

WHAT IS PABR AND WHAT IS THIS ONLINE-RESOURCE ABOUT?

For more than two decades, artists, scientists, scholars and researchers of different backgrounds have been discussing and exploring artistic and art-based research. Many different proposals and concepts have been developed and tested. *Participatory Art Based Research* (PABR) is one of them.

Participatory Art Based Research differs from other approaches and methodologies by situating research 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). Instead, PABR understands research first and foremost as a triangular relation and interaction between art, science and society. It understands the arts as providing crucial resources, toolboxes and opportunities to change the relation between research and the public and to create research practices in and for society.

In contrast to education, which is a constitutional right in most modern societies, research is still a privilege of the few. But demands for change are getting louder and come from a wide range of directions such as science studies (Latour 1998), cultural education (Peters 2019) and critical discourse (EFAP 2019). In 2006, Arjun Appadurai first demanded the right to research for everyone, arguing from the perspective of the global south. To make research more inclusive, more democratic, is an important task in societies that are increasingly based on commercialised knowledge production. Opportunities are created and strategies legitimised by research. Therefore, it is crucial that research practices are made accessible to everybody. When research is opened to the many, this opening

does not only follow ethical principles but improves the quality of research as such.

Participatory Art Based Research, as it is presented in this online publication, has been developed within the framework of two PhD programmes (2012-2017), the first publicly funded PhD programmes in Germany that allowed for art-based research. Other than many similar programmes today it was not situated at an art academy but was conducted initially by an alliance between the department Metropolitan Cultures (*Kultur der Metropole*) of HafenCity University and two research-oriented cultural institutions, K3 – Zentrum für Choreographie | Tanzplan Hamburg and FUNDUS THEATER/Theatre of Research in Hamburg. The programme focussed on performative art practices in relation to research in the humanities and was based on the expertise of the cultural institutions to engage emerging publics through participation.

From these starting points, *Participatory Art Based Research* can roughly be mapped by describing three trajectories, which often get entangled within PABR projects:

FIRST TRAJECTORY – HUMANITIES GO EXPERIMENTAL

In the humanities, knowledge about the performativity of the everyday, the institutional, the social, the urban, the political, etcetera, is expanding. Combined with performative art practices, this knowledge can be used to build hypotheses for experimental interventions and further practical exploration. The agenda of this kind of experimentation is often two-fold: On the one hand, knowledge from the humanities is tested in different fields. Thereby, it is questioned and augmented from the perspective of cultural practice. On the ot-

her hand, practice triggers questions about how the knowledge produced by the humanities can actually be used for transformative change. Thus, humanities and performative art practices can be combined and lead to an experimental turn that can take very different forms and shapes depending on the specific disciplines and practices involved. For example, analyses from media history can inform public media experiments; ethnographical observation can be combined with performative intervention in a feedback loop of action and reflection; a critique of archives can lead to the creation of new forms of collections; etcetera.

SECOND TRAJECTORY – PROCESSES OF ARTISTIC EXPLORATION ARE RENDERED PUBLIC

Questioning the representational structure and exclusivity of research corresponds to developments in the performing arts in the last decades, which have turned their focus from product to process. Performance practices and strategies have been converted into tools, which are no longer bound to stage and audience, but can be used to create various forms of participation. Both tendencies combined have transformed many formats and techniques that were previously used exclusively for artistic production into formats of exploration and public participation. What previously was a rehearsal is now a participatory performance. In this sense, participatory performances can be understood as public try-outs, where exploratory observation and creation coincide. Research visits to specific sites can become public presentations, improvisation can turn into a technique to engage with an audience, the cube of the studio can become the site for exchange between artists and members of the public, performances can be framed as or become assemblies, etcetera.

THIRD TRAJECTORY – EVERYDAY KNOWLEDGE AND ACTIVIST PRACTICES- CONFRONT ACADEMIA AND THE ARTS WITH SOCIAL EXPERIMENTATION

Research and knowledge have traditionally been performed in hierarchical formats. The male educated senior researcher explains his research results to the public. He speaks from a privileged position of research that is similar to that of the artist genius, who is creating a work to be received and appreciated by the public. In contrast to that, PABR values knowledge stemming from everyday practices and life experience as equal to academic or artistic kinds of knowledge. The PhD programme has initially been founded in response to new ways of assembling and participating created by activists of the Real Democracy movements of 2011. Subsequently, many of the research projects tried to enter into a dialogue with activists and other experts of the everyday, while art-based tools helped to access, acknowledge and translate their expertise.

Participatory Art Based Research happens where these three different trajectories – humanities go experimental, artistic processes go public and social experimentation challenges hierarchies of knowledge production – cross and get entangled. Combining all three trajectories, the proposed research formats aim to include expertise and agendas that come neither from the humanities nor from the arts, but from the field in question. This expertise and these agendas can only be heard, included and activated when the outcomes of the research will in turn also be made accessible and are useful to participants themselves.

From this perspective, participation aims to become collaboration. Even if a research set-up or design is shaped by a single researcher and participation within it will never be completely horizontal, it has to organise processes in which everybody can become a co-researcher. That brings PABR close to ap-

proaches and methods of participatory research and action research or its progressions (see Reason/Bradbury 2013), which ask for research as “social action” (Lewin 1946). The contribution of the (performing) arts to these approaches is their expertise in organising participatory processes, which in turn can create models for new types of social action, new structures and new contracts.

Researchers in the field face the challenge to build research set-ups within these dynamics and complexities. This online resource focuses on how to do that: How can one create research formats that combine knowledge and methodologies from the humanities and the arts with public participation and engagement? In analysing fifty research projects that have been conducted within the frame of, or in association with, the two PhD programmes, we found that these set-ups often start as hybrids of well-established working methods (such as the rehearsal) and public presentation formats (such as the lecture or the collection).

We found that a set of similar questions always has to be answered when devising and hosting participatory art-based research processes: How is the team of researchers and participants with their different responsibilities and agendas organised? Who addresses whom, and in what ways? In what ways is action linked to documentation in order to bring forth outcomes on different levels? How are feedback processes organised for various participants in between activities? How can hypotheses and results be tested in public? How can shared research processes be organised in a way that allows for knowledge to be distributed? How can art spaces and other realities be made to overlap in order to create laboratories for change?

In this online resource, we differentiate and describe a number of characteristic set-ups that we would like to suggest for conducting *Participatory Art Based Research* and

developing it further. They all fulfil the requirements defined above, but they still articulate very different possibilities of how to bring arts, humanities and publics together in research. Though the set-ups are distinct, they can overlap or coexist. A *Heterotopian Zone*, for example, can include a range of *Try-out Institutions*, a *Try-out Institution* can stage *Interventions into the Real*, *One-on-One Encounters* can be combined with a *Performative Collection*, etcetera.

The research formats presented here are the result of analysing a corpus of fifty projects. A first collection of data at the end of the official duration of the programmes showed that the goal to involve people from outside the contexts of art and academia was reached: projects counted no less than 750 co-researchers, people who were intensely involved in participatory research, such as the children collaborators in Hannah Kowalski’s project (*Yes No Maybe*, 2013), the activists of Hamburg Gängeviertel in Michael Ziehl’s project (*Building Symposia Gängeviertel*, 2015), or the members of Sylvi Kretzschmar’s Megaphone Choir (*AMPLIFICATION! A Collective Invocation*, 2013). A further 1500 people took part in participatory research at some point in the projects. In addition, more than 160 collaborations between various institutions took place to organise and support collective research, including not only cultural and academic institutions but also schools, churches, community centres and small companies.

All the research projects investigated assemblies, art, participation and the performance of citizenship in contemporary urban society. Therefore, many of the research formats presented require some form of historical analysis, while their main objective is to address questions of contemporary und future ways of living and working together.

From this corpus, we identified those methodologies that actually worked, and extrapolated common characteristics and formats.



They are presented here to facilitate their transposition to and their use in other fields and contexts.

Hamburg 24th of April 2020

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Cite as:

Peters, Sibylle/Gunsilius, Maike/Matthias, Sebastian/Evert, Kerstin/Wildner, Kathrin (2020): “What is PABR and what is this online-resource about?”.

Available at: <https://pab-research.de/what-is-pabr-and-what-is-this-online-resource-about/>