

CREATING A MEDIA DEVICE

WHAT IS IT?

The research format¹ *Creating a Media Device* focuses on developing a technological operation or media object as well as testing (see also *Testing in Performance*) it through practice and performance. The format is rooted in media theory and combines technological and performative experimentation². Modern and postmodern media theory teaches that instead of being tools for transporting content or supporting communication, media not only shape but create content and in fact whole modes of communication (McLuhan 1964). By appearing to merely transport the content provided, media disguise this process of creation. However, the fact that media technology forms and changes practices can also be seen as a chance for artistic experimentation (for example in the works that LIGNA has produced since 1997, such as *Secret Radio*, 2014). This art-based experimentation combines historical research, technological development and performative practice³. The media device or tool itself transmits, translates or amplifies information as it moves from one field, context or public to another, and thereby takes an active part in the emergence of information, field and public. It is understood as the material basis for physical operations of communication, perception and cognition (Krämer/Bredenkamp 2003: 18). Other than a method or procedure, the media device or tool is an entity in itself and as such part of technical history. The research set-up implies that newly developed devices create new forms of representation, interaction and experience and, therefore, insights, also regarding the intrinsic relation between knowledge, media and practice (Gethmann/Hauser 2009: 10). At the same time, the research enquires into the social field that is targeted. As the device needs to be applied to a specific si-

CONTEXT

1 Research formats: A single research format is realised in a specific context to configure the collaborative research of different experts in a physical way. It can structure one complete research project or become a smaller element within another format. The process starts with a desire, need, or question that brings together the participants as co-researchers, creating a collective agenda and interest in the research process. This collective interest has to be established before the participating researchers are able to perform, test materials, act, or assemble collaboratively. The co-researchers should be able to arrange, rehearse and plan details and activities for performative events. The activities and events then need to be evaluated or compared in relation to the underlying needs, questions and desires. Only after this evaluation can it be decided whether the same process should be repeated, — whether the rules and conditions should be adjusted or modified, whether the format should be changed entirely or whether researchers should proceed to another application/publication.

2 Experiment: Within PABR, we differentiate between experiment and exploration. Explorations enter an unknown area of interest without a concrete line of inquiry, whereas the experiment needs a controlled space to build a research set-up that enables concrete outcomes or solutions to questions, such as new artistic or performative techniques, practices or formats. To experiment is understood as an act of invention, discovery, and creation. In its continued repetition, however, productive differences are uncovered (Berg 2009, Rickli 2015, Hinz/Kranixfeld 2018).

3 Performative practices: The performativity of practice refers to the ability of ritualised and continuous actions to constitute reality. The term follows the linguistic concept by John L. Austin reformulated by Judith Butler, that understands language and movement not only as descriptive or assumptive but as having the potential to create reality. Through continuous use, acts and actions can shape bodies, perspectives, and the subjectively perceived world (Butler 1993).

CORPUS

I **AMPLIFICATION! – A Collective Invocation**

(2013): In *AMPLIFICATION! A Collective Invocation*, Sylvi Kretzschmar initiated a hybrid of live art and political demonstration. Led by the performance of ten women with megaphones, audience, activists, residents, neighbours and passers-by formed a protest march to the site of the so-called Esso houses at Hamburg's Reeperbahn, which were soon to be demolished in an area severely affected by gentrification. The Megaphone Choir became, in the literal sense, amplification and reinforcement of voices of residents, tenants, and neighbours of the buildings. An all-female choir 'armed' with megaphones spoke and sang their interview statements. It assembled acoustically the knowledge of the interviewees as citizen experts (Alltagsexpert*innen) of their district. Kretzschmar, Sylvi, *AMPLIFICATION! A Collective Invocation*, 2013, Hamburg.

II *Museum of Moments* (2014): As an auditory collection, the media installation of the *Museum of Moments* gathered individual memory fragments of senior citizens. At the same time, filmic portraits of elderly people quietly visualising past moments were shown on twelve large-format screens in a room in the form of a rotunda. The *Museum of Moments* was a collection of memories in which senior citizens were asked about images from their lives that have shaped them, about images that will remain, their very personal inner photographs. Their silent gaze met that of the audience. In the installation, the subjective spaces of the viewer overlap with those of the narrator, the listening spaces with the perspectives chosen: what is told, what is left out, what is kept silent?

Stefanie Lorey, *Museum of Moments*, 2014, Hamburg.

III *City_Neighbourhood_Videos_II*: For her research project *City_Neighbourhood_Videos_II*, Griebach assembled teenagers of a media group from Sonnenland in Hamburg to create their own internet videos about their 'outside' experience of urban publics. Together with the teenagers the idea was developed to display the videos on the passenger TV monitors in the busses and subway trains on the network of the Hamburg public transport system. For this special kind of public screening, two very different clips were realized: The first one consisted of different 360-degree pans of the centre of Hamburg. The second short clip was produced like an advertising video by the media group for the media group.

Griebach, Dorothea, *City_Neighborhood_Videos_II*, 2013, Hamburg.

tuation for testing, the interrelation between device, practice and field becomes productive. Thus, a media device or tool can be connected to research questions such as: What could a political speech be like that is involved in the political process, emerging from it, instead of initiating it, directing or controlling it? (Kretzschmar, *AMPLIFICATION! A Collective Invocation*^I, 2013). Or, in an art context: How can a collection be presented and experienced as a performance? (Lorey, *Museum of Moments*^{II}, 2014 [Lorey 2017])

WHAT IS RESEARCHED?

All known media tools can be at the centre of this format – such as, for example, PA systems or video channels (*City_Neighbourhood_Videos_II*^{III} [Griebach 2017]), or digital gaming environments, but also older media such as paper. In order to develop these *Media Devices* further, historical research is required as well as an analysis of the field targeted with the tool. Actors in the field should be invited to participate in developing the analysis. Sylvi Kretzschmar, for example, researched the media history of public address systems as well as the anti-gentrification movement in St. Pauli in 2013, connecting with different members of that movement. She then developed a 'Megaphone Choir' (*AMPLIFICATION! A Collective Invocation*, 2013), a new technology and practice of social amplification focusing on the performativity of the megaphone. The FUN-DUS THEATER/Theatre of Research analysed the history of apparatuses measuring well-being and founded the *Society for the Invention of Measuring Procedures*^{IV} (2012). The research team from the theatre worked together with children from local schools in order to co-create measuring tools and procedures which could potentially counteract the given performances of measuring in the context of schools and education as well as their respective power relations.

In trying to develop the device in question, this research format generates knowledge⁴ about the tool and its use, but also about the field. Testing the device combines both of these aspects and puts them in a performative feedback loop, in which the device and the field of application both change. Furthermore, creating a new device offers an alternative basis to reflect on other types of media and their performativity.

The main researchers⁵ in this format are those who take part in all aspects of knowledge production: field research, historical research, technological research. Co-researchers are often technicians and actors from within the social field, who take an active part in developing and testing the new tools and practices, as well as creating content (as in *Society for the Invention of Measuring Procedures*). A crucial group of participants are actors such as, for example, tenants (as in *AMPLIFICATION! A Collective Invocation*) or senior citizens (as in *Museum of Moments*), whose voices, actions and stories are being transmitted, amplified, measured and collected. Another group of participants are the audiences and publics that experience the tool as performance, like the visitors of Stefanie Lorey's collection, or fellow protestors at a political demonstration witnessing the Megaphone Choir.

IV Society for the Invention of Measurement Procedures (2012): In the *Society for the Invention of Measurement Procedures* children were asked what they would like to measure: boredom or adventurousness, the feelings they have for each other, how much time they have for the things they like to do, how many adults actually have a know-it-all syndrome or what the quality of the food is at their school. At the same time, students from three different universities and disciplines explored the art of measuring in a one-week research workshop. Theatre practices and exercises were investigated as potential tools of measurement. FUNDUS THEATER/Theatre of Research, *Society for the Invention of Measurement Procedures*, 2012, Hamburg.

ARTISTIC MEANS

Each media device has a history that might be related to former artistic uses, and is often actually based on historical art-based research⁶, as for example Kretzschmar shows in her analysis of Athanasius Kircher's re-

4 Knowledge production: PABR formats and designs are governed by the pursuit of a question, a desire, a need or by the attempt to find a solution for a problem. This initial framing poses a functional background for the researchers to evaluate the outcomes of the performative events and research activities, and therefore produce specific answers to the functioning of hypotheses or working solutions. For the evaluation, several moments of presenting, analysing, reflecting and discussing results are implemented within the operational steps. Results can include solutions, knowledge, theories, practices, artefacts, feelings, etcetera. Many outcomes can be verbalised or visualised, but some manifest in a way that eludes the discursive grasp. Knowledge production within PABR means that explicit and implicit forms of knowledge are valued equally. The researchers try to choose forms of presentation and analysis that make these forms recognisable. It has to be made clear that this analysis is one of many possible research narratives. Besides, there might be diverse research narratives that can be known and recognised, but also some that remain unknown to the researcher. PABR is distributed knowledge.

5 Researchers/co-researchers/participants: Researchers within PABR are those who are involved in the whole research process from beginning to end and are responsible for the shape and progression of the process. Co-researchers are invited to collaborate and join the research process for shorter or longer periods of time. Participants are invited to join the research only at certain points, for instance during its public presentation, and are involved in different ways. In order to organise participation on equal terms, it is crucial to recognise and acknowledge the different questions, interests, responsibilities, capacities and availabilities of the different co-researchers and participants and to define their role within the process.

6 Art-based research: Participatory Art Based Research differs from other approaches and methodologies of art-based research by situating re-



search on amplification (Kretzschmar forthcoming). To start the research process, researchers need to compile a general historical corpus of given designs or inventions and an account of related technological operations and performative practices.

It is crucial to link the research to technical and technological expertise in order to actually work on the tool as an apparatus. Lorey, for example, collaborated with engineers from the technical departments of the Hafen-City University in order to incorporate their knowledge of indoor navigation systems into her interactive video display.

It can also be argued that the transdisciplinary loop between the technological development, the use of the tool in performative practice and the feedback from actors has to be organised and facilitated using artistic expertise. Hence, the research set-up requires artistic experience in using media devices innovatively within the context of artworks and artistic experience in facilitating participatory performance⁷ events. Artists/researchers lead a process in which the device is tuned, restructured, and designed according to aesthetical and practical challenges. This can happen through a series (see also *Laboratory Series*) of prototypes or through many different uses that each shape the device just a little. Does the device support performative practice as it was intended? Does it produce something else? How does the perception of the media content differ between audiences on the one hand and participants on the other hand? Using the device for various audiences or participants or social fields can strengthen the knowledge and robustness of the device and its impact.

POTENTIALS, PROBLEMS AND OUTCOMES

Once the device is developed and tested in performance (see *Testing in Performance*), it can become a tool to be transported into a

variety of other fields for further observation and evaluation. Often, the performative practice that has been developed in relation to the tool will travel from one context to another. As the device might be linked to an individual artistic position, further uses or alternative devices developed by other artists can be compared, contextualising the research within art history and performance studies. Lorey, for example, developed a research design⁸ to investigate performative collections (see also *Performative Collections*). A collection of memories contributed by senior citi-

search neither exclusively within the arts – as artistic research about and for the arts (Borgdorff 2006), nor mainly in between art and science – as producing a different kind of knowledge that is disqualified by established academic research standards (Busch 2016). See also PABR - What is PABR and what is the online-resource about?

7 Participatory performance: Participatory art describes a form of art that includes the audience in the creative process or in the performative event as co-producers. Its origins can be traced to the Futurist and Dadaist performances from 1910 onwards. Later, in the 1950s, Allan Kaprow designed performances as happenings, where the audience was invited to participate in producing the event. Although participatory art has its origins in a fine art context, the art form is inherently linked to theatre and performance, as people constitute the central artistic medium and material. Participatory performance tends to aim at group dynamics, social situations, and providing tools for claiming participation in social and political contexts as well (Bishop 2012).

8 Research design: The original projects our research formats are based on were developed in the frame of the two postgraduate programmes, where methodologies had to be considered within a research design that fulfils academic standards. However, our formats are also intended to be applicable outside of an academic context, in art projects, education, or activist action. Researchers are invited to pick, choose, mix and further develop the proposed research formats within a bigger research design or within a single PABR project. Within a wider research design, several research formats can interlink, modify and support each other.

zens and presented with a new interactive technology for video installations is her own example of the genre in question that is then confronted with other examples by different artists (Lorey 2017). This positions the format also within “research for art” (Borgdorf 2007), as the device can be seen as a new tool for further artistic production not only by the researcher, but by other artists as well.

In this format the question how the research process and its outcomes⁹ should be documented¹⁰ is often partially answered through the tools and practices themselves, which necessarily include certain procedures of recording, formatting and archiving.

The creation and performative testing of media devices is not a new invention, but a found practice: It seems that this specific kind of participatory art-based research has existed throughout the history of media toolmaking and design in various ways, often bringing together artists, technicians, designers and publics in innovative constellations (Peters 2011: 79, and 83).

9 Knowledge production: PABR formats and designs are governed by the pursuit of a question, a desire, a need or by the attempt to find a solution for a problem. This initial framing poses a functional background for the researchers to evaluate the outcomes of the performative events and research activities, and therefore produce specific answers to the functioning of hypotheses or working solutions. For the evaluation, several moments of presenting, analysing, reflecting and discussing results are implemented within the operational steps. Results can include solutions, knowledge, theories, practices, artefacts, feelings, etcetera. Many outcomes can be verbalised or visualised, but some manifest in a way that eludes the discursive grasp. Knowledge production within PABR means that explicit and implicit forms of knowledge are valued equally. The researchers try to choose forms of presentation and analysis that make these forms recognisable. It has to be made clear that this analysis is one of many possible research narratives. Besides, there might be diverse research narratives that can be known and recognised, but also some that remain unknown to the researcher. PABR is distributed knowledge.

10 Documentation: How processes of PABR are documented depends on each project and cannot be determined in a general way. Researchers are advised to put documentation measures in place that help to store and translate processes and outcomes for those contexts in which she wants the project to proliferate. Documentation should be intertwined with moments of presentation and of gathering research material. Each project should develop a documentation method appropriate to the project, which may consist of several forms of documentation. Performances can be documented by video recordings, whereas collections, archives and media artefacts may become their own documentation. However, the collective activities are fleeting and perceived differently by each participant. The same event can be evaluated differently from the outside than from the perspectives of the performing participants. For comparison and evaluation purposes, these different experiences need to be represented in some form: collective writing, questionnaires, drawings, transcriptions of discussions or interviews, formal responses, and so on.

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WORKS/PROJECTS

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