesses of self-directed learning processes in which we merely provide the space in which self-creation may occur.

11.2 Autopoietic Somatic Learning

> The new education must teach the individual how to classify and reclassify information, how to evaluate its veracity, how to change categories when necessary, how to move from the concrete to the abstract and back, how to look at problems from a new direction – how to teach himself. Tomorrow's illiterate will not be the man who cannot read; he will be the man who has not learned how to learn. (Toffler 1970: 367)

Rodolfo Kusch brought home to us that, rather than living in a culture of ›being‹, we really live in a culture of effort. Furthermore, this culture is oriented according to the judgemental parameters of ›right‹ and ›wrong‹. This causes us perpetually to do too much, be frustrated and lose sensory contact with ourselves. Despite all our complaining and discomfort, we still find no way to change. We have unlearned how to learn (because we are not allowed to make mistakes) and we only see this unlearning as an enemy (when we forget learned knowledge against our will) not, like Spivak, as an opportunity to experience new things. The concepts by which we orient ourselves often do not correlate with our bodily experience. Body-amnesia is nevertheless a widely unfamiliar term. Yet most of us do not use anywhere near our full potential. Preconceived beliefs and attitudes prevent us from having new learning experiences. (How often do we hear statements like: ›I have no sense of rhythm. I cannot sing. I have a bad back. It runs in the family.‹)

Kinds of movement are socially and culturally conditioned, regardless of whether they may be good or bad: they are stubborn and cumber-

some when one tries to alter them. All too often, we appeal to an outside authority, which we place above our inner authority. These contradictions compromise the efficiency of our actions. Mono-motivated action is rare. Perhaps we see it on television, when we watch star athletes, musicians or exceptional craftspeople at work. Feldenkrais called these ›other‹ intentions that accompany our actions, *parasitic intentions*, like that of wanting to please, wanting to receive recognition, of wanting to avoid being noticed in an embarrassing way, or wanting to avoid conflict. All too often we are not even aware of these.

As people we are ceaselessly engaged in carrying out actions. So we need to organise ourselves with regard to time/timing (what rhythm do we use to organise an action?), space/orientation (orientation in space) and the awareness of the *how* in the movement (the shaping of the body in the action, kinaesthetic awareness and so-called proprioception) (Ginsburg 2010: 259). To ensure that this self-organisation is not left to chance, we need ways that allow us to train our self-perception, so that we recognise possibilities for change and can expand our ability to act. Therefore, what revolutionary theatre activists wish to achieve on a wider societal level, takes place here on the micro-level, relating to one's self.

To this end, Moshé Feldenkrais started an entire movement science. Boal often used games and exercises derived from the teachings of Feldenkrais in his workshops[97].

Feldenkrais's insight was that through questioning concepts of movement, outside the context of their social structures, one can open spaces of learning, in which people can confront themselves with ›how they are built‹ and what it has been ›heaped upon‹ them, as Feldenkrais teacher Lucy Schütte-Ginsburg puts it (Fritz, 2012). Within the framework of Feldenkrais work, people use their own sensorium to discover possibilities which seem interesting and useful to them. Learning takes place through the perception of differences, and in order to perceive the differences, one must do less and do this ›less‹ in a more effortless way. A further aid in this learning process is to suddenly find oneself in an unexpected circumstance. In a Feldenkrais class this would be, for example, to do movements lying down, that one commonly associates

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97 Personal communication from Henry Thorau, Boal's first German translator.

with standing up. In the theatre, this might be to get non-actors to stand on stage, or adults to play children's games. When we encounter ourselves in an unfamiliar, effortless way, it makes for inspiration, awakens curiosity and ›reanimates‹.

Our inculturated dependency on praise and criticism prevent us from having ›authentic experience‹. The object of autopoietic somatic learning is to re-engage inner authority, care for oneself and freedom of choice. This emerges from the possibility of being able to choose what you want to do rather than being locked into pre-existing patterns of reaction to situations. This means living consciously rather than merely functioning; human dignity is thus re-established. This belief correlates with Freire's ideal of the free ›new‹ human being.

11.3 Feldenkrais and TO

Moshé Feldenkrais was born in Slavuta, Ukraine in 1904, but at the age of fourteen he emigrated on his own to what was then Palestine. He worked as a land surveyor, studied mathematics, went to Paris, became an electrical and mechanical engineer, studied at the Sorbonne and worked in the laboratory of Frédéric Joliot-Curie. He learned Judo under the tutelage of Professor Kano and founded the first Judo Club in France. In the Second World War he escaped to England and worked there for the British Admiralty, before being called back to Israel as a scientist. As of approximately 1954, he dedicated himself exclusively to the development and dissemination of his somatic learning method. One can describe him as an exceptionally autonomous and freethinking person. He worked with thousands of people from a variety of cultures and social strata, was a tireless learner and possessed an immense wealth of knowledge and experience (Feldenkrais 1981, Introduction). His book *Awareness Through Movement: Health Exercises for Personal Growth* was first published in 1972 and it influenced a generation of actors, artists and people involved in the human ability to learn and to move. The point of contact with Boal arose out of a shared acquaintance with Richard Schechner and Peter Brook[98], as well as through Boal's visits to the Actors Studio. Thorau's ›Foreword to the German edition‹ of *Games and*

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98 Peter Brook and Feldenkrais shared a long-term friendship. For many years, Feldenkrais taught at Brook's theatre group. Cf. Beringer 2010: 217.

Exercises for Actors and Non-Actors also draws on the ideas of Feldenkrais. The task is to recreate the ›whole human being in us‹, to ›realise our full potential‹, to ›reawaken our sensory memory‹ and to ›de-specialise‹ ourselves. And for Boal it is never too late to do this (Thorau 1989: 174–5).

Boal, who was fascinated by the work of actors and their capacity for transformation, was profoundly interested in all methods and schools which explored and developed the ability to sense, perceive and express. He was engaged in a theatre of change as a means of overcoming fundamental human deficiencies so that extremes of inhumanity would never again occur. On a somatic level, this is echoed in Feldenkrais work. In terms of practice, Boal saw the body as the first phoneme of the human vocabulary. Thorau describes Boal's repertoire as follows:

> The arc of the work extends from unlearning and relearning, reintegrating movement sequences, bodily behaviour and bodily interaction, to the blossoming of our own expressive possibilities. (Thorau 1989: 172)

11.4 Foundations of The Feldenkrais Method

The central theme of Feldenkrais work is to ›reconfigure‹ your self-image on your own authority[99]. This occurs in a way that is comfortable and painless and always directed towards expanding the scope of human potential. In order to encounter ourselves (the prerequisite of any change), Feldenkrais chose movement as the medium of insight. Movement, which for Feldenkrais consists of *acting, thinking, feeling* and *sensing*, is thus wonderfully appropriate, because it addresses the whole person (all levels of human being), not just the physicality. Feldenkrais created over a thousand lessons through precise observation of inherent human dynamics and structure, comprising not only mechanical possibilities and patterns, but also emotions and reactions to situations. People tend to link each experience with previous experiences and thus

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99 There are two fundamentally different, yet complementary, techniques for this: ATM group work, in which people engage in guided movement exploration, and the FI individual work, in which the Feldenkrais practitioner uses touch to accompany and explore the student's movement possibilities.

produce the same ›scenarios‹ over and over again. In order to overcome this repetition, Feldenkrais connects the idea of his work with eastern spiritual traditions that bring our attention to the present.

One criterion for conscious ›self-use‹, as Feldenkrais put it, is reversibility, which Thorau also mentions in his foreword. In his interview with Richard Schechner, Feldenkrais speaks about it in connection with acting. To Schechner's question: ›What is good movement?‹ he answers:

> Well, good movement is more complex than it seems. First of all, it should be reversible. For instance, if I make a movement with my hand it will be accepted as good, as conscious, clear and willed movement if I can at any point of the trajectory stop, reverse the movement, continue, and change it into something else. (Beringer 2010: 98)

For Feldenkrais, the concept of reversibility not only comprises movement and gesture as the fundamental definition for ›acting‹, but also includes the reversibility of the entire posture. Consciousness, he says, implies the possibility of reversibility (2010: 99).

> (...) when you are fully aware of a movement you can change the intensity, speed, rhythm, and intonation. An act can be reflective, unconscious, automatic, or fully conscious and aware. Acquiring a new mode of doing needs awareness ontogenetically or individually. When learning is completed the action may become automatic or even unconscious. Phylogenetically learned action is reflective. Thus ›consciousness‹ or ›awareness‹ has no meaning except as a description or qualification of activity. (Beringer 2010: 99–100)

This means, that in order to change something, we must be able to reconstruct what we do, or rather, have done up until now. This claim has meaning on both levels, that of the body and the socio-political level. The fact that, for Feldenkrais, the meaning of ›awareness‹ arises from practice, corresponds with demands for awareness in TO, PAR and CC: praxis, that is to say, *Vivencia*, takes precedence over theory.

The goal of Feldenkrais work is the re-establishment of human potential. Part of this is the re-establishment of our awareness of ourselves as changeable and in the process of becoming. Only then can we also, as the theatre activists of the 1960s and 1970s demand, experience the world as changeable. People must take responsibility for this themselves and not be dependent on experts. Freedom of choice is essential. The limitations to which people have resigned themselves, which have been

ingrained by habit and lack of appreciation for our own possibilities, can largely be reversed through practice, provided there is no serious illness (Beringer 2010: 107).

When Boal points to the body being the first phoneme of human vocabulary, it also means that it is the most immediate medium through which one communicates with oneself. Feldenkrais adds that he never worked only with the body, but always with the whole person: ›I work on the person, not on the body. I don't know a body without a person‹ (203). Just as Feldenkrais uses touch and movement to guide people towards an increased awareness of their thinking, feeling and sensing (204), Boal achieves this through games and exercises and through theatre process in the aesthetic space.

The re-engagement of human potential is not only a personal but also a politically charged issue. Feldenkrais observes that in general it suits the needs of society, when people develop only a little (Feldenkrais 1972: 17). Most people are far from realising their true physical potential and many are not even aware of parts of their bodies (1972: 20). If movement is the basis of awareness, this has consequences that affect the whole community.

Feldenkrais sees the learning process which people go through as the most distinguishing factor among them, at least in terms of social life. He views the learning that enables us to do things which we are already familiar with in a different way (an expansion of the usual spectrum of action), as the most meaningful kind of learning. By finding ways in which to do things differently, we move away from mechanised, routinised sequences and develop a sensitivity which allows us to recognise small differences. For this to occur, effort must be reduced, allowing a ›discovery of the obvious, the taken for granted‹.

> The majority of people in each generation stop growing with sexual maturity, when they are considered to be adult and feel themselves adult. Most learning achieved after that involves essentially what is important socially, and personal evolution and growth are mostly accidental or fluke. [...] Only artistically inclined people, be they cobblers, musicians, painters, sculptors, actors, dancers, and some scientists continue to grow personally as well as professionally and socially. Others grow mostly socially and professionally and remain adolescent or infantile emotionally and sensorially and consequently also arrested in their motor functions. (Feldenkrais 1981: xi)

The goal of human development is the creation of a mature, strong self. An understanding of one's own history is essential in order to do this. Only then can action be separated from ›affect‹, thus allowing a free choice and the retention of dignity (Feldenkrais 1984: 25).

> Proper behavior has nothing absolute about it; it must fit the situation in the particular environment and time of the person. In other words, it is expedient, and only a matured person – that is, a person capable of dissociating past experience into its component parts and then using those that fit the present circumstances – is capable of such behavior. (Feldenkrais 1985: 51)

Maturity, human dignity, autonomy (self-reliance), fortune or misfortune are rooted in our perception of the world and in the conclusions we draw from them.

Like Freire, Feldenkrais believes that societal change is usually long drawn-out and cumbersome, as it is not sufficient to simply change the teaching methods. Forms of societal organisation are deeply rooted in people, and even revolutions only change people slowly. Feldenkrais claims that the most efficient means is to change the relationships of dependency, because these are the source of all ›improper adjustments‹ (Feldenkrais 1985: 240). Additionally, working with the senses is the most direct path towards understanding:

> I suggest, and I believe that I am right, that sensory stimuli are closer to our unconscious, subconscious, or autonomous functioning than any of our conscious understanding. On the sensory level communication is more direct with the unconscious, and is therefore more effective and less distorted than the verbal level. Words, as somebody said, are more to hide our intentions than to express them. [...] Through touch, two persons, the toucher and the touched, can become a new ensemble: two bodies when connected by two arms and hands are a new entity. These hands sense at the same time as they direct. Both the touched and the toucher feel what they sense through the connecting hands, even if they do not understand and do not know what is being done. The touched person becomes aware of what the touching person feels and, without understanding, alters his configuration ... (Feldenkrais 1981: 3–4)

Sensory awareness as a means to understand the world is also what Boal conveys in his *Aesthetics of the Oppressed* (2009). Well-intentioned touch leads to a more human world, as we also experience in the work of ap-

plied theatre, where partner games and exercises are integral. Feldenkrais's hint that it is advisable to be able to perceive one's fears as separate from the present situation echoes Frankl's and Boal's call for a meaningful and happy life in spite of and in the face of the horrors.

For Feldenkrais, a healthy person is a person who can live out their ›unknown dreams‹ without obstructions (Beringer 2010: 53); they can allow themselves to go for the things that inspire them. In a complex world, the greatest freedom lies in knowing one's self and making the most of one's potential:

> Learning is the gift of life. A special kind of learning: that of knowing oneself. They learn to know ›how‹ they are acting and thus are able to do ›what‹ they want – the intense living of their unavowed, and sometimes declared dreams. (Beringer 2010: 56)

This is precisely what can often be observed in artists, a vitality and creative energy that is uninfluenced by outside circumstances. The good fortune for human beings lies in creating their own personality and discovering their own language, instead of adopting an imposed ›life-style‹. Overcoming difficulties should be an incentive and a ›supreme pleasure‹.

11.5 Boal's Exercises and Games

In Boal's eyes, theatre means that all people are actors, that theatre is the essential human language and that we all can use it, in order to make our actions in daily life more efficient and propitious, because we become more aware of our actions.

> Nothing should ever be done in a competitive manner – we try to be better than ourselves, not better than others. (Boal 1992a: xxx)

When Boal says, being ›better than ourselves‹, he addresses Feldenkrais's intention, namely the expansion and restoration of our potential. In an interview with Henry Thorau, Boal described 99% of the population in every country as impaired by authority and upbringing (Thorau 1989: 168). He writes in his Foreword to the German edition:

> In our over-specialized, manufacturing industrial society we develop individual senses and abilities at the cost of other senses, other abilities.

> Numbed by sensory overload, our awareness is reduced to a small fraction of reality. (ibid: 174)

Much as in Feldenkrais work, he calls for a conscientisation of our own ability, so as to reverse mechanisation, unfurl ourselves and be those who we have never before been.

> We must develop all of our senses, not only sight, but also hearing, touching, smelling, feeling; we must not only look at, but perceive, not just hear, but listen. We must overcome the divide between perceiving, feeling, thinking, doing. We must consciously experience ourselves in relationship with the environment, with gravity, with space; we must reawaken our ›sensory memory‹, regain our expressive power. (...) The goal is not some sort of acrobatic feat, but rather, to utilise everything that we are provided with, because not only actors, but everyone can make theatre; not only the artists can make art – every person is an artist. (174–5)

In Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors,* there are five categories of exercises and games:
- Feeling what we touch (general exercises, walks, massages, integration games, gravity games)
- Listening to what we hear (rhythm, melody, tonal sound, breath, inner rhythm)
- Dynamising several senses (exercises with closed eyes, exercises for spatial awareness, integration games)
- Seeing what we look at (mirroring exercises, exercises giving shape, puppet exercises, image exercises, games on mask and ritual, the image of the object, spatial exercises on power, the creation of figures)
- The memory of the senses (the linking of memory, feeling and imagination)[100]

The exercises and games have a sequence and structure, continually leading the players' acting and sensory abilities further. They act as part of the emancipatory process.

Boal believes that all abilities, both virtues and bad habits, are intrinsic to all people. A human being's responsibility is to choose one or the other. But one needs consciousness of one's actions in order to do so. *Torture in Brazil* describes how those who torture more than once

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100 See also Babbage 2004: 110–11

are ›lost‹, because they experience too much enjoyment in it and lose any sense of morality (Dassin 1998: xxviii). Likewise, Boal takes up the problems of this issue in *Games.*

> A person may have the capacity for taking pleasure in torturing people, but not do it because he has chosen not to torture people. Human beings must invent themselves in the midst of an infinity of possibilities, instead of passively accepting their roles because they think they could not be other than they are. Nothing of what is human is barred to anyone. We are all, potentially, good and evil, loving and hating, heterosexual and homosexual, cowardly and brave, etc. We are what we choose to be. The Brazilian fascists are culpable not because of their capacity for making people die of hunger, while they line their pockets, but because they have chosen to pursue this course of action. (Boal 1998: 208)

Our path towards a consciousness of our actions in the world, is experienced directly through the body: no other path could manifest it so clearly. Boal's games and exercises and Feldenkrais's work with the body can be seen as political means of opposing tendencies towards fascism.[101]

11.6 The Autopoietic Game

In Hawaii there is a saying: ›If you work more than you play, you do not take life seriously‹.

Ginsburg's reflections on the dynamics of learning are materialised through games, which produce a sense of ease[102] which in turn leads to a more refined capacity for awareness.

In order to make his work as a theatre activist visible and accessible for his time, and with an eye on the European context, it was important

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[101] Those who say, that TO used by ›oppressors‹, strengthens their oppressive action, err. Any inhuman action is exposed in contact with itself and leads to life-affirming autopoiesis. This is not naïve, ›wishful thinking‹: rather it reflects Freire's perception that the oppressors' structures live within all oppressed people, and when the contradiction becomes clear, the pain over the loss of one's own humanity is brought to bear and can finally heal.

[102] Michael Chekhov recommends that his exercises be approached with a sense of ease.

for Boal to create his own system of theatre work. His iconic ›Tree of the Theatre of the Oppressed‹ represents this visually (see Fritz 2011: 39).

Boal was fond of Latin and Greek descriptions of theatre process. Even though his use of the terms is not always synonymous with current practice and quite often contradicts it, it is useful to recall in order to facilitate reading his work.

His publications on the practical use of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* primarily comprise the following books: *Stop: c'est magique!, Games for Actors and Non-Actors, The Aesthetics of the Oppressed, The Legislative Theatre*, *The Rainbow of Desire* and *A Estética do Oprimido*.

In *The Rainbow of Desire* he explains at length his concept of theatre and his fundamental ideas on the aesthetic space, osmosis, metaxis and analogical induction.

11.7 The Aesthetic Space

Boal defines theatre as a platform (aesthetic space): two people and a passion. The theatre is not something concerned with the trivial, the obvious, the conventional, but with a passionate commitment to an idea, one which we ›prize more highly than our own life‹ (Boal 1995: 16). The aesthetic space, which can be any space, as soon as it is defined as such, is ›penta-dimensional‹. It consists of three physical dimensions; of the dimension of memory (potential to reconstruct the past); and the dimension of imagination (potential to understand the world in terms of becoming – what is thinkable/doable). Moreover, its characteristics are dichotomous and dichotomising, malleable and tele-microscopic.

The aesthetic[103] space is, on the one hand, a space within a space, which arises as a result of our accepting its existence. But it can also be created merely by the gaze of those watching: it can exist simultaneously with them, but also in a different time-frame. The aesthetic space is a ›space-in-time‹, which exists for as long as there is an audience. This means that anybody can create such a space; it can exist solely in the subjectivity of an individual, who *stages* something. Actors and all of us are theatre. The theatre, the platform, or rather, the aesthetic space serves to separate the action from reflection. Both of these aspects can,

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103 For Boal this term means: ›pertaining to things perceptible by the senses‹ (1995: 18).

however, coincide within one person and this needs neither stage nor audience. Aesthetic action is innate to all people and can spontaneously manifest anywhere where there are people. (Boal 1995: 18–20)

Boal defines theatre *per se* as a form of knowledge:

> The aesthetic space possesses gnoseological properties, that is, properties which stimulate knowledge and discovery, cognition and recognition: properties which stimulate the process of learning by experience. Theatre is a form of knowledge. (ibid: 20)

The first characteristic of the aesthetic space is plasticity. Because the aesthetic space *is* a space, without actually *being* one (the dead come back to life, a chair is a dragon, the future is today, everything is possible, time can be stretched or compressed etc.) it invites *total creativity.* It has the same characteristics as our dreams, in which we are, without being. In this way, we can *concretise* dreams in the theatre. The dimensions of memory and imagination make everything that we know already (our experiences) accessible, intermingled with all the corresponding ideas, feelings and perceptions, which taken all together, allow us to experience ›the possible‹, ›if we accept that it is possible to think of impossibilities‹ (21).

Memory and imagination project into the dimension of the aesthetic space. This projection has an affective and oneirophrenic (dream-like) component. The affective component is expressed by our thinking, feeling, memory, by how we are touched by what we see. This is what Feldenkrais considered important for the maturation of the self, which each person needs to become aware of. This affective dimension allows us to enter into areas ›that are or were or could have been or could become‹ and recognise how we handle them. In the oneirophrenic dimension everything is possible. The boundaries between dream and reality and contact with the real, physical space are suspended and the dichotomy of being is dissolved (22).

The second characteristic of the aesthetic space is that it is dichotomous and creates dichotomy. Because we are in a space within a space, the conditions are created for our awareness, our perception as actors, to ›be‹ in two spaces simultaneously[104]. This aspect of dichotomous

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104 This is something like Richard Schechner's depiction of the actor in performance as ›Not-Not-I‹: I am not my everyday self and I am also not, for

awareness (with varying distance between actors and the role they take on), applies both to theatre situations and therapeutic situations. When situations are reanimated on the stage or in therapy, desires become objects of research. The subject, the intention, the desire becomes ›a thing‹, thereby making it easier to study and potentially even to be transformed. During the first encounter, or playing of a role on stage, we experience the scene ›in emotion‹. In the second run-through we experience it with ›re-emotion‹. ›The first action is a solitary discovery, the second a revelation, a dialogue‹ (25). In the therapeutic situation, as with the process-oriented theatre-work situation, the ›I-in-the-situation‹ and the ›I-re-experiencing-it-now‹ coincide within one person. Thus many possibilities for expanding the kinds of alternative action arise, as every movement in time and space, according to Boal, is in itself therapeutic, or healing. And once again Boal returns to his ›revolution of Copernican proportions‹: if people ›normally‹ experience themselves in daily life as the centre of their own universe, observed from a single perspective, namely their own, then the invention of theatre allows them not only to see the world as others see it, but also to see themselves and see how they are seen by others. ›To our point of view we add others (…) on stage, we see ourselves and we see the situation we are in‹ (26).

In this act of ›ascesis‹, people recognise themselves as the subject of their situation and ›translate‹ the meaning of their experience into an understanding of the wider context. In theatre work, which happens in groups, the individual is supported by the collective in this process, through the sharing of perspectives, images, experiences and play.

The third characteristic of the aesthetic space is that its effect is tele-microscopic. It can bring things closer and allow us to inspect them in detail. ›The stage brings to today, to here and now, what has happened long ago, far from here: that which has been lost in the mists of time, had deserted memory or fled into unconscious. Like a powerful telescope, the stage brings things closer‹ (27).

These three fundamental characteristics of theatre work:

1. Plasticity (making access to memory and imagination possible)
2. Dichotomisation (allowing self-observation)

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example, ›Hamlet‹; however, on the other hand I am also something of both of these. The aesthetic space is multiple and thus also paradoxical, because different kinds of ›realities‹ can operate in it simultaneously.

3. Tele-microscopic characteristics (bringing things closer)
engender its ›extraordinary gnoseological‹ (epistemological) power. All
of these characteristics work through the aesthetic process, in other
words, pertain to the senses: ›Knowledge is acquired here via the senses
and not solely via the mind‹ (28).

> This process of knowledge, this specific, artistic therapy, is constituted not
> only of ideas but also of emotions and sensations. Theatre is a therapy into
> which one enters body and soul, soma and psyche. (1995: 28)

Like gazing into an old-fashioned full-length mirror, we can look at our-
selves and our psyche; not only look, but with the help of theatre we can
also ›penetrate to modify our image‹ (29).

In the aesthetic space we can experience ourselves freely in a way
that is otherwise not easy to access. Yet when we are aware of it, this rec-
ognition creates a change in our reality, which we carry into our outer
reality, as this is part of our subjective reality.

11.8 The Human Being

The human being, who is primarily body, has five significant character-
istics, according to Boal:
1. Sensitivity/feeling
2. Capable of emotion
3. Rationality/ reasoned
4. Gendered/ has gender
5. Ability to move

This makes for a thinking, feeling, sensing and acting person. In ad-
dition there is the lucid conscious, the so-called pre-conscious (Stan-
islavsky, Freud) and the subconscious. Actors are those who explore the
depths of the soul and the metaphysical infinity (1995: 37). The theatre
is like a pressure-cooker, in which the ingredients, stoked by fears and
morality, come to the boil, exposing all of the ›angels‹ and ›devils‹ in an
explosion, and offering them up for examination (ibid: 33).

11.9 Three Hypotheses

The *Theatre of the Oppressed* always takes place within a group of people,
meaning that there is no audience, but instead there are simply active-

ly participating witnesses, or fellow-players. This also means that the scenes or subjects to be examined must resonate with the group, otherwise they are not suitable for exploration. The principal goal of any TO work is that each person considers him/herself the subject of his/her reality, and can transfer the modes of action experienced and developed in the theatrical process into life outside the theatre. Boal offers three hypotheses as to why this is true for every TO process (Boal 1995: 40):

11.9.1 Osmosis

Osmosis, which Boal begins writing about in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1998: 113–5), is the acceptance of fiction by the audience. In the *Rainbow of Desire* he further explains that Freireian internalisation, or indeed the embodiment of the dominant values of society, permeates every level of societal life (working life, family, school, advertising industry, the media, the church and military service) and poses the greatest threat to independence. His conclusion is that:

> The smallest cells of social organisation (the couple, the family, the neighbourhood, the school, the office, the factory, etc.) and equally the smallest incidents of our social life (an accident at the corner of the street, the checking of identity papers in the metro, a visit to the doctor, etc.) contain all the moral and political values of society, all its structures of domination and power, all its mechanisms of oppression. (1995: 40)

An intransitive theatre, which forces the audience into an uncritical acceptance of predetermined, irremediable circumstances, leads to passivity, paralysis and resignation. Oppression leads to two kinds of reaction in an oppressed person: submission and subversion.

> *Every oppressed person is a subjugated subversive.* His submission is his Cop in the Head, his introjection. But he possesses the other element, subversion. Our goal is to dynamize the latter, by making the former disappear. (1995: 42) (italics in original)

In introjection (as opposed to projection) the person internalises the elements of external reality into his/her self-image. Through Boal's process-oriented theatre work, the internalised elements become visible and can thus be deconstructed (in this process, personal volition is strengthened).

11.9.2 Metaxis

The difference between a traditional theatre performance and a TO presentation lies in the shift from empathy to sympathy. For Boal, contrary to most contemporary usage, empathy, in the context of theatre presentation, is the merging/opening into the emotions of others. It is a catastrophic and dangerous loss of self in a reality over which one loses control. Sympathy however, means autonomy, co-creation, and liberty to be and act in both worlds simultaneously – in the world of aesthetic presentation and in one's own reality. Both of these worlds should exist alongside each other autonomously; the artistic representation must never be reduced to a simple, realistic reproduction of the actual oppression: ›*it must have its own aesthetic dimension*‹ (43) (italics in original).

Metaxis means an independent existence of images of reality and reality of images. It is what Siegfried Essen, the German therapist calls ›play your part, but do not believe it‹ or ›Fictionality‹ (Essen 2015).

> The oppressed must forget the real world which was the origin of the image and play with the image itself, in its artistic embodiment. He must make an extrapolation from his social reality towards the reality which is called fiction (towards theatre, towards image) and, having played with the image, he must make a second extrapolation, now in the inverse direction, towards the social reality which is his world. *He practises in the second world (the aesthetic), in order to modify the first (the social).* (Boal 1995: 44) (italics in original)

11.9.3 Analogical Induction

›The *Theatre of the Oppressed* is a theatre of the first person plural.‹ This means that, whenever one is not working in a homogenous societal group, enduring the same, shared oppressive mechanisms, a relationship must be established between the individual situation and the underlying societal situation in general. The work begins with one person's story. By building analogies through images and improvisations by other participants, the situation becomes a collective challenge, relevant to the experience of the whole group. In developing a ›model‹ of the oppression, a working distance (metaxis) is created, enabling a study of varying perspectives. In this manner the group jointly studies a dynam-

ic, a scenario from which each one of them can trace insights back to his/her specific reality. This is akin to Buenaventura's insistence that the theatre of the Creación Colectiva must always also take on a politico-historical perspective.

Chapter 12
An Aesthetic of Perception and of Peace

12.1 Aesthetic of Perception

> Why does anyone write except to discover themselves? As long as we've had schools and churches we've been torn in quarters by education: it has taught us to separate the soul from the body and the heart from understanding. Those Columbian fisherman who invented the word *sentipensante* must have been learned doctors of ethics and morality: it could be translated as sensitive thinking, and that is the language which speaks truth. (Galeano 1998: 113)

Wolfgang Welsch (1993) and Matthias Duderstadt (1996) have defined aesthetics as the study of perception, or the ›Science of Sensory Realisation‹. Aesthetics is here understood to include both cognitive and emotional processes, which underpin but extend beyond the sense of what is pleasing or likeable. ›Perception can be equated with work on and with the senses. It is directed both outward and inward: perception of that which is outside of me, perception of that occurring within me‹ (Duderstadt 1996: 2).

Perception is thus fundamental to the attainment of what Freire calls *conscientização* (conscientisation): the need to understand the world in all its dimensions in order to actively engage in it. There are strong links here with Boal's desire to demechanise the body and release us from the structures of oppression engrained in us. This newly-acquired freedom allows theatrical action to be translated into real life. According to Feldenkrais, when we sensitise our consciousness to the extent that we know what we are doing, then we also have the freedom to do ›what we want‹. Consciousness is thus a factor of time: if in the present we become conscious of our past, we are in a position to create our future.

Duderstadt's definition addresses important elements, relevant both to the praxis of autopoietic theatre, which works on the inner as well as the outer, and to the theoretical reflection in this book on ways in

which theatre work engages with the ›whole person‹. A ›separation of the sensory realms‹ is, as Duderstadt writes, only theoretically possible (1996: 4); even if we are not aware of it, all the senses are involved in every one of our actions. Strengthening our experience of them increases our ability to grasp situations and to respond. The scope of an aesthetics of perception includes the arts and *all other areas of reality* (1996: 5)*.* The *Aesthetics of Perception* can thus be seen as a fitting companion to the *Theatre of the Oppressed,* because it is effective in theatre and in *all other areas of life,* in action on stage and beyond.

For Duderstadt, aesthetics also includes the capacity to draw on material we have experienced mentally and through the senses, which is not available to others. Through this *Perception of the Unperceivable*, our storehouse of experience is available as the basis for further experiences and creative undertakings. But if the storehouse changes in consequence of extending our range of perception, our starting point also changes. Possibilities of developing and projecting visions for the future expand; memory strengthens the capacity for imagination (1996: 7).

Duderstadt stresses the inseparability of the rational and the emotional in the process of perception:

> I am emphatically opposed to excessive veneration of the senses, but I am also opposed to those who view anything to do with the senses as trivial without investigating them properly. Both are important – and in my understanding, inseparable: the moment of rationality in the emotional realm and the moment of emotionality in the rational realm. (1996: 7–8)

Boal's *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, which can be seen as a striking plea for the importance of aesthetic education, starts from the recognition of a societal deficit, frequently exemplified in terms of a critique of globalisation and a rejection of US American trends and media hegemony. In *Aesthetic Thinking,* Welsch refers to this as anaesthetisation (1993: 13): ›consumption-stimulating aestheticisation‹ leads to desensitisation on both artistic and social levels, so that

> Aesthetic animation occurs as sedation – in the dual sense of intoxication and of anaesthetization. Aestheticisation (...) takes the form of anaesthetisation. (1993: 14)

Welsch's conclusions are sobering and, in my eyes, more relevant today than when he wrote them. The power of anaesthetisation of which

he speaks, which is usually viewed as progress (flatscreens, tabloids and modern communication media – despite some positive applications), exerts great influence and allows lived reality to fade into a ›secondary, seemingly-bland reality‹ (1993: 16)[105]. In my travels from indigenous communities to the big cities of Brazil, these contrasts and discrepancies became painfully perceptible on both the psychological and physical level.

In the 1990s, Welsch diagnoses a tendency in philosophy towards aesthetic thinking, a thinking which for Boal (2006, 2009), becomes a ›Pensamento Sensível‹ [sensitive thinking]. For Welsch, aesthetic thinking is the form of thinking which actually brings us closest to reality in the postmodern world; it is an inner compass, most able to help us analyse and cope with the unnatural aestheticisation of our environment (1993: 57). In an increasingly transcultural world, which ›claims plurality‹, while ›in reality turning everything into blanket uniformity‹, Welsch's thesis is that aesthetic thinking exhibits a particular ›reality competence‹ (ibid: 74).

> Aesthetic thinking (…) sensitises us to differences and to the irreducibility and incommensurability of life forms. And on the other hand, it also makes perceptible and demonstrable, where intrusive over-regulation and violations occur, where the rights of the oppressed should be defended. Functions of feeling, noticing and perceiving are given particular importance [in aesthetic thinking]. Political culture also needs to cultivate such an ability to perceive. This would be a condition for proper orientation and praxis in a decidedly plural world. (ibid: 75)

The counterpart to nearly all of these thoughts can be found in Boal's *Aesthetics of the Oppressed.*[106]

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105 Baudrillard calls it ›hyperreality‹ and says we are living in the age of the simulacrum.

106 It's important to note that TO processes can be and have been applied in non-elitist contexts. Academic discussion of aesthetics and embodied knowledge may appear inaccessible to marginalised constituencies, but the actual practice of TO and Boalian work has been widely deployed in exactly these areas.

12.2 Aesthetics of Peace/the Peaces

> Eritrea is here, Sierra Leone is here, Haiti has always been with us: even
> when people ›merely‹ die from hunger, a silent death, without bursts of
> gunfire – death whispered is not peace. Peace is an incessant, dynamic
> search. Reality is war, divided humanity. Peace is a dream. We want that
> dream, we want peace. Let us be dreamers…with our feet on the ground.
> Peace, yes; passivity, never! (Boal 2001: 303)

Wolfgang Dietrich aligns the *Theatre of the Oppressed* within the methods of elicitive conflict transformation (Dietrich 2013: 138–151), as part of a *transrational* shift in the politics of peace. In the summer of 2005 Augusto Boal was a guest lecturer at the University of Innsbruck's Peace Studies course. His methods are an integral component of the curriculum.

Elicitive conflict transformation and peace research seem appropriate frameworks for a theatre which operates in both majority and minority world societies. Boal was keenly aware of the divisions between them and always spoke against passivity and for peace. For him, conflicts are spaces of learning and peace is a matter of dynamic negotiation, which does not let itself become ›institutionalised‹.

12.3 Elicitive Conflict transformation

This is a term coined by John Paul Lederach, describing the dynamics of a (conflict) transformation that derives its energy from the conflict itself. Just as with PAR, agents do not pretend to ›neutrality‹ or ›objectivity‹, but do so with the ›careful and conscious integration of mediators in the conflicting system‹ (Dietrich 2013: 11). Elicitive conflict work is ›systemic‹, and ›draws on the common knowledge, values, and communication techniques that exist in the individuals, groups or communities concerned‹ (ibid: 10).

The strength and wisdom for healing come from the conflict itself, as signalled in the title of a book by TO practitioner Hector Aristizábal: *The Blessing is Next to the Wound* (Aristizábal and Lefer, 2010)[107]. In a

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107 Aristizábal's work is impelled by the murder of his brother and has involved
     protest against The School of the Americas and work with street gangs.

community ›reconstructing communication on a deep cultural level is of primary importance‹ (Dietrich 2013: 11).

Peace workers must be (self-)aware, sensitised and conscious agents, who, according to Dietrich, possess the following fundamental attitudes:

- Self-awareness and openness, selective authenticity;
- Attention and empathy in relationships;
- Congruent communication;
- Respect for the self-healing power of the conflict on the technical level;
- Scientific enquiry concerning facts;
- Systemic understanding of the self-healing creative potential of the context;
- Acknowledgement of what emerges in a given context;
- Courage to articulate and stand by one's position;
- Humility in view of the limitations of one's position. (ibid: 12)

Lederach describes the following abilities as essential:

- The capacity to see the situation beyond the urgent push for an immediate definition of the problem and a quick solution;
- The capacity to integrate multiple time frames;
- The capacity to turn contradictions, opposites, situational dilemmas and paradoxes into choices;
- The capacity to be on friendly terms with the fundamental complexity of conflicts;
- The capacity to see identity needs behind seemingly factual issues. (idem)

Moreover, they are driven by a ›paradoxical curiosity‹ which is perpetually in a state of questioning, engaging with the complexity of things and thus avoiding the traps of dominant beliefs (ibid: 13). As with PAR, the facilitator becomes a participating agent (30)[108]. Emancipatory peda-

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108 Speaking of the Joker and Forum process, Sanjoy Ganguly says: ›When I say connection it doesn't mean that you will have no difference with others' perspective or position. The friction between two stones makes

gogy, the working premises of PAR and the principles of elicitive conflict transformation offer an abundant resource for agents of process-oriented theatre work, who want to develop a profoundly effective work ethic and reflect on their style of work.

12.4 Transrational Peaces

> There is no rational method with which to recognize the limits of rationality, according to Zen. To be more than rational, transgressing the limits of rationality, is transrational. Those who expect rational answers to questions of being, peaces or reality, based solely on reason, overextend rationality. It is not made for this. It is needed in order to orient oneself in the world. This function is, however, superficial and does not reach very far into the depths of human existence, in which consciousness is created of and for peace. (Dietrich 2011: 109)

Transrational peace research is based on an expanded concept of peace, which promotes self-transcendence. Transrationality and transpersonality are terms that require close attention. Dietrich demonstrates in the second volume of his trilogy *The Many Peaces, Elicitive Conflict Transformation and the Transrational Shift in Peace Politics* what such approaches can look like. He bases this on interrogation of various methods, such as holotropic breathwork, subject specific interaction, Budō and Aikidō, political constellation work and the transformative theatre work of Boal. Since the methods sometimes refer to spiritual practices and realities, they often, Dietrich says, appear to be ›esoteric, from a *modern* perspective‹, and are usually ›dismissed as unscientific‹ (Dietrich 2012: 258). Yet he states:

> From a modern viewpoint this is consequent, but from the perspective of peace research it is impossible to ban evident aspects of human nature from the core area of research. (idem)

Transrational peace research also understands aesthetics in terms of sensory perception, directed towards ›things in their entirety‹; so aesthetics is not merely an ethics but also a set of energies. According to Di-

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fire; in difference, in friction, in conflict, thought evolves. So we invite conflicts in order to understand the truth, not to win in the argument.‹ (Ganguly 2016: 45)

etrich, the central question of peace research and conflict transformation is how ›destructive, violent narratives can be told anew[109] in such a way as to heal relationships, places in the world and their own story/history‹ (ibid: 399).

Here art, in combination with science, is a constitutive element of all transrational peace philosophies:

> I point to art, because all humans, all relationships, and all conflicts have unique characteristics which, above all, require intuition and creativity rendering void any prescriptive instructions. I point to science because we are, nevertheless, examining appropriate processes and structures that can and need to be systemically discovered or designed, intersubjectively communicated, tested in field studies, and applied in practice. (2013: 14)

In his book *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, Lederach writes that he is not sure whether he can answer the question about connections between political change in the world and art. He only knows that politics alone have not delivered convincing results. The greatest strides forward were often the result of failed experiments, parts of which took root in other places. These offshoots, as with the artistic process itself, have touched the source of ethical imagination. ›To believe in healing is to believe in the creative act.‹ (Lederach 2005: 162)

12.5 Boal's Aesthetics of the Oppressed

The examination of Boal's aesthetics completes the circle of my work. This has followed Boal from his beginnings in Latin America, his experiences with Paulo Freire, through his time as a director with the Arena Theatre in São Paulo and later into the revolutionary theatre movement. It is flanked by reflection on Boal's work along with the methods of Participatory Action Research and Creación Colectiva, in order to gain a more precise picture of the morphology, the *gestalt* of the *Theatre*

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109 As James Thompson and Elaine Scarry show (Thompson 2006), it may also be important to know when *not* to ask people to ›tell‹. This is another aspect of sensitive thinking – it moves beyond the obvious to listen to the intangible. Being told ›anew‹ could also take the form of an altered practice, which acknowledges the moment and its needs by manifesting as being rather than doing.

of the Oppressed and its context. I have also added some political fram-
ing of Boal's approaches by drawing on the work of Rodolfo Kusch and
Gayatri Spivak.

Two significant levels of operation have emerged: the reconstruction
of a community's history and the self-creation, or rather, reconstruction
of one's own life in dignity. By comparing the Feldenkrais method and
Boalian games, as well as autopoiesis and autopoietic play, which the
TO games and exercises can be classified as, I have found that TO is
potentially a method for ›societal healing and development of a mature
self‹. Dietrich's classification of TO within the methods of peace work
strengthens this assertion. How does Boal's legacy fit into this spectrum?

Boal called for an expansion of the notion of aesthetics, taking into
account the multiplicity of different cultures; thereby also implying the
need for recognition of a multiplicity of aesthetics:

> How is it possible to defend cultural diversity and at the same time the idea
> that just one aesthetic exists, for everyone? That would be like defending
> democracy and dictatorship at the same time. (Boal 2009: 15)

The following explanation appears in the foreword of the posthumously
published edition of *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*:

> This text must be read in the context of my half-century of work. When I
> write ›brain‹, I am talking about minimum wages and strikes; when I say
> ›neurons‹, I mean sectarianism and colonial wars, Aids and hunger; when
> I think ›synapses‹, I mean politics and dialogue; when I say theatre, I think
> social structures and conscious living; I will not budge from any of my an-
> ti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, anti-racist and anti-sexist convictions (…). I
> am becoming a more and more irreconcilable enemy of all forms of politics,
> morality, commerce and society, which nowadays enslave the majority of
> people. (Boal 2009: 19–20)[110]

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110 With this explanation and repetitions of similar positions in his texts,
Boal's content comes close to the ideas of Stéphane Hessel, *Indignez-vous!,*
2010 and *Engagez-vous! Entretiens avec Gilles Vanderpooten,* 2011 [Be Indig-
nant!] and [Commit Yourselves! Conversations with Gilles Vanderpooten];
Heleno Saña, *Antropomania: In defensa de lo humano*, 2006 [Anthropoma-
nia: In defense of humanity]; and Jean Ziegler, *Der Aufstand des Gewissens,*
2011 [The Revolt of Conscience].

Boal began his work on the *Aesthetics of the Oppressed* in 2004, when he published the first essay, *Aesthetics of the Oppressed – Prometheus Project* on the ITO webpage (www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.ph?nodeID=39). His books *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* and *A Estética do Oprimido,* appeared within three years of one another, the first in English published by Routledge (2006) and the final Portuguese version posthumously in 2009. This differs significantly from the English edition, is more clearly structured, researched and thought through, and is noticeably longer. Here I refer to the 2009 version.

In his foreword to *Estética*, Boal quotes Rosa Luxemburg's statement that the first revolutionary act is to call things by their true name (Boal 2009: 21). Boal describes us as still sitting in the Platonic cave, just seeing passing shadows and mistaking them for ›the world‹. This is why we need the aesthetics of perception, an *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, so that we can outgrow this ›deformation‹ (following Freire's definition of the oppressed). This also corresponds to Feldenkrais, who said that when we know what we are doing (sitting in the cave), we can do what we want (leave the cave).

Boal, who in *Hamlet and the Baker's Son* writes of freedom in prison (Boal 2001: 297), begins *Estética* with another journey into the microcosm, the adventure of the brain, its development and mode of functioning, and finds the analogy for his life's work. In a world of ideologies, power struggles, lies, and not entirely transparent networking and in light of obvious suffering, he calls for a return, almost a homecoming, to original human dynamic structures and their recognition on a political level.

By drawing on an aesthetics of perception as defined by Baumgarten, he insists on recognition for sensitive thinking (*pensamento sensível*), for symbolic thinking (*pensamento simbólico*) and for their synthesis, the ›thought/feeling‹ of ›sentipensantes‹, in order to reach a human (life-) praxis closer to the ›truth‹. Language is thus a factor which can be helpful but also possibly detrimental, which is why he gives it its own space within his deliberations; that is a subject we will return to.

12.5.1 The Oppressed

In accord with his life's work, Boal defines the humanisation of humanity as the ultimate goal and ›highest truth‹ of TO. TO demands social

progress directed towards a society without oppressed and without oppressors, in all areas of life. And it makes clear that we cannot fight against oppression and continue to be oppressors (Boal 2009: 34).

This means we must remind ourselves of the very first definition of oppression given by Paulo Freire. The oppressed are deformed people, not inherently ›likeable‹ (or ›unlikeable‹), yet of all people they have the greatest potential for change: if those exploited, enslaved, threatened by active complicity in their extinction, can only help themselves by fighting for mere survival, then the oppressed are those who want to and can change something, yet are captives of their passivity, from which they need to free themselves. Herein lies the real goal of TO: not first and foremost to fight against more or less abstract oppressors, but to function as a movement for the humanisation of those who are unaware of their potential and in consequence contribute to the world ›staying the way it is‹: causing pain and suffering[III]. This is why this theatre is the theatre *of* the oppressed, as in, *their own theatre,* and not the theatre against the oppressors; it is the oppressed's ›battlefield‹, a place in which conflict is not seen as negative, but a practice space for learning, ›a safe place to disagree‹, as Adrian Jackson likes to call it in his workshops.

12.5.2 Culture

Boal describes culture as continuously adaptive, the sum of everything which is produced by every group, through their relationship to nature and to other groups (Boal 2009: 32–3); much like Maturana, who notes that regular patterns lead to interconnections between social groups (Maturana 2011: 261). Yet according to Boal, we live in ›hybrid‹ cultures, which are contradictory, made up of people who, to a certain degree,

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[III] Here it is necessary to add that Boal's contentious rule, that in Forum Theatre the role of the oppressor cannot be replaced by a spect-actor, does not, in my opinion, represent an ideological construct, but rather a restriction usual in theatre work, an aid to the intensification of focus of the actual subject, namely one's own engagement with internal oppression – which the oppressed person must primarily overcome, says Freire. In contexts structured accordingly – i.e. in which for example political representatives are present in the audience, in India, Israel, Palestine – Boal never opposed a creative alteration of the methodological approach.

behave inhumanely. For Boal, not one of us is immune to ›cultural cannibalism‹: we incorporate what appeals to us. Our development does not occur in a sterile environment, so we must know exactly which aspects of a culture (our own and also the foreign) foster submission and passivity, and resolve to oppose these forces (Boal 2009: 36–7).

Here ethics, which – unlike morality – is not something we conform to (39), but rather something that is independently acquired, can be of assistance. Ethics aspires to establish social relationships and reflects a basic drive in human nature; the human being reveals itself as a social creature even in the womb. Here, Boal addresses current insights in neurobiology, which he followed with great interest. The ethical standpoint, according to Boal, is always that of the oppressed. It seems to me more productive to separate the oppressed (who can potentially grow out of their passivity and dynamically participate in the shaping of the world) from the most oppressed (who are largely at the mercy of their context)[112]. TO can thus be or become a theatre, which by being in solidarity with the (most) oppressed is motivated and called on to examine and overcome its own part in the perpetuation of this oppression.

12.5.3 Understanding of Self

The *Aesthetics of the Oppressed* offers a ›pedagogical art‹, which perceives itself as part of a political and social reality (Boal 2009: 32). Our human biological material ›blends‹ with the social world and becomes part of it[113]. Sensory experience is cumulative and provides the basis on which we compare and interpret all subsequent experiences:

> The ears hear and the eyes see but it is the brain that listens and perceives. Optical information is neutral; it is only when the artistic brain organises it into images, that it acquires meaning, emotion and value. Ears hear, the brain listens in and organises the sounds and tones and timbres, melodies

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112 I remember a Forum Theatre performance by a group from a country which they did not wish to have named, at the end of which, regardless of the nature of the interventions, the protagonist was invariably murdered by the patriarch of the family, as the family members stood silent.

113 Boal refers here to the functional and structural organisation of the brain, what Hüther describes as the *experience dependent plasticity* of the brain, which is effective both in as well as outside of the womb. Cf. Hüther 2007: 2

and rhythms, ascribes values to them or dismisses them as tumult and bab-
ble. The same thing happens with the other senses: they structure, rather
than just register. (Boal 2009: 56)

Yet senses are selective, meaning that, on the one hand, they use sim-
plification to deal with the unmanageable flood of inputs, while also
not latching onto images and impressions which they cannot interpret
(Hüther 2007: 3–4). Images which partially correlate to experiences
we have already acquired, move the brain into a mode of operation in
which ›old patterns can be accessed, expanded and rearranged‹, ›until
the activation pattern produced by the new perception pattern is inte-
grated into the now modified image‹ (idem). Thus, the person's patterns
of expectation are altered and expanded, bringing closer the ›utopia‹ of
a better world, or in the opposite case leading to re-traumatisation.

In production as well as in reception, artistic work creates a mul-
titude of possibilities for new connections between nerve cells. Thus,
on a biological level, it does in fact influence many competencies and
skills which people use in the world. The competencies and skills thus
supported in their development are located in the frontal brain; what
Hüther calls ›meta-competencies‹, which ›cannot be taught‹ (2007: 5).
These are, among others: strategic competence, problem solving, com-
petence in action, motivation, ability to concentrate, flexibility, insight-
fulness, control of impulses and toleration of frustration. Only through
our own experiences, through active involvement in the world, are peo-
ple enabled to handle the changing challenges of the world with varying
degrees of success. These highly complex procedures are stabilised by
the individual's anchoring within a ›meaning-producing community‹,
that is to say, by active dialogical engagement with the surrounding
world (9).

In his *Aesthetics,* Boal extensively details the neurobiological basis of
the effects of aesthetic action and aesthetic learning, and introduces a ter-
minology which distinguishes different kinds of perception, such as syn-
aesthesia, kinaesthesia and proprioception. The human being (as a baby),
Boal concludes, first perceives the world (giving it a basic framework of
knowledge), then learns that s/he can interact with the world, and finally,
that s/he can change it through her/his actions (Boal 2009: 61).

12.5.4 Language

Boal views language, the word, as both a possibility and a danger, because as an expression of symbolic thinking it always remains only a ›half-truth‹ (2009: 65). It serves both to reveal and to conceal. The word is polysemic, it is manipulated, interpreted and deformed according to the situation needing negotiation. On the other hand, it invites precision, the search for concretisation, and Boal concludes: ›Estamos condenados à criatividade‹ (›we are condemned to be creative‹).

> The power over words, images and tones enables us to invent religious, political, economic and social dogmas... and also the dogmas of art and culture. These dogmas divide people into artists and non-artists and into nobles and plebeians. That is dogma and indeed of the worst possible sort. (...) The power of the word is so great that it can produce counter dogmas which, although they are oppositional, likewise become dogmatism, sectarianism. It is the citizen's duty to analyse and unmask all dogmas. Because we are already condemned to the creativity of studying the past in the present, we must also invent the future, without waiting for it to happen. A future without dogmas. (Boal 2009: 75–6)

Boal concludes this first part of his *Aesthetics* with the appeal that art is a human right, just like the right to clean water, an intact earth and clean air; it is our right to knowledge and the ability to create, our right to enjoyment and our duty as human beings (ibid: 94).

Boal proposes the *aesthetic triangle,* which is made up of the social angle, that of the ›I‹, within the sphere of social interaction; the reality angle, which offers the person a model of the world; and the angle of a possible reality.

I
in sphere of social interaction

Possible Reality　　　　　　　　　　*Reality Angle*
The autopoetic human being　　　*World as a model*
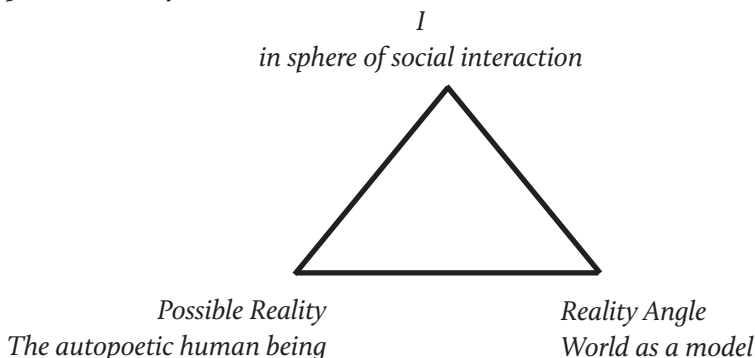
This metaphorical ›triangular‹ vision of the world (91) motivates us to uncover hidden potentials of vitality and creativity. In relation to this, Hüther describes the deficits which develop when children, who seek both safety and autonomy, are given no provision for these: they tend towards surrogate gratifications and manipulation through others, thus alienating themselves from themselves, a mechanism formally called ›disconnection‹. This results in the brain becoming a pale reflection of what it could have been (Hüther 2007: 2–3).

Aesthetics (of perception) are a human right. What does this mean? It is about sensitive thinking, which needs no words, thinking in images, in feelings; music, that speaks for itself. It leads to a flash of insight in the moment. We know when a relationship is over, we also know, when we love. Verbal discourse requires more space, time and reflection. Together, both modes of ›thinking‹ open up a profound understanding of the world (Boal 2009: 93)[114]. For Boal, art serves people as an instrument of understanding. Because people largely have the world explained to them, they lose confidence in their own authority, in their ability to judge their own situation and what goes on around them, or cede this authority to experts; in this way they miss out on many opportunities to develop the meta-competencies mentioned by Hüther, like motivation, problem-solving, flexibility etc. Thus their ability to feel joy is severely reduced. In order to be fully human, all people must be allowed to experience themselves as artistic beings. A person should use all forms of expression, all the senses and take all opportunities (ibid: 107). These words bring us back to the agenda of alphabetisation.

When a group of people who share a similar perspective work together artistically, this is a preparation for societal action. Artistic activity paves the way for change in the social arena, as continually demonstrated by the work of collectives and artistic projects in the realm of peace work. For Boal, one of the strengths of the artistic process lies in the fact that art never shows reality as it is, it does not copy. It creates anew, makes mistakes and shows its innards. This too sets things in motion (109).

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114 This links back to Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Symbolist injunction to ›think with the heart‹ and forward to the ecological consciousness of Bateson, Deleuze and Guattari. See also Appendix 2, The Mandate of Manaus. (Translator's comment.)

For Boal, art is a form of realisation; it is unscientific, subjective and sensory knowledge. Art transforms itself within us, we are in dialogue with it, it is both individual and social at once, just as in love, ›we penetrate the infinite‹. ›Art does not attest to the total, true reality, but it is a true reality‹ (112–3).

> When in a particular instance science has no exact answer or does not possess irrefutable knowledge then the ways open for poetic interpretation. We have a duty to poetry and a right to imagination. We know without knowing and prove without having proofs – only a symbolic and sensitive right. (...) With reference to the theory of aesthetic neurons, I think it's not a hypothesis; it's just a description. It exists: it is necessary to name it! It justifies a new interpretation of aesthetics, which arises and circulates through the senses which themselves are organised and intelligent, not merely a part of the epidermis. The senses are social and political organs, they communicate everything which is circumscribed by thought and ethics (...) Senses are sensible! (ibid: 114)

So Boal, while perceiving art as a way of knowing which does not claim to be scientific, sees science as having an inventive and creative approach which integrates sensitive thinking within its method. However, in contrast to art, it claims to explain reality.

12.5.5 The Aesthetic Neurons

Coming back to research on the brain, Boal refers to the publications of John Ratey *A User's Guide to the Brain: Perception, Attention and the Four Theatres of the Brain.*

> (...) the brain is the most complex object in the universe. There are a hundred billion neurons in a single human brain, and roughly ten times as many other cells that have noncomputational roles. Each of these neurons is connected to others by branching treelike projections known as axons and dendrites, most of which terminate in tiny structures called synapses. (...) it is believed that most learning and development occurs in the brain through strengthening or weakening these connections. (...) It is in the tiny synaptic gaps, where an electrical signal is briefly transformed into a chemical one and back again (...). (Ratey 2001)

In instances of neurological stimulation in the brain, the nature of the neurons is to interconnect and create ever more complex networks

and circuits. This process is exponential and empowers people to discover, to invent, to create and to remember, as well as to imagine utopias.

> This type of neurons and neuronal circuits is found especially in the cortex and the thalamus which are the most human part of the human brain because of their infinite creative networking capacity. They are capable of all kinds of application and unfortunately also of all kinds of omission. With apologies in advance to neuroscientists, I want to call them aesthetic neurons, because that is the function of aesthetics: to illuminate the process of gaining knowledge and enable transformation by developing the emotional intelligence of the senses. (Boal 2009: 117)

The aesthetic neurons stimulate both sensitive and symbolic thinking, helping us to think in metaphors and to understand them. Through metaphor we gain distance, which in turn allows us to take on different perspectives. The creative process is primarily an aesthetic process, in which metaphors are created. The artistic product created as a result must then be capable of bringing forth new ideas, ideas which are akin to those of the artist in the creation of the artwork.

> The aesthetic process builds up our atrophied capacities of perception and creativity, it increases our ability, to develop metaphors for reality. (ibid: 118)

Artistic metaphor, plastic arts, film, design and theatre, all generate a so-called ›firing‹ of neurological networks, which also affect the surrounding areas of the brain[115]. Boal describes these neurons as ›vagabonds in all spaces, times and directions‹ (120), while the specialised neurons do not have this freedom. And yet the ›aesthetic‹ neurons are guided by reason and enable people to organise the world in both an aesthetic and a noetic way.

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115 See e. g. Zeki, Semir (2008) *Splendors and Miseries of the Brain: Love, Creativity and the Quest for Human Happiness.* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell; Turner, Mark (Ed.) (2006) *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity.* Oxford: OUP

12.6 Democracies and Monarchies

›Everything, which has a drive to existence, must be named, even the invisible‹. (2009: 131)

Boal uses the limitations of Greek democracy to argue that we continue to live in similar forms of societal organisation and that absolute democracy has never existed. The most prevalent modern day form of societal organisation is that of monarchy (he derives this term from *monos*, single, and *akrhein*, commander) enforced with the aid of fists, fear, and stock markets. It exists in various forms: imperialist, despotic, oligarchic, plutocratic, dictatorial, parliamentary etc.[116] It organises people in war just as in peace, in their work and their free time, in science and in art, in families of all kinds, tribes, nations and states. Its essence lies in dividing people into groups, into castes or classes, according to power distinctions and acknowledgement of rights, in a pyramid shaped cone (cf. Boal 2009: 132).

And in this schizophrenic world, in which words, images and sound are, on the one hand, ›possessed‹ by the interests of the market economy and those who pull the strings, but on the other hand, are freely available to all human beings, one must take responsibility for freedom and life itself. ›The monarchy of communication dispossesses us of aesthetics, just as the large land-owners usurp the land‹ (ibid: 138).

12.7 Democratic Aesthetics against the Monarchy of Art

> The usual violence in films and on television aims to lead the audience towards fear and emotional imbalance, similar to that in a baby's first few months of life, being afraid of the world. (Boal 2009: 148)

Even adults find themselves in a condition of infantile powerlessness in regard to media. Boal calls this fraudulent infantilisation an invasion. And it demands a counter reaction, because it is through this that every person's legitimate wish to enjoy the things of life is transformed into a domesticated envy of those who are economically superior to them. The invasion of brains is not different from the invasion of countries, in Boal's view: first they are bombed, then the occupying infantry arrives: in the vanguard television and cinema; the market close behind (ibid:

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116 Cf. ›[o]ligarchic capitalist class privilege and power‹ (Harvey 2014: 292).

149).

Boal advocates the implementation of the human right to be human and as such, to be self-determined, to create and to decide. Yet this requires the strength of sensitivity, which for most of us is not given space to develop: in school, at work, even within the family. Although technology was originally invented to unburden our lives, now it generally leads to more work-related stress and a level of availability and communication that is out of control. Boal describes the problem of never being able to say stop and embrace the idea that less is more. His *Aesthetics of the Oppressed* stands in opposition to authoritarian violence and returns to the methods of the ALFIN project, when he says: ›Uma Nova Estética é urgente. A Estética do Oprimido é um ensaio da revolução.‹ [›A new aesthetics is desperately needed. The Aesthetics of the Oppressed is a rehearsal for revolution.‹] (Boal 2009: 158).

Yet this revolution has nothing to do with the old revolutions. This is a revolution of change, of hope.

> The Aesthetics of the Oppressed is transition; hope, not conformity! It has nothing to do with monarchical revolutions, those which are coercive, top down. The true *revolution* in culture, is when the base of the pyramid rises up in an aesthetic process and goes on to implement the people's insights. On the image of the tree of the Theatre of the Oppressed, Direct Action is at its crown.
> A democratic aesthetics, enabling its participants to bring to fruition their own works, will help them reject the pseudo-cultural products thrust down their throats each day by the communication media, owned by the oppressors. Democratic aesthetics against the monarchy of art. (2009: 167)

This is not a matter of war, it is a matter of reacquisition. A life without a television, without a smart phone, without internet? Unthinkable. Yet a selective choice of one over the other. Possible?

Boal recalls that long ago he dubbed his vision the ›Copernican revolution in reverse‹. The people at the centre of their universe. Celebrating life. With the courage to be happy. Relatively bold and probably unrealistic, as this implies the need for those in power to relinquish it. And yet:

›(...) não devemos obediência. Somos quem somos, e a vida é curta‹ [›we do not have to obey. We are who we are, and life is short‹] (Boal 2009: 168). Here Boal, without being aware of it, comes close to Rodolfo Kusch and his ›estar nomás‹, his appeal to not be afraid of who one is.

The *Aesthetics of the Oppressed* helps us learn to learn:

> In the same way that sports expand the potential of the body, art expands that of the spirit. (…) The Aesthetics of the Oppressed is a proposition, seeking to help the oppressed discover art, by discovering their own art; discovering themselves in art and discovering the world, by discovering their world; in which they discover themselves. (…) If I do not know who I am, I degenerate to a copy. (2009: 168–70)

This discovery opens up space for our own creativity, authority and agency. That is autopoiesis.

Outlook for the 21st Century

This book traces a trajectory from the roots of Augusto Boal's work in revolutionary theatre praxis to the autopoietic theatre work of the 21st century.

Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO) originated in the heightened political situation of the 1960s, as military regimes rose to power with active support from the USA in most Latin American countries, except for the particular circumstances in Cuba. Political, economic and cultural imperialism dominated, and while many found ways to adjust, artists, scholars/academics, as well as activists and liberation theologians – not to mention the poor – suffered under the cruel regimes. Persecution, torture and disappearance were part of everyday life. A strong leftist counter movement emerged, to which Boal can be connected, though he never wanted to tie himself to any particular group. After many years of engaged and experimental theatre work, after torture and months of incarceration, Boal was forced to flee into exile in Argentinia, later to Portugal, and finally to France.

He developed the *Theatre of the Oppressed* and its arsenal through various stages of his personal life, building upon the emancipatory philosophy of Freire, whom Boal describes as one of his fathers, in appreciation of this Brazilian peoples' educator. For his work, he received theatre and human rights accolades worldwide. One of these was recognition of his work by UNESCO as an accepted method of social change.

The guiding principles of TO, formulated by Boal, were published in 2003, identifying the aim of TO as the humanisation of humanity. Oppression is a part of our lives, in all societies and all social groups we see the effects of an unjust world. Theatre can be a way in which to examine this reality and to see the obvious, which all too often we do not want to or cannot accept. In this regard, little has changed since the 1960s.

The lives of Boal and Freire present many crossovers; they became friends in their later years. The spiral of violence in Latin America and its devastating consequences for the population were the constant driving force for their efforts. Boal, who lost many of his companions to a

violent death, stood against both violence and the cult of heroism, and sought to develop profound and effective ways for creating a more humane world. His methods are marked by ease and playful accessibility. They engage the creative spirit, as well as the pain which they strive to overcome: TO was born as a struggle for survival, a way of processing the shock of death and violence, and a means of finding a new pathway to life.

The key concepts which TO explores are defined in the writings of Freire and the early works of Boal: *The Theatre of the Oppressed* and *Técnicas latinoamericanas de teatro popular*. Interrogation of these offers ample opportunity for reflection, as presented in this book, on a contemporary application of the method. First and foremost, Boal's theatre is a theatre on the edge, a theatre which aims to overcome pain and destroy the power of people over people which persists because its structures have been internalised.

The path to liberation leads through the body and play, which is an integrative element of TO. In an immediate rehearsal of action, Boal translates Freirian pedagogy into somatic practice, opening up the way for direct action; the transfer of what has been experienced into one's own reality. The personal becomes political. Learning and change occur by means of dialogue with equals; people do not exist independently of their context. Theory and praxis go hand in hand.

On this path, Boal's first tangible experiences were in Brazilian cultural centres, prior to the first military coup of 1964 and later in the context of the Peruvian alphabetisation project ALFIN. He was invited to use his theatre as an instrument of alphabetisation among speakers of differing mother tongues. He revolutionised conventional theatre with his production of the play *Zumbi*, in which he challenged many of the usual theatrical norms, even that of eliciting empathy.

In comparing Boal's theatre, the method of Creación Colectiva and Participatory Action Research in Columbia, I sought to trace the most important premises of emancipatory theatre work.

Participatory Action Research in the context of this work and following the model developed by Orlando Fals Borda, is distinguished particularly by its insistence upon communicating scientific results via artistic means, and in this way completing them. As Spivak and Feldenkrais later stipulate, it requires a praxis of learning and unlearning. Its philosophical framework is based on the writings of Paulo Freire. It is a form of scholarship which takes up a political position, calling

for and supporting new relationships among participants and seeking to promote continual self-reflection. Fals Borda, the multifaceted and complex protagonist of PAR in the global South, introduced the expression ›sensitive thought‹, which was later taken up by Galeano and Boal. The Handbook of Action Research (2001) is a collection of texts by renowned experts, who, much like the TO Think Tank, or the PTO-Conferences, elucidate the developments and currents of the last ten years of the last century in PAR. Though new postmodern challenges and considerations are integrated into PAR, researchers strive to stay true to their altruistic premises. The fact that PAR projects are time-consuming may sometimes be seen as problematic; one way of resolving this is for researchers to recalibrate their lives to accommodate their work, since otherwise the tensions would be too great. As with TO, practitioners should ideally be invited by a community to come and work with them. Methods and subjects are decided collectively. All results are brought back into the community, as ideally in TO. The inviting community takes possession of its own reality during the process, and the researchers become (as in TO) somewhat superfluous. In contrast to TO, those carrying out PAR are usually specially trained persons, while it is generally left up to the TO practitioners to further their own development in the course of their activity.

The repossession of one's own reality and history is the chief objective of the New Latin American Theatre, which prior to and during the 1950s and 1960s, sought to curb the dominant eurocentrism. According to theatre scholar Abad, a new connection between Latin American thinking, theatre theory and praxis needed to be established. Enrique Beunaventura (Creación Colectiva) and Augusto Boal were among the most important influences in the history of the revolutionary theatre in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. Their desire was for Latin America to create, in various ways, its own narrative and to further revolutionary thought. Theatre was effective in the role of political alphabetisation.

The text *Nuestra América,* by Jose Martí (1853–1895) played a defining role in the identity of theatre activists from different countries. In effect, this created the impression of a unified identity across the continent, although given the size and diversity of the continent this did not in fact occur.

Boal and Buenaventura were two very different protagonists. Boal criticised Creación Colectiva's claim to be the ›only‹ acceptable form of

production, while Buenaventura criticised the use of theatre and the arts for political objectives alone. Overall however, one can ascribe similar goals, albeit with different means, to both men, who understood the creation of anti-imperialist theatre as a way of asserting and re-establishing human dignity in Latin American countries.

The Creación Colectiva's path led to intensive research on the subject (*trabajo de mesa*); the members of a theatre group worked collaboratively and shared all functions, even that of directing. Like those in TO, the plays devised offer no answers, but raise questions, which are discussed with the audience after the performance. On the basis of the audience discussion, new inputs are worked into the piece. In this manner, much time can pass before the definitive version of the play is reached. During the emergent period of Creación Colectiva, there were hardly any playwrights in Colombia, plays were developed in the course of rehearsal by the theatre group. It was process-oriented theatre, its outcome often being of disputed artistic value, yet the devising process was initially considered paramount. The goal was to democratise the theatre, which included the model of the division of labour in the theatrical process. The CC broke away from the pattern of the artistic dominance of a few dictating to others what should be done. Buenaventura describes this time as a time of confusion which had to be worked through and as an earnest attempt to find a new kind of theatrical production, based on the beliefs engendered by experience.

The *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Participatory Action Research and Creación Colectiva are instruments for societal and, in the broadest sense, political change. All three are context- and process-oriented methods, refusing sole individual authorship and expertise. Their goal is the reconstruction and reacquisition of history by its actors. Their premise, that all people are of equal dignity, makes for an unbiased appreciation of all kinds of knowledge. Their world view is one of becoming, and they ultimately value praxis, *Vivencia*, above theory. The challenges lie in the fact that the agents of these methods were themselves born into a world ›as it is‹, and are thus influenced by differences in their background, their work and education, which must first be overcome. Working with these three methods requires a high degree of self-organisation and reflection (financing, research, networking etc.) and does not necessarily protect against dogmatism. The working premises themselves represent a political change for those who carry out the work. What is facilitated is

a process of autopoiesis, creating reality anew, in autonomy and dignity.

Moshé Feldenkrais was concerned with the same issues. He investigated how people dealt with shock and could integrate it, in order to lead a life in dignity, autonomy and freedom, despite great challenges. He developed strategies to do so on a bodily level. Both Feldenkrais and Boal found ways of overcoming through the reconstruction of events, whereby the individual regains his agency. On the societal level, this means breaking through the silence around taboo subjects like war, rape, displacement, abuse etc. The energy for recreation lies in the recognition and confrontation of these issues.

Maturana and Varela show in their joint work *The Tree of Knowledge*, that there is no such thing as reality separate from human perception and that coexistence with others always requires communication. This means that ›world‹ is continuously generated; this is the movement of life, which, if we consciously engage in it, also leads to an ethics based upon this insight: we are the creators of our own history/story. Though there is one resulting constraint: if communication is limited purely to language, it can only move in prefabricated thought patterns. Yet again, one must value praxis over theory – much as in this quote ascribed to Beckett: ›Dance first. Think later. It's the natural order.‹

Feldenkrais' work with movement is Boal's work with theatre and autopoietic play. This play has many facets, represented in the diagram of the tree of the *Theatre of the Oppressed;* they can be realised in the most diverse ways. Its significant characteristic is, that it takes place in the aesthetic realm, the penta-dimensional realm of three physical dimensions, the dimension of memory and the dimension of imagination. This is a realm of total creativity, where what we already know, mixes with what could be; it is a place of insight for Boal. The plasticity of this space allows access to memory and imagination; dichotomisation enables self-observation, and its tele-microscopic potential brings us closer to the things we wish to experience and explore with all of our senses. Its protagonist is the person who, through his thinking, feeling, sensing and action in the ›pressure-cooker‹ of his fears, constrained by an imposed morality, allows his inner-life to be reconfigured in a theatrical explosion.

There is no audience in the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, only participants actively engaged in the process/event. Its working hypotheses are: *osmosis*, which is identical to Freirian internalisation of societal values;

metaxis, which means a process of extrapolating, of knowledge acquisition, in which the understanding of reality as shown through images is applied to reality as it is experienced in life; and *analogical induction*, through which the fate of individuals can be seen to reveal scenarios of oppression in a community.

Ultimately, the *Theatre of the Oppressed* serves both societal and personal ›healing‹ through the restoration of personal integrity. But this should not be read as an acquiescence with ›complete‹ models of the self or the society; the whole dynamic of the forms of work discussed in this book is to operate both a transdisciplinary and dialogic perspective and continually to challenge received structures both internal and external – as reference to Kusch and Spivak has suggested. What I am here arguing for is thus in a sense both a humanist and a post-humanist Boal. The processes of performance identified in discussing the whole range of work referred to above are characterised by ongoing reflection, reassessment and reconfiguration both of those who are engaging in them and of the continuously shape-shifting recognitions, forms of awareness and modes of action which emerge from them.

In the posthumously published edition of *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, Boal calls for an expansion of the notion of aesthetics, from the uniform-aesthetics suggested by mainstream culture to the appreciation of many aesthetic possibilities. In his last book he unites the insights of his half a century of work. Together with Rosa Luxemburg, he challenges us to ›call things by their name‹. Only once we know what we are doing, can we find the strength to shape reality according to our idea of happiness. We need an aesthetic of perception if we do not wish to be sucked up by the uniform culture of a cannibalistic capitalist system. Boal calls for the recognition of ›feeling-thought‹, for the sake of a way of life closer to the many levels of truth within and without. As a ›human community‹ we cannot continue to fight against oppression while remaining oppressors ourselves. The *Theatre of the Oppressed* is not a theatre against more or less fictional oppressors outside of ourselves, but a theatre in which we, as real people, struggle for our own humanity, instead of perpetuating the structures of a world which inflicts suffering, pain and the destruction of its own contours.

Boal's ongoing awareness of the political role of embodied and participatory production is manifested in his concern to *transfer the theatrical means of production* to participants (actors and spectactors). His con-

tinuous development and expansion of TO methodology derives from his recognition of the capacity of theatrical process to engender ›other‹ modes of sensing, feeling, imagining, articulating and acting. His path through ALFIN, PAR-models, CC and body-work represents an expanding vision of how the body can operate as a site of resistance and creative reorientation against the forces of oppression, dispossession and exploitation of the human. This book attempts to chart that vision and its successive deployment.

Appendix 1

International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation (ITO)

Declaration of principles

Preamble

1. The basic aim of the Theatre of the Oppressed is to humanize Humanity.
2. The THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED is a system of Exercises, Games and Techniques based on *Essential Theatre*, to help men and women to develop what they already have inside themselves: theatre.

Essential Theatre

3. Every human being is theatre!
4. Theatre is defined as the simultaneous existence – in the same space and context – of actors and spectators. Every human being is capable of seeing the situation and seeing him/herself in the situation.
5. Essential theatre consists of three elements: Subjective Theatre, Objective Theatre and Theatrical Language
6. Every human being is capable of acting: to survive, we necessarily have to produce actions and observe those actions and their effects on the environment. To be Human is to be Theatre: the co-existence of actor and spectator in the same individual. This is *Subjective Theatre*.
7. When human beings limit themselves to observing an object, a person or a space, momentarily renouncing their capacity and necessity of acting, the energy and desire to act is transferred to that space, person or object, creating a space inside a space: an Aesthetic Space. This is *Objective Theatre.*
8. All human beings use, in their daily lives, the same language that actors use on the stage: their voices, their bodies, their movements and their expressions; they translate their emotions and desires into *Theatrical Language*.

Theatre of the Oppressed

9. The Theatre of the Oppressed offers everyone the aesthetic means to analyze their past, in the context of their present, and subsequently to invent their future, without waiting for it. The Theatre of the Oppressed helps human beings to recover a language they already possess – we learn how to live in society by playing theatre. We learn how to feel by feeling; how to think by thinking; how to act by acting. Theatre of the Oppressed is *rehearsal for reality*.
10. The *Oppressed* are those individuals or groups who are socially, culturally, politically, economically, racially, sexually, or in any other way deprived of their right to *Dialogue* or in any way impaired to exercise this right.
11. *Dialogue* is defined as to freely exchange with others, as a person and as a group, to participate in human society as equal, to respect differences and to be respected.
12. The Theatre of the Oppressed is based upon the principle that all human relationships should be of a dialogic nature: among men and women, races, families, groups and nations, dialogue should prevail. In reality, all dialogues have the tendency to become monologues, which creates the *Oppressor-Oppressed* relationship. Acknowledging this reality, the main principle of Theatre of the Oppressed is to help restoring dialogue among human beings.

Principles and Objectives

13. The Theatre of the Oppressed is a worldwide non-violent aesthetic movement which seeks for peace, not passivity.
14. The Theatre of the Oppressed tries to activate people in a humanistic endeavor expressed by its very name: *theatre of, by, and for the oppressed*. A system that enables people to act in the fiction of theatre to become protagonists, i.e. acting subjects, of their own lives.
15. The Theatre of the Oppressed is neither an ideology nor a political party, neither dogmatic nor coercive and is respectful of all cultures. It is a method of analysis and a means to develop happier societies. Because of its humanistic and democratic nature, it is widely used all over the world, in all fields of social activities such as: education, culture, arts, politics, social work, psychotherapy, literacy

programmes and health.

16. Theatre of the Oppressed is now being used in dozens of nations around the world, as a tool for the making of discoveries about one-self and about the Other, of clarifying and expressing our desires; a tool for the changing of circumstances which produce unhappiness and pain and for the enhancement of what brings peace; for respecting differences between individuals and groups and for the inclusion of all human beings in Dialogue; and finally a tool for the achievement of economic and social justice, which is the foundation of true democracy. Summarizing, the general objective of the Theatre of the Oppressed is the development of essential Human Rights.

The International Theatre of the Oppressed Organization (ITO)

17. The ITO is an organization that coordinates and enhances the development of Theatre of the Oppressed all over the world, according to the principles and objectives of this Declaration.

18. The ITO does so by connecting Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners into a global network, fostering exchange and methodological development; by facilitating training and multiplication of the existing techniques; by conceiving projects on a global scale; by inspiring the creation of local *Centres for Theatre of the Oppressed* (CTO's); by promoting and creating conditions for the work of CTO's and practitioners and by creating an international meeting point on the internet.

19. The ITO is of the same humanistic and democratic nature as its principles and objectives; it will incorporate any contributions from those who are working under this Declaration of Principles.

20. The ITO will assume that anyone using the various techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed subscribes to this Declaration of Principles.

Appendix 2

The Manaus Mandate: Indigenous Action for Life

Gathered in Manaus between 15th and 18th of August, 2011, at the First Regional Amazonian Summit, the Amazonic Indigenous people and organisations from nine countries: Bolivia (CIDOB), Brazil (COIAB), Ecuador (CONFENIAE), Colombia (OPIAC), Guyana (APA), French Guiana (FOAG), Peru (AIDESEP), Venezuela (ORPIA) and Suriname (OIS), together with other social, governmental and environmental agencies, concluded that the climatic and environmental crisis is extremely serious, perhaps irreversible. Global and national powers are not doing anything of relevance to stop this crisis; in fact, in many cases they are profiting from it, with their so-called »green businesses deals«, even though these endanger all forms of life. They are powers based on racism, patriarchy, individualism, mercantilism and consumerism; privatising everything and acting arrogantly as if they own nature, forgetting that, in reality, they are just a small part of it.

We denounce the hypocrisy and contradictions in the global and national policies on forests. While "sustainable" statements, plans and projects seem to abound, depredation, deforestation and degradation continue to occur. These result directly from mining and hydrocarbon exploration, large-scale hydroelectric dams, extensive cattle and soya farming, agribusinesses, pesticides, the expropriation of indigenous protected areas, bio-piracy and theft of ancestral knowledge. Better forestry policies and practices are urgently needed and we call for a complete change in the macro-policies of the neo-liberal global powers.

We propose the following objectives, focuses, alternatives and actions:

1. ›Full Life‹ territories for the planet's cooling

It has been proven that, if proper measures are taken to impede degradation and deforestation, the forests and the territories of the Amazonian people can become havens of life. It is fundamental to change legislation and public policies to provide an accurate demarcation of the territories of indigenous peoples, to guarantee their collective enti-

tlement as a people, and to support, rather than marginalize, our »Full Life« strategies, which make a marked contrast to the commodification of nature. This is an effective strategy to reduce global warming and to recover the harmony with Mother Earth, which we have maintained for thousands of years. In order to change the climate, we have to change the system. The system and us, Mother Nature's earth-coloured children, should adapt to nature's call and adapt to its needs..

The financial cost to settle this historic debt, which has its origins in the ethnocide of the colonisation period, is very small if compared with the money currently being spent on ineffective meetings and projects.

2. To strengthen »REDD+ Indigenous« and to make ecological debtors reduce their pollution

To the ones with power of decision over REDD+ processes [REDD is the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries], that is, the World Bank and the Inter-American Bank, FIB, ONU-REDD, COP17-CMUNCC, Rio+20 and others, we demand, before taking any further steps in REDD+ processes, that guarantees should be given to the Indigenous People:

– To respect and strengthen the REDD+ Indigenous proposals or adapt REDD+ to the collective vision and rights of the indigenous people, as is stated in the document »COICA guidelines on climate change and REDD+« which states the following:

- With no assigned territory or guaranteed collective rights, REDD+ is infeasible;
- No communal contract relinquishing territorial control or intellectual property is to be signed until all international rules are applied. And these are not to be drafted in foreign languages and laws;
- To respect and support the conservation of the forests as a whole, not only in the areas where deforestation occurs;
- To respect our national regulation proposals in regards to REDD
- To ensure prior, free and binding consultation and consent;
- To respect COICA's reports on REDD+ alongside the state's reports;
- To establish unbiased and efficient strategies to deal with conflict resolutions;

- Not to support the carbon credit market, a mere façade for the global polluters.
- To prioritise policies and funds to consolidate and entitle the Indigenous Peoples Territory, an unrestricted condition before advancing any further with REDD+;
- To change national laws to guarantee the Collective Right on consultation and consent, on environmental services laws and on forestry services laws which abound with »REDD+ loopholes« (mineral, hydrocarbon, agri-fuel, etc).
- To ensure states and banks take responsibility for controlling the expansion of Redd+ thieves (carbon cowboys, REDD+ bubble) by taking the following measures: to set up international public registration and certification for REDD+ operators; to ban fraudulent companies and NGO's that have been denounced by the indigenous peoples; to work with communities to create an understanding that they should not sign any ›REDD+ contracts‹ or ›carbon deals‹ until all national and international regulations are implemented.
- To prioritise the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) contamination by the biggest industrialised environmental debtors, who come from the rich minority powers, North and South.

3. To unify ancestral knowledge and biodiversity survival

Our ancestral knowledge is intrinsically connected to the productive conservation of nature, and guided by this ideal, we request to the Conference of the 11 Parts of the Biological Diversity Congress and to the International Nature Union (UICN) the support to the following proposals:

– To prioritise the demarcation, legalisation and legal security of the indigenous territories, as a means of conservation of biodiversity, genetic resources and ancestral knowledge.

– To consolidate the right to prior consultation and the right to prior, free, informed and binding consent of the indigenous peoples, to access the genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge in the indigenous territories.

– To ensure that the genetic resources and associated ancestral knowledge in the indigenous territories constitute the collective intellectual and natural heritage of the indigenous peoples and have been preserved

and passed on from generation to generation for thousands of years
– To ensure that access to ancestral knowledge and genetic resources comes with a fair and equitable participation in the benefits and derived products.
– To ensure that governments and international organisations (such as the Convention on Biological Diversity – CBD) should grant a sui generis legal status for the protection of the ancestral knowledge, as ancestral knowledge is not public domain but is part of the cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples.
– To ensure that ancestral knowledge is not commercialised and that it is not misused in unauthorised biotechnological patents.

4. Rio+20: Solutions for Life, not for the Market.

The 2012 UN Conference to be held in Rio de Janeiro next June will be one of the last opportunities to save all life forms in the planet. We, the Amazonian people, call for political and cultural acts in areas in the vicinity of the summit location. We call for the participation of indigenous leaders, artists, scientists and academics to get the attention of global politicians and to get public opinion behind us. We must develop political intervention strategies within and outside Rio+20 and set up our own Summit of the Indigenous Peoples, one that is plural, democratic and very public.

We must muster as much political support as possible, to ensure the UN does not give in to the irresponsible political games of the global powers. We must ensure real advancements are made in the objectives and proposals, such as:

• Refuse to accept the «Green Economy» as a mere combination of developing neoliberalism with «green projects», instead see it as a profound change where consumerism, waste and degradation are reduced, and where there's a real shift in production patterns, consumption, distribution and energy (hydrocarbons and biofuels) to achieve a society in harmony with different cultures and with nature.

• Renewal of the Kyoto Protocol, with binding commitments to reduce the effect of the greenhouse gases and participation of the indigenous peoples. We should not leave up to the powers to decide how much, when and how they reduce their emissions.

• Consolidation of the Territories of the Indigenous Peoples and

their «Full Life» Vision, conceding to them the management of nature for the ‹cooling› of the planet, providing them with the necessary global public funding to implement territorial demarcation and entitlement.

• Establishment of an International Environmental Court, independent from the global powers and with the participation of the indigenous peoples, who are most affected by the environmental crimes.

• Reorganisation of the UN's environmental agencies, to ensure they are not controlled by the polluting powers, surpassing bureaucracy to allow the participation and influence of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon and of the world.

Finally, the Summit proposes communication as a means to enable political action, not only as a tool for dialogue. To have an effective influence in public polices to access all media and make use of information technology to set COICA's Network of Amazon Communicators in motion.

The indigenous people and nature are one, therefore we must reduce deforestation and keep the forests alive, guarding their many benefits such as fresh water, biodiversity and climate for the survival of all life. All we are asking for is to leave us in peace so we continue with our mission.

An end to »Belo Monsters« type of projects in Brazil, Guyana, Peru (Marañón, Pakitzapango), Bolivia and in the world!

No to a Rio+20 which will condemn the people and life in the Xingu!

No to the motorway to be built on the indigenous territory Isiboro Secure in Bolivia, brother Evo Morales, defend your people's interests not BNDES's (Brazilian Development Bank)!

An end to the oil destruction in Ecuador (Yasuní), in Peru (Datem) and in other countries!

No to the impositions of IIRSA [Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America], like the Manta-Manaus Interconnection Road, which will destroy the Napo River!

Action and Solidarity with the plight of the indigenous people of the Amazon and the world!

Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana, ratify Convention 169!

We, the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon Region, walking on the path of our ancestors, ask the world to open their hearts and dreams and join us in our journey for life and for all humans.

- Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Organisations of the Amazon

Basin – COICA

Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Organisations of the Brazilian Amazon – COIAB

Peru: Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Forest – AIDESE; Regional Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Peoples Organisations – CORPI; Regional Association of the Central Forest Indigenous Peoples – ARPI; Regional Organisation of the Eastern Indigenous Peoples – ORPIO; Regional Organisation AIDESEP Ucayali – ORAU; Native Federation Madre de Dios – FENAMAD; Coordinating Committee of Defense and Development of the Indigenous Peoples of San Martin – CODEPISAM; Regional Organisation of the Indigenous Peoples of Alto Marañon – ORPIAN

Ecuador: Confederation of the Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon – CONFENIAE; Confederation of Cofan Indigenous Peoples of Ecuador – FEINCE; Organisation of the Secoya Indigenous People of Ecuador – OISE; Interprovincial Federation of Kichwas Communities of the Ecuadorian Amazon – FICCKAE; Interprovincial Federation of the Shuar Centres – FICSH; Federation of the Organisations of Kichwa Nationalities of Sucumbios – FONAKISE; Achuar Nationality of Ecuador – NAE; Sapara Nation of Ecuardor – NASE; Provincial Federation of the Shuar Nationalities of Zamora, Chinchipe –FEPNASH.ZCH

Bolivia: Confederation of the Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia – CIDOB; Guarani People Assembly – APG; Organisation of the Heads for the Wenhayek and Tapiete – ORKAWETA; National Confederation of Indigenous Women of Bolivia – CNAMIB; Centre for the Ethnic People of Mojeños de Beni – CPEMBE; Centre for the Indigenous Peoples of the Pando Amazon – CIPOAP; Indigenous Centre for the Bolivian Amazon – CIRABO; Centre for the Indigenous Peoples of La Paz – CPILAP

Brazil: Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Organisations of the Brazilian Amazon -COIAB; FEPOIMI, Cuiaba, Pantanal; COAPIMA, Coordinating Committee for the Organisations of the Indigenous Peoples of Maranón; FOIRN – Federation of the Indigenous Organisations of Alto Rio Negro; HUTUKARA Association; ICRASIM – Institute, Reference and Health Support Centre of Manaus

Manaus: COPIAM – Council of the Indigenous Teachers of the Amazon; OGPTB – General Organisation of the Ticuna Bilingual Teachers; CGPH– General Council of the Hexkariana People; AMARN –Indigenous Women of Alto Rio Negro Association; COIAM – Confederation

of the Indigenous Organisations and Peoples of the Amazon; AMISM –Sateré-Mawé Indigenous Women Association; WAIKIRU Association; MUNDURUKU Indigenous Peoples Association; MEIAM – Movement for the Indigenous Students of the Amazon; WOTCHIMAUCÜ Organisation; UPIM – Union of the Indigenous Peoples of Manaus; Metareilá Organisation of the Suruí People; Association of the Cinta-Larga People; Forum of the Organisations of the Paiter-Suruí People; CIR – Indigenous Council of Roraima; APIRR – Indigenous Peoples of Roraima Association; OPIR – Organisation of Roraima's Indigenous Teachers; OMIR – Organisation of the Roraima's Indigenous Women; CONJABA – Council of the Organisations of the Javaé Indigenous Peoples of Bananal Island; CIX – Xavante Indigenous Peoples General Coordination; ATIX – Xingu Indigenous Land Association; OPRIMT – Organisation of the Indigenous Teachers of Mato Grosso; Raoni Institute; FEPOIMT – Federation of the Indigenous Peoples of Mato Grosso; OPIN – Organisation of the Indigenous Peoples Amazonian Southern Acre and Northeastern Rondonia; OPIAJBAM Organisation of the Apurinã and Jamamadi Indigenous Peoples of Boca do Acre – AM; COAPIMA – Coordinating Committee of the Organisations of the Indigenous Peoples of Maranhão; APIO – Oiapoque Indigenous Peoples Association; UMI-AB – Union of the Brazilian Amazon Women; APN

Suriname: Organisation of the Indigenous Peoples in Suriname – OIS; Talawa; VIDS; Umari; Vrouwe Organisalie; Alle 34 Inheemse Dorpen Van Suriname

Colombia: Organisation of the Colombian Amazon Indigenous Peoples – OPIAC; Association of the Indigenous Authorities of Guaviar – CRIGUA II; Organisation of the Indigenous Zone of Putomayo – OZIP; Association of the Regional Indigenous Council of Guainía – ASOCRIGUA; Association of Cabildos Huitotos of Caquetá – ASCAINCA; The Amerindian Peoples of Guiana Association – APA

Venezuela: Regional Organisation of the Amazon Indigenous Peoples – ORPIA; Indigenous Federation of the Bolívar State; Union of the Indigenous Communities of Warao – UCIW-CONIVE Delta Amacuro; National Council of the Venezuelan Indigenous Peoples – CONIVE

French Guiana: Federation of the Autonomous Organisations of Guiana – FOCAG; Federation Lokono – FL; Makana Pinius – WAYAPI; Chief Council – CC.G; Kauna Council –MANA; Kalina Council – KOUROU; Kalina Council – AWALA; Kulakasi Council – CK; Palikve Council – MATAP

Appendix 3:
Applied Participatory Action Research in Guatemala

Here, as an example of PAR in Latin America, I outline a project conducted in Guatemala in 1999 by Brinton Lykes, in conjunction with the Association of Mayan Ixil Women, which is described in the *Handbook of Action Research*. This project suggests links both with Boal's early text *Theatre of the Oppressed* and with more recent developments dealt with in *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*.

The researcher was invited by the Ixil women, who had first encountered him in the context of another project in 1992, to help them in rebuilding their society and improving the conditions of their life, which had suffered enormously from the occurrences of the war which had been going on for thirty six years. The trauma to be addressed included massacres, the burning of their villages, disappearances, extensive resettlement and exile. Only 54% of the population had access to clean drinking water, 57% to medical care; literacy was 65% but only 79 women for every 100 men could read and write. Girls were sent to school less frequently than boys, because they were needed at home. The Ixil women from Chajul are one of twenty one groups of Maya in the country. In 1999 the total population was eleven million, out of which 51% were under 18. The women had formed a committee with the aim of trying to improve the quality of community life in the face of ongoing use of force, severe poverty and few opportunities for training or education. The project drew on artistic means as resources for PAR.

The effects of the long war can only briefly be indicated here (trauma, long-lasting fear, perceptual disturbances, unprocessed sorrow, flight or active resistance, institutional racism, destruction of spiritual roots, hundreds of damaged villages, rape of girls and women, foetuses torn from the womb of pregnant women, murder carried out in front of family members, women and their children rejected by the society following rape).

In order to work with the Ixil-speaking women, very few of whom spoke Spanish and even fewer could read or write, the working group (likewise Ixil women) formed by Brinton Lykes looked for methods which would enable everyone to be involved in the communication

process. The women of the ›Association of Maya Ixil Women‹ (ADMI) (788) decided to use photography, based on a project in China (Visual Voices: 100 Photographs of Village China by the Women of the Yunnan Province, 1995) (789). They wanted to document their life in images and tell the story of the violence, as a way of avoiding further violence in future. At the same time they wanted to use their story to make links with other women in Guatemala who were trying to take similar steps and to acquire new capacities and strategies. They worked out together a plan of action which involved collecting data and analysing it. As project initiators, the Ixil women travelled to the neighbouring villages and took photos of the women and their families; at the same time they carried out interviews. Through collecting many stories from the region, they were able to sensitise themselves and others to the various kinds of violence and to the complex nature of the challenge posed by the work of investigating them. Later on the initial group of twenty photographers was joined by sixty-five more. The photos they had taken formed a basis for choosing the next set of themes to explore. The initial theme was work; followed by family, health and illness, religion, culture and traditional practices. From the results, each photographer chose five to seven photos per 24-photo roll of film and recounted the stories behind them in a small-group session. In doing this she also commented on the reasons why she had chosen these images. Then a further group analysed and organised the images according to themes. The discussions were very inspiring and motivational. For example, a photo of a small girl carrying wood gave rise to discussion about child-labour, schooling, poverty, marketing, and the cost of staple foodstuffs. Other pictures related directly to violent occurrences which the witnesses had often not previously been able to talk about. The interviews and pictures made it possible to tell these stories and to include others who had been similarly affected. Consequently a collective picture of the past could be established. Each stage of the work was recorded and all the outcomes assimilated into the collective resource. From several thousand photos sixty were finally selected and made into a book, along with short narratives based on the interviews. According to the project co-ordinator, this project (*PhotoVoice*) led to a better understanding of the life of women in the region. The women themselves also learned how valuable it was to bear witness to their experiences for the next generation, who might otherwise not believe that such things had occurred. Telling the stories

and creating the hope that this kind of violence would never occur again was a great relief for people. And international attention and interest focussed on their situation would strengthen this possibility.

The project was undoubtedly very challenging. The most complicated factor was the the division and application of finance, but in addition the presence of non-indigenous outsiders in a very poor community brought up many questions. Unavoidable equipment costs made the continuation of the work problematic without outside assistance. In spite of this the results were impressive and served to strengthen the community. The women were proud of their new capacities and had a new perception of themselves. Some of them continued to develop their linguistic skills and became translators for the community. Most of the men supported these activities although some did oppose them. The women's organisation ADMI also received support and recognition from the mayor, who was in favour of their work. All these things had to be negotiated and that also led to a further strengthening of the position of the women. For the men it was a challenge to deal with a new situation in which their wives and daughters, mothers and sisters took on new roles. There was a good deal of humour between married and widowed women, because the former did not have to ask their husbands for permission to take part in projects any more, whereas the latter did.

The home-made photos showed up the exploitation of the Guatemalan Maya peoples by the tourist postcard industry. This situation could not be explored in the project itself, but the people engaged in it were alerted to it. The project is one of many carried out by Maya communities using painting, performance, story-telling and photography. A photo represents first and foremost the perspective of the person taking it, but it very soon takes on a life of its own and becomes a stimulus to talk about things which had been taboo previously. It functions as a catalyst. The project report mentions that ADMI independently devised and carried out further initiatives using pictures. Some of the women involved became active in peace work and in promoting their rights.

Appendix 4

Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth

April 22, 2010
World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of
Mother Earth
Cochabamba, Bolivia

Preamble

We, the peoples and nations of Earth:

considering that we are all part of Mother Earth, an indivisible, living community of interrelated and interdependent beings with a common destiny;

gratefully acknowledging that Mother Earth is the source of life, nourishment and learning and provides everything we need to live well;

recognizing that the capitalist system and all forms of depredation, exploitation, abuse and contamination have caused great destruction, degradation and disruption of Mother Earth, putting life as we know it today at risk through phenomena such as climate change;

convinced that in an interdependent living community it is not possible to recognize the rights of only human beings without causing an imbalance within Mother Earth;

affirming that to guarantee human rights it is necessary to recognize and defend the rights of Mother Earth and all beings in her and that there are existing cultures, practices and laws that do so;

conscious of the urgency of taking decisive, collective action to transform structures and systems that cause climate change and other threats to Mother Earth;

proclaim this Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, and call on the General Assembly of the United Nation to adopt it, as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations of the world, and to the end that every individual and institution takes responsibility for promoting through teaching, education, and consciousness raising, respect for the rights recognized in this Declaration and ensure through prompt and progressive measures and mechanisms, national and international, their universal and effective recognition and observance among all peoples and States in the world.

Article 1. Mother Earth

(1) Mother Earth is a living being.

(2) Mother Earth is a unique, indivisible, self-regulating community of interrelated beings that sustains, contains and reproduces all beings.

(3) Each being is defined by its relationships as an integral part of Mother Earth.

(4) The inherent rights of Mother Earth are inalienable in that they arise from the same source as existence.

(5) Mother Earth and all beings are entitled to all the inherent rights recognized in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as may be made between organic and inorganic beings, species, origin, use to human beings, or any other status.

(6) Just as human beings have human rights, all other beings also have rights which are specific to their species or kind and appropriate for their role and function within the communities within which they exist.

(7) The rights of each being are limited by the rights of other beings and any conflict between their rights must be resolved in a way that maintains the integrity, balance and health of Mother Earth.

Article 2. Inherent Rights of Mother Earth

(1) Mother Earth and all beings of which she is composed have the following inherent rights:

(a) the right to life and to exist;

(b) the right to be respected;

(c) the right to regenerate its bio-capacity and to continue its vital cycles and processes free from human disruptions;

(d) the right to maintain its identity and integrity as a distinct, self-regulating and interrelated being;

(e) the right to water as a source of life;

(f) the right to clean air;

(g) the right to integral health;

(h) the right to be free from contamination, pollution and toxic or radioactive waste;

(i) the right to not have its genetic structure modified or disrupted in a manner that threatens its integrity or vital and healthy functioning;

(j) the right to full and prompt restoration for violation of the rights recognized in this Declaration caused by human activities;

(2) Each being has the right to a place and to play its role in Mother Earth for her harmonious functioning.

(3) Every being has the right to wellbeing and to live free from torture or cruel treatment by human beings.

Article 3. Obligations of human beings to Mother Earth

(1) Every human being is responsible for respecting and living in harmony with Mother Earth.

(2) Human beings, all States, and all public and private institutions must:

(a) act in accordance with the rights and obligations recognized in this Declaration;

(b) recognize and promote the full implementation and enforcement of the rights and obligations recognized in this Declaration;

(c) promote and participate in learning, analysis, interpretation and communication about how to live in harmony with Mother Earth in accordance with this Declaration;

(d) ensure that the pursuit of human wellbeing contributes to the wellbeing of Mother Earth, now and in the future;

(e) establish and apply effective norms and laws for the defence, protection and conservation of the rights of Mother Earth;

(f) respect, protect, conserve and where necessary, restore the integrity, of the vital ecological cycles, processes and balances of Mother Earth;

(g) guarantee that the damages caused by human violations of the inherent rights recognized in this Declaration are rectified and that those responsible are held accountable for restoring the integrity and health of Mother Earth;

(h) empower human beings and institutions to defend the rights of Mother Earth and of all beings;

(i) establish precautionary and restrictive measures to prevent human activities from causing species extinction, the destruction of ecosystems or the disruption of ecological cycles;

(j) guarantee peace and eliminate nuclear, chemical and biological weapons;

(k) promote and support practices of respect for Mother Earth and all beings, in accordance with their own cultures, traditions and customs;

(l) promote economic systems that are in harmony with Mother Earth and in accordance with the rights recognized in this Declaration.

Article 4. Definitions

(1) The term »being« includes ecosystems, natural communities, species and all other natural entities which exist as part of Mother Earth.

(2) Nothing in this Declaration restricts the recognition of other inherent rights of all beings or specified beings.

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Where two dates appear the second is the date of first publication.

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