

Investigating media artifacts with children

Conceptualizing a collaborative exploration of the sociomaterial conduct of everyday life

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Investigating media artifacts with children

Conceptualizing a collaborative exploration of
the sociomaterial conduct of everyday life

PhD dissertation

The PhD program Social Psychology of Everyday Life

Department of Psychology and Educational Studies

Roskilde University

May 2014

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Investigating media artifacts with children. Conceptualizing a collaborative exploration of the sociomaterial conduct of everyday life

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Preface

Niklas Chimirri's PhD dissertation investigates the significance of media technologies for children's learning, exploration of the world and the development of their conduct of everyday life. Based on empirical investigations conducted in a kindergarten in Berlin, the study presents a theoretical-analytical framework focusing especially on how researchers and practitioners can take children's everyday experiences and actions with media artifacts seriously – and learn from them in relation to a democratic and participatory re-configuration of psychological research as well as educational practice for and with children.

The dissertation has been developed in the PhD program “Social Psychology of Everyday Life”. As an autonomous piece of work it is on the one hand engaged in its own research problems, interests and unique ways of developing knowledge and insight; on the other hand it contributes to the development of an emerging field of psychological research: the social psychology of everyday life. Research in the PhD program “Social Psychology of Everyday Life” investigates the everyday life of human subjects in their cultural and societal relations. The program builds on transdisciplinary developments of theory, knowledge and methodology rooted in research problems of social life and connected to the everyday life of people. In this way the program is distinguished by a problem-orientated and transdisciplinary approach to social psychology in a broad sense.

To include the perspective of children into research has a long tradition in psychology, however it became nearly forgotten with the increasing dominance of the experimental statistical psychology in the 20th century. In recent years the situation is in transformation: a variety of different approaches including cultural-historical activity theory and subject-scientific psychologies are systematically re-enacting the perspectives of children and the complex reality of their everyday world in the psychological conception. Niklas Chimirri's project is entrenched in this movement building on critical subject-scientific psychologies and a body of interdisciplinary work ranging from process philosophy, media studies to dialogical theory. The dissertation is engaged in developing a psychological theory and research practice which takes the subjectivity and agency of children seriously, trying to systematically capture the connection between children's and adults' conduct of everyday life.

This engagement enables the development of a conception which not only puts the perspectives of children in a critical relation to the perspectives of adults (parents, pedagogues, researchers), but opens up the view on the role of technological artifacts for children's learning and exploration of the world. The project reveals in detail how the challenge of understanding the significance of media technologies in children's life as well as transforming adequately educational learning practices requires to take systematically the participants' perspectives into account – including those of the children. This dissertation is a very thoughtful piece of work offering substantial discussions and contributions for the psychological study of children and media in and across the educational contexts of everyday life.

Charlotte Højholt and Ernst Schraube
Roskilde University, PhD program *Social Psychology of Everyday Life*
May 2014

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Introduction:

Staging the problem

Amanda sticks her doll-covered hand through the computer screen's plastic frame, as if she was trying to address the audience more directly, to proverbially be in their faces. She does not seem to care that the physical properties of a fully assembled computer screen would not allow for such an action. Right here and right now, it is possible, and not only that: The audience supports her doings with laughter and reinforcing comments. But this will not remain the only breach of the 'authentic' or intended characteristics of an old tube-run computer monitor. Later Amanda will walk around the table-screen setup in order to involve the audience of fellow kindergarten companions – including me – more directly, insistently asking us to collaborate on staging the next hand doll play, thus switching and transforming the traditional roles of audience and artist, of user and producer, of message recipient and bearer. The material and imaginative limitations built into a regular computer-screen-arrangement are sidestepped to make room for a number of situated possibilities for acting through and around the screen in ways that make me temporarily forget about one of my research foci: Namely that I am also there to investigate those exact material limitations that for a moment seem to be eradicated, or at least far far away from whatever it is I am experiencing in that half hour of re-imagining and re-situating an object known to all participants from other everyday situations and uses.¹

This sociomaterial interplay emerged while I was participating in a daycare practice in Germany's capital Berlin in late spring and early summer 2011. Throughout a period lasting four months, I was regularly visiting this daycare so as to investigate how young children aged three to six relate to everyday media artifacts. I wrote a research diary, recorded some 20 hours of video footage of children's shared actions and around 50 hours of audio footage. I conducted situated interviews or conversations with children and staff as well as problem-oriented semi-structured interviews with most of the staff and a few parents. Instead of solely adopting an adult perspective on the child-media relationship by focusing on what children *ought to* do with media, the study's aim was to focus on what children *actually do* with media. I thereby intended to question seemingly ubiquitous discourses, which deemed young children to be at the mercy of society's technological development, by emphasizing the children's own perspectives on electronic media, particularly

¹ These re-situated phenomena descriptions of experienced situations are highlighted via indentation throughout this dissertation. Indentations are exclusively used for descriptions which refer to experiences made while participating in the daycare I investigated.

their perspectives on the historically relatively novel, digital media artifacts (like digital cameras, smartphones, hand-held consoles, other mobile and less mobile computers, etc. – both in terms of their ‘content’ and of their ‘form’). As the initial description shows, this question is inseparable from the question of what children do in relation to technological arrangements in broader terms: As long as the children ascribed a media-related meaning to a thing, a thing like the plastic frame of a dismantled computer screen, a thing that is reminiscent of a digital medium, which still offers the possibility of relating to it as a computer screen, this thing became of analytical interest to me. Both epistemically and methodically, I wanted my study to be guided by the children, guided by their sense-meaning-relations, by what they deemed exciting and relevant to act with, around, on. I wanted to take their perspectives seriously by taking their actions seriously, their reasons for getting engaged with stuff, with the media’s tangible materiality, with media narratives and media characters. Understanding their fascination for *something*, I assumed, would be the first step towards arranging meaningful learning practices with children – collaborative learning practices that purposefully involve such things and herewith overcome heated and one-sided adult debates on whether the (virtual) presence of digital media artifacts in pedagogical-educational settings is either boon or bane.

Media in children’s everyday lives: Beyond boon or bane

The role of media artifacts in children’s everyday lives is typically investigated and discussed from adult perspectives on this relationship. This has both political and conceptual reasons: On the political hand, there is an underlying agreement that it is adults who are responsible for arranging and shaping children’s learning relations to the social and the material world, for instance by setting up and developing pedagogical-educational institutions. On the conceptual hand, this is related to the seemingly unquestionable presumption that it should primarily be the adults who *know* best what is good for a child’s life, without necessarily asking the children themselves. In other words: Scientific concepts, whose purpose is to better understand and act on human life conditions, too seldom help in systematically including children’s perspectives and knowledge into adult considerations.

Both of these presumptions, therefore, may turn out to be self-fulfilling prophecies: If adults rule over the political as well as the scientific agenda by

setting up conditions that prioritize adults' points of view, who is there to question whether it is exclusively the adults who know best what is good for children? The ontologically drawn schism between adults and children creates epistemic boundaries, whose consequence is the marginalization of the children's perspectives in the ongoing arrangement and shaping of conditions – even when these conditions are primarily set up for the sake of the children based on the adults' best knowledge. Exploring media artifacts together with children through analytically prioritizing their perspectives on media is thus an attempt to avoid preconceiving of the adults as the sole everyday life experts, and it includes questioning my adult expert role throughout the research. Borrowing a formulation by developmental psychologist Barbara Rogoff, I instead wanted to “engage in a creative and open process with an unknowable future” (Rogoff, 2011, p. 292) in collaboration with children. Such a creative and open process undermines seemingly immovable categorizations and also rejects preclusions which construct media artifact use as being either boon or bane for a child's everyday life. Totally opposite understandings is what much research on the child-media relationship has kept on reproducing: Either conceive of the child as a media-savvy and absolutely competent media user in its own right, or as someone who is at constant risk from media-related harm (cf. Buckingham, 2000, 2007). One-sided black-and-white accounts, however, do not offer the conceptual advancements necessary for better understanding the complexity of the developing human-technology relationship and for purposefully acting on it. In addition, the disquieting or even dystopic visions make for the more interesting headlines, so that the “introduction of each new medium has generally been accompanied by a 'moral panic', and anxieties typically centre on children and young people” (p. 2), as media researchers Livingstone & Bovill (1999) put it (cf. also Drotner, 1999). Recently, for instance, renowned cognitive neuroscientist and psychiatrist Manfred Spitzer (2012) inscribed himself into such a dystopic discourse. He published a broadly discussed popular book with the title *Digitale Demenz: Wie wir uns und unsere Kinder um den Verstand bringen* (Digital dementia: How we make us and our children mad). Here he claims that children are undoubtedly at risk from new media harm, as its use leads to addictive behavior, overweight, stupidity, violent behavior, and emotional blunting. Albeit his theses were strongly criticized by both journalists and fellow scientists, the book has sold brilliantly across Germany² – and was probably not only bought by critics. In a related newspaper commentary, media and communi-

² It was the 7th most sold hardcover non-fiction book in Germany in 2012 (Spiegel Bestsellerliste; <http://www.buchreport.de/bestseller/jahresbestseller/hardcover.htm>).

cation researcher Uwe Hasebrink (2012) warns that such blanket critiques of 'the media' are particularly good at increasing the insecurity of parents trying to take sensible media use decisions for their children.

The mentioned insecurity of parents, as well as of other adults, point to two underlying problems. First, there is a general lack of concepts which assist adults in meaningfully communicating with children and thereby in collaboratively understanding and acting on contradictory everyday life phenomena. Here one can identify a conceptual neglect in focusing on the perspectives of children including the ontological and epistemological commonalities between children and adults. Second, it is particularly the adults who are insecure when they are supposed to appropriate newly introduced technologies, be it because their children demand the introduction. Would adults focus on the children's perspectives on technologies, however, a joint exploration of an artifact's possibilities and limitations may lead to unexpected insights for all involved parties and to tackling adult insecurities.

Investigating everyday sociomaterial entanglement from the standpoint of the subject

The initial re-situated phenomena description of an everyday scene or situation³ illustrates how Amanda's actions can be read and analyzed in productive ways: It is an analytical description which primarily highlights how the relation to a (former) media artifact is related to creativity or imaginativeness as well as the wish for collaboration. The description thereby foregrounds the boon-side-of-things. As with any other aspect of the world, meanwhile, children's relations to things are many-sided: The children also struggle with ambivalences, contradictions, challenges, and dilemmas when relating to technological artifacts. But such struggles are neither determining that a child is at the mercy of media artifacts, nor are these struggles exclusively related to the qualitative specificity of the material artifact: They also depend on the qualitative specificity of the social situation. Had there been an authority intervening in the children's theatrical performance by claiming that this is not the appro-

³ *Situation* is here understood as a subjectively relevant or meaningful folding or nexus of space and time, in which the social and the material are specifically interwoven. This nexus is framed by me, the researcher-author, who deems a specific space-time constellation relevant for his insights and discoveries, or rather relevant for contextualizing and generalizing his insights and communicating them to the reader. It is thus a subjectively meaningful, set framing, which helps me in relating my findings to empirical material and is supposed to help the reader relate to my findings. *Scene* is the term that Klaus Holzkamp uses in his articles on the conduct of everyday life (e.g., Holzkamp, 2013g; cf. Chapter 1).

priate way of engaging with a former screen or of doing theater, for instance, the situation would have unfolded quite differently. The social and the material specificities or aspects are “*constitutively entangled* in everyday life [...] [or] inextricably related – there is no social that is not also material, and no material that is not also social” (p. 1437), as organizational researcher Wanda J. Orlikowski (2007) put it. In contrast to Orlikowski and other posthumanist theoreticians, however, I argue that it is nevertheless necessary to investigate the sociomaterial from the perspective of the human being and human subjectivity (cf. also Schraube & Sørensen, 2013), in my case consciously privileging the perspectives of the children. Building on a psychological tradition which has been promoting a *science from the standpoint of the subject* (Holzkamp, 1985; Schraube & Osterkamp, 2013), I deem it analytically ineluctable to ground an investigation of any relationship to a phenomenon in the perspective of a human being – most obviously because researchers cannot circumvent their own humanness, their own sociomaterial being and becoming human, their own historically situated human perspectivity.

An investigation of children’s relations to everyday media artifacts can therefore not elude an investigation of one’s own sociomaterial relations to both the children one sets out to work together with as well as to everyday media artifacts. This interrelatedness and interdependency of oneself with the experienced social and material poses a number of philosophical, theoretical and methodological challenges to a technology-interested psychology, which in turn call for conceptual advancements. The dissertation at hand thus builds on the challenges and struggles I experienced in the daycare so as to further develop the framework which in the first place shaped my focus throughout my participation therein. While investigating children’s perspectives on media artifacts, for instance, I undesignedly noticed that the existing conceptual-analytical framework for meaningfully exploring sociomaterial relations together with children would be insufficient. I realized that I needed to temporarily decenter my analytical focus from the children’s perspectives on media artifacts and re-center it on my own conceptually mediated adult perspective, on my participation in the daycare’s sociomaterial practice, on my own conduct of everyday life in relation to the children’s various conducts of everyday life in the daycare context and beyond. Rephrased in communication philosopher John Shotter’s words, I concur that “the conduct of our inquiries [...] must begin *from within the midst* of the complexity of our lives together” (Shotter, 2013, p. 46).

The lion’s share of the dissertation therefore analyzes how a co-research across age thresholds is possible from within the midst of a pedagogically-

educationally arranged together, from within my own participation in a day-care context, before enacting an in-depth discussion of children's media-related practices. Empirical and theoretical, particular and general developments throughout the research process are considered to be dialectically intertwined (cf. Dreier, 2007), culminating in the *prototypical reformulation* of a number of basic subject-scientific concepts. The suggested reformulations are also intended to open subject-scientific Critical Psychology to related psychological as well as non-psychological debates which revolve around children and childhood, human and non-human development, participation and collaboration, and technological communication as an everyday life phenomenon. Consequently the dissertation at hand is intended to lay a conceptual foundation for promoting inter- or rather transdisciplinary, problem-oriented investigations into human everyday sociomateriality. In order to achieve this goal, it draws on insights from a number of interrelated fields and disciplines from the Human and Social Sciences (foremost relational and practice-based approaches in Science and Technology Studies, Media and Communication Studies, and Childhood Sociology), so as to extend its subject-scientific, psychological roots.

Co-researching sociomaterial problems shared across ages

Taking young children's perspectives and actions as seriously as any other human being's throughout the exploration of media artifacts requires foundational conceptual work, work which is additionally complicated through the fact that children's verbal actions make them appear less intelligible than older human beings. This work, however, is a prerequisite for engaging in a subject-scientific investigation of everyday human relations to media artifacts, as the approach is based on the scientific principle that the researcher's problem is inseparably connected to problems of the investigated. Problems are jointly shared and require to be tackled together.

Subject-scientific critical psychological research is thus *research (also) done for the sake of others*. The academic researcher's research problem is always already interrelated with and interdependent of problems which other research participants face as well, as they all partly and partially share the same life conditions or sociomaterial arrangements. Hence a science from the standpoint of the subject articulates and understands research participants as *co-researchers* to a jointly perceived problem. A human being never exists in isolation, and nei-

ther do human relations, nor do human problems. A researcher's problem is socially or rather intersubjectively as well as materially constituted, and s_he⁴ needs others in order to both understand and overcome them. And arguably, non-academic everyday researchers might need academic research-workers so as to better understand and eventually overcome problems they perceive. Research is consequently understood as an emancipatory and collaborative project, where individual problems are inseparable from broader societal problems that affect many human beings, for instance problems related to sociomaterial arrangements which establish and uphold domination and injustice.

Accordingly, my explorations in the daycare were guided by the problems children faced when acting on, with and around media artifacts. But in order to understand the children's *problems*, I first needed to investigate more globally what children actually do and attempt to do with media artifacts, so as to analytically pinpoint the problems they encounter throughout this process. And second, I also needed to investigate how the children's problems relate to sociomaterial arrangements I myself deem problematic, i.e. how our seemingly individual problems turned out to be shared problems.

Throughout Amanda's and the others' theatrical performance, then, I was not merely a by-stander or distant observer: While Amanda was playfully questioning the artist-audience separation, I was entangled in the situation's sociomaterial interrelatedness and thereby an involved and contributing participant in that situation. As Science and Technology researcher Annemarie Mol points out, such an understanding challenges the disentanglement of the subject-object relationship throughout the process of theorizing:

“The Western philosophical tradition favours the fantasy that [the] author, the subject of theory, is located outside the object of reflection. This is a voyeuristic tradition. Only from a distance may we hope to tell the truth. Only from a distance may we hope to pass a balanced judgement. Disentangled. Hands behind your back, do not get involved physically with whatever it is that you are theorizing about. Don't touch the white woman. Don't walk on the grass. The body of the subject of theory is not to get involved in the theorizing” (Mol, 2008, p. 32).

Mol's critical remarks about the fantasies of the “voyeuristic tradition”, and about how these lead to apolitical ways of theorizing theorizing, carry dire ontological implications: Relating Mol's argument to the terminology of subject-scientific *Practice Research* (cf. Nissen, 2000; Mørck & Huniche, 2006; Koush-

⁴ I will use underscores in the singular third person narrative mode, as the underscore points to all imaginable gender constructions between these idealized poles.

olt & Thomsen, 2013), the author-researcher is entangled with the investigated *practice's* relational ensemble. The researcher becomes part of entanglements of practice as soon as the practice becomes an “object of reflection”, as soon as the researcher engages in feeling-thinking her_himself into the relationships of practice. For personality psychologist and subject-scientific practice researcher Ole Dreier, *distance* therefore merely implies a spatio-temporal displacement, not an ontological distance:⁵

“In our analysis to be at a distance [from the ‘object of reflection’; NAC] rather means to be somewhere else, not outside of everything in the privileged nowhere of pure thought – a notion which would blind us to the social qualities of knowledge and its part in social practice. Diversity of practices and perspectives replaces distance as the key condition of possibility for reflection” (Dreier, 1999, p. 14).

In the process of reflecting together with the children on our diverse perspectives on and problems with media artifacts, I meanwhile encountered a major epistemological-methodological challenge: So as to collaboratively study the interrelatedness of problems, one would need to be able to communicatively specify his_her own perspective on a problem to the co-researcher, and negotiate what the jointly shared, problematic aspects one seeks to overcome actually are. Otherwise, one runs the risk that one’s own analysis of a problem overshadows the co-researcher’s perspective, thereby enacting the dominance of one’s own perspective over the other’s – particularly once the discoveries are publicized, stabilized, and thus rendered hardly questionable for anyone outside of the academic arena. That means that if I did not find possibilities for making sense of the children’s verbal and non-verbal actions, a common sense or understanding they themselves may agree to, I would again merely put forward my own (adult) perspective and potentially paternalize the children’s perspectives.

The epistemological and methodological challenge of collaborating with children aged three to six while taking them seriously as co-researchers has therefore assumed a central role throughout this dissertation. The co-researcher concept is foundational for any subject-scientific participatory investigation. However, a specification of how to work with co-researchers whose possibilities to express their perspectives verbally do not live up to adult standards has

⁵ Not to be able to disentangle oneself ontologically does not mean that an epistemic distance cannot be achieved. However, it is precisely necessary to become part of the practice in order to attain epistemic distance (cf. Schraube, 2012; Chapter 1). Still, attaining epistemic distance is easier said than done, as a researcher of course also becomes epistemically entangled with his_her co-researchers (on this challenge, cf. Chapter 3).

not been explicitly given. As already mentioned, the dissertation will therefore not only dwell on the question of how kindergarten children relate to media artifacts, but also on the question of how the researcher as an adult can analytically relate to this relation (and vice versa) *in meaningful and non-paternalizing ways*. Hence, the focus of this investigation is primarily put on identifying commonalities between how children and how adults approach the world, on how their respective directionalities for acting on the world intersect or overlap and on how they possibilitate collaborations across human beings and herewith across age thresholds – an investigation whose process will temporarily result in questioning the notion of ‘the child’ altogether.

Questioning concepts, fostering practical change

Subject-scientific *German Scandinavian Critical Psychology* (GSCP: cf. Nissen, 2008, 2012) has a number of concepts up its proverbial sleeve which are extremely helpful for analytically identifying commonalities across human beings, i.e. to conceptualize and promote mutual understanding and learning between adults and children. Ontologically speaking, many of these subject-scientific concepts do not presuppose a *verbal* exchange of perspectives, but focus on an individual’s relational ensemble of actions in its societal and processual situatedness and interrelatedness. Central concepts such as agency, intersubjectivity, participation, the scope of possibilities for action, mutual self-understanding, and the conduct of everyday life will therefore be introduced, thoroughly discussed, reconsidered and further specified based on the experiences made in the daycare.

Particularly for the sake of specifying the co-researcher principle and its emancipatory directionality, the *conduct of everyday life* concept assumes a central position in this enumeration: I will argue that engaging in co-researching activities is foundational for conducting everyday life as a whole, while conducting everyday life is inherent to doing co-research – irrespective of the individual human being’s age. More generally, the conduct of everyday life concept holds the potential to encompass and unify the analytical function of many other subject-scientific concepts. For example, the enactment of the concept stipulates that Amanda’s initially sketched performance cannot solely be analyzed in relation to the singular isolated situation. Instead, her actions in that setting have to be understood as one instance or scene of her overall conduct of everyday life. Her conduct of everyday life reaches beyond this singular scene: It simultaneously encompasses past experiences and imaginations, the

present state of being and feeling, as well as imagined future actions. Her relation to this situation including eventual problems or struggles thereby transcends the concrete daycare context in which this scene takes place, and it transcends the physically present interlocutors. Amanda had already prior to that July morning learned something through someone about hand-doll play, about computer screens, about audiences. These transcontextual and intersubjective experiences from her conduct of everyday life – its learning possibilities and limitations – played into the emergence of the specific theater performance described above.

Meanwhile, conceptual developments in Critical Psychology tend to underexpose the centrality of the material qualities of conducting everyday life. This results in the paradox that albeit its conceptual framework points beyond verbalizable human actions, by explicitly encompassing individually unconscious emotional and motivational processes, its subject-scientific epistemology, methodology and its methodical possibilities for analyzing experiences are usually reduced to the verbal or dialogical exploration of individual perspectives on shared conditions and problems. Conceptual advancements in its Scandinavian offspring, subject-scientific Practice Research, have been seeking to transcend this dominance of verbal approaches to doing research, foremost through engaging in participatory observations. In this tradition, however, the technological mediatedness of everyday living requires further conceptual specifications. In particular the centrality and ubiquity of (digital) media artifacts in a contemporary everyday life have been only marginally discussed. Practice Research therefore lacks concepts which may assist in understanding and acting on children and adult struggles with and around current technological developments.

In order to understand children's actions with media artifacts and purposefully collaborate on overcoming sociomaterial problems of shared concern, this dissertation iteratively re-visits and re-works its conceptual starting point on the basis of the experiences made throughout my daycare participation. The following research questions function as argumentative cornerstones and narrative red thread for the conceptual discussions and advancements as well as for the political-ethical propositions for arranging future pedagogical practices:

What possibilities and limitations as well as problems do children identify and encounter when acting in relation to (digital) media artifacts, and how can these be meaningfully explored by adults so as to collaboratively improve the arrangement of learning practices together with children?

- How can academics and other practitioners purposefully draw on and learn from the children's experiences with media artifacts in order to arrange learning practices in ways that take the children's everyday actions seriously?
- What subject-scientific conceptual advancements are needed so as to investigate the sociomaterial entangledness of children's everyday situations with digital and other media artifacts?
- What political-ethical implications follow from these advancements, and how can these be taken into account and implemented throughout the process of arranging future learning practices?

Modus operandi

In order to transparently document the analytical exploration of these research questions, the dissertation's argumentative modus operandi retraces and roughly mirrors the reflexive movements of the underlying research project's process-over-chronological-time. This implies that the dissertation's narrative will put the collaborative cart before the technological horse. I.e., I first need to argue how I was able to learn from the children by approximating their perspectives before I can draw on these epistemological-methodological discoveries so as to explore and analyze the daycare children's everyday actions in relation to media artifacts. In the upcoming chapter I will therefore explore established subject-scientific theoretical-methodological conceptualizations which clarify the relationship between a human being, other human beings, and the world they live in and through. Most centrally, this is to underline the significance of the *co-researcher* idea pivotal to my own research project with children, ergo the notion that a psychological problem is never a purely academic issue and can therefore never be overcome without the assistance of research participants who collaborate with the (official) researcher on overcoming a similarly problematic condition or arrangement. After introducing into the emancipatory relevance of the co-researcher concept, I will discuss how it is inherent to concepts such as the *conduct of everyday life* and *participation*, which are in turn helpful for conceiving of methodological approaches to co-researching media artifacts together with children.

Chapter 1 is followed by an account and analysis of how these preliminary considerations on my analytical focus were shaken and questioned once I came to participate in the daycare practice. Chapter 2 thus highlights the

struggles and challenges I faced when attempting to apply the co-researcher ideal to a practice whose pedagogical aims – albeit displaying numerous similarities to my intended research directionalities – partly contradict my research’s aims. I offer an analysis of which pedagogical aims may conflict with the co-researcher concept, and how I tried to collaboratively negotiate with the adults in charge how my research may benefit the daycare’s relational ensemble. The chapter sketches how the co-researcher principle cannot be exclusively applied to those participants the researcher particularly would like to work with, but must also consider all the other practice participants’ wishes, needs, hopes/directionalities – foremost of those who qua positioning have a relatively bigger say in arranging the practice and herewith my research as a possibly integrated part of that practice.

While Chapter 3 will draw on the challenges my participation in practice posed to my conceptual presumptions from Chapter 1 and propose epistemological and ontological re-formulations necessary for clarifying how co-research with children can be put into practice, Chapter 4 will apply the discoveries re-presented throughout Chapter 3 to specifically relate the expanded conceptual framework to the children’s media-related struggles and contradictions. For instance, Chapter 3 will argue that the concept of *participation in practice* may need to be complemented with the term *contribution to practice* (also Chimirri, 2012a, 2013a), so as to highlight that participants actively engage in co-constituting the daycare practice by conducting their everyday lives in relation to others and their jointly shared hopes (e.g., educational, pedagogical, democratic hopes). These *shared hopes*, which are also present in the accounts of the children, imply a certain directionality of development in and across practices. Development, as will be argued, can be understood as the on-going process of working on obtaining influence over those very same life conditions which arrange and thus co-determine one’s own conduct of everyday life.⁶ However, one is dependent on the other participants in practice, first and foremost on their perspectives and discoveries. Relating to those various perspectives of human beings on the shared, sociomaterially constituted everyday life is a *conditio sine qua non* for being able to imagine a different future, for thinking, feeling and perceiving one’s own past-present experiences and imaginations in a new light. This emerges when analyzing some of the children’s collective or rather collaborative (as they imply work) sense-meaning-making processes. Closely investigating sense-meaning-negotiations

⁶ As Holzkamp (2013f) writes: “No-one can develop if s/he does not change her/his possibilities of living and acting and hence also of her/his relationships to others. It is not ‘I develop *myself*’ (no-one knows how this could actually be done), but, at best, ‘I develop *my relations to the world*’” (p. 229).

is, as Chapter 4 will show, unavoidable when wanting to understand better how children (and human beings in general) act on and with technology such as media artifacts in their everyday lives, what they (would like to) use them for and what aspects of them they struggle with. Sense-meaning-making precedes and simultaneously is the result of relating-to and acting on the socio-material arrangements at hand, is the foundation for both transforming and maintaining praxis through communication and collaboration.

Hence, Chapter 4 draws on the conceptual framework advanced in Chapter 3 and relates it to media-related struggles which abounded in the daycare. Exemplary descriptions and their analyses star the children and the possibilities (as *potentialities* and *virtualities*)⁷ as well as the *limitations* they themselves and other participants identify when (collaboratively) acting on, with and through media artifacts. They also highlight how the children's sense-meaning-relations and re-negotiations always already build on given contradictory arrangements, and how the sociomaterial interplay of seemingly unchangeable or hypostatized contradictory arrangements may increasingly corset the child's scope of imaginable possibilities for acting. Media artifacts clearly play into this process, but they are not alone. Other participants may reinforce this hypostatization when it appears subjectively functional. Therefore I argue that in pedagogical as well as any other practices, participants require each other's perspectives so as to meaningfully act on, with, and through technology. They need to situatedly re-negotiate what they expect of the sociomaterial arrangements they draw on, and to collaborate on maintaining those relations-to-arrangements which serve a joint purpose as shared hope/directionality, while transforming those relations they reject. Undoubtedly, this proposition is much more difficult to virtually actualize than to verbally propose, as it implies that human beings generally come to question and thereby develop their approach to other humans, to other animate processes of living, and to technology as sociomaterial arrangements.

First suggestions on how to contribute to this process are to be found in the Conclusion. I consider what ethical-political implications the chapters and the specifications of the conduct of everyday life concept carry for democratically re-negotiating pedagogical-educational as well as academic learning practices.

⁷ I shortly discuss the different scopes of the terms *potentiality* and *virtuality* in Chapters 3 & 4, drawing particularly on the conceptualization in Kontopodis (2012a). It may be noted, however, that for instance Dorte Marie Søndergaard's (2013) agential-realist re-conceptualization of Giorgio Agamben's (1999) potentiality term is closely related to Kontopodis' virtuality term, even though derived from a quite different cross-analysis or diffractive reading. What Kontopodis refers to as potentiality resembles what Søndergaard terms *potential*. A diffractive reading of Kontopodis and Søndergaard would certainly be fruitfying, but cannot be offered here.

As will furthermore be shown, current conceptualizations of *media literacy*, of teaching-learning how to use media for one's own ends, could benefit from understanding the child-media relationship as a human-human-technology relationship, through prototyping a transcontextual communicative-collaborative multimodal learning across age thresholds.

Chapter 1:

Approaching co-research with children: Analytical framework and conceptual presumptions

At the heart of subject-scientific Critical Psychology⁸ lies the understanding that the researched other cannot be researched from the outside, from a disentangled “third person standpoint” (Holzkamp, 2013a, p. 45), as the influential theorist of German Critical Psychology Klaus Holzkamp put it in 1988. The researched other cannot merely be used as a test subject and discarded after s_he has stood at the researcher’s and his/her problem’s disposal. The researched other is just as much a human being as the researcher is, and it is up to psychology to explore and analyze human living in its interrelated complexity so as to meaningfully improve it. It is *a science not done on the other*, but *together with the other*. It is a subject science, which realizes that the researcher’s problem is not unrelated from an other’s problem, and which therefore takes the other’s subjective perspective on a problem seriously – irrespective of the other’s age.

The research project this dissertation emerged from took its conceptual point of departure in Critical Psychology because it sought to take the children’s perspectives on media artifacts seriously. It sought to overcome one-sided explanations formulated from a third person standpoint on the child-media relationship. It sought to explore and analyze children’s everyday life with media artifacts together with the involved children.

Co-research implies mutually learning from each other’s perspective through dialog (cf. Højholt & Kousholt, 2011; Schraube, 2012, 2013). Generally, such an approach is fiercely challenged by positivist, disentangled ways of understanding and doing research. This abounds a fortiori when investigating prob-

⁸ The spelling with capital letters is an adaption of the German spelling. Since this is a distinct approach to conceptualizing psychology critically, it came to be known as *Groß-K Kritische Psychologie*, ergo Critical Psychology with a capital K or here: C (cf. also Tolman, 1994; Fahl & Markard, 1999; Nissen, 2000).

lems of shared concern together with children: Co-research with children is challenged by hypostatizing conceptualizations of *the child as a not-yet-fully-developed-adult*. This “developmental gaze” (e.g., Holzkamp, 2013f, p. 223) stabilizes children as ontologically different from adults and herewith as unequal communication and learning partners. An analytical framework built on the foundations of Critical Psychology and the closely related subject-scientific Practice Research tradition was therefore to help me question and overcome such a developmental gaze throughout my own co-research project.

The chapter starts out by historically outlining how co-research became a central tenet of German Critical Psychology, a tenet in its quest of making psychology relevant for human emancipation. It discusses how a researcher’s problem is never merely a researcher’s problem, but a problem of shared concern. A problem is therefore to be worked on together, through co-research. That which ontologically makes it possible for human beings to collaborate, then, is their status as historical and acting subjects. They are subjects which dispose of a unique experiential horizon and consequently a unique first-person perspective. Nevertheless are they able to act together, intersubjectively. Actually, this is of existential importance: The only way one can overcome one’s own perspective, one’s own limited horizon, is to intersubjectively engage in a dialogic reason discourse. Learning is related to understanding one’s own relations to the world better through an other’s relations to the world, through the process of mutual self-understanding. In order to account for the complexity of learning, however, Holzkamp felt he needed to complement the existing framework with the conduct of everyday life concept. Albeit he never finished his articles on the concept, I introduce more thoroughly into them as they are key for understanding how both the researcher and the co-researcher’s conducts of everyday life are interdependently interwoven, even though each acts across a variety of different contexts and practices. These latter terms are in turn central for Practice Research, which has both further specified the conduct of everyday life concept and radically situated subject-scientific investigations. Situated investigations into children’s everyday life practices and an exploration of children’s perspectives are a specialty of Practice Research, so to say. In the end, I therefore clarify how I rooted my methodology and my methodical approach for co-researching media artifacts together with children primarily in this tradition. In addition, I suggest picking up on Qualitative Heuristics so as to highlight the epistemic virtualities of interrelating perspectives on the jointly shared – irrespective of age.

The chapter's aim is to conceptualize child research beyond rather *unwordly* (Dreier, 2007), *worldless* (Holzkamp, 2013g) or *one-sided* (Tolman, 1994) approaches, approaches which identify (a more of) agency either in the child or in the sociomaterial arrangements it lives through. Media artifacts as specific sociomaterial arrangements will only appear at the margins of this chapter, partly because this is not the main focus here yet (wait especially for Chapter 4), but also because this underemphasis mirrors the marginal position digital media investigations have had up to now throughout the subject-scientific psychological tradition of thought.⁹

Emancipatory relevance, or: Why Critical Psychology decided to do research for the researched

Who are those allegedly non-dividable individuals, those human beings who decide to become part of a research project set up by someone else, a someone labeled a researcher or a scientist? Why do they participate in such a heteronomous setup? Or, seen from a social researcher's perspective like mine, and plainly asked: How do I get them to act according to my research design, how do I effectively and efficiently acquire my sample? Do I really have to bribe them with money, hours, or at least the possibility to win in a lottery, as many experimental researchers do? Could they eventually not just be or become interested in what I am interested in, so as to not make it only my project, but *our* project – voluntarily conduct one's life so that the everyday of the researcher and the researched are (temporarily) shared?

These questions troubled me already while studying psychology, particularly because at the Free University of Berlin, we were instructed to collect 'hours' by participating in psychological studies – else we would not have been able to pass the first half of our diploma curriculum. This led to the absurd situation that there was a competition among us psychology students to quickly identify the least time-consuming and least boring studies to participate in. What added to the absurdity was that especially functionalist experimental psychology built on the presumption that it should be “psychologically untrained, everyday” (Holzkamp, 1972b, p. 46; translation NAC) individuals

⁹ Conceptualizations of the human-technology relationship in more general terms, meanwhile, are increasingly being discussed in Critical Psychology and Practice Research (e.g., Schraube, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2013; Axel 2003, 2009, 2011; Dreier & Costall, 2006; Dreier, 2008; Busch-Jensen, 2013; Holm Jacobsen, 2014).

who are to be tested, not psychology students. Else, how would one be able to make generalizable claims about the non-academically trained human subspecies – those exotic Others out there in the non-academic world?

It is important to remember that (German) Critical Psychology was initially termed as such because it emanated from a strong *criticism of mainstream psychology*, ergo predominantly behaviorist experimental psychology and their philosophical precursors: naive empiricism, logical empiricism, falsification theory (cf. Holzkamp, 1972a; Tolman, 1994). Klaus Holzkamp, who wrote much of Critical Psychology's groundwork, was a successful experimental psychologist himself. In the 1960s, however, he gradually came to the conclusion that most psychological research forgot to reflect on and discuss its philosophical presumptions about the human being, its presumptions about the participants engaging in experiments as well as the role of the researcher in the experimental setting itself, or essentially: *subjectivity*. Furthermore, the question of whether the assumptions tested were relevant for humankind or not was itself deemed irrelevant (Holzkamp, 1972a). In lieu thereof, psychological researchers or experimenters presupposed that by examining the behavior of the 'test subjects', universally valid patterns of human action could be substantiated. These patterns were simulated according to implicit or explicit understandings of the human being as an organism which merely reacted to the stimuli encountered in the world (Holzkamp, 1972b). The predominant stimulus-response models of behaviorism made it possible for the psychological researcher to simulate these stimuli in an experimental setting. The experimental results were to point to and generally predict future behavior under the influence of similar stimuli in the world, they were to be transferable.¹⁰ Consequently, as Holzkamp noted in 1968 with reference to philosopher Jürgen Habermas' terminology, psychology became self-referential, constantly revolving around itself and its experimental methods, merely interested in the *technical relevance* of its experiments and the employed methods rather than in psychology's *emancipatory relevance* (Holzkamp, 1972a). Predictability of outcomes, of stimuli-response chains, ruled the field (and arguably still rule the field today; cf. Dreier, 2007). Psychology was to become an exact science formulating ahistorical natural laws, a *control science* which investigated, predicted and tried to control the interplay of a multiplicity of factors or phenomena in the world influencing or even determining a specific outcome (cf. Holzkamp, 1972a, 2013a). In psychology, however, research was not about trying to control the traction of automobile wheels in relation to rainy weath-

¹⁰ For a critique of the related notion of *knowledge transfer*, cf. Lave & Wenger (1991) and Lave (1996, 2011). This critique was also formulated in Critical Psychology (e.g., Holzkamp, 1995a).

er conditions – it was about predicting and controlling human behavior. Besides that this understanding of research or science might be deemed ethically very troubling,¹¹ Holzkamp indicated that by trying to become increasingly exact in its predictability, by increasingly refining its methods, the psychological reality represented through experimental outcomes corresponded less and less with the complexity of human life lived.¹² The illusion of being able to find all relevant stimulus-response patterns necessary in order to predict all human behavior – in my eyes psychology’s take on discovering its *world theory* – could only be upheld due to the underlying presumption that human animals were no different from other non-human animals. Commenting on human learning theories that were almost exclusively developed on the basis of animal experiments, as for instance Clark L. Hull’s, Holzkamp writes: “[T]he decisive questionableness of the mentioned conceptions is rather due to its lack of reflecting that *for instance rats ‘are’ organisms, while in the experimental setting humans merely behave like organisms after agreeing upon that*” (Holzkamp, 1972b, p. 57; translation NAC). This rather obvious demur did not keep behaviorism and its followers from re-producing abstract, general laws about the human being, which built on the idea that the human organism is alike with an animal’s organism, a human mind operating just like a computer system, human action nothing more than the interplay of hormones and neurotransmitters. The consequence: “In opting for abstract generality over specificity, the behaviourist [*sic*] has had to abstract individual subjects from their phylogenetic and in the case of humans from their historical and societal natures” (Tolman, 1994, p. 18).

I will discuss the implied human specificity shortly, but first I wish to underline an important consequence Holzkamp drew out of this analysis of the contemporary psychological research of his time. As in many parts of the world in the late 1960s, the student revolts – which Holzkamp actively supported – protesting against reactionary inner, foreign and education policies in Berlin and other German cities were brutally put down by the police. So noting that psychology was a science which tried to control human beings, here positioned as state citizens, had a tremendous *political significance*. The claim that psychologists mostly worked in the service of the elites, those in charge (cf. Staebble in Holzkamp, 1972c, p. 217; or in Tolman, 1994, p. 8), did not disappear without leaving a trace. Quite the opposite: The newly

¹¹ Holzkamp (1972a, p. 29) writes that maximal technical relevance in psychology would be attained once the dystopic visions of George Orwell’s novel *1984* or Herbert Marcuse’s *The onedimensional man* were to become reality.

¹² Other psychological researchers would call this lack of correspondence a lack of *ecological validity* (e.g., Giles, 2010, p. 16).

founded *Psychologisches Institut* (1970-1997) at the Free University of Berlin was to be a counter-movement to the established academic psychology, one that would be able to account for the human specificity, for the complexity of human life.¹³ It would need to be able to account for that which human beings create and how they organize: society, politics, economy, etc., so as to study aspects of living that are of relevance, of personal and societal relevance, or as said above: of emancipatory relevance. That implies that psychology should not be conducting studies about the other person, the researched, but *for* the other person, bridging the gap between personal and societal relevance. And as Tolman (1994) adds: “An important corollary is that the problem investigated must also be a problem *for* the other person. This does not necessarily mean that the other person must come to the researcher with a complaint, but that the problem be understood by the person as a problem, the understanding of which is in his or her interest” (p. 141).

Although this does not yet explain how to ensure emancipatory relevance, it shows how Holzkamp and his co-researchers turned the focus of common psychological research of their time upside-down: The ‘test subject’ was not to be at the mercy of the researcher as an exchangeable organism to conduct own experiments on, but it was suddenly the test subjects’ state of being-feeling and her_his problems that came to matter. The psychologist’s task was thus to study phenomena which were (also!) regarded problematic by the test subject itself, which were personally relevant to the test subject, and not only to the researcher: Suddenly the psychological researcher was to actively work on *making the common good better for those struggling*, rather than controlling it and securing the societal status quo. What the improvement of the common good precisely entails, then, constitutes another complicated story and narrative thread throughout this text. But irrespectively, the overcoming of the test subject in Critical Psychology does not go hand in hand with overcoming the human being’s status of a *subject*: Critical Psychology’s conceptualization of the human being as subject – which can be considered one of the cornerstones of the entire conceptual framework – is on the one hand quite different than that of the test subject, while on the other hand not that much. For discussing this in detail, though, I first move on to what Critical Psychol-

¹³ Actually the foundation of the *Psychologisches Institut* needs to be ascribed to an institutional separation initiated by the 'liberal' or supposedly 'non-political' psychologists at the FUB, who did not agree with the Institute's political changes during the time of the student protests in the late 1960s. The entire story of the Institute's separation and reunification after Holzkamp's death is quite complex and would take us too far off-topic here. Holzkamp himself retraced the beginnings of Critical Psychology as institutionalizing project in 1972 (especially, cf. Holzkamp, 1972c). A very informative, English language introduction into these times of "dissent" can be found in Tolman (1994, pp. 3ff).

ogy understands by *human specificity*, what this implies for the subject term and, finally, what this implies for the relationship between the psychological researcher and the one researched, ergo their *intersubjective relationship*.

Human beings as historical and acting subjects

“Once again, people are reduced to subjects and agency is lost”
(Livingstone & Das, 2009, p. 4).

This de-contextualized citation borrowed from two audience researchers whose work I admire, is only presented here to exemplify an understanding of ‘the subject’ which I often encounter when talking to other researchers, and which actually stands in diametrical opposition to the one laid out in Critical Psychology. It is reminiscent of the understanding up to now referred to as ‘test subject’, a human being who is completely subjected to experimental conditions designed and arranged by a researcher, over which the test subject has absolutely no say – in so far as there is an implicit or tacit agreement in place when participating in an experiment that makes its socio-material arrangement appear unquestionable. When agreeing on unquestionably accepting the experimental premises, agency would de facto be lost – were it not for the aforementioned fact that humans are not test rats, and can always decide not to follow the researcher’s script (maybe test rats can, too, but that is not for me to explore). As Ute Osterkamp and Ernst Schraube write in their introduction to the edited collection of translated writings of Klaus Holzkamp, human beings are always confronted with at least two possibilities for acting. Osterkamp & Schraube (2013) translate this ontological given as *dual possibility*, of either “conforming to prevailing conditions or questioning the conditions which compelled conformity” (p. 4). Ergo: A human being never has to give in to any humanly arranged conditions, no matter how restrictive they appear to be (cf. Holzkamp, 1985).

But if people are on principle always able to oppose conformity, to engage in an alternative possibility for acting, are agentive, why keep on calling them subjects? Why oppose notions such as the competent child (cf. Introduction), which exactly point to a seemingly unlimited agency of the children? Are human beings subjected to anything at all after all? Are there not enough renown scientists who argue that the human being will reign over all socio-material conditions in the not-so-distant future (e.g., Kaku, 2012)?

If one looks into the world, just like Holzkamp did throughout the 1960s in relation to the student movements, there are many human beings who are evidently facing existential struggles, struggles that may appear personal in the first instant, but which are co-constituted by the way society is arranged. It is therefore that academic work, when formulating problems, needs to consider and systematically reflect on the interrelatedness of the personal and the societal, so as to claim emancipatory relevance. I.e., in order to strive for human well-being, one needs to acknowledge¹⁴ that personal problems, contradictions, ambivalences, struggles are not merely personal, but always mediated by and related to societal problems, contradictions, ambivalences, struggles – because the person is always historically situated in society, and thus existentially subjected to the historically concrete formation of the societal conditions s_he lives his/her everyday life in (or rather through). However, as will be discussed in more detail further down this chapter, human beings can – epistemologically speaking – access societal conditions only from their own limited first-person perspective. This perspective is historically unique, as nobody else shares the same way of coming to live and understand life as oneself does – no one else walks in the exact same ontogenetical shoes. And no other one contributes to co-creating the sociomaterial arrangements and conditions in the world in the exact same way.

Opposed to the above mentioned one-sidedness of many theories on the human-world relationship, the understanding sketched here is *two-sided, dialectical*: Although the human being is always subjected to more general societal conditions that others are also subjected to, her_his way of acting in-on-through the world is unique. Furthermore, these unique subjects also share a phylogenetic or biological history, as Tolman (1994) emphasizes:

“German Critical Psychology [...] seeks to affirm the uniqueness of the human subject because it is precisely *subjectivity* that is at stake in the politics of human well-being. It is an obvious fact of experience that we as human beings organize ourselves into societal arrangements; and that *history* is something more than mere evolution. At the heart of facts like these lies subjectivity. Human beings truly are *subjects* of their own existences and histories in ways that other animals appear not to be. This, then, cannot be denied or circumvented by any social science with the least pretension to scientific adequateness: on the contrary, subjectivity must constitute the very subject matter and epistemic standpoint of social science.

¹⁴ Throughout this work, I will prefer using the term *acknowledgment* over *recognition*, which both can be understood as the translation of the German *Anerkennung*. This latter term is central for the dialectical traditions of thought which explicitly build on the philosophies of Hegel and Marx. For a discussion of why ‘acknowledgment’ incorporates and transcends the Hegelian notion and is thus crucial for understanding Critical Psychology’s intersubjectivity concept following Marx, cf. Dege (2012).

At the same time, human beings were not simply dropped here out of space. We are biological beings who belong to the natural world and many of the needs we seek to satisfy through our societal arrangements reflect this. While most of what we do as human beings is concerned with the *quality* of life, we must have a life to which to give quality. Were this not so we would hardly have spent so much of our time and other precious resources on problems like curing cancer” (Tolman, 1994, p. viii).

The biological commonalities across human beings as outlined in Tolman’s quote will, throughout this dissertation, be understood as an ontological given and not discussed in detail (which does not imply that human beings are entities which are biologically separable from other animate processes; cf. Chapter 3). The reconstruction of the phylogenetic development of the human being,¹⁵ claiming its biological uniqueness in comparison to other organisms in the known world, has been central for the categorial framework Critical Psychology has come up with, and I would want to refer you to Holzkamp’s (1985) groundwork book *Grundlegung der Psychologie* (Foundations of Psychology) as well as the third part of Tolman’s (1994) *Introduction to German Critical Psychology* for further delving into this extensive and discussable subject matter. Important to mention here, nevertheless, is the phylogenetic turning point that Holzkamp identifies with Leontyev (1979): Human beings came to become uniquely human once they evolved into organisms that were able to produce and reproduce artifacts, once they became historical beings creating society. For now, let me just explain this roughly: *Artifacts* are objectifications of human actions, intentionally produced as tools (a spear, a hammer, etc.).¹⁶ Language could also be regarded an intentionally communicative artifact.¹⁷ Artifacts embody (a number of contradictory) objectified intentionalities or directionalities-for-action as *materialized actions* (cf. Schraube, 2009). These artifacts are essential for creating society, as they enable the being to hand intentionalities and herewith directionalities-for-action on to the next generation. When compared to primates, subsequently, the main difference does not lie in the production of artifacts (some primates can build such extensions), but in being able to learn how to re-produce them. The bottom line is that the specificity of being human entails its historicity. Instead of being subjected to

¹⁵ Critical Psychology’s phylogenetic reconstruction enacts A. N. Leontyev’s *historical methodology* (e.g., Leontyev, 1979; cf. Holzkamp, 1985; Tolman, 1994; also Nissen, 2000, 2012).

¹⁶ I emphasize intentionality here, as I will later discuss how artifact re-production also takes place unintentionally. It points to an eventually necessary analytical differentiation between the term *artifact* and *tool*. This is currently being worked on in our research groups, especially in relation to Wartofsky’s (1979) artifact understanding (cf. also Nissen, 2012; Bang, 2012).

¹⁷ There is no clear answer to the question what came first: The graspable tool or language. Frankly, I do not care much, but I speculate that they dialectically constituted each other.

evolution, humans became subjected to the very same history they came to re-produce.¹⁸ Hence the two-sidedness of the human-world relationship: *between subjective determination and objective determinateness*. And it is not coincidental that this understanding of the human specificity as historical and agentive subject also lies at the heart of the writings of German journalist and philosopher Karl Marx, crucially formulated in his theses on Feuerbach in 1845, since its dialectical materialism served as point of departure for Holzkamp's reconstructive work (cf. especially Holzkamp, 1985).¹⁹

The first-person perspective, the reason discourse, and intersubjectivity

The conceptualization of subjectivity in Critical Psychology counters individualizing understandings of the isolated (test) subject: *Individual existences are socially mediated* (e.g., Holzkamp, 1985, 2013a). An individual human being is never worldless: Even though each of us human beings has a distinct perspective on the world, constituted by the unique experiences made across spatio-temporal, sociomaterial arrangements, we nevertheless partly and partially inhabit the same places, are partly and partially confronted with the same conditions, for which we partly and partially share similar meanings. We develop and learn together, face common struggles and therefore engage in joint projects. We collaboratively re-produce artifacts and thus the specific conditions we share – there are problems in the world that are perceived by many, even though they may be mediated to each one (slightly) differently in relation to one's unique experiences. But we can access these commonalities and the ways we act with and on them only from our own standpoint, via our own distinct perspective, constituted by our own unique experiences. Paraphrasing the first thesis on Feuerbach, we therefore need to conceive things, reality, sensuousness as human sensuous activity, praxis, subjectively (Marx,

¹⁸ "From phylogenesis to the dominance of sociogenesis" (p. 86), as Tolman (1994) tellingly entitled his sixth chapter.

¹⁹ Holzkamp's phylogenetic reconstruction Holzkamp may appear a bit outdated nowadays. That reality again points to the historical situatedness of the subject Klaus Holzkamp, who referred to his contemporary literary works from history, biology, anthropology. His account is of course highly generalized, the artifact transcending and re-constituting his own subjectivity: It is *meta-subjective*. Whatever critique one might bring forward towards this account – what I believe counts is how relevant Holzkamp's conclusions were and still are for engaging in theoretical-empirical, co-researching emancipatory work. As Tolman pointed out above, it is about expanding human well-being or quality of life, potentially for each and every one a researcher works together with. It is the emancipatory relevance Critical Psychology's contribution to psychology and the social sciences should be measured by.

1845). It is our (joint) acting through the world and the ways we subjectively perceive them which are to take center stage in theories on the human-world relationship. The question remains, however, what concrete conceptual-analytical tools are needed for systematically taking the human sensuous activity into account when conducting (practice-based) co-research.

In a German language article from 2012, technology psychologist Ernst Schraube builds on Marx' first thesis on Feuerbach and argues for the usefulness of analytically working with the *first-person perspective* concept in both theoretical and empirical work. Schraube gives an overview over contemporary understandings of the first-person perspective, which share the stipulation that subjectivity must be at the center of (social) research in order to tackle objectivist and thus one-sided conceptualizations of the human-world relationship. He confronts his reading of this analytical concept in Critical Psychological subject science with understandings from phenomenology (mainly Dan Zahavi) and analytical philosophy (particularly John Searle). His argument opens up by stating that most of science succumbs to the illusion that in order to be deemed scientific, it has to create a third-person perspective, an outside view on the phenomenon investigated – it believes it has to achieve ontological objectivity in its stance and its conclusions by adopting a (disentangled) “view from nowhere”. While the objective givenness of the world is not challenged by any of the mentioned authors, it is the mode in which the world is perceived by or accessed which is ineluctably subjective, ergo: The sociomaterial arrangements we human beings live in are always given to us in the first-person mode. Schraube quotes Searle so as to underline that objectivist science has been confusing its epistemic and ontological premises:

“Since science aims at objectivity in the epistemic sense that we seek truths that are not dependent on the particular point of view of this or that investigator, it has been tempting to conclude that the reality investigated by science must be objective in the sense of existing independently of the experiences in the human individual. But this last feature, ontological objectivity, is not an essential trait of science. If science is supposed to give an account of how the world works and if subjective states of consciousness are part of the world, then we should seek an (epistemically) objective account of an (ontologically) subjective reality, the reality of subjective states of consciousness. What I am arguing here is that we can have an epistemically objective science of a domain that is ontologically subjective” (Searle, 2002, p. 11, cited in Schraube, 2012, p. 9).

To clarify Searle's statement, Schraube adds that there are subjective and objective modes of existing. For instance, without a sensuous being experienc-

ing fear, fear as a phenomenon would not exist. “Consequently are all psychical entities ontologically subjective and given in the first-person mode, as they need to be experienced by a human so as to exist. Psychical givens are thereby different from, for example, nerve tracts, trees, fountains, mobile phones or nuclear power plants. Such givens have an objective mode of existing, as they do not need to be experienced by a human so as to exist” (Schraube 2012, p. 10; translation NAC). Following Schraube’s argument so far, we are again confronted with the dilemma that human beings experience phenomena in a unique manner, as they are always already given to them in an ineluctable first-person mode. And Schraube also emphasizes that no one will ever be able to fully understand the other (and thereby also oneself), due to the phenomena being experienced differently by each and every-one – no one can ever experience the world in exactly the same way the other does. So how to achieve the epistemically objective account Schraube proposes with Searle? How to be able to say anything general about the world we inhabit together but perceive in an innumerable multiplicity of ways? Here Critical Psychology as a psychology from the standpoint of the subject suggests a particular take on subjectivity and its relatedness to the world:

“Although one cannot talk of the individual’s actions as being directly determined by circumstances, from the subject’s standpoint these actions are nonetheless *grounded* in these circumstances as the premises for their actions.

In our view, the level of the ‘subjective groundedness’ or ‘subjective reasons for action’ accentuated in this way represents a general meditating [*sic*] level between societal meaning structures and individual life activities. In their specific human quality, psychic functions manifest themselves in the ‘reason discourse’ (which incorporates and transcends the non-specific ‘conditioning discourse’ [e.g., of positivist sciences; NAC]). The particularity of reasons for action, compared to non-mediated conditions, is that they can only be stated from the *standpoint of the subject*. Reasons are always ‘first-person’, i.e. each individual has their own reasons for action. Although societal conditions/meanings are objectively given, they only become decisive for my actions to the degree that they become premises for the reasons of my actions” (Holzkamp, 2013b, p. 47).

Let me take you step by step through my reading of this dense citation: First, human beings are not determined by their circumstances/conditions, on the one hand because we co-produce these circumstances, on the other because we are always able to act alternatively (cf. the *dual possibility* above). Still, we are always acting in relation to the circumstances given to us, as they constitute the *scope of (imaginable) possibilities for acting* we perceive (see Chapter 3).

Second, the circumstances are given to us as societally mediated meanings, and we accentuate specific meanings according to the *subjective reasons for action* (or acting)²⁰ we have – our *premises-reasons-relations* (Holzkamp, 2013g, p. 287). The reasons mediate between the meanings we perceive and our individual life activities, our experiences, actions, emotional dispositions (cf. also Osterkamp & Schraube, 2013). And third, these reasons for action can only be stated from the standpoint of the subject, or as Schraube (2012) writes: reasons exist in the first-person mode, they are ontologically subjective (p. 10). My point here being that even though reasons for acting are only given in the first-person mode, are unique in relation to one's own experiences, they are always already related to the currently given, societally or rather sociomaterially mediated circumstances, ergo to the meanings perceived by the acting human being. Reasons for acting inextricably interrelate the single human beings' living to the ever-changing, societally mediated circumstances or conditions. The general ongoing human activity or praxis Marx postulates in his first Feuerbach thesis is unthinkable without human beings having (subjectively good) reasons for engaging in this society-shaping praxis (through collaborative activities), reasons that supersede the evolutionary or biological need for mere organismic survival.

So as to lay out what all of this entails for my co-research project, foremost with regards to the epistemic objectivity and the possibilities for generalizing across particular perspectives and experiences, I need to dwell one more paragraph on the dual possibility, i.e. the possibility relationship human beings have to the world. In the possibility relationship lies an important corollary, which is essential for conceptualizing how human beings come to consciously relate to the circumstances and to formulating reasons for this conscious relating: “Basically, the possibility relationship creates a kind of *epistemic distance* between individuals and their world that allows them to assess the relations among events (as opposed to being constantly concerned with the relations of events to themselves), and thus to discover their objective lawfulness. It is in this epistemic distance that we become fully *conscious* of the world and our relation to it” (Tolman, 1994, p. 102).²¹ The possibility relationship enables epistemic distance from the events or situations at hand, so that human beings are able to de-center from the apparently immediate necessities that the

²⁰ I prefer the active verb over the rather passive substantive, so as to underline that human action is a dynamic process which entails a multiplicity of actions, and these are interrelated to a number of partly unpredictable other actions and circumstances etc.

²¹ Let me just briefly note that I would add the word 'potentially' to the last sentence, i.e. that human beings can *potentially* become *fully* conscious of the world – else I am reminded of the psychological world theory described above. See Chapter 3 for why this addition is needed.

current circumstances seem to demand. It thereby becomes possible to perceive the objective (or objectified) meaning structures, and how they are not only perceived and acted with and on by oneself, but also by others: it is socially mediated. Epistemic distance is thus key to understanding that oneself is not alone in the proverbial boat. Re-relating this to the subjective reasons for action, one can hereby then concretely come to grasp subjectivity as *intersubjectivity*: Via epistemic distance, we human beings can ground (or find communicable reasons) for prioritizing one possibility over the other, according to the currently perceived and accentuated life circumstances. Meanwhile, the life circumstances and the possibilities perceived are again socially mediated, meaning that they would not exist without society, without other human beings co-creating these societal action possibilities. We come to understand that besides our own standpoint and perspective, *there are other centers of intentionality which co-constitute the life we live or rather: they co-constitute our possibilities for acting*. Meticulously re-tracing Holzkamp's (1985) train of thought laid out in his seminal monograph, Tolman (1994) highlights how in *Critical Psychology*, subjectivity must unavoidably be understood as intersubjectivity:

“The individual [...] comes to relate consciously to societal action possibilities, and consequently also to relate as a first person to others in their societal relations. Others can no longer be merely social instruments or communication partners, but necessarily become understood by one as centres of intentionality like oneself. This is the foundation for what we know as *subjectivity*, which is, by this analysis, simultaneously *intersubjectivity*. The reciprocity of societal relations requires that I relate to societal practice from my particular, subjective point of view, and thus to others as acting from their own subjective points of view. Interpersonal relations thus move from a state of mere cooperation to that of a shared subjectivity” (Tolman, 1994, p. 103).

Hence, the first person relates to the other mediated by the awareness and acknowledgment that the other is a center of intentionality as well. In other words, no matter what one considers, says or does, an other is always already part of this relationship. One's own actions are always already related to an other's intentions, although this mediated intentionality may appear rather abstract due to the innumerable *levels of mediatedness* (Holzkamp, 1995b) human beings have been creating: The other's intentionality could be mediated via an artifact, for instance the form for your next tax declaration. Actually, analyzing the multiplicity of intentions objectified in and related to this highly complex technology (though merely a stack of papers) may be the work of a lifetime, particularly because the intentions or rather the subjective premises-reasons-relations of the co-producers acting through this artifact may contra-

dict each other (lawmakers, policymakers, corporate and private taxpayers, an army of lobbyists, administrative staff, etc.). And these contradictions, which are sometimes re-produced across uncountable generations, are one of the main reasons why subject science ought to empirically engage with human beings' everyday living. The contradictions are, I dare to say, the origin of both human creativity and human suffering, as they (co-)create (at times irresolvable) insecurities, tensions, conflicts, manifest struggles – which in turn call for development or transformation (cf. also Marvakis, 2013; see Chapter 3). Meanwhile, it is precisely the rejection of intersubjectivity, of the acknowledgment that one's own standpoint, perspective, existence is always dependent on others, that intensifies these struggles (cf. the exemplary situation analyses in Chapters 3-4). Positivist psychology with its conditioning discourse has heavily rejected any notion of intersubjectivity, also because it adheres to the idea that the researcher should be ontologically distant from its object of investigation or reflection. It conceptualizes human beings as test subjects rather than historically situated and acting subjects, thereby ignoring most of the problems these human beings are having, clinging on to technical rather than emancipatory relevance. But what, then, is the subject-scientific alternative for engaging in an 'empirical' research project with others?

I have outlined so far that reasons for action are subjective and always given in the first-person mode.²² In order to abduct epistemically objective insights or discoveries, it is necessary to transcend one's fixation of the seemingly immediate givens and acknowledge the societal mediatedness of one's own actions (and problems), ergo one's intersubjective interrelatedness with other centers of intentionality. The easy-sounding solution suggested above by Holzkamp: Co-research (as well as all other human activities) needs to engage in a *reason discourse* with other human beings, in which “the question is no longer *whether* a person had reasons for her/his actions, but *what* reasons for her/his (always grounded) action could be made out in the modus of intersubjective understanding. The result of such efforts towards understanding can never be 's/he had no reasons', but (at worst) 'despite all communicative efforts, I was *not able to find out what reasons the other had for her/his actions*'” (Holzkamp, 2013g, p. 287). To enact this discursive mode of exchanging subjective reasons for action, the others' subjectivity and thus humanity must be fully acknowledged, not denied by reducing and objectifying it to a mere instrument (Tolman, 1994, p. 103). The researcher's reasons for action must be put on the table, while the other subjects' perspectives on a shared prob-

²² Which does not imply that one may perceive others' reasons as being given in the third-person mode.

lem/struggle and her_his reasons for (potentially) acting on it in a specific way becomes a prerequisite for approaching epistemic distance, as the scope of (imaginable) possibilities is (potentially) expanded. Basically, the researcher needs to acknowledge that s_he needs the others in order to look beyond his_her own limited or historically situated subject standpoint and first-person perspective. A researcher needs to engage in a dialog with the other as a *co-researcher* (e.g., Holzkamp, 2013a, p. 53ff), engage in creating an *intersubjective frame of understanding* (Holzkamp, 1995b). This intersubjective frame, in which the researcher and the co-researcher meet at ontological eye-level, in which *intersubjective-social symmetry* (Schraube, 2012, p. 16; translation NAC) is established, is indispensable for reaching meta-subjectivity, for adopting a *meta-standpoint* (Holzkamp, 2013g, p. 325) – i.e. to develop epistemically objective, generalizable insights or discoveries that are as such objectifications of the intersubjective mode of relations, most evidently when turned into an artifact (for instance a book). That implies that in the meta-subjective mode of understanding, “*intersubjectivity itself is made into the object of structural reflections*” (ibid.). A meta-perspective would consequently be “the standpoint of multiple reciprocity of all standpoints involved in a specific scene: each person does not only have equivalent relations to the others within the scene of life conduct but, moreover, these relations are essentially qualified by the fact that they imply (within the intersubjective mode of relationship) the other’s relations to me as equiprimordial. *I, as a subject, experience you as a subject, who experiences me as a subject*” (ibid., p. 326; emphasis added).

Holzkamp’s take on the conduct of everyday life

The biggest part of my conceptual framework for engaging in co-research is laid out: I wrote about emancipatory relevance, or how and why the problems of other subjects should matter to the researcher. I wrote about why Critical Psychology considers human beings to be subjects, who are dependent on those very same circumstances they simultaneously co-create or re-produce, whose individual existence is always already historically and societally mediated. I wrote about why and how this implies that subjectivity must be understood as intersubjectivity. And finally I wrote about the implications for doing research: that research must, enter into a reason discourse with the co-researcher; a reason discourse in which the respective first-person perspectives are dialogically explored at ontological eye-level, such that the researcher as well as the researched commonly strive for (*mutual*) *social self-understanding*

(2013g, pp. 326ff), collaborating on creating an intersubjectively more meaningful meaning, mutually learning from each other's standpoints. What remains untapped, up to now, is the question of how all these various situations or scenes of exploring each other's perspectives through reason discourse are interrelated with each other across a subject's course of life: After all, the subject experiences different possibilities and limitations across time and space so as to engage in a reason discourse and turn insights into a jointly shared premise for further action. Furthermore, whether the premise-for-action is emancipatorily relevant in the sense of seeking to purposefully transform world for the common good also remains mysterious.

Maybe, Holzkamp became aware that the psychological tradition of thought he significantly co-formed for over 25 years, was still not able to grasp and tackle the complexity of societal mediation and the complicatedness of human living. In any case, in 1993 he published his second monograph, this time on the concept of *learning* (Holzkamp, 1995a), which he sought to subject-scientifically re-formulate. It is a sort of prototypical application of the theoretical and methodological framework presented ten years earlier in his *Foundations of Psychology* (Holzkamp, 1985), and he supposedly had worked all those ten years on that book (next to a considerable amount of articles). Even though it turned out to be a fascinating piece of work, his *Foundations of Learning*, so to say, had its limitations, and he quickly acknowledged that.

He opens with the probably biggest limitation in one of his articles on the concept of *the conduct of everyday life* (alltägliche Lebensführung; Holzkamp, 1995b): Up to the point of starting to write that article, he says, he had systematically little reflected on the centrality of human learning taking place across numerous settings, situations, scenes, in relation to numerous others. While relating to his students or rather to their conducts of everyday life, he found that their motivation, emotional disposition, or as I would term it: their *current state of being-feeling* (in German: *Befindlichkeit*) for engaging in learning activities was clearly dependent of their conducts of everyday life elsewhere. Most learning theories, though, do not consider learning outside of educational institutions to be learning at all. Certainly there are some notable exceptions (most recently: Sefton-Green, 2013, on learning at not-school; on (inter)connected learning, cf. Ito, Gutiérrez, Livingstone, Penuel, Rhodes, Salen, Schor, Sefton-Green & Watkins, 2013; the classic: Lave & Wenger, 1991; also Lave, 1996, 2011).²³ Still, many researchers as well as parents, education pro-

²³ Of course there are more exceptions. Arguably all learning theories originating in the Cultural-Historical School of Vygotsky and his scholars (sometimes entitled Cultural Historical Activity Theory or CHAT nowadays) should enact a learning concept that reaches beyond the explicitly educational

professionals, policy-makers, assume that learning primarily takes place in institutional settings, for example daycare or preschool, school, the university, advanced vocational trainings, etc. The shortcomings in theorizing learning across places, situations and contexts, though, will more deeply absorb us later. In relation to the conduct of everyday life, the discovery of these shortcomings was only the starting point for Holzkamp's further considerations, considerations that were far more far-reaching. He emphasizes that psychology has radically neglected how human beings conduct their everyday lives, even though that is exactly what psychology should be doing: Investigate the conducts of life humans are living. It should be considered a problem to be investigated systematically in its own rights (Holzkamp, 1995b, p. 820), and as his 1995 article's title already states: *The conduct of everyday life was to become a basic concept for (Critical Psychological) subject-science* (cf. also Holzkamp, 2013g, p. 233).

It appears as a bitterly ironic twist of fate that Holzkamp was not able to conclude any of the two articles on this concept (Holzkamp, 1995b, 1996; the latter was translated into English: Holzkamp, 2013g), which were both only published posthumously and with the remark that they were in the very early stages of development (cf. Osterkamp, 1995). Due to this incompleteness, both articles raise many questions, as they partly contradict each other. Furthermore it has led to the situation that some proponents of (German Scandinavian) Critical Psychology have tried to integrate and expand the concept into their frameworks, while others (particularly in Germany) regard the concept as insufficiently elaborated, since it sometimes even questions other basic concepts Holzkamp had re-formulated in his earlier works. Therefore the concept tends to be ignored in some publications related to Critical Psychology. The decision to amerce a concept with conscious neglect, however, does not seem to be an unheard-of practice among other traditions of thought either.

From my vantage point, Holzkamp undoubtedly had very good reasons for proposing this conceptual expansion of the already established framework. From face-to-face conversations with people who knew Holzkamp personally, I learned that his sudden idea to dig into that concept came as a surprise to everyone at the institute, probably also to himself. After all, it came at "a time when the process of developing the epistemological and methodological prin-

practice. Partly in contrast to Jean Lave's impressions from that conference (Lave, 2012), my impression of the last conference of the International Society for Cultural and Activity Research (ISCAR) was that there are also many researchers who consider themselves in line with the tradition, but adopt a rather narrow and functionalist perspective of learning, at times re-producing the notion that 'formal learning' in institutionalized educational settings is the only 'real learning'.

ciples of Critical Psychology was largely completed” (Osterkamp & Schraube, 2013, p. 6). More important for this dissertation, though, is the expandability that the introduction of the concept provided to the whole approach. Not only did it provide a pivotal conceptual expansion for further developing Practice Research, which will be discussed in the subsequent sub-chapters. Crucially, I will argue, it allows for understanding human living as well as the investigation of human living as an ongoing *process*, thereby inextricably intertwining a single subject’s living to the ongoing process of overall human reproduction: *praxis*.²⁴

Re-formulating the sociological concept

Holzkamp criticized that psychology itself had almost completely neglected focusing on the process and the challenges of conducting everyday life. Therefore Holzkamp regarded it as fortunate to have stumbled across a sociological research project group from Munich (Germany) which focused on the impact of flexible working conditions on the life conduct and had worked on and with the concept for a considerable amount of time. Holzkamp, who mostly draws on the publications of Voß (1991) and Jurczyk & Rerrich (1993),²⁵ is thus able to build on the research groups’ conceptual-analytical reflections for his attempts to reformulate the concept for subject science. In short, the Munich group conceptualized life conduct as the subject’s active effort to meaningfully arrange (or coordinate, juggle) the multiple demands various areas of life (job, family, friends, etc.) pose. The organization of the

²⁴ Arguably, the processuality (as well as its relationality), which I deem to be inherent to the conduct of everyday life concept, renders it possible to interconnect it to a variety of so-called *poststructuralist approaches*, most notably to works borrowing from and/or expanding Michel Foucault’s analyses of power (Holzkamp’s himself refers to Foucault, e.g. Holzkamp, 1995a, 1995b, 2013g). But, for instance, also the metaphysics of Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari (e.g., Deleuze & Guattari, 1994; Deleuze, 1994), or the deconstructive works of Jacques Derrida (e.g., Derrida, 1997), as well as approaches building on the process philosophies of Henri Bergson (cf. Kontopodis, 2012a; Hviid, 2012) and Alfred North Whitehead (cf. Brown & Stenner, 2009; Stengers, 2011; Tucker, 2013) become fruitfully graspable. Also seminal works in feminism (e.g., Butler, 1999; Haraway, 1991) and its new-materialist developments (e.g., Barad, 2003, 2007), as well as in postcolonial theory (e.g., Spivak, 1988), Actor-Network-Theory (e.g., Latour, 2005a; cf. also Schraube, 2013) and the praxiology of material-semiotic studies (Kontopodis & Niewöhner, 2010; Kontopodis, 2012b) appear connectable. A few of these authors’ insights will be related to the (children’s) conduct of everyday life (with media artifacts) and discussed throughout the exemplary situation analyses (Chapters 3 and 4), also because Critical Psychology shares at least one hope or ambition with these approaches: Overcoming the objective determinateness of one’s own life and related feelings of helplessness, marginalization, frustration, fear, anger, pain – of being dominated or at the mercy of an abstract ‘other’.

²⁵ It should be mentioned that the research project involved more than eight researchers. The project was financed from 1986 to 1996, and produced an impressive amount of publications (for an overview, cf. <http://www.arbeitenundleben.de/alf-PSFB.htm>). Its insights are still being discussed and developed, recently at Roskilde University’s conference entitled *Psychology and the Conduct of Everyday Life* (June 2013).

conduct of life can consequently be termed the “arrangement of arrangements” (Voß, 1991, pp. 262ff; also Holzkamp, 1995b, p. 821). It differs from a diachronically constructed biography, as it is characterized by its synchronic everydayness and the routinization of everyday processes. The subject’s active effort lies in the *integration* and/or *construction* of organizing the everyday (*Alltagsorganisation*), hence organizing the levels of time, division of labor, and of the social in everyday life (cf. also Dreier, 2008, p. 182). As life possibilities and resources (foremost time) are limited, the integration requires the development of a “life conduct economy”, by which priorities are set, compromises effected, contradictions neutralized, conflicts sorted out or set aside (Holzkamp, 1995b, p. 822). In order to cope with this organization and keep it intact, the conduct of life develops a certain “own logic” (*Eigenlogik*) (cf. also Diezinger, 2008), which is necessary for dealing with the manifold everyday demands. The sociologists understand the conduct of everyday life as a concept mediating between the subject and the societal structures. Special attention is given to the action spaces (*Handlungsräume*) when confronting these structures: The subjects dispose over “degrees of freedom” while conducting their lives and are consequently “relatively autonomous” in relation to their life circumstances (Jurczyk & Rerrich, 1993, p. 37; Holzkamp, 1995b, p. 822). The research group’s main concern thus lies with the subject. It practically takes side with the subject and its everyday struggles in conducting everyday life, a concern which the group terms “subject orientation” (*Subjektorientierung*). This is to counter a systematic sociological blind-spot, which is owed to theories that cling to the objective determinateness of the subject by its (past and/or current) life circumstances. What is forgotten throughout these theories, as Holzkamp (1995b, p. 823) notes with Kudera & Voß (1990), is that the subjects themselves constitute the life praxis and thus the circumstances they confront.

Holzkamp (1995b) shows how also psychology has ignored this latter insight, which has been foundational for Critical Psychology (also Holzkamp, 2013g). But while he can build on many of the arguments brought forward by the Munich group, Critical Psychological subject science cannot subscribe to their (mere) “subject *orientation*” and its implications (1995b, pp. 831ff). Holzkamp argues that the term points towards the group’s epistemic interest, which abides by a clearly sociological approach inspired by Max Weber and his analyses of protestant ethics (Weber, 1952). The research group wants to contribute to an empirical social structure analysis, and to show how, next to rationalization and individualization, the pressure of modernization with its specific socio-structural characteristics interrelates with the individual conduct of life.

There is no possibility relationship between the subject and the pressure of modernization, the subject cannot actively act on this alleged pressure – irrespective of the relative autonomy postulated. Meanwhile, the method of choice is a qualitative survey, which collects demographic data so as to structure the respondents according to social characteristics, primarily their jobs. Therefore, the Munich approach remains – in spite of their subject orientation – centered on society rather than the individual. And furthermore, I add, there is no ontological symmetry to be found in their approach, no co-researcher principle: It is the researchers who define the problem, and who work on analyzing (and categorizing, instrumentalizing) the subject in relation to its circumstances *from the outside*, mediated by the survey as instrument. No matter how emancipatory their intentions are, they undermine it by ontologically distancing themselves from their “object of reflection” (cf. Introduction).

Instead, the epistemic interest of Critical Psychological subject science lies in (*social*) *self-understanding*,²⁶ which Holzkamp here defines as the “germ cell” of subject science (p. 833). There cannot be an outside view on the subjects researched, the co-researchers. Self-understanding is about explicating and thereby overcoming the tacitness of one’s “tacit knowledge”, as Holzkamp (*ibid.*, p. 834; also Holzkamp, 2013g, p. 330) writes with reference to Hugh Mehan (1979, p. 176), by questioning those meanings-that-suggest-themselves-as-explication (*das Naheliegende*), that seem natural, immovable, ossified, ontologically given. Through a dialog of subjective reasons for acting, a common language is to be developed: the task is to acknowledge intersubjectivity through reason discourse so as to obtain meta-subjective discoveries. But what does the new concept of the conduct of everyday life add to prior analyses and thus the subject-scientific framework?

I would claim that one of the concept’s key contributions is the light it sheds on the complexity and complicatedness of conducting *and reflecting on* an everyday life. It thereby facilitates acknowledging intersubjective dependency and correspondingly establishing a meta-subjective frame for mutual self-understanding. For instance, apparently rather *restrictive*²⁷ ways of acting may

²⁶ I regard the translation of *Selbstverständigung* as self-understanding, as utilized throughout the translations of Holzkamp in Schraube & Osterkamp (2013), as still unsatisfactory: The German *Verständigung* already implies the *reciprocity* or rather *mutuality* of this understanding, i.e. an other becomes a *condicio sine qua non* for understanding oneself. In the translation of Holzkamp’s long article on the conduct of everyday life (2013g), this mutuality becomes a tad more evident by adding *social* to it. I myself will from time to time point to its mutuality by terming it *mutual (sociomaterial) self-understanding* (cf. Chapter 3).

²⁷ The dialectical pair *restrictive* versus *generalized human agency* has been crucial for the development of Critical Psychology as subject science (e.g., Holzkamp 1985; Tolman, 1994; Osterkamp & Schraube, 2013). As this construct is often used abstractly, I will rather concretize situations in my analysis

suddenly appear more comprehensible to an other when taking into account that one's conduct of everyday life demands juggling a variety of subjectively relevant others' interests and wishes across a multiplicity of contradictory sociomaterial arrangements. In his first published article on the concept, Holzkamp (1995b) opens up and simultaneously closes down for this interpretation by introducing *everyday cyclicality* (Alltagszyklizität) as fundamental reproductive characteristic of the life conduct vis-à-vis the productive, *actual* or *virtual life* (das eigentliche Leben).²⁸ Interestingly enough, neither term reappears in the longer second text (Holzkamp, 2013g). So even though one might speculate about how central or not these terms actually were to Holzkamp's analyses, I find it important to discuss them nevertheless, as they become pivotal for conceptualizing the *processes of maintaining and transforming* as central characteristics of the conduct of everyday life throughout Chapter 3. Furthermore the terms are still food for debates in some subject-scientific developments, among others in Practice Research.

Cyclicality and virtual life

Holzkamp emphasizes the subjective groundedness of everyday cyclicality (1995b, pp. 842ff). Courses of action (*Handlungsabläufe*) do not occur linearly, but in cycles, or rather: a linear pattern of actions repeated on an everyday basis (going to bed, getting up, eating breakfast, going to work, to school, etc.). Nevertheless, it is oneself who needs to get these (cyclical) courses of action going – *one needs to conduct them*. One is still in a possibility relationship to one's own meaning-mediated circumstances and one's own cyclical conduct of life, and one can avoid getting such courses of action going (for instance, 'forgetting' to set the alarm, pretending to be sick, or more radically: a change of scenery by escaping the current way of living, moving away, etc.). Furthermore, completely unanticipated or sudden *dramatic* circumstances, like serious injury/illness or death of a close one, undermine the everyday cyclicality. A phenomenon Holzkamp points to is the fact that human beings who are (involuntarily) thrown out of their everyday cyclicality quickly try to re-establish some kind of everyday cyclicality. It therefore seems to be subjectively functional to (partly) engage in such a cyclical conduct – it seems to relieve oneself from needing to reassess one's premises for action on an everyday basis. Still

which simultaneously point to both poles.

²⁸ Choosing *virtual life* as translation creates a possibility to think this further with Kontopodis (2012a), who argues that actualizing virtual possibilities for action instead of merely realizing potential possibilities always requires a collective (cf. Chapter 3).

it does not imply that the cyclical is conducted outside of the reason discourse or the *mode of intersubjective understanding* (Holzkamp, 2013g, p. 287): It can be accentuated as premise for action and meta-subjectively transcended. The everyday cyclicity is reassuring, and Holzkamp (1995b) speculates that it may also be due to one's impression that as long as it returns, life appears infinite (pp. 844f). In my words, *everyday cyclicity has an existential quality*, and I can agree to that. Another conclusion he draws, however, is that this everyday cyclicity, which he at times uses synonymously with the conduct of everyday life, is to be analytically separated from the *virtual life* (translated as "real life" in Dreier, 1999, p. 19), which he connotes with the terms of "productivity, exhilaration, joy, fulfillment, fighting for a common cause" (p. 845; translation NAC). He does mention that it is impossible to ever draw a clear boundary between the two sides of living, but does not expand on that matter. To me, then, both cyclicity and the virtual are part of conducting everyday life: They are dialectically intertwined and inseparable from each other, even on an analytical level – there is no boundary to draw. As I will argue in Chapter 4, it is unforeseeable which aspects of living are rather maintaining or transforming, rather cyclical or virtual, continuous or changing, repetitive or different.²⁹ Unfortunately, I could nowadays only speculate on whether Holzkamp would disagree to my disagreement because we eventually agree. That does not seem very intersubjective to me. So I continue with how Holzkamp concludes (or rather was forced to temporarily conclude due to his serious illness and timely death) this text by mentioning that up to that point of his argument, he, in order to accentuate the features of everyday cyclicity, "up to now pretended that the 'conduct of everyday life' was merely one's own matter" (1995, p. 846; translation NAC), and that it required "considerable abstraction efforts" (ibid.) to do so. He points to the fact that his examples of going to school or to work already implies having to relate the individual conduct of everyday life to social demands and arrangements. Thus the Munich research group's central characteristics of the conduct of everyday life, ergo the *integration* and/or *construction* of organizing everyday, were not yet considered in his reinterpretation. Before the text breaks off, he asks what exactly it is that needs to be integrated through the conduct of everyday life. As I would interpret this question: Where is the link between a single subject's conduct of life and the sociomaterial arrangements s_he lives his_her life in, through, and by, and how does s_he make the arrangements a premise for her_his actions (*integrate*) so as to collaboratively enact mutual social self-understanding (*construct*)?

²⁹ A first hint that it might be possible to think Deleuze (1994) into this concept.

Intersubjectively constituted scenes in the conduct of everyday life

In a way, Holzkamp's longer text on the conduct of everyday life – first published in 1996, one year after his death – picks up this train of thought while focusing primarily on the relationship between the researcher and the researched other (Holzkamp, 2013g). After a comprehensive critique of the worldlessness of psychological research traditions like “elementism, Gestalt psychology, behaviourism, and cognitivism” (p. 254) and the psychological “structure blindness” (p. 259), he begins writing about the subject-scientific approach by introducing the term *research dyad* (p. 267). Even though he uses the notion also for connoting experiments with more than one researched, it postulates that it needs at least two human beings to actually do research. Thanks to a long fictitious description (or *scene*, as he calls it), he furthermore illustrates how an experiment comes into existence because of two human beings conducting their everyday lives in such a way that they – after having engaged and before engaging in other activities – decide to meet in a lab. He thereby intended to remove the standard experimental design “from the sphere of constructing abstract stimulus-response relations or variable models and locate it where it actually belongs: in the real world ‘in’ which the researcher and test subject actually meet [...] – first and foremost taking account of the fact that it [the experimental session] is merely one scene in a sequence of scenes constituting an individual's day” (p. 270). He highlights how in the experimental session, the intersubjective communication is heavily restricted, as the researched is to delimit him_herself to her_his role as test subject. But the test subject's agreement to assuming this role is not part of the researcher's interpretation. Holzkamp almost sarcastically comments on the paradoxality of what, then, the researcher makes out of the test subject's performance:

“[T]he test subject is not only assumed to *perform*, say, a stimulus-response mechanism, but actually to *be* such a mechanism. This would indeed leave no alternative to assuming a mystic metamorphosis under the spell of the standard design. In reality, of course, each person involved knows that it is merely a matter of an agreement or – however seriously meant – an experimental game which only works as long as everyone ‘plays along’” (p. 271).

The most significant conclusion he draws out of these (fictitious) observations, though, regard the question of how the individual conduct of life relates to another subject's conduct of life, ergo how ontological intersubjectivity is enveloped in the subject-scientific understanding of the concept:

“A crucial feature of the scenes of conduct of everyday life portrayed here is that [...] different conducts of life always intersect or, more precisely, result in an *intersection area of more or less shared conducts of life*. [...] Hence, we have to note for later that conducts of life typically imply *interdependencies with other individuals’ conducts of life*. Accordingly, one cannot a priori distinguish the ‘I’ as the subject of the conduct of life from ‘others’ as part of ‘external conditions’ to be integrated into one’s own conduct of life (a mistake also made by the Munich group [...]). Instead, the question of whose conduct of life I address and whose I leave aside is simply a question of the standpoint adopted and the particular problem” (p. 272).

In my understanding, the integration of external conditions into one’s conduct of everyday life – as proposed by the Munich research group – is transcended when conceptualizing it with regards to other subjects’ conducts of life. These other conducts are *not external conditions to relate to*, but are inextricably woven into one’s own conduct of everyday life – they are *constitutive of one’s conduct of everyday life*. One cannot think and act outside of the relations one has to others: One’s own conduct, one’s everyday considerations and actions, one’s coordination and organization efforts, are always already – *ontologically* – interdependent on the conducts of the human beings we share our lives with. As Holzkamp notes, however, some conducts of life are not foregrounded. That depends, as I read him, on one’s own situated epistemic interest in relation to the currently given circumstances. Not every potentially relevant conduct of life needs to be and can be (consciously) taken into consideration at all times. Rather, it is a question of the standpoint, of which meanings out of the meaning structure (or culture, cf. p. 278) one currently accentuates or puts into focus – i.e., which generalized possibilities for action turn into one’s premises for action in relation to a particular problem one is facing. And the limitedness of the accentuation, in turn, depends on one’s specific *locality* as well as one’s situated *horizon* (p. 276; cf, Chapter 3).

Practice Research – participating across contextual practices

There is a lot more to be written about Holzkamp’s long article on the conduct of everyday life concept. Much of what he writes has already been interwoven into earlier sub-chapters, much will re-appear and be discussed later. But I would like to seize the opportunity of him addressing the situated restrictions of conducting one’s everyday life by introducing the terms *locality* and *horizon* so as to lead over to a specific reading and branch of German

Scandinavian Critical Psychology, known particularly throughout Danish academia: subject-scientific *Practice Research* (for its historical development, cf. Nissen, 2000; Mørck & Huniche, 2006; Kousholt & Thomsen, 2013). The reason I deem it fitting to weave this further thread into this text, is that the approach has keenly built on Holzkamp's conduct of everyday life concept, while expanding the subject-scientific framework so as to encompass precisely the limitedness (including the radical situatedness) of one's own perspective, of one's own standpoint. In doing so, it clearly points to the necessity of engaging in the dialogic reason discourse, in mutual learning as mutual self-understanding.

Danish Critical Psychology has initially put a lot of its focus on theoretically-methodologically overcoming the theory-practice gap in psychology.³⁰ The point of departure is a more or less still very present, widely accepted division between *theory* (what academics make – abstract categories etc.) and *practice* (what practitioners outside of academia do – concretely in psychotherapy, social work, schooling).³¹ Nissen (2000) historically retraces this fundamental debate, which also led to the organization of the first Theory-Practice Conference (*Theorie-Praxis-Konferenz*)³² in 1983.³³ Danish psychologist Ole Dreier was actively involved in organizing these conferences, and they became a central forum for the collaboration between the Critical Psychologists in and around Berlin and those in and around Copenhagen (Nissen also mentions participating in these in 1987 and 1990). But I only sketch this so as to give an impression of the background against which Danish Critical Psychology developed a number of own categories-concepts which concretized and part-

³⁰ Like the history of any other tradition of thought, “the history of [German Scandinavian] Critical Psychology is a history of ongoing debates and differences [...], all of the participants also work simultaneously together, cover different fields, develop standpoints that supplement each other etc.” (Nissen 2000, p. 148f). There is therefore a constant danger for the current author to oversimplify, evolutionize, and caricature the various historical rifts and shifts, perspectives and standpoints, the participants' manifold contributions. Intersubjective face-to-face dialogs with some of the contributors on their subjective reasons for action have assisted me in making some sense out of the sometimes contradictory developments, but – just as Morten Nissen underlines – it is not about claiming a historical truth here. From my perspective, what I do here is to accentuate a fraction of meanings, of generalized possibilities to make sense of this history, mostly in order to lay bare my premises for writing this piece.

³¹ This is already an extreme caricature. For more details on this problem in psychology, cf. Holzkamp's functional analysis of practice (Holzkamp, 2013d; first published in 1987).

³² In German, *Praxis* denotes both Marx' (societal) praxis as ongoing basic human activity as well as local practice(s), ergo that which is made and done in specific contexts. This has led to much terminological confusion in English language debates, also because the interrelation of both activities is still subject to academic contestation. For now I will orthographically stick to *practice*. In case that Marx' general term is obviously intended, I will either use (*ongoing*) *social practice* as suggested by Dreier (2008, p. 21) or *praxis*. I will return to discuss this differentiation in Chapter 3.

³³ The alleged gap between theory and practice is discussed and worked on until today, as for instance a recent conference entitled *Theory in Practice* at Roskilde University again demonstrated.

ly transcended the framework laid out in the German writings. Some of these concepts seem to have been (implicitly) taken up by Holzkamp (2013g) in his reformulation of the conduct of everyday life. Particularly his description of a *lab meeting*, in which the researcher and the researched subject agree to meet for engaging in a psychological experiment as only *one scene* in the conducts of life of both subjects, clearly tackles and bridges the notion of an alleged theory-practice gap: In my eyes, Holzkamp's aim was to build a general psychology which can theorize everyday practice while acknowledging that theory-building is itself an everyday practice (cf. also Nissen, 2012). This acknowledgment is an essential prerequisite for engaging in co-research, as it questions the societally fortified supremacy of academic theorizing over everyday 'lay' practicing. Instead of accepting this theory-practice gapping, such an understanding actively calls for co-research between participants from academic practices and non-academic practices: They need to learn from each other so as to engage in societally relevant transformations.

Shifting the focus on conducting everyday life in and through practices highlights that societal structures or conditions are not something the single individual stands in opposition to and can analyze from an outsider's third-person perspective: Societal structures are lived, re-produced and thus co-arranged by practice participants, including academic researchers. Nevertheless did Holzkamp hold on to the term *societal structures* (structural conditions subjectively perceived as *meaning structures*) throughout his writings. Practice Research, then, worked on concretizing and situating these societal structures: What does it mean for the concrete subject (or *person*, as Dreier prefers) to be living in relation to societal conditions? Are really all societal conditions subjectively relevant, and if not, how does the person come to accentuate specific meanings for these conditions? And how can these shared conditions be investigated?

In relation to Tolman, who wrote that emancipatory relevance unifies and necessarily interrelates personal and societal relevance (see above), it seemed that the question of how societal structures become personally relevant required further specification. Against this background, Dreier proposes to study subjects as persons who participate in conditions across concrete contexts, rather than as persons facing a societal or social structure:

“[H]uman subjects do not live their lives in one context or one homogeneous life-world facing an overall social structure. They live their lives by participating in many diverse contexts. These contexts are local settings which are materially and socially arranged in particular ways to allow for the pursuit of particular social practices within and beyond them; they are re-produced and

changed by their participants and separated from and linked to other social contexts in a more comprehensive structural nexus of social practice. Accordingly, we must study persons as participants in and across particular contexts” (Dreier, 2009b, pp. 195-196).

Human activity in ongoing social practice thus takes place *in and across distinct contexts*, in “the pursuit of particular social practices”. Subjects do not face an overall societal structure, but relate to those details of the (overall) structure of social practice that they actually (locally) participate in, as contexts: “I define a social context of action as a delineated, local place in social practice that is re-produced and changed by the linked activities of its participants and through its links with other places in a structure of social practice” (Dreier, 2008, p. 23). In Dreier’s approach, *context* as concept thus becomes key.³⁴ Contexts are sociomaterially co-arranged and re-produced by those very same persons participating in the practice of the concrete context.

Through enacting such a situated and agentive understanding of a person’s relations to societal conditions, namely by conceptualizing individual subjects as participating in contextual practices, it becomes easier to fathom where a co-research of problematic conditions can take its point of departure: In the concrete contextual practices shared and re-produced by the various (academically and non-academically working) participants. But albeit *participation* in structures of social practice is always ontologically given and therefore inter-relates all potential co-researchers in a given context, each person participates differently: Each one participates in and across a different constellation of contexts, each one participates from a different position, and each one perceives a different scope of possibilities for action even in commonly shared contextual practices.

On the one hand, there is no one who participates in the exact same contexts from the exact same position. “The links and separations between contexts [...] constitute particular infrastructures of ongoing social practice” (p. 24). Power relations are woven into these contexts and herewith into the infrastructure of ongoing social practice: Even though contexts are linked together, they are also separated through erected barriers of access. With reference to Lave & Wenger (1991), whose Situated Learning Theory has had a strong impact on Practice Research’s notions of participation and learning as/in practice, Dreier explains how these barriers affect the concrete persons: “Particular persons or groups of participants may have access to particular con-

³⁴ Dreier (2008) draws on Theodore R. Schatzki’s considerations on the relation between context and practice (e.g., Schatzki, 2001). Although my impression is that Dreier’s understanding of context and practice slightly differs from Schatzki’s, I cannot delve into this discussion here.

texts or be excluded from them in particular ways; in other words, they may count as legitimate or illegitimate participants or members” (Dreier, 2008, p. 24). A somewhat obvious example: Children are not intended to be legitimate participants in a higher education context – their position does neither entail working nor studying in academia.

On the other hand, this implies that each participant may perceive different problematic conditions even in a shared contextual practice, since the scope of possibilities for action is different for each participant across the diverse contexts s_he participates in:

“At any given time there are several, alternative possibilities for what may be done in a context; together, they make up a scope of possibilities. Different contexts offer different scopes of possibilities, which may be more or less restricted or far-reaching[...]. What is more, participants in a context may have more or less restricted possibilities for expanding the given scope and for utilizing it to affect events and possibilities in other contexts through the links between them. [...] Persons on different positions in a context have different scopes and relations to coparticipants; different authorities, rights, and obligations; and different links to other contexts” (Dreier, 2008, p. 25).

The historically situated participation in practice including the perceived possibilities for affecting or influencing a context thus depends on personal *locations* and social *positions* one comes to inhabit and/or assume in the course of one’s own life trajectory (cf. also Dreier, 1999; a more elaborated discussion of location and position is to be found in Chapter 3). One does not relate to the whole world and its meaning structures, but only to those meanings one actually comes to experience. Therefore, one’s scope of possibilities for action is ineluctably limited. This is important for understanding why subjects/persons develop and adopt different *stances* on their personal participation in social practice: “Personal stances are gathered and composed from various experiences and concerns about courses of interaction and conflicts between participants in attempting to find what one stands for in relation to them” (Dreier, 2008, p. 42). So as to de-center from one’s own limited stance and learn, therefore, an academic researcher would need to investigate practice from various other perspectives, from within the context the subjects participate in (cf. also Nissen, 2000). This can be read as an invitation to engage in co-research, specifying that it would need to be situated in the contextual practice whose problems one is seeking to investigate.

For my upcoming account of methodological preconceptions, which were to prepare me for delving into the daycare practice, these insights from Practice Research were particularly helpful. For instance, it became obvious to me that

I would come to be a participant in the contextual practice of the daycare, and that my reflecting and theorizing as practice would (also physically) interrelate with the other activities going on in that context. Furthermore I realized that in order to investigate what the children actually do with and how they make sense of media artifacts, how they learn from and with them, I would need to closely study how the children themselves are influencing practice, and I would furthermore need to participate in other contexts the children conduct their everyday lives in. The main challenge, however, would be to further specify my methodological approach along the way: It needed to be adequately reflecting the conceptual framework laid out so far, so that I could meaningfully relate to and analyze the children's perspectives on media artifacts while accounting for the intersubjectivity of our interrelated conducts of everyday life in the institution's daycare practice and beyond.

Methodological considerations: Participating with children, discovering interrelated problems

Critical Psychology argues that methods shall be *adequately* chosen according to the subject matter under scrutiny (cf. Holzkamp, 1985; Tolman, 1994). In other words, given specific philosophical, socio-historical and theoretical presumptions which co-constitute the conceptual framework, not all methodologies and methods are equally adequate for exploring a concrete research problem. It is therefore that I have chosen to explicate my other conceptual-analytical presumptions before concretizing my methodological approach, albeit the latter is dialectically entangled with the former (cf. Dreier, 2007). But how is it possible to adequately engage in an ontologically symmetrical co-research with children? How to relate my perspective to their perspectives so as to identify problems of shared concern? What methods to enact, what recording artifacts to enact, and where to set the focus while participating in the everyday sociomaterial interplay of a contextual practice?

Clearly, what interrelated the children, the pedagogues, the parents, and me, was our joint participation in this specific daycare practice. In order to identify problems of shared concern, thus, it appeared most sensible to build on the existing work from contextual developmental psychological practice research, which conceptualizes *children as participants* in structures of social practice (an early work: Højholt, 1999; for a recent overview, cf. Kousholt & Thomsen, 2013). This, per definition, put children on the same ontological level as other participants. Furthermore, it methodologically implies that the

researcher's focus should center on what the participants are (collectively) engaged in, ergo on how they actively co-constitute the contextual practice or rather its sociomaterial arrangements (cf. Dreier, 2008, p. 25). One methodological advice became especially central for my work:

“[T]o understand the personal engagements of a child, we have to look not only at the child itself but also ‘in front’ of the child – what is the child looking at, occupied with, taking part in? Children are like other persons aiming at something, and we must explore their personal reasons related to their engagement in concrete social situations with different things at stake” (Højholt, 2011, p. 75; cf. also Dreier, 1999, p. 30).

Basically, Højholt describes here what I set out to do: Look in front of the children, at their participation in practice, look for their stakes. My recording artifact of choice for that mission was a small *video camera*, which resembled a mobile phone (this led to many unexpected inter-actions between the co-researchers and me; cf. Chapter 4), foremost intended for better recalling that which I experienced in specific situations. The video camera was complemented by an *audio recording device*. With the children, I mostly used the audio recorder when I felt that the camera was obstructing my other intended engagements as well as for *situated interviews*, ergo focus-driven informal conversations. After all, I wanted to engage in *participant observation* (e.g., Jones & Somekh, 2011), take part in the activities the potential co-researchers were caught up with, although I gradually came to recognize that my participation was *transcending my role as participant observer* (cf. Chapter 3). Therefore I started using my digital media artifacts with decreasing frequency as data collecting technology, instead relying on my notes from the field or *research diary* (e.g., Holly & Altrichter, 2011). I wrote a few memos while actively participating in a situation, but mostly while ‘taking a break’ in between relevant situations. For that purpose, I sat down in the daycare leader’s office or looked for a quiet corner inside the building or in the extensive garden area. As I jotted down the notes and rather spontaneously emerging considerations in German (remember that the daycare was in Berlin, and my strongest language is German), I usually translated them into English the very same evening. I also used this opportunity to supplement my rather descriptive discoveries with further discoveries, which often connected a day’s experiences to other experiences, thus expanding my explorative considerations across sociomaterial arrangements, across time and space.

What I primarily focused on were the children’s actions, their (shared) engagements, their verbal and non-verbal negotiations, their conflicts and strug-

gles. These actions, which I was a part of, created possibilities for establishing a reason discourse and thereby approximating the children's perspectives (cf. Chapter 3). Meanwhile, it was obvious to me that the children's perspectives could only be investigated in relation to the perspectives and conducts of life of staff and parents. Clearly, the adults co-constituted the daycare practice, hence co-delimiting the scope of (imaginable) possibilities for action in general, and herewith for acting with, on and around media artifacts. Therefore I arranged more formalized, *problem-centered interviews* (Witzel, 2000) with most of the staff members (13 out of 15) and nine interested parents. I additionally asked some of these interested children and parents whether I could come visit the family at home, so as to get an insight into the children's other everyday contexts. Unfortunately, only three parents finally agreed to that (or rather: they contributed to finding a date that fit). All these interviews were audio-recorded, along with situated interviews I had with staff members. And I came to analyze all of these perspectives whilst taking into account that I myself was a participant in practice, and that the other participants in the daycare practice would only have limited possibilities of participating in my later writing practice (for details, cf. Chapter 3).

The German sociologist Gerhard Kleining has, together with a number of colleagues, worked out a methodological approach which I regard as largely tailored to this kind of multi-perspective multi-method practice research: Qualitative Heuristics. By productively critiquing hermeneutics (especially *sensu* Wilhelm Dilthey), Kleining & Witt (2001) come to formulate three basic suggestions for doing future research:

“1. to consider subjective interpretations as an everyday technique of orientation within a lifeworld and a starting point of research. But rather than adding another interpretation, to apply research methodologies to discover the patterns, structures and functions of it at the level of intersubjectivity. This implies the abandonment of universalistic claims – intersubjectivity always refers to a certain societal and historical situation;

2. to disregard any need to separate methodologies on the grounds of topics of research, supposed alternatives of intentions and/or forms of data. It can be shown that discovery methodologies have been successfully applied not only in the natural sciences but also within psychology and the social sciences [...];

3. to avoid falling back to a pre-methodological stage or a ‘trial-and-error’ method and/or to give up any rules in collecting research data or dealing with it. If research aims at discovery there are always better and less suitable procedures.

In sum: to replace hermeneutic and/or interpretative research by research aiming at exploration and discoveries. The change would be from hermeneutic to heuristic methodologies” (paragraphs 10-11).

One needs to remember that this approach originates from (a critique of) sociology. Therefore, the here provided conceptual understandings of – for example – structures may be (philosophically) incompatible with especially Practice Research’s conceptualization of persons participating in structures of social practice. However, there are some striking similarities between the approaches that can be drawn. First, merely subjective (one-sided, isolated) interpretations need to be overcome, so as to make way for societally and historically situated intersubjective interpretations. Second, different methodologies (or rather methods) can be combined, so as to intersubjectively explore commonalities and make discoveries together, which implies, e.g., not to objectify the other. Third, and this may at first seem to stand in opposition to an explorative approach, applying methodology and methods need to be well thought through. This can be related to Critical Psychology’s initially mentioned call for methods to be *adequately* chosen according to the conceptually specified subject matter in exploration.

Concerning the methodological practice, the authors formulate four basic rules that make up the distinct Hamburg approach to Qualitative Heuristics:

Rule One: ‘The researcher should be *open to new concepts* and change his/her preconceptions if the data are not in agreement with them’ [...]

Rule Two: ‘The *topic* of research is preliminary and *may change* during the research process.’ It is only fully known after being successfully explored [...]

Rule Three: ‘Data should be collected under the paradigm of *maximum structural variation of perspectives*’. There should be a multitude of *different* points of view, as different as possible: methods, respondents, data, time, situation, researchers etc [...]

Rule Four: ‘The analysis directs itself toward discovery of *similarities*’. It looks for correspondence similarities, accordance, analogies or homologies within these most varied sets of data and ends up discovering its pattern or structure. Completeness of analysis is required” (Kleining & Witt, 2001, paragraphs 24-28).

My co-research project by and large follows through with most of the “rules” proposed here. While I imagined beforehand how suitable the concept of, for instance, conduct of everyday life would be for engaging in the exploration

and later analyzing the “data”,³⁵ I always considered the possibility of having to re-formulate it according to my discoveries in the daycare and beyond. The same holds for sociomaterial artifacts, participation, practice, etc. And I will attempt to re-formulate and expand some of these concepts, implying that I necessarily also change the “topic of research” over time.

The variation of perspectives mentioned by Kleining & Witt, meanwhile, is broadly in line with Dreier’s quote from Chapter 1: “Diversity of practices and perspectives replaces [ontological] distance as the key condition of possibility for reflection” (Dreier 1999, p. 14). As laid out throughout the last pages, mutual social self-understanding can only be approximated by engaging in a co-researching dialog with others’, by exchanging a variety of perspectives (various children, staff members, parents). The need to make this variation “structural” a priori, however, seems paradoxical: After all, many of the criteria needed for ensuring “maximum structural variation” (gender, class, ethnic background, etc.) would shut down the explorative openness and processuality of the first two rules and, most crucially, dialogic exchange throughout the reason discourse. The mode of intersubjective communication presupposes that one co-researcher becomes interested in the other co-researcher’s problem, and in how this other’s problem interrelates to one’s own problems. It is not merely up to the academically trained researcher to seek maximal variation. Nevertheless, once the official researcher has found potentially interested co-researchers, s_he may gradually seek to increase the dialog with those seemingly struggling the most and those seemingly struggling the least with given sociomaterial arrangements. Identifying commonalities across the most diverging perspectives may turn out to spotlight the most purposeful interrelations and discoveries.

Negotiating adequacy while participating in daycare practice

Regardless of all the good methodological advice I got from contextual developmental psychology and Qualitative Heuristics up to this point, I was still doubtful at the outset of my participation in the daycare: How would I be able to make sure that my methodological approach adequately takes into consideration subject science’s conceptual implications for doing co-research?

³⁵ To me, *data* is nothing more than an objectification of the researcher’s experiences made, an artifact manufactured as meaning so as to be able to re-relate and make (new) sense out of it across time and space (and subjects, but that would call for some further explications).

How would I make sure that my methodological preconceptions and here-with my analytical focus render it possible to adequately take the children's perspectives on media artifacts seriously, as seriously as any other participant's perspective (including my own)? How would I be able to take adequately into account that the children may be conducting everyday life, albeit from a very different societal positioning and with very different premises-for-acting, communicated in to me unusual ways? And what exactly does this latter conceptual preconception, the conduct of everyday life, imply for my participation in daycare and my aim of doing co-research?

For instance, my focus would be put in front of the children, at their actions. I wanted to explore these young children's perspectives, ergo their subjective reasons for acting on, with and around media artifacts throughout their conducts of everyday life. But would that be possible at all, given that I had little recent experience talking to and acting with such young human beings?

Certainly, there was enough evidence provided by other practice researchers that it actually would be possible. However, a researcher is never able to know beforehand how conducting a participant observation will turn out, what dynamics are in inter-play, and what discoveries it may lead to. Participant observation is something to be learned through experiencing while doing it in a specific practice, it is situated: "The only way of learning participant observation is to do it, be there, live it" (Schostak, 2010, p. 8). As I understand it, thus, conducting participant observation in a beforehand unknown practice is, enacting Barbara Rogoff's words again, "a creative and open process with an unknowable future" (Rogoff, 2011, p. 292). Soothing my initial fears by realizing that this adaptiveness and openness is also pivotal for doing co-research with adults, putting all of us participatory explorers of the stormy sea called everyday life practices into the same rocking boat, I hoped that the discoveries made-perceived-accentuated would make up for the troublesome crossing laying ahead of me.

The method adequacy, I concluded before setting sail for entering the daycare practice, would need to be re-negotiated throughout my participation. I would not be able to know beforehand, only to imagine, anticipate, assume what might be adequate. And if the method adequacy would need to be negotiated, the whole conceptual-analytical framework would need to be open for re-negotiation, as these are dialectically interrelated. So while the upcoming chapter analyzes how the daycare practice's specific conditions-as-meanings or sociomaterial arrangements already made adaptations and re-negotiations necessary, Chapter 3 will pick up on this necessity so as to specify, refine and expand this initial conceptual-analytical framework.

Chapter 2:

Contradictory directionalities of the daycare institution's socio-material arrangement

The previous chapter presented the conceptual-analytical framework on whose foundation I attempted to approach the children as well as the other daycare participants as the project's co-researchers. My aim was to engage in processes of mutual social self-understanding by establishing an ontologically symmetrical dialog among the various participants so as to explore possibilities and limitations when acting on, with and through media artifacts. I was particularly interested in exploring and analyzing the different meanings children enact when relating to various media artifacts, from their perspectives and consequently together with them. I wanted to investigate what relevance these artifacts have for the children's conducts of everyday life, how they assist as well as hinder them in purposefully participating in the daycare practice and beyond – assist and hinder them in learning about and influencing those very same life conditions their lives are themselves dependent of. Looking in front of the children, at the directionalities of their actions, and specifically at their verbal and non-verbal negotiations, problems and struggles, were the main methodological principles. I wanted to find out how their problems with media artifacts relate to my problems as well as the other participants' problems: our jointly shared struggles.

When I first set foot into the daycare institution, I was overwhelmingly surprised: Joint explorations of the world were all around the institutional practice. Not only were children exploring world together with peers, as I expected beforehand. The pedagogues were exploring together with the children, the pedagogues with the pedagogues, the pedagogues with the parents. And many of the participants also got interested in exploring media technology use together with me. It seemed to me I ended up in participatory heaven, and this was also due to joint explorations being considered a major

means of education throughout the pedagogical approach of the specific daycare.

Whilst participating for longer in the daycare practice and reading up on its textual foundations, however, I increasingly came to realize that the intended directionalities of these explorations were contradictory.³⁶ In particular, the joint explorations across ages, between children and adults, did not presuppose an ontological symmetry between the involved parties. This was an institution set up so as to educate the children alone, not the other participants. Irrespective of whether learning was actually taking place across ages, the adults' learning was not systematically accounted for and promoted. In turn, the children's learning was accounted for, but little seen as relevant for changing the overall practice. The primary function of the practice maintained, its seemingly unquestionable purpose, implied that the professionals were there to educate and teach the children, while rearing them for the parents. Hence, maintaining this daycare practice was not understood as "a process of interdependent learners learning" (p. 161), as Social Practice theorist and anthropologist Jean Lave (1996) neatly put it.

According to the legislative and pedagogical-educational artifacts the institution and particularly its employed participants were to draw on, adults are not required to put children on the same ontological level as adults. They did not have to live up to my conceptually driven subject-scientific co-research ideal and its emancipatory directionality. Instead, they attempted to live up to the ideal purposes arranged via the pedagogical-educational practice's foundational texts as well as through how their fellow professionals put these into practice – irrespective of how contradictory the purposes may have appeared to them. That is the pedagogue's job, their work task, their agenda: They need to live up to the job's required purposes. The parents' task is meanwhile to educate the children, while also being employed in another contextual practice, and the children are primarily the receivers of this education. Consequently, the tasks, aims, purposes or rather directionalities formulated in the relevant artifacts as well as sociomaterialized in the already established ongoing practice de-limit the practice participants' scope of imaginable possibilities for acting and herewith for questioning the given. What I needed to do so as

³⁶ Instead of directionality, it would be also appropriate to draw on Lave's (1996) concept of *telos* here, which she defines as "a direction of movement or change of learning (*not* the same as goal directed activity)" (p. 156). Meanwhile, throughout my analyses, it emerged that in the sociomaterial interplay, there is never merely one *telos* implied, but a variety of contradictory *teli*. I thus prefer using directionality or directionalities, as the term more clearly points to a *telos* being a matter of ongoing negotiation between involved practice participants. In case a directionality is more clearly spelled out and herewith temporarily stabilized, I also use the term *purpose*.

to establish and maintain the possibility for co-researching media artifacts together with all participants, meanwhile, was to *partly subject my own possibilities for acting to this given arrangement* (cf. Chapter 3).

The upcoming chapter will map out what seemingly unquestionable meanings were already in play throughout the daycare practice's sociomaterial interplay, a practice whose approach principally *promotes a participatory co-research approach*. It thus highlights how even in such a potentially fruitful sociomaterial arrangement, subject-scientific ontological-symmetrical co-research across ages is still rendered hardly imaginable. The analysis of established conditions-as-meanings expounds what meanings are officially handed to the institution's participants so as to accentuate them as premises for their future actions. It is inspired by the so-called Praxis-Portrait or Practice Portrait method (cf. Markard & Holzkamp, 1989; Markard, Holzkamp & Dreier, 2004), which is supposed to assist the subject-scientific researcher in analyzing a (psychological) work practice, its contradictoriness, and the possibilities for action its sociomaterial setup allows for.

The chapter starts out with an introduction into the legislative arrangement of daycare institutions in Germany and specifically in Berlin. The legislative artifacts act as foundation for the more pedagogical ones. This is followed by an analysis of the *Berlin Educational Program* (BBP, 2004), a uniform frame of more or less binding guidelines for all pedagogical institutions in Berlin, as well as of a recent publication on the daycare's specific pedagogical approach entitled *Qualität im Situationsansatz* (Quality in the Situational Approach), edited by Preissing & Heller (2009).³⁷ Instead of merely highlighting the ontological differences drawn by positioning children, parents and pedagogues differently throughout these texts, the focus is primarily put on how the various participants are nevertheless intended to contribute to a jointly shared practice – i.e., to the pedagogical-educational practice of a German daycare following the Situational Approach. *Participation* appears as a key term here, as the children are required to learn how to participate in co-creating a community or society. Media artifacts are, at least in the BBP, foremost seen as means the children are to learn about so as to expand their participation in a practice. Curiously, however, what exactly it is the children are to participate in, and especially what primary directionality is implied, is little spelled out.

³⁷ Both pedagogical texts were handed to me by the daycare leader, as she deemed them the most relevant for arranging the institution's practice. I was also handed one of the internal evaluation reports (*Selbsteinschätzung*), which build on the evaluation suggestions made in Preissing & Heller (2009). These reports result from individual scheme-guided self-evaluations and group discussions among and across the pedagogical teams.

In the Situational Approach, on principal, the practice-guiding directionality should be the children's own premises-for-action, as interpreted by the adults in terms of the children's subjectively relevant experiences or situations. It is analog to Social Practice Theory in that it acknowledges that the pedagogues' teaching is "to begin with learners [the children], because they constitute the working conditions for teaching rather than the other way around" (Lave, 1996, p. 159). However, the primary directionality or rather purpose of the pedagogical-educational practice, *what task it is intended to fulfill in relation to the broader societal ensemble*, often contradicts taking the children's perspectives as starting point for the practice's sociomaterial arrangement.

The second part of the chapter concentrates on the negotiation of directionalities once I myself came to participate in the practice. As my own ambition was to explore the practice from within its relational ensemble and together with the other participants, I needed to find common grounds of intelligibility with each one I intended to work with. I needed to relate to the potential co-researchers' *common sense* so as to make any sense out of their actions – and out of their problems. But I needed not merely to relate: I needed to partly subject myself to an established common sense and simultaneously negotiate and co-create a transformed common sense the respective co-researchers and I would temporarily agree upon. Still: When arriving in the daycare, I was the solicitant who sought refuge in their practice, not vice versa. I was the one who came around with the intention of exploring, of learning, of discovering the other participants' everyday together. First of all, I needed to learn that they had many good reasons for holding on to apparently useful pre-arrangements, good reasons considering the positions they held and the multiple agendas they pursued. Meanwhile, and that is where Chapter 3 will later pick up the thread laid out in the upcoming chapter, it would emerge that throughout the various negotiation processes, I came to actively contribute to the daycare practice more than I ever imagined beforehand.

Legislatively stabilized purposes of a daycare institution in contemporary Berlin

German kindergartens or daycares³⁸ have been historically arranged – at least after World War II – as democratic institutions which establish a pedagogical-

³⁸ The daycare is located in former West-Berlin. Therefore, when touching upon the history and sociomaterial arrangement of the daycare throughout this chapter, I will sidestep the historical and organizational specificities of preschool institutions in former Eastern Germany, ergo the German Demo-

educational practice for preschool children. This is what the parents and professionals that I met in Berlin understood the institution's purpose to be: to educate young children through pedagogical means. However, this does not explain much, as both education and pedagogy – always in relation to the political-economic impetus promoted within the constitutionally given, *free democratic basic order* (freiheitliche demokratische Grundordnung) of post-war (Western) Germany – can manifest itself as practice in multiple, contradictory and contested ways. For instance, when talking to parents and pedagogues about the use and sense of media artifacts in pedagogical practice, different and conflicting notions about what these technologies should assist in educating the single child towards emerged. The democratic ideal of educating towards promoting the child's *societal participation* (gesellschaftliche Teilhabe)³⁹ hardly ever played a role in these conversations, even though this purpose plays a major role throughout all legislative texts which relate to preschool education. In my experience, legislative artifacts were actually never explicitly consulted so as to productively draw on the aims formulated therein for promoting a purposeful joint participation in the pedagogical-educational practice. Quite the opposite was the case: The texts were almost exclusively consulted when conflicts arose about which adult has the right and expertise to take sensible decisions about media use on behalf of the children. What happened in these cases, then, was that the disputers recurred to legislatively fixated terminologies or positionings: The parent as primary caretaker recurred to his/her legislatively granted *natural right* to educate the child (cf. SGBVIII, §1, Abs. 2), whilst the pedagogue recurred to her/his position as a supporting authority, as the thoroughly educated *qualified professional* (e.g., SGBVIII, §45, Abs. 3). If the promotion of participation was mentioned at all by the adult participants as a relevant purpose of this practice, it was foremost because this aim also takes center stage throughout the texts on the Situational Approach.

Meanwhile, the existing laws could also be regarded as helpful point of departure for analyzing and negotiating the purposes of such an institutionalized practice and of its sociomaterial arrangements. What may inhibit such a productive reading of the legislative artifacts, then, are rather abstract and at times even contradictory ways of formulating these purposes. Arguably, a relative openness or interpretative flexibility of many of the national laws is ad-

cratic Republic or GDR.

³⁹ I underline the *Teilhabe*, as in German, participation can be translated into both *Teilnahme* (sensu: taking part) and *Teilhabe* (verbatim: having part). As I will show later, I understand the latter understanding to be rather problematic.

visible, so as to possibilitate local specifications. In Germany, after all, pedagogical-educational policy-making is primarily a matter and area of responsibility of the single German Federal States, the *Länder*. This means that the 16 Federal States (among them Berlin) are responsible for implementing respective educational laws, resulting in a rather complex variety of implementation laws with different discursive interpretations of what pedagogy and education are actually supposed to achieve. Nevertheless, national laws set the grounds and thereby arrange the possibilities for formulating these state laws, which in turn arrange the possibilities for formulating pedagogical-educational guidelines, so that especially contradictory formulations may suddenly wind up creating everyday misunderstandings and disputes in a specific daycare practice. With regards to children's education, the most relevant national law besides the *Basic Constitutional Law* (Grundgesetz) is *Book VIII of the German Code of (Social) Law* (Sozialgesetzbuch/SGBVIII). The latter, adopted in 1990, is entitled *Law on Children and Youth Welfare Services* (Kinder- und Jugendhilfe). Furthermore, there are single national laws adopted thereafter that co-arrange and specify the implementation of state laws for preschool institutions. Federal state laws need to comply with these national laws, and the current law code in Berlin explicitly builds on these legislative artifacts.

In the SGBVIII, the educational purpose of promoting societal participation surfaces primarily in a rather individualized guise, namely in the terms of promoting *self-responsibility* (Eigenverantwortung), *community-ability* (Gemeinschaftsfähigkeit), and *personality* (Persönlichkeit). This purpose is formulated as a fundamental right of young human beings at the very outset of this law code: "Every young human being has the right to the promotion of its development and to education towards a self-responsible and community-able personality" (SGBVIII, §1, Abs. 2; translation NAC). Children's day care institutions are consequently to fulfill this educational task: "Children day care institutions and day care services are to 1. promote the development of the child towards a self-responsible and community-able personality" (SGBVIII, §22, Abs. 2; translation NAC). It continues:

"The mandate of promotion encompasses the upbringing, education, and care [*Erziehung, Bildung und Betreuung*] of the child and relates to the social, emotional, physical and mental development of the child. It encompasses the mediation [*Vermittlung*] of orientating values and rules. The promotion shall orientate itself on the age and the developmental stage, the linguistic and other capabilities, the life situation as well as the interests and needs of the single

child, while accounting for its ethnic background” (SGBVIII, §22, Abs. 3; translation NAC).⁴⁰

What role the child is to play in the community or society at large, *how and for what purposes it is supposed to participate and develop*, is not spelled out. Curiously, however, the same paragraph highlights what purposes the pedagogues and parents are supposed to fulfill. On the one hand, the work task of the pedagogues is spelled out: “support and complement the upbringing and education in the family” (SGBVIII, §22, Abs. 2; translation NAC). This formulation also reflects the above mentioned natural and primary right of the parents to educate the children. On the other hand, however, the last part of the clause points to a broader societal purpose the parents are to engage in: The day care institutions are to “assist the parents in reconciling employment and child education” (ibid.). *Parents*, hence, are not only to educate their children, but they are also *supposed to be employed*.⁴¹ *They participate in the society or the community in terms of their labor force*. Day care institutions and herewith pedagogues as labor force, then, are to assist the parents in fulfilling this purpose. Seen in this light, I would ask, is it too far-fetched to speculate that the child is to be educated towards purposefully and self-responsibly participating in the community as adult labor force as well?

Two of the mentioned purposes of daycare re-appear almost verbatim in the first paragraph of Berlin’s *Law for the Promotion of Children in Day Care Institutions and Day Care Services* (Kindertagesförderungsgesetz/KitaFöG): day care institutions are to “promote the development of the child towards a self-responsible and community-able personality” and to “assist the parents in reconciling employment and child education” (KitaFöG, §1, Abs. 1; translation NAC). Meanwhile, the Berlin law adds a few other nuances, for instance that day care institutions are to be understood as “socio-pedagogical educational institutions [*sozialpädagogische Bildungseinrichtungen*]” (ibid.), and that their

⁴⁰ Here we encounter one of the numerous translation difficulties that emerge when trying to translate legislative artifacts, since the specific culturally-historically grown terms carry different implications. Most obviously, this is the case with the German *Erziehung* commonly translated as either *upbringing* or *education*. In colloquial language, the German term, arguably, in some ways transcends the English translations, as it also encompasses notions of *cultivation* and *socialization*. Depending on the interpretation of the concept *education*, cultivation and/or socialization may be implied as well, but this interpretation seems rather optional. Meanwhile, the English *education* also encompasses the German *Bildung*, a very broad understanding of *learning* or *learning to learn*. Interestingly enough, the German *Erziehung*, consequently, is exclusively targeted at the adults, as it does not imply the children’s learning processes, but merely the actions the adults are supposed to engage in so as to ensure the education/cultivation/socialization of the child. Throughout this dissertation and especially this Chapter 2, I will translate *Erziehung* with *upbringing* and *Bildung* with *education*.

⁴¹ Sine Pentthin Grumlose (forthcoming) discovers similar tendencies in Danish legislation and political debates on daycare, for instance that the laws of the 2000s strongly focus on facilitating the *employed* parents’ everyday life.

“promotion encompasses the education, upbringing, and care of the child. It is to offer the same educational opportunities [*Bildungschancen*] to all children, irrespective of their ethnic and religious affiliation, the family’s social and economic situation, and their individual capabilities” (ibid.). In comparison to what can be read in the national law SGBVIII, the Berlin KitaFöG puts some new issues on the day care institutions’ agendas, while leaving aside a few others. Most concretely, *German language acquisition* is to play a major role in Berlin’s day care services, understood as a key factor for promoting participation. Furthermore, Berlin’s KitaFöG clarifies the relationship between self-responsibility and community-ability by specifying what day care institutions (and I suppose also parents) shall prepare the child for, what the child’s becoming shall be directed at:

“(3) The promotion in day care institutions shall be primarily directed towards

1. preparing the child to live in a society, in which knowledge, language competence, curiosity, the desire and ability to learn, problem-solving and creativity are of great significance,
2. preparing the child to live in a democratic society, which necessitates the active, responsible participation [*Teilhabe*] of its members in the spirit of tolerance, understanding, and peace to persist, and in which all human beings are equal before the law, regardless of their sex [or gender], their sexual identity, their handicap, their ethnic, national, religious and social affiliation [or belonging], as well as their individual capabilities and impairments,
3. preparing the child to live in a world, in which the responsible use of natural resources is indispensable,
4. making it possible for the child to develop an autonomous and self-confident personality, which recognizes [or acknowledges] and approves cultural diversity,
5. supporting the child in acquiring an awareness of the own body and its needs,
6. supporting the living together of children with and without handicaps on the basis of the equal rights imperative of humans with and without handicaps” (KitaFöG, §1, Abs. 3; translation NAC).

This *educational road-map* for daycare institutions – as I would term it – is the most outspoken legislative artifact on daycare I came to analyze: It was not

possible for me to find any more clearly formulated prescriptions or intended directionalities of what preschool pedagogy and education are supposed to achieve, of what their actual purpose is. It additionally pinpoints what kind of societal ideal the lawmakers pursued, in that the child is to become an active, responsible, autonomous and self-confident member of a society which could be loosely circumscribed as a democratic, culturally diverse, sustainable knowledge-society, based on the “equal rights imperative” and some sort of a lifelong-learning ideal. The child’s future employability as purpose shimmers through these formulations, but is not made explicit.

I favor such efforts to further clarify what the SBGVIII merely called the development of a “self-responsible and community-able personality”, as they offer a more tangible basis for discussing those very same legislative guidelines presented. On this basis, it is possible to identify and discuss at least three aspects of this road-map which hamper the establishment of an intersubjective framework of understanding together with children as co-researchers: First, the children themselves are again neither directly addressed as audience (unlike their parents: cf. KitaFöG, §14), nor is their existing agency addressed. Duly noted, this road-map is directed at daycare institutions or services and their actions, their work. But can these services make their own work work without building on guidelines of how to purposefully understand children and collaborate with these supposedly different beings? This leads to the second concern: The law does present assumptions regarding what a child is, does draw a sketch of the child’s (future) ontological status. But instead of thinking this onto-epistemology in *processual terms*, of how and why the child tries to act differently over time in relation to the given circumstances, the law code implicitly labels the child with a number of seemingly universal categorizations: The child has (or is to have) a sex, a sexual identity, may have a handicap or not, has an ethnic, national, religious and social affiliation, has capabilities and impairments, will develop a personality, etc. Maybe the society the child comes to live in demands of the child to adopt a stance in relation to all these seemingly universal labels. But is that, then, truly a *democratic society*? Which takes me to my third problem: Should all of these labels presented in this and other legislative texts not be potentially negotiable in a democratic society? And should, consequently, children not learn to question these labels, to themselves develop a critical standpoint in relation to the legislative arrangements and the categorizations they somewhat stabilize? This becomes especially protuberant when looking at the first clause of the KitaFöG: Are we human beings who happen to live in Germany really to accept that we are living or are supposed to be living in a knowledge-society, in which language

skills and our willingness to learn are of major importance? And who decides, in this case, what knowledge is, what relevant language skills are, what learning and creativity are, and most crucially: Who defines the problems we are supposed to solve, if we cannot even question that problem-solving itself is apparently of great societal and thus educational importance?

Pedagogical-educational arrangement of the investigated daycare

In 2003, the Administration of the Berlin Senate responsible for youth- and family-related issues presented a program which was to establish an educational and pedagogical frame valid for all preschool daycare services across the Federal State of Berlin, the so-called *Berlin Educational Program* (BBP: Berliner Bildungsprogramm). This program was originally worked out by the non-profit organization *International Academy for Innovative Pedagogy, Psychology and Economics* (INA), which is affiliated with the Free University of Berlin (where I studied psychology) and which also developed the *Situational Approach* (Situationsansatz, SitA; e.g., Zimmer, 2000; Preissing & Heller, 2009)⁴². This organization was furthermore the sponsor (*Träger*) of the daycare I participated in, which implies that the daycare had adopted INA's Situational Approach. Consequently, one of the central proponents of the approach I came to experience in the daycare, Christa Preissing, was also a central figure in formulating the BBP. Since the BBP and the SitA share many fundamental principles,⁴³ one might think that the daycare I came to investigate could be considered a role model institution with regards to the implementation of the BBP's demands and suggestions. Nevertheless did the professionals I worked with encounter struggles and dilemmas in combining the SitA with the BBP's assumptions, also because both their directionalities still partly contradicted each other.

As argued, the law codes mainly relevant for arranging daycare provide the concerned adults (pedagogical professionals, administrators, parents, also judges) with rather vague ideas about how and for what societal purposes children (are to) develop and conduct their lives, and arguably that should not

⁴² The Situational Approach recently celebrated its 40th anniversary with an international conference at the Free University of Berlin. The approach is not only prominently present in Berlin, but has actually first been implemented in a number of southern German daycares and is renown across most of the country's Federal States.

⁴³ In an interview, the kindergarten leader Rebecca referred to them as "almost identical".

be up to the lawmakers at all. In my eyes, the vagueness is also stabilized through the fact that the children's active role in doing daycare is not considered at all: They are primarily affected by it, but are not actively involved in affecting it – presumably because they are not identified as the target audience of the legislative prescriptions (cf. Steindorff-Classsen, 2010).

In contrast, the BBP and the SitA not only provide pedagogical professionals and parents with suggestions on how to understand themselves in their respective positionings as well as in relation to the 'object' of their practice, which is the sole possibility for specifying their positioning (i.e., the terms pedagogues and parents exclusively become meaningful when relating them to a child; just like a teacher only exists when there are learners: cf. Lave, 1996). They furthermore offer suggestions on how to understand the child, specifically its development (and developmental needs) and its everyday life actions. Both artifacts additionally promote a co-researcher approach to exploring and acting on children's everyday life problems, particularly among the adult participants. The SitA takes a step further in promoting such collaborations by conceptually and systematically involving the children's perspectives on relevant life situations, on their *key situations*.

When reading BBP and SitA through each other as well as through the legislative arrangements they (have to) build on, however, it emerges that the purpose of this co-researching exploration is at best nebulous if not even clearly heteronomous, ergo not guided by the interests and problems of the child, and only partly by those of the involved adult participants. Throughout the short upcoming analyses of these texts, I will limit my reading to the discussion of a few basic onto-epistemological assumptions and to a selected number of contradictions which may both foster and inhibit a collaboration across ages in the exploration of specific sociomaterial (media technological) arrangements.

The Berlin Educational Program

As a starter, it is informative to rivet on the BBP's full title: "The Berlin Educational Program for the Education, Upbringing and Care-taking of Children in Day Care Institutions *up to their first day of school*" (Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Sport, 2004, p. 3; translation & emphasis NAC).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ I refer to the 2004 version of the BBP, as that was the one that was used by the kindergarten throughout my stay there. Even though the publisher of the BBP is the Berlin Senate's Administration for Education, Youth, and Sports (Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Sport), I will abbreviate the reference as BBP (2004).

Herewith, one directionality of this pedagogical artifact is laid out: The primary purpose of this program is to prepare the child for school – even though this aim is partly put into perspective throughout the rest of the booklet. This focus on school preparation is underlined by the introductory words of the responsible former senator, Klaus Böger, who emphasizes that the program describes precisely “which aspects designate children’s educational processes, what society currently demands of young children’s education, and which educational tasks follow from the two for day care institutions” (ibid., p. 7). In this understanding, pedagogy equals or is swallowed by education sensu Bildung, at least in his text. Another clue the senator gives the reader is that the promotion of language skills is of central significance, which requires an own educational area (pp. 61ff).⁴⁵ The last of the senator’s many catchwords that I wish to mention is the *knowledge-society*. He thanks the sponsor IBM, which assisted in publishing the BBP and donated so-called “multimedia learning stations” to 10 percent of the daycare institutions, thus paving their “way into the knowledge-society” (ibid., p. 8).

Although the former senator tried to frame the reading of the program in specific ways according to his (or the Senate’s) own political goals, the artifact breaks with this one-sided reading by referring to a number of partly concurring or at least contradictory statements about the individual child’s development, the child’s relations to others and the world, the child’s participation in democracy, and, arguably, about democracy itself. In many ways, the direction of the text could be labeled *progressive*, seemingly inspired by a broad social-constructionist reading, for instance by taking the child as an agent being in the here and now seriously (cf. James, Jenks & Prout, 1998), by underlining the developmental importance of the child’s social surroundings (parents, pedagogues, and the children’s communities) and the child’s creative-active learning processes. In turn, the BBP compartmentalizes pedagogical education in the preschool/kindergarten/daycare⁴⁶ into seven educational areas: body, movement, and health; social and cultural environment; communication: languages, writing culture and media; visual crafting (*bildnerisches Gestalten*); music; basic mathematical experiences; basic natural-scientific and tech-

⁴⁵ While other educational areas are also deemed important, especially the evaluation of language skills seemed to occupy the pedagogues I interacted with a lot.

⁴⁶ Officially, the preschool or kindergarten is called a *Kindertagesstätte* (Kita) in Berlin. It would therefore be best translated as daycare. Meanwhile, each term points to a different societal function: daycare to childcare, preschool to the educational goal of preparing for school, kindergarten (following the ideals from Fröbel) to a place for explorative play. The institution I participated in considered itself to be a Kita, which was divided into the kindergarten for the older and the crèche for the younger children. I will stick to ‘daycare’ when relating to the entire institution, and ‘kindergarten’ when specifically referring to the 3-6-year old.

nical experiences. Furthermore the authors – under the project leadership of Christa Preissing – explain their understandings of education, of play, of planning and designing educational projects and the institution’s locales, of observing and documenting, of the collaboration with parents, the transition to school, and most notably for this dissertation, of promoting the children’s participation in democracy as the main purpose of this pedagogical-educational program.⁴⁷

Education as approximating an objective understanding of world

In relation to their understanding of *education*, the authors refer to Wilhelm von Humboldt and his *Bildungsverständnis*.⁴⁸ Consequently education is understood as a never-ending, contradictory learning process, whose goal is to develop the subject through actively appropriating as much of the world as possible. In order to get an idea/image of the world (“sich ein Bild von der Welt machen”: BBP, 2004, p. 18), the child is to get an idea of the self and the other, and it needs to experience and explore the world. After all the child is trying to answer fundamental questions about its being in the world with others. The answers the child finds are both subjective and intersubjective and always related to the world. The BBP calls on parents and pedagogues to themselves relate to the child’s interpretations through dialogic exchange, and also by questioning one’s own interpretations. This is to lead to a more objective image of the world which is shared with others:

“The more differentiated the exchange of interpretations becomes, the more manifold the perspectives become, the more will the child be able to approximate an objective understanding of world. Approximation because we are never really able to know what is ‘true’. Objective therefore means here: To be certain that one’s own answer to a question – at least in one’s own culture group – is shared with others and can be compellingly reasoned for, and that there are comprehensible arguments at hand for this reasoning which can be introduced into a discourse” (ibid.; translation NAC).

On the one hand, the child is to obtain a more encompassing, whole or “objective” understanding of the world throughout education by exchanging perspectives with others – here we find a striking similarity to Holzkamp’s notion of *mutual social self-understanding* (cf. Chapter 1). On the other hand, one

⁴⁷ This latter point may be connected to Preissing’s interest for Paolo Freire’s liberation pedagogics (or *Pedagogics of the Oppressed*), which is not explicitly mentioned in the educational program, but instead in the book on the situational approach (Preissing & Heller, 2009; cf. below).

⁴⁸ For an interesting critical essay on the “Humboldt’sche Bildungsverständnis” and its implications for education, cf. also Hofmann (2010).

needs to be aware that every interpretation of the world is an approximation and thereby limited – it is at least culture-specific or rather *situated*. How to think these notions together, ergo exploring the objective side of the world in an open-minded way so as to establish a more closed subjective understanding or viewpoint one can compellingly argue for and about with others, remains undiscussed.

A contradiction not to be found in Critical Psychology, though, arises from the fact that the BBP names four competences that are to be developed throughout the daycare education: the *I-competence* (Ich-Kompetenz), the *social competence* (soziale Kompetenz), the *object competence* (Sachkompetenz), and the *methodical learning competence* (lernmethodische Kompetenz). Even though they are merely to be read as directions for the pedagogical education and are complemented with examples for how to observe these, they are still focused on the single child's autonomous and responsible development – the world it lives in, the relations to others and the world, seem to suddenly be put on hold (cf. BBP, 2004, p. 26). I speculate that the authors of the BBP wanted to offer the pedagogues analytical tools for making sense of the children's development. However, they thereby risk that, instead of understanding the child's learning processes in relation to others and the world (including themselves), the pedagogues are offered a conceptual tool box which may magically transfer every problem into the child. Albeit the competences mostly still point to others and the world, one individualizing explanation for children's not-easily-understandable behavior too easily suggests itself (*nabelegen*; cf. above): the child has not (yet) developed this or that specific competence. Such easy explanations may clearly inhibit a collaborative exploration of problems.

Democratic participation as purpose of education

What is the mentioned progressive learning towards a (subjectively speaking) more objective image of the world good for? What is education good for according to the BBP's authors? What is a daycare's principal purpose? And how can the purpose be enacted by the responsible adults? The BBP's chapter on *Democratic participation – demands on collaboration and communication* specifies what rights the children are to have – particularly the right to take part in society, – and that assisting the children in learning participation implies that the *pedagogues learn together with them*:

“The educational understanding [presented in the program] is therefore inextricably tied to the rights and duties, that on the one hand the community

[*Gemeinschaft*] has vis-à-vis the single individual [*dem Einzelnen*], and on the other the single individual has vis-à-vis the community.

An extremely important right, which with growing comprehension and growing responsibility is increasingly complemented with the assumption of duties, is the *right to participation* [*Recht auf Teilhabe*].

Every child has the right to the best possible educational opportunities and to a livable perspective, independent of its origin and its individual prerequisites. Each child is supposed to participate in our society's educational wealth, is supposed to take part in its social environment. The goal is that every girl and every boy can cultivate its capabilities, individual possibilities and willingness [*Bereitschaft*] and to contribute to the development of the community – our society: *In daycare, the child forms itself, and [thereby] society is formed.*

Participation is first a democratic right and consequently also a democratic duty.

The right of the child to be heard and to co-decide will be, over time, strengthened through the inner attitude [*Einstellung*] to wanting to participate and to taking over responsibility. [...]

What is needed are *pedagogues/educators who can be both teachers and learners vis-à-vis the children; who through own evident learning processes exemplify how the child itself could learn.* Thereby they show the child that learning and development never cease to go on. That only works, if the adults behave authentically, i.e. if they really want to find out something new or learn" (BBP, 2004, p. 122; translation & emphasis NAC).

This long citation points to many interesting presumptions about the child and its learning processes as well as its role in a democratic society. The main purpose of the pedagogical-educational daycare practice could be summarized as showing the children how to make use of their democratic rights so as to collaboratively learn to shape the democratic society.

Consequently, when it comes to the question of *how* one is to participate in this specific German democratic arrangement, some of the formulations offered in this passage transcend the notion of participation as mere *having-part in something given*, i.e. a "Teilhabe" in the already given societal or sociomaterial arrangement we find in Germany. Instead, the passage seems to promote active taking part, ergo "Teilnahme" rather than *Teilhabe*: Participation is about *contributing to the development* of the community. Also the notion that the pedagogues should be learners and not only teachers, that they should also be willing to develop, echoes learning ideals from both Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) and Lave & Wenger's *Situated Learning Theory* (1991), which in

turn point to the first sentence of Marx's third thesis on Feuerbach: "The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated" (Marx, 1845). Simultaneously, these implicit calls for engaging in such a *revolutionary praxis* together with the children, so to say, are countered by the BBP's emphasis that it is through the strengthening of the inner attitude and responsibility that democratic participation is to be fostered – rather than for instance elaborating on the question of how such a development of the community in terms of a democratic society is necessarily a *collaborative undertaking* or *joint venture* (Nissen, 2012).

Developing with and through media technology

What role do media artifacts play in promoting the democratic development of the child as well as of the other daycare participants? In connection with the *knowledge society* mentioned by former Senator Klaus Böger (cf. above), the revised version of the BBP directly deals with the role of media in daycare education. Next to media artifacts being denoted throughout various chapters of the BBP, the section on the educational area *Communication: Languages, writing culture and media* (BBP, 2004, pp. 61ff) specifically deals with this subject matter.

Mostly, the related passages build on the notion that the ubiquity of media technology is a challenge that needs to be taken up in a productive manner throughout daycare education (cf. also Chapter 1). For instance, in the chapter on the educational understanding promoted in the BBP, the authors write:

"Changes in the family structures and the related changes of childhood conditions, as well as the increasingly earlier access to all sorts of media open up for the children – whether we like it or not – whether they like it or not – new experiential horizons and bring about new impertinences. The kindergarten may not shun such experiences" (p. 19; translation NAC).

There are both new or different possibilities and limitations arising out of the centrality of media artifacts in and around the household, and the kindergarten-daycare should be a place in which to explore them together.

In the chapter on competences (pp. 25ff), media technologies explicitly play into the development of all four identified competences. As part of the "I-competence", the child is to "perceive beauty in its environment, to experience nature, art and culture, to savor media experiences and to rejoice in them" (p. 27; translation NAC). To "understand media as means for communication across regions and boundaries and to use them for contacting other

human beings” (ibid.) and to “self-consciously deal with advertisement, media’s pressure to consume [*Konsumdruck*] and the competition among children” (p. 28; translation NAC) are part of developing “social competence”. In terms of “object competence”, we find an array of media-related learning demands: “Develop an interest for written language symbols, for books and for reading. Unlock the content of narrations, fairy tales and poems. [...] Develop skills in the use of materials, work techniques, objects, tools and technical devices. Develop an interest for utilizing various media (e.g., books, newspapers, computer, the Internet, video, television, auditive media) and to appropriate skills in this process. Recognize the difference between own real experiencing [*Erleben*] and the experiencing of media productions. Develop a critical consciousness towards media and media products” (ibid.). Finally, as “methodical learning competence”, the child should “get to know manifold possibilities (experts, libraries, electronic media, etc.) to selectively appropriate knowledge and information” (p. 29; translation NAC).

When it comes to pinpointing the pedagogical-educational tasks for the daycare pedagogues on how to shape the everyday life in the daycare, media shall be part of that: “They [the pedagogues] offer manifold materials and media. They make it possible for the children to access them autonomously and unlock their possibilities for usage together with the children. [...] They support the children in processing [*verarbeiten*] media experiences” (p. 34; translation NAC). In relation to play situations, the pedagogues are to “support the children in acting out seen and felt experiences – also from television, videos, and other media – in play and to process these experiences according to their developmental condition. They do not set taboos, but agree upon boundaries and rules with the children” (p. 36; translation NAC). With regards to designing rooms, the pedagogues are again to offer manifold materials and media while giving the children the opportunity to make “counter-experiences to sensory overload and consumption orientation” (ibid.). Furthermore, the pedagogues are themselves to use various media so as to document the child’s development in collaboration with the child. During my visit in the daycare, for instance, all of the pedagogues collected drawings as well as printed-out photo images for documentation purposes in the child’s portfolio.

The lion’s share of the BBP deals with the seven educational areas mentioned above. Almost all of these mention media-related experiences as important and name pedagogical-educational tasks that draw on various media artifacts. The main focus of the educational area *Communication: Languages, writing culture and media* is put on (multi-)language acquisition and writing, which are understood as key to comprehending the world. Spoken and written language are

conceptualized as a medium themselves, while media (technology) are seen as visual and written language carriers. Echoing the assumption that the ubiquity of media technologies is increasing, the BBP authors write: “Children are surrounded by visual and written language products and show an interest for these products long before they can themselves read, write or use media. Media expand and deepen access to the world. They simultaneously enable a connection to the manifold cultures of the families. Early media experiences and encounters with visual and written language are part of language education” (p. 61; translation NAC). Language as communicative action takes place and is learned in various contexts. The child’s language is a medium to pursue goals, to be able to act in the various contexts. According to the authors, by learning the symbolic function of language (supposedly around the age of three), ergo that words have a meaning for something, children start relating past and future, real and imagined to the present. As soon as the child learns to generalize, to discriminate and to assign meaning, it can transcend the specific context and act across the various contexts. The more possibilities for acting in differentiated ways in those contexts, the more differentiated their language becomes (cf. p. 62). They learn language from the everyday, in relation to bodily interactions. Important for the educators (parents and pedagogues) is *not to look for a correct way of using language, but to recognize what the child’s will is directed at*.⁴⁹ The children’s experiences with context-liberated language [*kontext-entbundener Sprache*] – which I would call *transcontextual* as language-related actions are in my view always related to the current context – are central for learning about the importance of written language: Written language is key to the knowledge of the world and to understanding the variety of cultures through different sign systems. Therefore should the children experiment with foreign as well as made-up signs.

The last part of the BBP’s section on communication is dedicated to media literacy (or *Medienkompetenz*, media competence, in German). Media technological ubiquity again takes center stage, while the authors give the phenomenon a relatively positive twist: “The variety, availability and ubiquity of media pave the way for today’s children towards more information sources and other communication forms than for previous generations. Children use media in order to get in touch with others, to have fun (together), to learn new things, to understand themselves in this world better, and to be capable of acting [*handlungsfähig*]. Already the kindergarten child is able to appropriate the world as mediated by media” (p. 63; translation NAC). Media use, they write,

⁴⁹ Here I would draw an obvious connection to Højholt’s call for looking in front of the child, ergo investigate what the child’s action is directed at (cf. Højholt, 2011; see Chapter 1).

can amuse, relax, enable the examination of experiences, fears and fantasies through proxy figures, which assist their identity formation.⁵⁰ Media experiences are turned into children's role-plays, thereby enabling comprehension and appropriation of the world. Therefore shall daycare make media part of the educational-pedagogical everyday life: The pedagogues shall assist the children in using and understanding media, and in processing the related feelings. Children shall have the possibility to self-responsibly use all kinds of media as own means for expression and communication. "Only through the active examination [*Auseinandersetzung*] and an intense accompanying dialog with adults are they able to acquire competences for a critical media use" (ibid.). Particularly children with special needs can profit from using key-operated play and learning technologies by being able to (easily?) influence the world.

Even though children are to develop a critical media use together with the pedagogues, this section offers merely two sentences on reasons for why to be critical towards media use: "Media contents become part of the perception processes at a very early stage and are connected to images of reality [*Wirklichkeitsbilder*]. Next to the expansion of world knowledge, media can also consolidate clichés, antiquated role models and undesired conflict behavior" (ibid.). For my later argument, it is important to note here that the BBP only refers to possible negative consequences in relation to media *contents*. The tangible or manifest material qualities the various media technologies offer, instead, are only mentioned with regards to children with special needs. Bluntly put: Pushing buttons may make them see the direct consequence of their action and thus feel influential. The large disregard of the thingness of media technologies, their infrastructures and interfaces, is not only present in this textual artifact – in whose context I come to speculate that this disregard may be due to its overall accepted positive framing of the knowledge society dictum. Overall does the BBP offer a relatively productive understanding of media artifacts which highlights the need for collaborative explorations of their potentialities in daycare. However, the purposes or the directionality of media artifact use are – in contrast to other parts of the BBP – strongly focused on developing the single learning child, rather than on developing the pedagogical-educational practice as a relational ensemble. The double role of the pedagogue as both teacher and learner, i.e. the mutual learning processes emphasized in the BBP's understanding of democratic education, appears tempo-

⁵⁰ The usage of the term *identity* in the BBP would be another interesting research topic, as it is never defined what the authors mean by that.

rarily overlooked once thinking media artifacts into the sociomaterial interplay.

Pedagogue collaboration with parents

The last part of my selected reading and analysis of the BBP regards the authors' understanding of the parents' role in this educational-pedagogical program. I deem this part significant for this dissertation, as throughout my stay in the Berlin daycare, it turned out that many of the sociomaterial arrangements and perceived intended usefulnesses were firmly and yet very differently stabilized by each and every pedagogue as well as by each and every parent.⁵¹ Rather than engaging in joint explorations or a co-research of contradictory and thereby problematic arrangements, potentially problematic for both the young and the older practice participants, parents and pedagogues tended to defend their respective stances. This was at least the case when engaging with each other across their ascribed societal positionings – with me as a differently positioned participant, they appeared to at times question their own stance, relativize it, put it into perspective. Why, then, is it evidently more difficult for parents and pedagogues to collaborate? After all, they depend and have to rely on each other throughout their conducts of everyday life. May this assertion of interdependence eventually be conflict-laden itself? Although parents by law have the natural right and duty to take care of the child (cf. SGBVIII, §1, Abs. 1), it is currently widely discussed in Germany whether to make daycare attendance mandatory with the age of three. Irrespectively, the option of sending the child to daycare the latest at the age of three most often suggests itself (again: *liegt nahe*). After all, in 2009, more than half of the German couples with an underage child consisted of two jobholders (Rübenach & Keller, 2011).⁵² This implies that professional pedagogues are part of the everyday lives of the vast majority of children, the latest from the age of three onwards – and therewith of the everyday lives of most parents. The pedagogues, on the other hand, may in principal not decide on anything decisive about the child's upbringing and development without the parent's consent. The federal law of Berlin, the KitaFöG (§14), states that collaboration with the parents is to be ensured by daycare institutions. Parents

⁵¹ Any artifact is a sociomaterial arrangement and herewith always perceived differently. They are *multistable*, as postphenomenology terms it: "artifacts are multistable as cultural perceptions because learning organizes cultural knowledge about what is to be expected in the perceived world" (Hasse, 2008, p. 50; cf. also Hasse, 2013; Rosenberger, 2011).

⁵² Simultaneously, the Federal Government just decided to introduce the possibility for applying for care money [*Betreuungsgeld*] in case the parents want to rear the child at home until school, a move heavily criticized by all left-wing parties and many other stakeholders.

are to be regularly informed about their child's development in daycare. Parents are to be consulted with regards to the organizational and pedagogical implementation of the institution's concept, also those which may financially involve the parents. "The professionals discuss the foundations, goals and methods of their pedagogical work with the parents" (KitaFöG, §14, Abs. 2; translation NAC). The parents are furthermore part of the parents' assembly, which is to choose parent representatives (cf. *ibid.*). Of course, though, pedagogues have to decide on many aspects of the child's everyday life in daycare without being able to always consult the respective parent and/or the parent representatives. When to choose to consult certain aspects and decisions with the parents, is up to the single pedagogue in relation to his/her colleagues and eventually the institution's leadership. Hence, what is *decisive* about the child's development and communicated to the parent depends on the respective pedagogue's perspective. This contradicts the power relations set up by legislation: The parent is always in the stronger negotiation position as s/he is ascribed the *natural right and duty* to decide for the child – except when there is an obvious mistreatment or abuse on the part of the parent. Still the pedagogue is regarded as a significant caretaker him/herself, and is factually almost entirely in control of what information about the child's everyday life in daycare to disclose to the parent. In the light of the assigned positions and functions, the parent-pedagogue relationship is thus precarious and contradictory from its very outset, thereby potentially hindering a productive dialog at eye level.

So how does the BBP try to tackle this problematic, unequal relationship and install a collaborative environment between these groups? First, the BBP clarifies that parents are almost always the most important attachment figures for a child.⁵³ Children supposedly react with great sensitivity to their attachment figures, while the adult influences the child's understanding of the world. Education is then social co-construction between the child and the attachment figures, which are not necessarily exclusively the parents: "Next to the (biological and social) parents do also other attachment figures affect the education processes of the child – foremost the pedagogues. The relationships between these most important figures influence each other reciprocally, and must be considered in their reciprocity in the interest of the best possible development of the child" (*ibid.*). By understanding the (child's primary) pedagogue as another significant attachment figure for the child, the authors suc-

⁵³ The BBP booklet does not define its use of the term *attachment figure*. However, it is usually associated to John Bowlby (1969) and his attachment theory. Its use is widespread, often without clarifying its meaning. For a subject-scientific critical perspective on attachment theory, cf. Juhl (forthcoming).

ceed in making the child's development a three- to fourfold co-construction which is reciprocally intertwined. Therefore, the BBP argues, it is of utmost importance that these attachment figures collaborate productively in the best interest of the child (while the child is no collaborator). What would happen when the pedagogue-as-attachment-figure changes the job or gets sick for a longer period – I experienced both, and these are much more probable scenarios than the case that one of the parents completely breaks away as attachment figure – is unfortunately not explained.

The emphasis on reciprocity between parents and pedagogues, which discursively tries to reinsert the previously lost ontological symmetry through unequal positioning by law, is slightly undermined again by writing that “parents need to be won for the most important [educational] themes, and they let themselves get won over once they understand the reasons that militate in favor of a specific action” (Laewen & Andres, 2002, p. 57, as cited in BBP, 2004, p. 110; translation NAC). Therefore, there should be a “fellow discourse of parents and pedagogues about goals and contents of pedagogical work which serves the support of the children's educational processes and contains important elements of parent education” (BBP, 2004, p. 110; translation NAC). Could this be hinting towards an underlying understanding of the pedagogue as the *actual expert for childrearing*?

I continue to focus on these contradictions as from my point of view, they carry potential for easily stirring up controversy rather than promoting collaboration. There are quite a few more contradictions in this BBP chapter on parent collaboration, especially when it comes to discussing details of the initial familiarization process or the mandatory, formalized *development talks* (Entwicklungsgespräche) parents and pedagogues are supposed to have with each other.⁵⁴ These contradictions in the positioning of the pedagogue and the parent can also not be overcome or leveled by transparency and reciprocal information giving, as the BBP suggests with reference to the “education partnership” between the adults mentioned in the SGBVIII. What is needed here, and this is what I will want to argue for throughout this dissertation, is that the given or assigned positionings qua legislative and pedagogical text artifacts need to be open to purposeful re-negotiations between collaborators. For instance, many conflicts were taken up differently by the adults I met in the daycare once they re-positioned themselves as ‘friends’.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ In my experience, the rather informal talks which took place when the children were brought or fetched from the institution seemed to mediate more 'knowledge' about the child's developmental trajectory than the official development talks.

⁵⁵ Not to imply that the positioning as 'friend' is not somewhat contradictory, but as far as I know, it is – for instance – not legislatively co-arranged.

The Situational Approach

The SitA celebrates its 40th birthday this year (2013) and can be seen as a “child of its time”, as Preissing & Heller (2009, p. 11) put it. I.e., it was developed in the light of experiences made with West-German (anti-authoritarian) reform kindergartens in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Nevertheless do the authors⁵⁶ note that the basic principles of the approach were (only) formulated in 1984 by one of its founders, Jürgen Zimmer: “the orientation towards key situations, the connection of social and object-/issue-related learning, the involvement of parents and other adults as experts, the acknowledgment of the discrete incitement milieu [*eigenständiges Anregungsmilieu*] of the mixed-age children’s group, and its opening into society with an institution-critical aim” (Preissing & Heller, 2009, p. 10; translation NAC; cf. also Zimmer, 2000). The most pivotal concept of the Situational Approach (SitA) is the *key situations* Zimmer mentions, ergo the most relevant *life situations* encountered: “In the Situational Approach are the complex and societally ever-changing life situations the point of reference and content of pedagogical work. The girls and boys, their parents and pedagogues are perceived as subjects, who act in relation to their interests and think autonomously; they move in these life situations, they change and shape them, and they meanwhile encounter challenges and boundaries that sometimes also demand perseverance [*ein Aushalten-Können*]” (Preissing & Heller, 2009, p. 11). These life situations, as I will argue in this sub-chapter, are both the conceptual strength and weakness of the approach, as the concept builds on notions of relationality, processuality, intersubjectivity, materiality, and both topographical and temporal situatedness, while its relative conceptual vagueness makes it hard for the pedagogues to productively work with it so as to purposefully collaborate on the many challenges they face in their everyday work life. The problem that I see with the concept and subsequently with the whole approach – and I will further dig into this also throughout the rest of the dissertation – is that it takes (or needs to take) for granted related legislative sociomaterial arrangements as current societal conditions. Without the ability to even question these arrangements, it becomes almost impossible to pedagogically tackle some of the situational problems the children and the participants around them face – and thereby further develop the approach’s quality.

⁵⁶ Note that Preissing & Heller are the editors of this publication, while many more participated in authoring it. When I refer to Preissing & Heller also as authors throughout my text, I thereby intend the entire author collective.

The quality of the approach is to be measured in relation to the mission statement (*Leitbild*), the aims and the conceptual principles and/or basic sentences (*konzeptuelle Grundsätze*) of the approach:

“They [mission statement, aims and principles] describe what quality is under the current societal conditions. They define the pedagogical concept with focus on the developmental needs [*Entwicklungsbedürfnisse*] of the girls and boys, their social and cultural potentials and prerequisites. They point to their respective individual particularities as well as their being-involved in their family, their neighborhoods and communities. They invite to question the institution and the commonwealth [*Gemeinwesen*], what participation [*Teilhabe*] these offer the children and which possibilities they open up through personal relationships and material provisions, so that children can make identity-forming [*identitätsstiftend*] and reassuring experiences” (Preissing & Heller, 2009, p. 11; translation NAC).

Mission statement, aims and principles are operationalized, i.e. translated into 16 conceptual basic sentences, which in turn are divided into a varying number of practice-related sub-criteria. The authors emphasize that these criteria are neither hierarchically structured nor can they be read in a linear way by the pedagogues. Instead they propose an understanding of these theoretical guidelines as being reciprocally related to pedagogical acting or practice. They write: “Theory and practice [*Praxis*]⁵⁷ permeate each other with their respective specific logic and relate to each other reciprocally. Theory-guided professional acting in the pedagogic field implies in our understanding, that theory is used for the reflexion of one’s own actions and subjective experiences and to step into a critical discourse about them. Theory thereby supports professionalization through the scientific-technical [*fachlich*] exchange of practical-pedagogical experiences” (ibid.).

Consequently, all the quality criteria laid out in this publication, which have been dialogically developed together with numerous stakeholders, must be understood as interpretable according to the specific situation at hand. Hence, one can only make temporally limited claims with regards to their usefulness or validity. They are tools to promote practice reflections, but must be – in my words – always *re-situated* according to the specific conditions at hand. And the inherent dialectical⁵⁸ theory-praxis understanding also presupposes

⁵⁷ Be aware that as mentioned above, in German the term *Praxis* both encompasses daily (contextual) practices, or ways in which things are commonly done, as well as practicing as processual activity on various levels of abstraction. The German *Praxis* can thus also be understood as the (individual or communal) mastering and thereby expansion of restrictive conditions at hand in relation to (self-defined and-or pre-defined) aims or hopes, or as human activity in relation to the conditions of the world in general and herewith as "ongoing social practice" as explained by Marx (1845), Lave & Wenger (1991), and Dreier (2008). Cf. Chapter 1 and 3 for further discussions.

⁵⁸ The authors do not use the term *dialectical* here. Overall they use it very rarely, presumably because in Germany thinking in *dialectics* is mostly still understood as 'belonging to' Marxist theories and –

that new practice experiences made should feed back into the theoretical criteria described – however without stating how this feedback loop is to be implemented.

In accordance with the SGBVIII, the SitA offers five theoretical dimensions under which the quality criteria are subsumed: life-world orientation, education (sensu *Bildung*), participation, equality and difference, unity of content and form. With reference to insights from the project *Children's situations* (Kindersituationen; cf. Doyé, 1995), Preissing & Heller (2009) understand life-world not merely as the child's outer environment, "its familial and social surroundings, but always also the ways how the single children subjectively experience, interpret and shape their life-world" (p. 42). Educational processes are to be linked to the child's life-world. Life situations especially relevant to the child – the so-called *key situations* (Schlüsselsituationen) – thus become the point of departure for pedagogical work (cf. also Zimmer, 1974, pp. 32ff). The authors connect this understanding of the curriculum-shaping (key) life situations to the work of Brazilian critical pedagogue Paulo Freire and his concept of *generative themes* (Freire, 2000), as both "reflect the thinking and acting of human beings, their values, ideas, hopes, doubts and the challenges in a concrete historical time-frame and unfold various other possible themes of everyday life" (Preissing & Heller, 2009, p. 42; translation NAC). Similar to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000), the main aim of the SitA is to enable those ones growing up to shape their own life situations in a self-determined and competent manner, mediated through participating in the real life and learning through relations of sense (*Sinnzusammenhänge*) rather than predetermined contents. "Learning in and for life situations" (ibid., p. 43) implies learning in and outside the daycare institution, so as to work on and change lived reality, i.e. one's life-world. Therefore it is of crucial importance to collaboratively explore and determine key situations in the child's everyday life, arguably the biggest theoretical-practical (or conceptual) challenge the approach faces.⁵⁹

through a historically specifically situated short-circuit, one might say – to socialist-communist regimes, especially the former German Democratic Republic.

⁵⁹ Fthenakis (2000) gathers various criticisms on the SitA, thereby commenting on Zimmer's (2000) rather polemical replique to some of the critics. One of the central issues argued over is the fuzziness or unclarity of the concept (*life*) *situation*, which serves as basis for the whole approach and is nevertheless only loosely defined. In my eyes, a more precise conceptualization of the *situations* in relation to the main aims and the implementation methodology in practice is a necessary first step for answering all the other criticisms in a sustainable way (e.g., who gives what life situation which relevance and why, herewith entering the *reason discourse* introduced above). One crucial issue would be to debate who has the power to define what a key situation and thereby a problem or struggle is for the child – it seems as if the child is still only to have a limited say in that.

Life-world orientation & key situations

Quality criteria 1 and 2 of the 16 propositions of the SitA are most clearly related to the first theoretical dimension *life-world orientation*. Criterion 1 can be translated as follows: “The pedagogical work builds on the social and cultural life situations of the children and their families” (Preissing & Heller, 2009, p. 19; translation NAC). The according sub-criteria are (in this order): “pedagogues explore the family situation”, “pedagogues realize the individual needs, interests and developmental trajectories of the children”, “pedagogues analyze the everyday living-together [*Zusammenleben*] of the children in the children’s community”, “pedagogues know the social, cultural, economic and ecological circumstances of the living area [*Wohnumfeld*]”, and “pedagogues follow societal developments and their consequences on children’s lives” (ibid., pp. 19f). Quality criterion 2 focuses more specifically on the pedagogical work with life and key situations: “Through the ongoing discourse with children, parents and other adults, pedagogues identify key situations in the children’s lives” (ibid., p. 20). Pedagogues are subsequently to “explore what children in manifold ways express about their life situation, [...] initialize talks with the parents about meaningful situations in the everyday life of their children, [...] exchange views and opinions on meaningful life situations of children with others interested in the upbringing of children, [...] exchange with other team members children’s meaningful life situations in their daycare center, [...] choose out of the variety of possible life situations those, which they will work on with the children in terms of a ‘key situation’” (ibid., pp. 20f).

As one can tell from merely looking at these two (out of 16) quality criteria and their sub-criteria, a lot is asked of the professional pedagogues in the daycare: They are supposed to have not only an overview over most of the surroundings the children and their families live in, with and through, but have an insight into what the children’s relations to the surroundings mean to the children themselves. This insight shall lead to the ability to formulate a *key situation*, which is then picked up and worked on together with other children and pedagogues (in few cases also with the parents) in the context of a pedagogical project. During my visit, the pedagogues came up with very creative solutions on how to answer to these demands. For instance, they turned the children’s relation to their concrete housing conditions and neighborhood into a key situation project: Some parents allowed the rest of the children’s group to visit the apartment; some other children could borrow digital photo cameras and take pictures of what was important to them at home. This allowed the pedagogues to get an impression of the sociomaterial surroundings of the child as well as of which ones they seemed to deem especially im-

portant or relevant, facilitating the pedagogues' processes of relating to some of the conditions at home in more meaningful ways while conversing with children and parents. Nevertheless, not all parents wanted to participate in this project (allegedly due to privacy issues, or because they were afraid of being judged), and these were also often those who hardly ever showed up for parent meetings or other events (like theater performances, the summer barbecue, etc.). Here, the parents' primacy or "natural right to educate" (cf. above) inhibited parent-pedagogue collaboration in some cases, and that in turn made it difficult for the pedagogues to get insight into the children's *life-world* and *life situations* beyond the daycare context – a necessary step for being able to formulate key situations. Therefore, and also due to time and staff constraints, many pedagogues chose the key situations according to what they already before had experienced that other children might deem relevant, and according to what they learned while they gathered with their children's group during the regular morning sessions.⁶⁰ One prominent example was the project on *death*, triggered by a girl who had just lost her grandmother, and which did not interest many of the other children but was considered so important for that specific girl and for all other children in general that it was turned into a key situation. Another example was *getting to know one's own city*, certainly an important topic in more general terms, but not very specifically cut to one child's life situation.

Next to the challenge of obtaining (technologically-mediated) physical access to the child's sociomaterial life-world in resource-efficient ways, the question of *how to explore what is really meaningful* to one or several children is only vaguely addressed in Pressing & Heller (2009). In other words: what about the epistemological-methodological challenge of accessing the child's *perspective* on key life situations (cf. Chapter 1)? First it is not clear how the pedagogues are to learn from the children without wholly relying on language. According to the second quality criterion, pedagogues are to take into consideration the manifold ways children express their life situations – but how? The pedagogues "encourage the children to express their expectations, ideas, visions, their questions, anxieties and worries. They consider the children's different expressive forms and possibilities, especially of the children in the prelingual age. They conduct individual and common talks, in which the children can illustrate their viewpoints on things and occurrences, their wishes and imagi-

⁶⁰ Depending on the week's agenda, the weather conditions, staff resources, etc., the various groups held in between 1-3 morning sessions per week. Sometimes the responsible pedagogues of one children's group visited another group, for instance because they were educated in a specific field (art history/painting, music-making, English language, etc.).

nations” (ibid., p. 20). The paradox that some children cannot or do not make themselves intelligible through language while the suggested primary means for learning about the life situations is talk, is not even highlighted here.⁶¹ Also when it comes to selecting key situations out of the identified life situations, Preissing & Heller (2009) remain on the vague side of clarifications:

Pedagogues “choose those situations that correspond to the children’s curiosity and thirst for knowledge and that promote the children in their self-determined, socially responsible and object-competent acting. They choose those situations that children can – according to their development – understand, shape and influence and that strengthen their active stance on life [*Lebenshaltung*]. They take on situations which the children are currently struggling with. They also propose themes to the children which are indispensable for their growing-up in society. In the selection of key situations, they do justice to the children’s different life circumstances and tolerate diversity. They render transparent their planned activities for shaping the children’s everyday life and for longer-termed projects and face up to the conversation” (ibid., p. 21).

What I would like to point to here is the relationship between key situations and the underlying presumption that there are certain themes the children should learn about that are indispensable for living in society, and that they should develop competences so as to tackle them in a self-determined, socially responsible manner. Before discussing the consequently related theoretical dimensions of education and participation, let me just hint at one last problem: (media) technologies as part of children’s life situations play no role in this publication – an aspect which, in terms of the life-world orientation promoted as well as the extensive related discussion throughout the BBP – I myself find at least curious. The only (negatively formulated) nod to media technology is found in the authors’ recommendation to let the children co-shape the rooms and spaces in the kindergarten, but not without pinpointing that the rooms should stimulate the children while at the same time “thwart the widespread sensory overload” (ibid., p. 47).

Participating in democracy, or: What to educate towards?

The first sub-section on the second theoretical dimension, education, carries the title “In kindergartens children form themselves and society is formed” (Preissing & Heller, 2009, p. 44). Here the authors make no bones about the

⁶¹ In the so-called *language learning diary* (Sprachlerntagebuch), which is provided by the Federal State of Berlin in connection with the BBP so as to track the language development trajectory of the single child, there are explicit suggestions on how to ‘decode’ or interpret nonverbal cues. Due to space-time constraints, I will not get into an analysis of that artifact, though.

complexity and ambivalence of the legislatively formulated task the SitA needs to fulfill: The SGBVIII positions daycare institutions as public educational institutions which have an educational mandate. This educational mandate implies that daycare institutions are to “promote the development of the child towards a self-responsible and community-able personality” (SGBVIII, §22, Abs. 2; cf. also above). Preissing & Heller (2009) interpret this developmental ambiguity as follows:

“This double perspective corresponds to the insight that individual autonomy [*Eigenständigkeit*] can only come into existence in manifold and tension-rich [*spannungsreich*] relations. Emotional relationships and mutual understanding [*Verständigung mit anderen*] is the precondition for any education. The education of a person always takes place in social involvement. [...] The educational mandate directly points to the actors of the educational processes. Those are the children and the adults, which in a common – communicative – field produce both individual and common [*gemeinschaftlich*] developments. In this field, children, parents and pedagogues are always and simultaneously both learners and teachers. And they need to (self-)understand each other [*sich verständigen*]. The questions are: How do children experience the world in which they grow up, what do they want to know of this world and what do they want to influence [*bewirken*] in it? Which experiences and insights on life do the parents and pedagogues want to share with the children? What do they want to convey to them?” (p. 44; translation NAC).

In many ways Pressing & Heller’s implicitly dialectical understanding of the child-world and child-adult relationships, in which mutual learning takes place and is actually dependent on the others, goes hand in hand with the two-sided understanding of these relations in German Scandinavian Critical Psychology (cf. Chapter 1 & 3). Also the first question posed by them could be a one-to-one translation of parts of my research interest (cf. Introduction). However, the second and third questions posed convey a superiority of the adults over the children: They are to decide what to show or teach the children, while the children are the receivers of the message. Suddenly the notion that teachers need to be learners and vice versa – as also suggested by the BBP – seems eradicated.

One of the reasons may lie in the fact that the authors are very aware of the relative immovability of the hierarchical order-ing in-built into the relevant legislative arrangements, arrangements which require an enormous concerted effort to be changed. Preissing & Heller (2009) hint at this when writing that the actors in daycare are part of a bigger relational picture, that daycare is part of societal reality. On top, the pedagogues are somewhat understood as ambassadors of society, also because they are financed by public money and

therefore have to fulfill public tasks: They are to show parents and children what is important and precious about society, while offering them another part of reality than what they know from their families (cf. p. 44). Suddenly the image of the pedagogue as teacher and expert of society is spotlighted, while the image of the pedagogue as learner is shoved off to the gloomy shades – at least in relation to what the parents and children might teach them. This contradicts what was written on the very same page about the learner-teacher mutuality, and also the whole idea of having to learn about the child's life situation in order to be able to do one's pedagogical work and initiate pedagogical projects. By positioning the pedagogue as the one teaching the others about society, the authors preclude *that the parents and children might actually teach the pedagogues something about society*.

In order to dig deeper into what actually is important and valuable in society, what pedagogues are to teach about, I now turn to the understanding of *democracy* sketched out in this publication – and thereby to the third theoretical dimension: *participation*.⁶² Preissing & Heller (2009) introduce this section by writing:

“A democratically constituted society presupposes the possibility and necessity of the participation [*Teilhabe*] of all members and their responsible involvement [*Beteiligung*] in all life matters. The life in a democracy is inextricably connected to the rights and the responsibility which, on the one hand, the community has vis-à-vis the individual, and on the other hand, the individual has vis-à-vis the community.

In daycare as a public institution, the children experience [*erleben*] how democracy can be understood and shaped by all participants. Here they experience [*erfahren*] which values and norms in this society apply to all – independent of those valid in the private family space” (p. 48).

Let me polemically highlight a few contradictory peculiarities outlined in this quote: First, participating in all life matters is supposedly a possibility *as well as a necessity* in a democracy. Participation is thus not only possibility, but duty. This points to an understanding of participation as *Teilhabe* instead of *Teilnahme* (see above), of having-part in a *passe-partout* already laid out, a *passe-partout* which formulates necessities and not so much possibilities. Democracy is thus not something to actively shape through one's own con-

⁶² In case you do not feel that you have been educated enough about SitA's notion of education, let me just add that the rest of the section partly re-iterates what has been written in the BBP (see above) about Humboldt's understanding of *Bildung* and about promoting the development of the four competences identified there (the I-competence, the social competence, the object competence, and the methodical learning competence).

tribution – while in the second paragraph, it again is supposed to be shapeable. Or not? Democracy’s values and norms are obviously also to be accepted rather than shaped. They apply to all, no questions to be asked. Okay, maybe democracy’s values and norms do not apply in the “private family space”, which obviously exists outside society. But although this “private space” may build on other values and norms, the pedagogue as democratic ambassador is to investigate and understand the child’s life situations, no matter whether in ‘public’ or ‘private’ spaces.⁶³

The paragraphs following these seesaw formulations clarify what the described kind of participation is actually about: decision-making. With reference to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989) and especially the SGBVIII, the children are to participate in all public youth-aid-related decisions that affect them – in accordance with the child’s development (or age and maturity, as the UNICEF writes). But *decision-making presupposes a variety of already given options from which to choose from, rather than working out, negotiating, shaping these very same options*. Even though throughout the next pages, the authors eloquently write about how children learn to constructively participate, contribute, shape, etc. a heterogeneous and interesting society-community, they do not spell out that having influence over one’s life conditions really implies that *the scope of imaginable alternative possibilities to choose from is also (collaboratively) shaped, that one’s options may go beyond what the world has been teaching one so far*.

Basically, this is – next to the disregard of media technology’s probable significance for children’s life situations and the perpetuation of the competence terminology used in the BBP – my main point of critique towards Preissing & Heller’s 2009 publication. In more general terms, the Situational Approach is highly compatible with the theoretical framework laid out in Chapter 1: dialectical relationship between theory and practice, between individual and society, between content and form, and – in principal – between teacher and learner; departing from the child’s concrete everyday life situations and learning together with the other children and adults in projects; involving all participants in the shaping of the institution, meanwhile understanding the kindergarten as an organization which is to learn from its practice (Preissing & Heller, 2009, p. 57; cf. also p. 39). However, especially this last point, the collaborative changing of the institution, is counteracted by a narrow understanding of changing (or transforming) as shaping under given and to the

⁶³ These contradictions become most obvious when turning to page 43. Here the authors write: “The Situational Approach is a institution-critical concept, which wants to overcome the separated life worlds of the day care institution and the residential environment, ergo the insular existence of the children’s institution” (Preissing & Heller, 2009, p. 43).

biggest degree unchangeable conditions. This implicit (and for a public institution certainly unavoidable) a priori opposes many of the approach's foundational assumptions and thereby limits its virtualities, i.e. its possibilities for collaboratively changing a great deal of the practice and herewith of praxis together with the children. Hence, the a priori de-limits the children's possibilities to participate through actively transforming those very same sociomaterial arrangements their conduct of everyday life depends on.

Institution-specific sociomaterial arrangements upon entering the practice

Up to this point, the analyses of sociomaterial arrangements given before my participation in the daycare has focused on legislative propositions and pedagogical-educational guidelines valid for all Berlin daycares following the Situational Approach. Only little have I touched on how this had actually been implemented throughout the specific daycare I came to investigate. The concrete arrangements I encountered there have merely been *co*-arranged by the interrelated textual artifacts discussed so far: It is up to the staff to make a situated common sense out of the texts so as to establish, maintain and transform their specific practice – in relation to the specific parents and children. Meanwhile, the practice was also *framed* by the pedagogical-educational and particularly the legislative arrangements: As far as I could tell, no adult was eager to break with the law, and no adult was eager to question the specific democratic formation found in Germany at that time. The adults' scope of imaginable possibilities for acting appeared not to question the law's propositions, and seldom did it question the pedagogical guidelines' propositions. And the adults' limited relating-to the arrangements *co*-arranged and partially framed the children's scope of possibilities for acting. The texts as conditions sociomaterially afforded limited possibilities for relating to and acting on them. Collaboration across age thresholds on ontological eye-level, for instance, seemed to be unimaginable. Next to the textually mediated conditions, meanwhile, a multiplicity of other conditions additionally played into stabilizing an ontological separation between adults-children, adults-adults, and children-children. The spatio-temporal arrangement of the contextual daycare practice in relation to other contextual practices, among many other relationships, are such a condition – as well as all those infrastructural *sociomaterial* arrangements the practice participants were un-consciously relating to on a daily basis, and which I first needed to learn about and partly and partially

subject myself to (cf. Chapter 3). The upcoming pieces of relatable information shall assist in contextualizing my hitherto and later situated analyses:

The daycare is located in the outskirts of Berlin. It is mostly surrounded by residential areas, which consist of a mixture of single-family or multi-family houses as well as higher and partly run-down modernist apartment buildings. The families' income-level during my visit was mixed: While some of the families in the daycare lived off welfare aid and had a rather low income, most of them seemed to dispose of a lower to middle income. Very few of the families had a higher middle income. Around a fourth of the children also spoke a language other than German. Two groups engaged in irregular English language learning activities.

The building of this daycare center was separated between the crèche (1-2-year old children) and the kindergarten (3-6-year old children). They were connected by a door, which was almost exclusively used by the pedagogues – it was built such that the younger children could not lower the handle. The kindergarten was, other than the crèche, two stories high. These two stories were occupied by four official groups, each composed of 10-20 children. The three smaller children's groups (10-15 children, one group for the 3-4-year old children, one 4-5-year old group, one preschool group) were regularly led by two responsible pedagogues, while the larger one (15-20 children; mixed-age group, sometimes divided according to age) by three. Inside space was very limited, as one of the groups had to recently move in as another building had to be torn down. Meanwhile the necessary re-arrangement of the newly shared building created possibilities for re-designing the rooms, *which was done in collaboration with the children*. In addition, the daycare consisted of a big garden area, around four times the size of the building. The garden offered two open sand areas with playground equipment (monkey bars, a broad and short slide, different kinds of swings), a sandbox with a small colored wooden house, a small soccer area with goals, a small hill, a stone terrace for sitting outside, several wooden benches, younger and older trees, the stone path to the entrance/exit of the building and the area, and a hedged fence. As I participated in the daycare practice throughout the summer, most of the activities took place outside. Here also the children from the crèche and the kindergarten mingled, and some had good friends and/or family members in the other age groups. The pedagogues either initiated or assisted the children in initiating activities with specific children, or sat on the benches while outside. While the leadership's office, the industrial kitchen, the staff kitchen and two bathrooms were primarily intended for adult use, children were most often allowed to use them as well. The rooms primarily intended for the children

had different names according to their primary intended functions: the experiment room (where the only desktop computer exclusively set up for the children was located), the role-playing room, the building room, the painting room (one desktop computer for the pedagogues), the Snoezel room (something like a plushy cuddle room), and the breakfast-lunch room.⁶⁴ Every official group had a preferred room, especially for holding the morning sessions. However, depending on current pedagogical projects, these group-room-arrangements were sometimes re-mixed.

Lunchtime was the most strictly arranged activity. At times it was organized according to age groups, and there were three time slots due to space restrictions. Individual wishes of the child (e.g., whom to eat with) were taken into consideration as long as that did not conflict with other pedagogue premises. While throughout many other daily activities, children were generally allowed to engage with artifacts intended for adults, this was different at lunchtime: Children were to sit on the children's chairs, use plastic cups and small cutlery, while they were – relative to the supervising pedagogues – behave more or less neatly, i.e. in accordance with adult eating conventions. Food could usually be self-served by the children, but sometimes the amount was restricted.⁶⁵ One or two of the pedagogues furthermore insisted on the children being silent while eating, while this requirement was subject to debate with the other adult participants (including myself).

The groups' weekly agendas were first coordinated among the respective responsible pedagogues, then coordinated with the other groups. For some activities, the groups were mixed, sometimes according to the children's or the parents' wishes. During 'free play', which made up most of the afternoon and some of the morning time – particularly when there was warmer weather, – the children were allowed to roam freely and arrange activities according to their own wishes and premises-for-action. Some of the pedagogical projects had a longer time-frame (up to half a year), some were rather spontaneous and only lasted half an hour. The projects' time frames also depended on the identified key situation, and on how relevant the project seemed to be to the rest of the children's group. Coordination among pedagogues was, next to increasing project documentation and competence evaluation activities, self-reportedly the most resource-consuming activity for them (time and energy-

⁶⁴ The latter room was at a later stage remodeled by a TV show aired on the children's channel Nickelodeon, as the kindergarten had won a competition. Struggles around the related efforts of this channel to brand that room with their TV characters, mostly between and within the 'groups' of pedagogues and parents, require a further in-depth analysis (forthcoming, so to say).

⁶⁵ Parallels to Michalis Kontopodis' material-semiotic investigations into co-arranging eating practices in another Berlin kindergarten are easily to be drawn (cf. Kontopodis, 2012b).

wise). During my participation, furthermore, there were considerable staff shortages appearing, as some pedagogues were ill for a longer period. That made staff coordination an even bigger challenge for conducting and thereby arranging the shared everyday life in this contextual practice.

Usually around 10-15 staff members were present, including the 1-2 kitchen employees as well as the daycare leader Rebecca and/or the co-leader. Since the daycare officially opened at 6:00 in the morning and closed at 17:30, the staff worked on a two-shift-model. During my participation, two pedagogues were taking their education, and three were qualified as integration pedagogues, i.e. qualified for working with children with special needs (14 children; two levels of extra special need funding: level A providing an extra 1/4 position, level B an extra half position; two of the children were considered to be 'level B children').

The staff held a meeting at least once a month. Parent representatives did so as well. More encompassing plans to spend money and re-arrange the practice were coordinated with the parent representatives. Additionally, the single groups were to hold parent meetings every month. However, during my participation, the summer months were about to begin, implying that these regular meetings were held with a certain irregularity. All in all, I was able to attend two staff meetings and one group parent meeting, so as to introduce into, inform about, negotiate and further discuss my preliminary discoveries.

Here comes the researcher: Reciprocally negotiating access and situating ethical practice

My own participation in the daycare needed to be integrated into the rest of my conduct of everyday life, especially into the coordination of other work-related tasks. Among other things, I could quickly tell that I needed time in the evening to work through, translate (from German to English) and learn from my field notes, which I had usually jotted down as memos in between activities in the leadership's office (which I was always allowed to use outside of meeting arrangements). Also, I needed days away from the daycare in order to relate my preliminary discoveries to readings etc. In total, I visited the daycare on around 55 days, sometimes for 6-7 hours, sometimes only for 2 hours (for instance for a pre-arranged interview). Usually I came early enough to join the fellow morning sessions. Which groups I participated in depended heavily on the planned activities, so in the beginning of my day, I coordinated with various pedagogues to find out about their agendas.

While throughout the first weeks, I tried to get my head wrapped around all these coordinative efforts and agendas, the projects and struggles, I later followed some children and groups more closely than others, supposedly due to a mixture of jointly shared interests with some of the children as well as some of the pedagogues (I will analyze this further in Chapter 3). Furthermore I found preferred lurking sites, sometimes sitting outside on the benches with the pedagogues, sometimes just walking among the (self-established) children's groups during 'free play', waiting for them to invite me to join, or just asking about their activities in case they caught my curiosity. These less-formalized interactions among the children and all the other participants were to become the most insightful for me, but only after being able to relate them to the more formally structured sociomaterial arrangements and the maintained common sense that re-produced them.

Meanwhile my participation did not just happen, and it was neither wholly coincidental, nor was it fully planned or designed from the outset of the project. Actually its outset is almost impossible for me to de-limit. The same goes for the process of interrelated transcontextual actions through others which led up to my actual *access* to and presence in the daycare. Undoubtedly, however, do these intersubjectively constituted interrelations across space and time co-arrange the entire project's and especially this text's scope. It is therefore I will sketch this sequence of interrelated scenes of my conduct of research in relation to my conduct of everyday life, as it also points to why I subscribe to the notion that co-research requires to "engage in a creative and open process with an unknowable future" (Rogoff, 2011, p. 292), and that transformation can only build on the already maintained.

Describing the entangled emergence of my participation in this specific institution

Already while working on my PhD application and while the initial idea that this could take place in a daycare institution was in the process of surfacing, my partner Daniela suggested I could introduce my project to her aunt Rebecca, since she was leading a daycare institution in Berlin. Rebecca suggested I could conduct my study in her Berlin daycare – she would be very interested in the findings. Underlying my decision to investigate this specific daycare practice was thus a mixture of multiple, pragmatic-appearing decisions. First, I did not know Danish very well (yet), which would have certainly complicated a meaningful participation in a Danish institution. Second, Daniela was still living in Berlin, and I looked forward to again visiting her for a longer pe-

riod after I had moved to Denmark over half a year earlier. And third, I had Rebecca's and thereby the daycare leader's consent that I could start my investigation in close temporal proximity, while she would take care of getting the sponsor's consent. All I needed to do was to think of how to inform staff and parents (and actually also the children), and of how to get them interested in participating in my research project.

In the spring of 2011, I conducted the one-week pilot study (which I made part of the design only after colleague-friend Pernille Juhl told me that my premises for conducting the practice study would probably concretize after having had a first superficial insight into the practice). During that period, I audio recorded four conversations: a situated interview with a pedagogue about my project and about some of the daily sociomaterial arrangements in the daycare (e.g., how a birthday is celebrated); then the staff meeting, in which I presented my research interest and which turned out to become a very general group discussion of how to make meaning of media artifacts especially in relation to education;⁶⁶ a beforehand arranged conversation took place with Rebecca about the text materials used for teaching and evaluating the pedagogical-educational work, among others the Berlin Educational Program and the book edited by Preissing & Heller (2009); and last but not least, I let the audio recorder run while monitor-dismantling project mentioned in the introductory phenomena description with Amanda unfolded. Meanwhile I produced a bulletin and attached it close to the entrance at the lower and upper floor of the daycare. It was to inform the parents about my position as social psychological researcher and PhD fellow, topped it with a recent photo of me and my contact data, and provided my reasons for being in the daycare on a regular basis throughout three to four months. The main reason stated was to get an insight into the media-mediated world of the children, and to understand the possibilities and limitations of media technologies from their perspectives. Furthermore I informed about the forms of data which would be collected, promised anonymity and the possibility to veto the use of any data related to them or their child (only one parent made use of the veto), and asked for their and the pedagogues' active collaboration. I particularly wanted to let them know that I would have liked to visit some of the families at home during my participation.

Once I had learned about the most regular activities (the schedules varied often, cf. above) and gotten acquainted with most of the pedagogues as well as a considerable number of the 3-6-year old children and some of their parents

⁶⁶ This staff meeting is analyzed in one of my articles (Chimirri, 2013b). A differently focused analysis of the same situation is presented in Chapter 3.

(after about a month), I started asking the parents of those children who had an obvious interest in sharing time with me whether it would be possible to take time for an interview and/or a home visit, the latter in order to get an impression of the sociomaterial arrangement at home with a special focus on digital media artifacts (which digital technology was present in which room?; how would the children approach the artifacts while I was around?; which ones do they think the most interesting and why?). While it was also difficult to arrange interviews with some of the pedagogues, the biggest challenge proved to be to arrange parent interviews and home visits. The main reasons given for declining this possibility were organizational ones (lack of time, mostly). With a lot of persistence and by trying to assure many times that my intentions for both interviews and home visits were by no means related to judging any of the participants, I was finally able to arrange 10 formalized interviews with parents as well as 3 after-preschool home visits.⁶⁷ Sometimes, those children who got interested in my actions actively advocated for their parents' approval. Together with formalized pre-arranged interviews with 12 staff members (including the leader and co-leader) as well as more than 11 hours of audio recordings of *situated interviews*, I ended up with a vast amount of audio recordings – more than I could ever micro-analyze in this dissertation.

When it came to participating in specific events, projects, etc., ergo activities that I could not anticipate, I heavily relied on the staff as well as the children to inform me about these events, or to (often literally) take me by the hand and guide me there, and I was welcome to participate in every activity. Fortunately my initial presentation at the staff meeting seemed to do the trick, i.e. the majority of the pedagogues approached me actively in an increasing manner when they felt like discussing a variety of aspects of their everyday practice, most clearly when (somehow) related to digital media artifacts.⁶⁸ But actually, all kinds of pedagogical and non-pedagogical successes and frustrations were shared with me, which gave me valuable insights about the challenging working conditions, re-occurring problems and struggles with colleagues, parents and children as well as with conducting their own life beyond the contextual practice in the daycare.

⁶⁷ I also designed a little brochure which explained my intentions with visiting the families in their homes in more detail than the bulletin. The home visits lasted 2-3 hours, consisting of a formalized interview with one or both parents and a tour of the children's rooms as well as those rooms arranged for using media artifacts together with the children (mostly the living room, but also the kitchen).

⁶⁸ Some pedagogues even positioned me as computer expert (or geek, I suppose), as they tended to ask for my help when encountering interface problems with their computers.

Ongoing situated negotiations as ethical practice

I stop this description here, else I will never stop again. The main reason for halting, though, is that the notion of *access* has already shifted meaning throughout this description. In social research, access is usually understood in terms of finding research participants who are willing to share information with the researcher, ergo access to so-called *informants* or *respondents*. Often, this implies asking for – at least – a gatekeeper’s consent to initiate a research activity in an established institution, a community, a practice, etc. (cf. Chaderton & Torrance, 2011). The gatekeeper consents to the research on behalf of others, traditionally for the purpose of interviewing these others. As mentioned above and as also feminist researchers Miller & Bell (2002) point out, this practice of proxy-consenting on behalf of others “is important from an ethical perspective because it suggests the potential exercising of power by some individuals over others” (p. 55). The usual way of handling this dilemma is to complement the gatekeeper’s consent with each single participant’s *informed consent*. Miller & Bell (2002), however, argue that also this is insufficient, as the initial consent of a participant does not account for the dynamics and the processuality of conducting, analyzing, and writing up research. Instead they suggest that “‘consent’ needs to be ongoing and renegotiated between researcher and researched – not just at the time of access but possibly as transcripts are analysed and findings are published” (p. 67), a proposition also shared by many subject-scientific Practice Researchers.

On principal, I agree with Miller & Bell. Meanwhile, I would like to emphasize that it depends on how the data is used throughout the research process on whether a (especially written) consent is needed: As I hardly disclose any identifiable facts that may lead back to the participants, as I primarily analyze our interrelated actions and interests rather than their personalities, and I especially underline that my re-presentations of collected data are always already a subjective and re-situated re-narration of the experiences made, that it is *my first-person perspective on shared researcher-researched actions*, there is no claim to a factual truth or authenticity to these past experiences involved – other than, for instance, in interview data which is cited and used as verbalized facts (cf. Mørck & Nissen, 2005, for a related critique). Instead, I try to make sense of contradictory conditions-as-meanings and the various perspectives on these, which I experience(d) across manifold contexts in relation to my and the co-researchers’ interests, my and the co-researchers’ questions, and the interrelating sociomaterial arrangements at hand. And right now, I as the formally installed researcher with time at my disposal attempt to re-arrange this sense as meaning in the form of an artifact-as-text. Basically, then, ethical concerns

can only be productively discussed when re-relating and explicating them in relation to one's generalization and publication ambitions. One's generalization and publication ambitions are furthermore inextricably intertwined with the socio-political context and purpose of the research. In their call for a *situated ethics*, Piper & Simons (2011) emphasize the relationality and significance of guideline-based ethical decision-taking, whose dynamics they acknowledge by terming it *ethical practice*: "Ethical practice depends on how the principles [of ethical guidelines] are interpreted and enacted in the precise socio-political context of the research. [...] Situated ethics, in principle, acknowledges the uniqueness and complexity of each situation" (p. 27).

Reciprocity in accessing conducts of everyday life as foundation for co-research

I dig deeper into the question of ethical practice with a focus on the socio-politically mediated generalization of situated discoveries later, when discussing my expanded understanding of co-research – because notably, the question of consent becomes much more challenging when working together with young children. Also, I must acknowledge that certainly, I did not foresee all 'ethical dilemmas' involved in designing and conducting my participatory research. I did what I did to my best knowledge, e.g. by hanging up bulletins and having at least short conversations with every single parent of the 3-6-year old children and informing them about my research. Most importantly, though, I was there 3-4 days a week over the course of 4 months, most often accessible to them and their questions. So in fact, I tried to *make the question of access a reciprocal issue*: I obtained access to the daycare through a distant family member, the daycare leader, the gatekeeper, but then *I was there to be accessed by the participants in practice whenever they felt like accessing me*.

Thinking access reciprocally radically shifts the common focus of the term: From the access to the participants' (verbalized) information, eventually via a pre-arranged contextual practice's gatekeeper, to (a potential) reciprocal or even mutual researcher-researched access at ontological eye-level, through a jointly shared participation in practice. Ethical practice then becomes a shared practice, which is not alone dependable on the researcher's conduct of research as well as everyday life,⁶⁹ but of her_his conduct in relation to the conduct of everyday life of the other participants in practice. If I as researcher

⁶⁹ If, for example, a researcher is positioned as a right-wing or a left-wing extremist due to his_her participation in another contextual practice, this may very well have an impact on how this ethical conduct of research is perceived.

think-feel that – based on the various ethical guidelines provided – the disclosure of specific experiences with a co-participant might create problematic conditions for her_his conduct of everyday life, I should definitely check with him_her whether s_he agrees to the publication of these experiences. But I would claim that this often inexplicable ‘gut-feeling’ is much more grounded when experiencing the other participant across a multiplicity of situations in relation to the shared practice and its sociomaterial arrangements.

An example: I gave my phenomena description about Peter, his fascination for the video game character Sonic the Hedgehog, and his related social struggles in the daycare (used in Chimirri, 2012a, 2013a; also in Chapters 3 & 4) to Peter’s mother to read and comment on, and she promised to also consult him. It was rather improbable that many people they were acquainted with would read it, but there was a substantial chance that one of the pedagogues and/or the daycare leadership might get to read it, as they were interested in my research discoveries. I tried to formulate the description in such a manner that the different perspectives on the struggles that I came to experience were equally re-presented, and emphasized that Peter’s emerging and ongoing struggles in the daycare arose out of a relational web of ambivalent and contradicting expectations, positionings, stances, etc. Thereby I attempted to de-center from individual responsibilities for his related problems in practice towards a jointly shared responsibility. I thus did not feel I was exposing or judging any single participant. But since I knew that the institution and consequently other (powerful!) administrative bodies were already concerned about Peter’s family in more general terms, I anyway felt the urge of asking via e-mail⁷⁰ for their permission to use the description. After waiting for a few weeks, feeling twitchy as I really wanted to use the description, the description got the mother’s thumbs up (hopefully also Peter’s). The most satisfactory result, though, was that both she and the daycare leader later confided to me that they found my published analyses to actually be helpful for their respective conducts of family life. This example also illustrates the significance of interrelating ethical practice to the socio-political context – as Piper & Simons (2011) term it, – or rather: relating the discoveries made in practice to the sociomaterial arrangements which strongly play into co-constituting possibilities for acting in that investigated contextual practice. For instance, Peter’s family’s situation can only be interpreted as precarious when taking into consideration what the public institutions expect of the parents and the pedagogues – another reason for why I deem the above analyses

⁷⁰ The mother had given me her e-mail address so as to coordinate a home visit and to keep in touch about my discoveries.

of expectations formulated in legislative and pedagogical-educational texts important for this dissertation.

On the need of exploring contradictory directionalities together

In this Chapter 2, I explored how I came to become a participant in one specific daycare practice, and I presented and discussed an analytically and situationally de-limited discussion of which sociomaterial arrangements may have primarily played into co-constituting the practice. I particularly focused on what purposes this institutionalized practice is expected to fulfill, and in how far children are supposed to have a say in formulating these purposes. As illustrated, the two primary legislative texts discussed (the national SGBVIII and the federal KitaFöG) expect the child to develop a self-responsible and community-able personality. Daycare institutions are supposed to ensure this, and both the Berlin Educational Program and the Situational Approach reflect this demand. Furthermore, daycare institutions are to assist parents in reconciling child education and employment. The societal purpose of the adults as participating in society in terms of their labor force is clearly spelled out throughout the legislative texts, in contrast to the societal purpose of being child.

According to the KitaFöG, educating children towards societal participation is key. Instead of illustrating this participation of children as an already ongoing process in which the child is actively involved, however, it tailors a vest of essentializing categorizations which the child is expected to put on so as to be able to participate (sexual identity, ethnic-national-religious-social affiliation, capabilities-impairments, etc.). Children are, in my interpretation, to learn to participate in the already given political-economic system by adopting the already laid out values and norms currently deemed sensible.⁷¹ They are not to assist in questioningly developing the system, only in maintaining it as wage laborers once they are normalized as adults. Up to that point, they are *hypostatized* (Holzkamp, 2013f) as not-yet-fully-adult and thereby as not-yet-fully-human. In that sense, they are also no ‘full’ participants to the institutionalized practices yet, no ‘full’ collaboration partners, which anneals the ontological wedge jammed in between children and adults and exacerbates the possi-

⁷¹ Similarly, developmental and educational psychologist Erica Burman criticizes developmental psychology's seemingly unquestionable discourses of moral development the child is expected to undergo (cf. Burman, 1994, pp. 177ff).

bility of taking their perspectives seriously whilst exploring and tackling problems of potentially shared concern together.

Both the Berlin Educational Program and the publication on quality in the Situational Approach, those pedagogical-educational texts pointed out to me by the daycare leader as the most practice-relevant, go in depth with propositions on how to understand children's actions as valuable contributions to the institutionalized practice. Both suggest understanding the pedagogues as teachers as well as learners, learning from the children's and thereby also the parents' concrete life situations. This two-sidedness of learning-teaching through an exploration of each other's perspective, however, is countered by the recursion to positionings somewhat already laid out in legislation: Parents, pedagogues and children are qua definition different, have different tasks and agendas, and therefore they supposedly also follow different interests and purposes. Parents have the natural right to educate the child, pedagogues have their expertise as qualified personnel, and children are to be educated towards becoming a good participant in society. Only the children are developing here, parents and pedagogues are seemingly done with doing so. So why should they still learn and not merely teach?

It is no surprise that there are different positionings in play here, and to some extent, it may make sense for a democratically arranged society to uphold specific aspects of them. However, the pedagogical-educational texts overlook that these positionings are changeable, they are negotiable. The participants are in a *possibility relationship* to these positionings. So while children are strongly promoted to influence the daycare practice in Berlin through their participation, the institutionalized character of the practice, stabilized by the fact that the positionings appear unquestionable, is never at stake – even if its concrete *sociomaterial* arrangement may co-constitute problematic key situations for the children that the Situational Approach promises to tackle thoroughly; and even though the Situational Approach formulates the ambition of being an institution-critical approach (cf. Preissing & Heller, 2009, p. 10).

That positionings are negotiable became obvious throughout my entering into the daycare practice. From someone applying for a PhD, seeking familial assistance in finding an institution to investigate, to a PhD student and little experienced researcher, who nevertheless is equipped with scientific authority in the eyes of the daycare staff, but breaking with this expectation once clarifying that he was there to learn and not to teach or evaluate, learn with all participants in practice and particularly the children. All this has implications for the ongoingly re-negotiated situated ethical practice: Being someone who seeks dialog and collaboration on ontological eye-level so as to identify and

potentially act on problems and struggles of shared concern turns one-sided one-time access for the sake of the researcher and his/her problem into a reciprocal process, one where both access and problem are constantly negotiated between involved participants. In my case this intended intersubjective reciprocity and symmetry also created ulterior struggles, struggles which may have been circumvented or at least extenuated had I willingly adopted my positioning as scientific expert: For example, I might have gotten more parents to let me investigate their homes and technological equipment. Or maybe not, no sense speculating about it. What I am certain about, however, is that my insisting on such an expert positioning would have not made me want to specify and advance the notion of co-research so pivotal for the subject-scientific approach, would have not made me want to write the upcoming chapter about how I was able to make sense of the children and their relation to media artifacts irrespective of the many unquestionable-seeming obstacles.

Interlude:

Sociomaterial interplay = play?

Amanda sticks her doll-covered hand through the computer screen's plastic frame, as if she was trying to address the audience more directly, to proverbially be in their faces. She does not seem to care that the physical properties of a fully assembled computer screen would not allow for such an action. Right here and right now, it is possible, and not only that: The audience supports her doings with laughter and reinforcing comments. But this will not remain the only breach of the 'authentic' or intended characteristics of an old tube-run computer monitor. Later Amanda will walk around the table-screen setup in order to involve the audience of fellow kindergarten companions – including me – more directly, insistently asking us to collaborate on staging the next hand doll play, thus switching and transforming the traditional roles of audience and artist, of user and producer, of message recipient and bearer. The material and imaginative limitations built into a regular computer-screen-arrangement are sidestepped to make room for a number of situated possibilities for acting through and around the screen in ways that make me temporarily forget about one of my research foci: Namely that I am also there to investigate those exact material limitations that for a moment seem to be eradicated, or at least far far away from whatever it is I am experiencing in that half hour of re-imagining and re-situating an object known to all participants from other everyday situations and uses.

I shortly re-visit this phenomena description presented at the outset of this dissertation so as to ask: Does this sociomaterial interplay not 'just' illustrate children playing? Is this not what play and more specifically role-play is about, to draw on experiences made across various contextual practices, imitate others' actions, and re-situate them in another context together with peers? What, then, is the purpose of play, as seen from the children's perspectives? Why do they engage in such activities that at least throughout the daycare practice I participated in were commonly termed play? What may be the purpose for terming such activities play?

While Pressing & Heller's (2009) publication on the Situational Approach does not recur to the notion of play at all, the Berlin Educational Program (2004) conceptualizes play as central to the child's desire for creating conditions according to its own imagination:

“The play of children is a self-determined activity, in which they construct and reconstruct their life reality. They treat reality according to their imagina-

tions; they act and behave as if the play was reality. Through play children construct social relationships and create own suitable conditions. Children always connect sense to play and its contents. They use their fantasy so as to remodel the world in the play according to their own imaginations. The action through which they realize their play purposes and their aims alone is relevant to the players, not the action's final goal. It is exactly in this that the educational elements of play lie.

Play is in a particularly pronounced way self-determined learning with all senses. [...] While playing children learn voluntarily and are having fun, with trial and error, but without fear of failure. While playing they pose themselves their own questions and make up the answers to them. [...] Play makes it possible for the children to deal with [*sich auseinander setzen mit*] other persons, get closer to them, to explore and respect their particularities, strengths and weaknesses – and simultaneously to become familiar with oneself' (BBP, 2004, p. 34; translation NAC).

According to the BBP, play has a purpose for the children: Learning through all their senses to remodel world according to their imaginations, posing own questions and answering them through trial and error without fear of failure.⁷² From my perspective, the BBP's description of play constructs a sort of safe haven for the single child: Its desire for playing is acknowledged as meaningful for learning, learning according to its own premises, not according to any adults' premises. The daycare pedagogues are to actively support this process, while analyzing whether the children thrive or not, looking for potential signs of isolation. Peculiarly, the description of play offered in the BBP simultaneously isolates the single child's playing. The child is supposed to explore and get to know others through play, it is to learn about sociality. But it is not to learn about the sociality together with and through the others, is not to learn about potentially shared premises-for-acting – neither with peers nor adults. So while there is a directionality of playing implied for the single child's learning and development, *there is no commonly joint directionality implied*. Play is self-determined, self-directed, not something shared and to be negotiated.

Albeit numerous situations I experienced in the daycare point to the opposite, ergo that play is most often shared and that non-verbal and verbal negotiations of participants' premises-purposes are therefore inherent to the engagement of inter-playing, the pedagogues' understanding of play tended to mirror the BBP's potentially isolating explanations. Their understandings of

⁷² This understanding of learning comes close to understandings put forward in some cultural-historical or CHAT approaches, for instance in S. L. Rubinstein's approach to learning as creative self-activity. Dafermos & Marvakis (2011) analyze Rubinstein's writings about learning and term the process a *mediated getting-to-know-the-world*.

play furthermore reverberated understandings I have encountered throughout many other contexts of my remembered life. These tend to build on at least three central presuppositions: First, play is understood as something children – and exclusively children – do. After childhood, human beings still engage in rule-based games, but that is then commonly considered a leisure activity (cf. Chick & Barnett, 1995). Second, play is not societally productive, i.e. no goods are produced throughout the process. It is therefore not a really purposeful activity. This may be one of the reasons why adult play is termed leisure activity, in opposition to societally purposeful work. Third, it is to be distinguished from living ordinary life. It is neither a serious nor a necessary reproductive activity. For instance, exclamations like “Oh, he is *just playing*” (with the according downplaying intonation) point to the play activity as not being serious, not to be taken serious, not being a purposeful interplay – and an activity which would be considered as seriously odd or out-of-the-ordinary when performed by an adult, one example being a male-gendered individual dressing up as a princess standing at a cash register selling gravel.⁷³

While the latter two presumptions – play as unproductive and not serious – could be related to the broad impact of play theories following Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga’s influential work *Homo ludens* from 1949 (Huizinga, 2002; cf. also Caillouis, 1961), the presumption that play is something exclusively done by children appears to be taken for granted throughout many play theories with a background in the Russian Cultural-Historical School (recently, e.g., Hännikainen, Singer & van Oers, 2013) as well as other dialectical approaches (e.g., Braun, 1991). But it is not my intention to unfurl all those innumerable discussions currently taking place around the topic of play. What I wish to point to is that enacting the term ‘play’ so as to exclusively refer to children’s activities may co-arrange a *neglect of the interrelatedness of the sociomaterial inter-play*. It may downplay the children’s historical and agentive subjectivity, their agency’s directionality, their participation in practice, and herewith their conduct of everyday life.

Throughout the next chapter, I instead propose to analyze situations of sociomaterial interplay such as the one re-narrated above through concepts which do not preemptively discriminate between children and adults. Thereby, I attempt to put the focus on how children just like any other human being draw on their intersubjective, transcontextual experiences with various socio-

⁷³ An exception would be turning up as princess at a dress-up party, or at a gay parade, etc. However, these are specific sociomaterial arrangements created for a specific leisure activity. It thereby remains out-of-the-ordinary, as the premise of the activity setting is to act out-of-the-ordinary. Meanwhile, who would dress up as a princess to sell ‘worthless’ gravel?

material arrangements while engaging in a specific interrelated practice, a daycare practice constituted by both the participating children and the participating adults in relation to jointly shared sociomaterial arrangements. The practice is an ongoing activity constituted by all participants, be it serious, or ordinary, or neither. Preemptively labeling the children's activity as 'play', then, might obstruct the possibility to understanding and investigating their role or rather influence in co-constituting the shared everyday practice in a daycare context. "Can the appraisal that a child is in the middle of a specific 'developmental stage' or that it exhibits a specific 'attribute' (here: being defiant) be helpful for mutual self-understanding? Or does it hamper mutual self-understanding?", developmental subject-scientific researcher Gisela Ulmann rhetorically asks (Ulmann, 2010, p. 246; translation NAC). Taking up this thread, I ask: Can the appraisal that a child is 'just playing' promote mutual self-understanding in any way, then?

Chapter 3:

Specifying the children's socio-material conduct of everyday life

The point of this chapter is to refine and specify the conceptual-analytical framework presented in Chapter 1 so as to further clarify the possibilities and limitations of engaging in an *emancipatory subject-scientific co-research with children*, of exploring their perspectives on everyday media artifacts together for the 'common good'. The principal question to be posed here is how children and adults are not only interrelated through practice, but are able to conjointly act on the practice albeit intelligibility and mutual self-understanding appear to be hampered due to diverging experiences, premises, positions, agendas, and possibilities for verbally addressing their respective intentions or directionalities for action. A conceptual refinement may assist in fostering meaningful collaborations across age thresholds for the sake of questioning and purposefully transforming the daycare practice's sociomaterial arrangements without omitting the relevance of any of the participants' perspectives.

Most importantly, the transcontextually and multimodally mediated, processually ongoing sociomaterial entangledness of the daycare practice participants' conducts of everyday life is conceptually carved out. While the intersubjectivity and herewith interdependency of conducts of everyday life has already been roughly expounded in Chapter 1, the sociomaterial challenges around co-research's contradictory directionalities discussed in Chapter 2 make it necessary to further explore and analyze how this social interrelatedness is arranging and is meanwhile co-arranged by the material qualities of the daycare practice in relation to the material qualities of other practices the participants conduct their everyday lives through. Altogether, the upcoming chapter will argue that the *conduct of everyday life is inherently sociomaterial* and interconnects the various participations of the potential co-researchers across contextual practices. It explicates how the concept is crucial for better under-

standing how human beings engage in negotiating and jointly tackling problems of shared concern.

The concept of participation in practice as the chapter's argumentative point of departure helps in unfolding how sociomaterial arrangements are co-constitutive of the various participants' conducts of everyday life and their directionalities, and how their conducts of everyday life are co-constitutive of the sociomaterial arrangements' directionalities. This two-sidedness requires, however, *to take all perspectives on this participation equally seriously, as every participant is co-constituting and co-constituted through sociomaterial practice – including the researcher*. Only through my own participation in a for me entirely novel practice was I able to better grasp what participation implies and what challenges it can conjure up if not conceptualized as collaboration among *all* participants. The earlier re-formulation of access as reciprocally negotiated access already pointed to how I as researcher processually co-constituted or contributed to the daycare practice under scrutiny. In lieu of understanding these contributions as unintended, as interfering with a true or authentic research outcome, I will now re-consider them as meaningful and productive for a collaborative transformation of the very same practice I came to investigate. This re-formulation has implications which call for an ethical-political re-orientation of this and other subject-scientific research projects. In fact, the discovery of me contributing to the very same practice I came to observe calls for an ontological and herewith also an epistemological clarification of the researcher-researched relationship and consequently of the adult-child relationship.

I will initially draw on the re-situated phenomena description of Amanda's theater performance as sociomaterial interplay so as to illustrate the relevance of the proposed conceptual expansions and specifications. These seek to establish an ontological symmetry between the researcher and the researched, between adults and children, through proposing that *the fundamental ontological commonality across human beings precisely lies in their epistemological diversity*: No human being understands the world in exactly the same way another human being does, and neither do participants share the exact same directionalities while conducting their everyday lives together, nor does a single participant enact only one directionality throughout this process. Participants' directionalities are inherently contradictory, just like the conditions-as-meanings they live through. This, adults undoubtedly have in common with children.

The proposition that epistemological diversity is inherent to human relating-to processes on the one hand makes it possible to systematically engage in co-research across age thresholds, on the other it poses challenges to the questions of how human beings are nevertheless able to meaningfully collaborate

and herewith of how to conceptualize a researcher's sociomaterial interrelatedness in a contextual practice like the daycare. Further conceptual specifications therefore become necessary once analyzing a number of other re-situated interrelated phenomena descriptions. These descriptions illustrate both situations I experienced in the daycare as well as more recent situations or scenes from my conduct of everyday life, in which I re-relate to the daycare experiences so as to interpret them in terms of their transcontextual usefulness, validity, meaningfulness. These analytical illustrations also serve to underline that the project's principal discoveries emerged from diverging and at times conflicting approaches to *problems* I partly and partially shared with other participants, first and foremost with the children I came to collaborate with. It was primarily the children's explorations and re-negotiations of experienced sociomaterial arrangements and the contradictions they struggled with which I could meaningfully relate to. Additionally, their questions and questioning interplay challenged the very same maintained common sense I myself tried to meaningfully relate and partially subject to in the daycare, thereby calling for a re-arrangement or transformation of this common sense. And it is the children's challenging questions, problems and struggles that will later – in Chapter 4 – be the guiding principle for collaboratively exploring the children's perspectives on digital media artifacts as well as the implications for purposefully co-arranging our sociomaterially entangled conducts of everyday life.

Subject-scientific relational process ontology

In Chapter 1, I have – with reference to Holzkamp and Schraube – argued that children should be approached at ontological eye-level, so as to engage in a symmetrical dialog with them as co-researchers and conjointly explore their reasons for acting with, through and on media artifacts. This is pivotal for not *hypostatizing* (Holzkamp, 2013c, p. 78) the child, for not reifying it, for instance as something exotic, inaccessible, irrational, incomprehensible (cf. also Kontopodis, Wulf & Fichtner, 2011). But what does this ontological symmetry imply? In what ways are children and adults similar, arguably the same? What are the ontological commonalities between these two age-related groupings? And how can an adult researcher like myself meaningfully identify and tackle problems of shared concern together with children?

With Schraube (2012), one could say that both adults and children belong to the same class of creatures (*Wesensklasse*), they are human beings. Conse-

quently, they are both simultaneously epistemic subject and epistemic object of the exploration of everyday life. Both adults and children explore the world from their respective first-person perspective, which comprises of experiences about the self and the world, as well as of sensations, thoughts, and actions (Schraube, 2012, p. 3). In his *Foundations of Psychology*, Holzkamp (1985) re-constructed the phylogenetic development of the human being towards becoming a subject to its self-made history, to its self-made societal arrangement, resulting in what he called the *societal mediatedness of individual existence*. It follows that both children and adults can be understood as historical-societal and acting subjects, and they always dispose of more than one possibility for acting with-through-on society's conditions (the *dual possibility*, cf. Chapter 1).

Both Schraube and Holzkamp imply a relational and processual understanding of the human-world relationship. To borrow a term psychologists Steven Brown and Paul Stenner (2009, pp. 11ff) enact for summing up Alfred North Whitehead's metaphysical philosophy, I suggest that subject-scientific Critical Psychology proposes a *relational process ontology*. Other than Whitehead, however, it proposes an ontology *which enacts an emancipatory directionality and is situated in the standpoint of the subject and herewith in the process of intersubjective human experiencing*. Meanwhile, particularly this processuality is seldom clearly explicated throughout Critical Psychology, making its arguments vulnerable for the allegation that it is working on a universalizing and essentializing conceptualization of what a human being *is*.⁷⁴ What is needed, hence, is a clarification of how it is possible to avoid static understandings of the human being and nevertheless be able to explore ontological commonalities across human beings. What is needed is to explicitly shift the analytical focus from investigating the ontological *status* of a human being towards investigating its ongoing ontogenesis or rather its *ontogenetical becoming* – an organic, animate becoming which never takes place isolated from others or the world, which is socio-material and thus always inextricably intertwined with the overall human activity in the world, with praxis.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Holzkamp himself was very aware of this danger. He sought to avoid it by insisting upon a differentiation between the categorial and the current-empirical level (*kategoriale* and *aktualempirische Ebene*). This means that the ontological concepts or categories provided on the categorial level cannot be utilized for explaining someone else's actions in an empirical study. They can merely serve as expanded and common language so as to promote self-reflection in relation to one's societal mediatedness, and to enable a reason discourse and thereby mutual self-understanding between co-researchers (cf. Holzkamp, 1985).

⁷⁵ Stetsenko (2008) argues for a similar understanding of becoming in her expansion of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory. I return to her argument below.

Becoming, here, is not conceptualized in the way childhood sociologists James, Jenks & Prout (1998; cf. also Jenks, 1996) have criticized it: Childhood as nothing more than a transitory stage towards becoming an adult, and childhood research as a study of the child as unfinished adult rather than as a social agentive being in its own right.⁷⁶ Instead, the becoming proposed here concurs with sociologist Emma Uprichard's understanding, who – with reference to Ilya Prigogine's (1980, 1996) ontology of time – argues that “children and childhood are *always and necessarily* ‘being and becoming’” (Uprichard, 2008, p. 303). A broader ontological project underlies this claim, namely that of questioning the rather arbitrarily drawn boundaries between childhood and adulthood. Rooting this project in Nick Lee's (2001) book entitled *Childhood and Society*, she writes:

“In sum, Lee suggests, we are all – children and adults – interdependent beings who are also always in the process of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ with one another, who are more or less competent at doing certain things throughout our lives. This ‘being and becoming’ approach is much more useful than either the ‘being’ discourse or the ‘becoming’ discourse taken alone, not just because it is based on a conceptually more realistic representation of both children and adults, but also because it bridges the gap that makes children ‘different’ to adults. [...] Children (and adults) are always ‘being and becoming’ in Prigogine’s use of those terms. The process of ‘being’ a child and ‘becoming’ an adult is irreversible, and it plays a constructive role in the physical and social world; it is deeply rooted in the dynamics and experiences of being and becoming in the world. So far, the notion of the child being in the world has been separated from that of the child becoming in the world to such an extent that each has generated its own childhood discourse. However, as Prigogine suggests in relation to time in dynamic systems, it is the *interplay* between the different notions of time within each discourse that is key to understanding the notion of the ‘child’. Hence, whilst the discourse of the ‘being’ child accentuates the present, and that of the ‘becoming’ child stresses the future, both the present and the future interact together in the course of everyday life.” (Uprichard, 2008, pp. 307-308).

Uprichard draws on Lee and Prigogine in order to underscore an ontological symmetry or rather commonality between children and adults: They are all interdependent of each other, and they are all connected through their being and becoming, the process of living in the present in relation to the future.

⁷⁶ Holzkamp (2013C) specifically criticizes psychoanalysis' "developmental gaze": "The one-dimensionality of the 'developmental gaze', namely explaining each later period of life as arising from earlier ones (thus hypostasizing the biographical past as the 'real cause' of the biographical present), becomes transparent on a more general level when one questions the underlying causalistic understanding of history and emphasizes instead the perspective of history – and with it each individual's *experience* of history and *way of relating to it* – as being determined by the present" (p. 227).

Meanwhile, Uprichard is “not denying that social constructions may create ‘thresholds’ between what constitutes a ‘child’ and an ‘adult’” (p. 308), and that these social constructions play an important role in understanding the individual and collective relevance of time and age⁷⁷ – and I would add: in understanding the relevance of responsibility and accountability, not wanting to preclude that the construction of childhood *may* also co-arrange sensible societal boundaries. But “how we construct the notion of ‘child’ is not to be confused with being a child; knowledge about childhood cannot be reduced to what childhood actually is. [...] The key is to achieve a working balance between the temporal constructs of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ without diminishing the humanity or the personhood of every human being, child or adult” (p. 309).⁷⁸

I subscribe to Uprichard’s considerations on both children’s and adults’ actions needing to be investigated in terms of how these actions depend on both their being and becoming – i.e., as *relational* and *processual*. There are many parallels to be found in Holzkamp’s writings, foremost in his article on the *Colonization of Childhood* (Holzkamp, 2013f). In short: Here and now the subject draws on past biographical experiences in relation to current emotional dispositions-sensations and premises for future actions – what Holzkamp termed the *dual perspective* of one’s becoming. This corresponds to what Uprichard writes when citing Emirbayer and Mische (1998), who argue that agency is “an embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963, cited in: Uprichard, 2008, p. 311). And as also philosopher Marx Wartofsky (1981) points out, next to Uprichard, Lee, James, Jenks & Prout, and many others,⁷⁹ both children and

⁷⁷ Cf. the works of Pernille Hviid on children’s experiences of time and development, e.g. Hviid (2012). See also Gulbrandsen (2012) on the developmental dynamics of children’s self-and-other constructions.

⁷⁸ For a similar argument, partly drawing on the conceptual language of Bruno Latour, cf. also Kontopodis (2012a): “[B]oth time and development are co-fabricated, entangled, and processed together in a way that *doing* development is *doing* time and vice versa. In turn, it is not a single *subject* or *person* that develops in time, but it is a system of relations, a relational whole that either remains qualitatively the same or becomes different-in-itself through the development of qualitatively new relations among its parts. This *process* is intensive and qualitative (thus, there is a link to Nietzsche, as emphasized in the Vygotskian notion of *perezhevaniie*); however, this process is also organized, directed, stabilized and objectified by mediating devices that measure, quantify, organize, spatialize and objectify time” (Kontopodis, 2012, p. 92).

⁷⁹ If you happen to read German: Cf. the volume on children and child research edited by Klaus Weber (2010), or for instance the sociological discussion of children’s agency laid out in Bühler-Niederberger (2011). Cf. especially also the contributions in Hedegaard et al. (2012).

adults are agentic beings, always already dispose of this future-oriented agency.

Here it is time to stipulate clearly and precisely that agency as *Handlungsfähigkeit*,⁸⁰ just like the first-person perspective, the subject, and all other concepts Critical Psychology has and is further developing, must be understood as *terms describing interrelated processes, becomings*, instead of static entities or essences. Still they are related to one's current state of feeling-being, which however is developing at every moment, underlies irreversible time, is ongoing, just as praxis is. So when looking for ontological commonalities across children and adults, these can only be found in the processes, in how the subject relates to the world in relation to the future in relation to others. So even though 'being' is dialectically intertwined with 'becoming', I postulate that the only way a researcher can *investigate* and tackle problems of shared concern is to relate to and investigate other subjects' conducts of everyday life in terms of their past-present-future relations – in terms of the process of relating one's current state of being-feeling to one's ongoing becoming, as expressed in one's communicative past-related future-oriented actions.

Throughout an empirical analysis of everyday life, this implies *shifting the focus from what subjects are to what subjects do together*. I re-iterate a pivotal citation from Chapter 2:

“[T]o understand the personal engagements of a child, we have to look not only at the child itself but also ‘in front’ of the child – what is the child looking at, occupied with, taking part in? Children are like other persons aiming at something, and we must explore their personal reasons related to their engagement in concrete social situations with different things at stake” (Højholt, 2011, p. 75).

Actually, I would claim that ‘we’ have to *particularly* look ‘in front’ of the child, and not only the child, but in front of each other, in front of all subjects playing into a specific sociomaterial situation of concern. Foremost Danish Critical Psychology and its Practice Research tradition have been explicitly focusing on de-centering their analyses away from understanding the single subject and her_his respective reasons for acting, towards centering on the subject's engagements in and contributions to a commonly shared practice, as ongoing social practice or praxis. Central to this de-centering process is Practice Research's use of *process methodologies* and longitudinal or *processual methods*, for in-

⁸⁰ Sometimes is *Handlungsfähigkeit* also translated as action potency, for instance in Erik Axel's works (Axel, 2003, 2009, 2011) as well as in the works of Tolman (Tolman, 1994; Tolman & Maiers, 1991), or also as action potency (e.g., Dreier, 2003). As the potency as well as the potency terms invoke essentializing connotations, I prefer sticking to agency.

stance participant observation or rather actual participation in and across manifold practices.⁸¹ Practice researchers' investigation reports or publications are thus *accounts of the researcher's becoming through participating in the becoming of the co-researchers*, and are herewith implicitly rejecting the idea that participant observation can be understood as means for data collection: "For participant observation is *absolutely not* a technique for data collection. Quite to the contrary, it is enshrined in an ontological commitment that renders the very idea of data collection unthinkable. This commitment, by no means confined to anthropology, lies in the recognition that we owe our very being to the world we seek to know. In a nutshell, participant observation is a way of knowing *from the inside*", as anthropologist of experience Tim Ingold puts it (Ingold, 2013, p. 5; similarly: Shotter, 2013; see Introduction). Implicitly sharing Ingold's commitment, then, Practice Research has always already looked for ontological commonalities across human beings, no matter which age or other positioning they are labeled with – because without the interrelatedness of various participants' ontogenetical becomings, the researcher's own becoming and his/her insights would not have come to be. Hence, the epistemological consequences of putting the analytical focus on shared ontogenetical becomings are immense (see below).

Throughout the upcoming pages, I will show how participation, contribution, and the conduct of everyday life should be explicitly understood as *process-exploring concepts* which may help in understanding children's purposeful process of relating-to the world more precisely, i.e. in dynamic, interrelated, and emancipatory ways. It is a further specification of concepts already introduced in Chapter 1, a specification needed so as to set the subject-scientific conceptualization apart from and simultaneously open it up to research approaches which draw on the same terms differently while sharing a similar political commitment. I illustrate this necessity by analyzing Amanda's theatrical performance through these specified concepts. Key will be to show that by using terms such as participating in, contributing to, and conducting one's everyday life, ontological commonalities and common directionalities between children and adults can be pointed out which are consequential for proceeding with the further analyses – without hypostatizing that human beings *have* a participation or a conduct of everyday life, without fixating the participants' ontological status.

⁸¹ This is a characteristic subject-scientific Practice Research shares with other Action Research approaches (cf. Dege, forthcoming).

Directionality of participation

Participation is a key term in German Scandinavian Critical Psychology. Still, there are differences in what exactly the concept implies: While throughout German Critical Psychology, participation is primarily understood as the directionality of agency, of *Handlungsfähigkeit*, sensu being part of arranging those life conditions one is dependent of, in the Scandinavian tradition it *additionally* points to one's situated interrelatedness through one's ongoing partaking in social practice – a kind of processual ontological status of being-in-the-world. In the latter tradition, then, the directionality of this joint becoming through partaking is at times lost from its analytical sight, while in the former one's already given interrelatedness in practice tends to be underexposed.

Participation is meanwhile a term often encountered throughout the Humanities and Social Sciences – it is considered a *buzzword* by Phillips, Kristiansen, Vehviläinen & Gunnarsson (2013, p. 7), whose implied meanings furthermore tend to be *black-boxed* (Carpentier & Dahlgren, 2011, p. 7). Arguably, participation is a term which interrelates many approaches which share a similar political commitment: overcoming social domination and injustice. How to engage in this overcoming, what role participation is to play in that, and what kind of a future alternative to domination is imagined, ergo what directionality is precisely implied, in turn disunites these potentially emancipation-bound projects again.

I propose a rather broad entry point so as to begin a more thorough discussion of the understanding of participation I came to adopt throughout my participation in the daycare. This entry point is offered by audience researcher and social psychologist Sonia Livingstone:

“Grammatically speaking, participation is the nominalization of the verb, to participate, meaning to take part in something. It is important to identify what that something is: One does not participate, or seek to increase participation, merely for the sake of it. Moreover, participation is never a wholly individual act, and it always advances certain interests. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines participation as ‘the state of being related to a larger whole’ and the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as ‘the process or fact of sharing in an action, sentiment, etc.; (now esp.) active involvement in a matter or event, esp. one in which the outcome directly affects those taking part’” (Livingstone, 2013, p. 24).

As she pinpoints, participation covers both one's being part of a larger whole as well as one's becoming through active partaking. But Livingstone herself notes that there is at least one facet of participation which usually remains unanswered: “So, if the present paradigm for audience research centers on

participation, we must ask – participation in what? Not, surely, participation in an audience per se but, rather, participation in culture or community or civil society or democracy” (ibid.). What makes the term particularly tricky and nebulous: Participation is not only a pivotal term throughout the Humanities and Social Sciences (including audience research), but also takes center stage in the democratic organization of nation states and other formal bodies. The ideal democratic system is unthinkable without the ideal of (citizen) participation. In turn, participatory research is unthinkable without its democratizing impetus, its drive to promote democratic ideals in and through research. And finally, democracy is also a precondition for participatory research.⁸²

Combining considerations from various contemporary participatory action researchers, the conceptual and related methodological struggles for establishing a meaningful participatory research practice can be broken down to two fundamental and intertwined questions that should be posed to any conceptualization of participation: ‘who participates in what how?’ (cf. Unger, 2012; Neidel & Wulf-Andersen, 2013) and ‘what democratic ideal is implied?’ (cf. Carpentier, 2011; Götsch, Klinger & Thiesen, 2012). While posing these two questions to German Scandinavian Critical Psychology is a *condicio sine qua non* for further conceptualizing an emancipatory co-research with children, the specifying discussion of possible answers will be haunting the rest of this dissertation’s narrative all the way down to its temporary conclusion. What will be offered here is a mere head start.

As mentioned above, participation as *Teilnahme* or the ongoing interrelated process of active partaking is hardly used throughout the German tradition of Critical Psychology. Instead, the authors center on the subject’s struggle for or process of developing *Teilhabe* (verbatim: having-part) as the expansive directionality of agency. Confusingly, *Teilhabe* also forms one of the basic rights granted by German legislation,⁸³ which points to an always already given with neither action nor directionality implied (except for the children, who are no ‘full citizens’ yet; cf. Chapter 2). In the Danish language texts, *deltagelse* is used for participation, which is the exact translation of partaking. The participation concept is indispensable particularly for the Danish developments of Critical Psychology. This relates to this tradition’s strong interest in Lave & Wenger’s seminal publication *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, in which learning is understood “as increasing participation in communities of prac-

⁸² Cf. Bergold & Thomas (2012), as well as the rest of the special issue on Participatory Qualitative Research in the Forum Qualitative Research they edited.

⁸³ In many other contexts, the German terms *Teilhabe*, *Teilnahme* and *Partizipation* are used synonymously.

tice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49). In his 2008 monograph *Psychotherapy in everyday life*, Dreier builds on Lave & Wenger as well as on Holzkamp (1985) to provide a comprehensive conceptualization of participation:

“First, to adopt participation as a key concept in a theory of persons means that we think of human subjects as already involved in social practice. Human activity is meaningful by virtue of being a part of a common social practice of which we have a more or less common understanding [...]. So, in order to understand the actions, thoughts, and emotions of persons, we must study the ways in which they participate in social practice.

Second, with the concept of participation, we think of persons as being situated in local contexts of social practice and involved from there in primarily practical relations with structures of social practice. The embodied nature of personal being implies that persons always participate locally in social practice.

Third, [...] the concept of participation urges us to understand persons by asking what they are a part of and how they involve themselves in it.

Fourth, the concept of participation implies grasping personal participation as a partial aspect of a social practice. [...] Individuals have only a partial grip on and influence over a social practice and a partial ability and knowledge about it. [...]

Fifth, the concept of participation urges us to notice that individuals play different parts in a social practice. [...] They configure their participation in social practice in a partial *and* particular way.

Sixth, the fundamental human duality between acting within the existing limits of a social practice and expanding its scope of possibilities [...] is reflected in a similar duality of modes of participation. Persons may participate in the re-production of the current state of affairs in a (local) social practice or change it by expanding its scope and the degree to which it and its links with other social practices are at their disposal” (Dreier, 2008, p. 30).

Individual subjects (or persons) are, following Dreier, always already involved in a social practice. And they not only are involved, they actively participate in upholding and changing social practice. They are participants because they act in relation to the social practice, and in relation to as well as in interrelation with the other participants in the practice. In order to understand their actions, research must study their participation and how their actions reproduce and change the existing social practice. Participation can thus be understood as an ontologically given process: A subject is always already part of a social practice, but its involvement is simultaneously always already chang-

ing through its participation, its taking-action on the social practice it is involved in.⁸⁴ Hence, there is a directionality of action implied, which may point to either upholding the status quo or in expanding one's – via the others' – scope of possibilities for acting.⁸⁵ This directionality is part of the ontological givenness: Human beings always act, consciously and unconsciously – their ontogenetical becoming does not just happen to them, they themselves actively engage in the process of becoming. And this holds true for all human beings, irrespective of their age.

If we consider Amanda as participant who is both being and becoming, who is actively engaged in the process of acting on the given social practice, her sidestepping of usual conventions and directionalities sociomaterialized in a computer screen is not unproductive as often suggested around 'free play' (cf. the above Interlude). She may actually aim at something by engaging the audience, on the one hand with her hand doll, on the other hand with her approaching the audience. There may be a multitude of premise-reason-relations grounding her actions, e.g. to question the relative immobility of a theatrical stage-audience relation, to expressively impress a specific other child, a pedagogue, maybe even the present researcher, or – and the further development of that situation hints in that direction – she wanted someone else to take over, not be the only one to entertain the others: She wanted it to become a truly collaborative activity. Significantly, her actions, her participation, had an impact, she changed the social practice: She showed her fellow age companions that the plastic frame of an ancient computer screen can be used for staging an improvised theater play, that a child can actually improvise such a play, for instance with hand dolls, that one can involve and entertain others, be it by improvising on-stage or off-stage, etc. Meanwhile, Amanda showed the pedagogue that the children enjoy using the plastic frame for such stagings, that it made sense to Amanda that the pedagogues put the frame at the children's disposal, and that the pedagogues should consider keeping it instead of trashing it. Another pedagogue, the one responsible for dismantling the computer screen together with children, meanwhile, was shown that her idea and initiative for a shared participation yielded fruit. Finally, my participating in her and all the others' participations in that situation showed me all of which I am currently writing down. So summa sum-

⁸⁴ For instance through involving the other participants (cf. Neidel & Wulf-Andersen, 2013).

⁸⁵ This differentiation of upholding the status quo or expanding the scope of possibilities for action is related to Holzkamp's categorical pair restrictive versus generalized agency (cf. Holzkamp, 1985; Osterkamp & Schraube, 2013).

marum, one could straightforwardly claim that many of us learned something meaningful that day by participating in that situation.

In that sense and in support of Lave & Wenger's argument, participation is certainly key to learning. Learning through participation is a ongoing qualitative process which is neither quantifiable nor cumulative, it can neither increase or decrease, and it interrelates teaching and learning (cf. Lave, 1996). Participation as simultaneous being and becoming is an ontologically given quality of a human being's relations to the world – as always already part of social practice and always already taking part through acting on it. If we think this quality further, and also considering Amanda's impact on the learning processes of all participants, we might actually consider that the directionality of participating in practice could be better specified by conceptualizing it more explicitly as the *process of contributing to practice*.

Participants as contributors to practice

“It is not possible to comprehend social relations-conditions [*soziale Verhältnisse*] without simultaneously questioning them, re-arranging them, thinking them differently; as oneself is part of them, beginning their and one's own change through thinking. The investigation of the social processes is withal not merely the deed of single intellectuals, but itself an engagement of the many” (Haug, 2003, p. 98; translation NAC).

As also argued elsewhere (Chimirri, 2012a, 2013a, 2013b), the participation term might not be conducive enough to highlight the impact single or collaborating participants' actions may have for the structuring of the shared social practice – be it in upholding or in changing this practice.⁸⁶ Instead, I pick up developmental psychologist's Anna Stetsenko's suggestion to specify participation as contribution, or rather of *participating in practice as contributing to practice* (cf. also Højholt, 2011). This conceptual clarification is also direly needed due to the increasing significance or centrality of the concept of participation and of participatory research in the Human and Social Sciences. Although throughout subject-scientific Practice Research, participation is per definition understood as contribution to practice, the radicality and poignancy of the

⁸⁶ A similar critique of the participation concept is brought forward by Neidel & Wulf-Andersen (2013). By confronting literature from Action Research and poststructuralist feminist research, they argue that research participants – including the researcher – are always already participating and engaged in the world. Participants are always already involved and involving others, and this carries important ethical implications for research. Especially Action Research, whose outspoken aim is to (help) shape and change others' practices, must straightforwardly deal with this non-innocence of its actions. See also below.

term at times withers away both in its own and in related research area's publications. This is especially the case when conceptualizing participation not as an ongoing process, but as a political tool, as a site of ideological struggle – as it is used in democratic theory (cf. Carpentier, 2011). Ideological struggle is undoubtedly part of the process of participating in practice (see below), but participation as described in Dreier's above citation is not merely a political artifact created by humankind – quite the contrary: the process of participating in practice is *constitutive of humankind*. It is the process of transforming societal practices, through ongoing activity, through praxis.

Stetsenko underlines such a processual and transformation-oriented understanding of participation:

“Participating in and contributing to sociocultural practices of collaboratively transforming the world appear then as processes of a *dialectical co-authoring of history* and a collaborative historical becoming through which people establish their collective humanness while making unique contributions to sociocultural practices [...]. Therefore, human individuals are simultaneously ineluctably social and individually unique. That is, positing such a continuous flow of collaborative transformative practices as the foundation of human life does not eschew the fact that each generation and each individual human continues past achievements while, at the same time, also contributing to these practices, transforming and altering them (sometimes radically and sometimes only on a small scale), under the challenges of unique sociohistorical conditions and in view of aspired goals and visions for the future” (Stetsenko, 2008, p. 484).

In her article, Stetsenko argues that the sociocultural approaches promoted by Jean Piaget, John Dewey, and Lev S. Vygotsky, which are often presented as irreconcilable, share a common foundation, a common theme: “namely, the theme of *relational ontology* of human development and, more specifically, that of human active engagement with the world as the process through which both learning and development take place” (ibid., p. 473). All three theorists opposed the reductionist and mechanistic view of positivist sciences, whose research abstracts the individual from the world it lives in by essentializing and separating phenomena in that social world:

“In opposition to this [positivist] view”, she writes, “many sociocultural theories are based on the notion that social and psychological phenomena are processes that exist in *the realm of relations and interactions* – that is, as embedded, situated, distributed, and co-constructed within contexts while also being intrinsically interwoven into these contexts. [...] Thus, the reductionist metaphor of separation (typical of the previous mechanistic worldview) is replaced with the metaphor of ‘in-between-uity,’ that is, of mutual co-construction,

co-evolution, continuous dialogue, belonging, participation and the like, all underscoring relatedness and interconnectedness, blending and meshing – the ‘coming together’ of individuals and their world that transcends their separation” (ibid., p. 477).

While she declares these principles as unifying across diverse sociocultural theories, Stetsenko demurs that this commonality may be insufficient for overcoming what she calls research’s “*spectator stance* on development” (p. 479)⁸⁷. It is important to not only acknowledge that human beings are embedded and relationally involved with each other, it is not merely about existing or being together, but about *becoming together* – ergo to anchor the centrality of human action, of active engagement, which always already implies directionality, in (sociocultural) theory and research (cf. also Stetsenko, 2012). Stetsenko argues that especially Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as unfolded by Vygotsky⁸⁸ features possibilities for conceptualizing this collective becoming or development in dynamic and processual ways. In order to do so, however, the researcher cannot think her_himself as posited outside of this collective becoming, cannot assume a spectator stance. Instead, Stetsenko suggests to actively endorse a *transformative activist stance* (Stetsenko, 2008) (also referred to as *activist transformative stance*: Stetsenko, 2012), to productively engross the fact that the researcher – just like the other participants – contributes to and thereby transforms the research process. Consequently, all research participants contribute to and transform the (temporary) outcome, and herewith they transform human history and human practice. It follows that “acting, being, and knowing (including knowing through research) are all seen, from a transformative activist stance, as rooted in, derivative of, and instrumental within purposeful social practices of a *collaborative historical becoming*” (Stetsenko, 2008, p. 486).

Similar to Uprichard (2008) and Dreier (2008), Stetsenko argues that being cannot be disentangled from becoming. There is a claim of directionality in-built into participation. Her concept of transformative activist stance furthermore calls into mind that the researcher’s directionalities also become part of the practice. The academic researcher must render her_his research’s purposes as transparent as possible, for instance by explicitly adopting a transformative activist stance. Meanwhile, it remains unclear how the re-

⁸⁷ Parallels to the phrasing “view from above, from nowhere” (Haraway 1991, p. 195), which Schraube (2013) utilizes for criticizing a non-situated, externalizing view on psychological and technological phenomena, are quite obvious. Cf. also Annemarie Mol’s remarks on the “voyeuristic tradition” of the Western philosophical tradition (Mol, 2008; see Introduction).

⁸⁸ For a short introduction into CHAT’s theoretical and particularly methodological premises, cf. also Langemeyer & Nissen (2011).

researcher's directionalities are and can further be interwoven with the other participants' directionalities. Furthermore, the researcher can never adopt one single stance: S_he conducts his/her life in a world where stances or rather directionalities are always at stake and re-negotiated across sociomaterial practices, are contradictory and herewith conflictual. And even if the researcher was able to prioritize a transformative directionality and perfectly anticipate its outcome, is s_he supposed to hold on to it even once confronted with resistance from the other co-researchers? Is s_he to impose his/her (emancipatory-transformative) stance onto the others throughout the process of exploring problems of shared concern together? Would that not devastate the entire co-research venture?

As seen throughout the analyses of contradictory pedagogical-educational directionalities of Chapter 2, I was not merely able to enter the daycare practice and implement my more or less stabilized directionality, ergo my emancipatory co-research project. The directionality of my participation was interdependent of the other participants' directionalities, their tasks, agendas, premises-for-acting – interdependent of the others' conducts of everyday life in relation to the given sociomaterial arrangement of the practice. Stetsenko's suggestion to consider human living or development as an ongoing process of contributing to and transforming the social practices one participates in is highly relevant for highlighting the potentiality of this joint participation. But in order to better understand how we became interrelated through our participation through contribution, how we were collaborating on joint ventures albeit we all had a unique perspective on this collaboration, I need to return to and further specify the conduct of everyday life concept.

The conduct of everyday life as subject-scientific unity of analysis

Human beings act across locations, positions, stances. They interrelate their participations as contributions to a variety of practices, and they juggle the contradictory directionalities (demands, tasks, agendas) sociomaterialized in these contextual practices. Human beings contradict themselves, as they work on both upholding one practice while transforming another and vice versa. And they never do so alone, in isolation: Their actions are always already interdependent of others' actions, irrespective of whether one can make sense of the other or not, of whether it appears purposeful or not. Acknowledging that children are just as much conducting their everyday lives as adults makes it possible to analytically focus on how exactly children are engaging in ex-

panding their scope of (imaginable) possibilities for acting across contexts – what contradictions, struggles and conflicts they are confronted with from the perspective of their conduct of everyday life, for instance in relation to media artifacts, – and on how this may be both different and similar to how other participants (including the researcher) approach and eventually attempt to tackle these contradictions.

But what exactly does the conduct of everyday life concept add to the list of potentially processual concepts, ergo to participation and contribution in relation to Stetsenko's transformation? As written in Chapter 1, Holzkamp (1995b) refers to Voß (1991), who terms the conduct of everyday life as *arrangement of arrangements*, i.e. the individual's active efforts of integrating the various demands from different life spheres into a livable economy of individual resources. I would like to re-phrase this notion in subject-scientific, relational-processual terms: *Conducting everyday life implies arranging one's relations to the sociomaterial arrangements one is encountering on an everyday basis across the multiplicity of contextual practices one is engaged in*. Or in short: Conducting everyday life implies the constant transcontextual re-arranging of given sociomaterial arrangements so as to transform praxis. I consequently agree with Erik Axel that "praxis must be understood as *the continuous reproduction of actions that are mutually dependent and constitutive*. This means that an act cannot be understood as an entity in itself – rather, it is constituted in its context, including other acts. It also means that praxis cannot be characterized in advance as a totality, but appears in its reciprocally constituted units" (Axel, 2011, p. 57). These reciprocally constituted units or rather unities of praxis are, in my understanding, the single contributors' ongoing conducts of everyday life, which in turn unify interrelated single acts or actions.

It is important here to recall that one's relations to given sociomaterial arrangements are always changing, ongoing, and these relations are always dependent on all those who play into co-constituting these sociomaterial arrangements, the others. Conduct of everyday life therefore denotes a *fundamental collective process*, as Højholt & Kousholt (2009) coined it: Conducting one's everyday life is always an intersubjective process, as the conduct of everyday life of others inevitably plays into the constitution of (one's own relations to) the sociomaterial arrangements. Others – no matter whether children or adults, no matter whether near or far – are always already co-constitutive of one's own relations to the world, and thereby of the world itself. That does not mean, however, that one takes all these others and their conduct of everyday life actively or meaningfully into consideration when acting. Re-iterating another central quote from above (Chapter 1):

“A crucial feature of the scenes of conduct of everyday life portrayed here is that [...] different conducts of life always intersect or, more precisely, result in an *intersection area of more or less shared conducts of life*. [...] Hence, we have to note for later that conducts of life typically imply *interdependencies with other individuals’ conducts of life*. Accordingly, one cannot a priori distinguish the ‘I’ as the subject of the conduct of life from ‘others’ as part of ‘external conditions’ to be integrated into one’s own conduct of life (a mistake also made by the Munich group [...]). Instead, the question of whose conduct of life I address and whose I leave aside is simply a question of the standpoint adopted and the particular problem” (Holzkamp, 2013g, p. 272).

The first half of the quote, which underlines the interrelatedness or even interdependency of conducts of everyday life, and herewith of living a human life in the broadest sense, comes close to what Stetsenko (2008) called *collaborative historical becoming* – even though the collaboration is rather implicit in Holzkamp’s quote. This interdependency is also reflected in discussions held among feminist researchers, who have long been arguing that research is always political, never innocent, as the researcher is her_himself contributing to the research outcome as well as to the lives of the other participants beyond the research – the *researcher is always involved/involving*, as Neidel & Wulf-Andersen (2013) termed it. Also, both Stetsenko’s and Neidel & Wulf-Andersen’s contributions reflect that this involved becoming reaches across contexts. For Critical Psychology as science from the standpoint of the subject, this transcontextuality becomes – from my perspective – better graspable when relating it to the conduct of everyday life concept, while participating in, contributing to, and transforming may mistakenly be understood as referring to only one contextual practice – for instance the investigated daycare practice of a research project. When acknowledging that all participants-contributors are in the process of conducting their everyday lives, instead, the process of engaging in a specific contextual practice already points to the transcontextuality of this process, as everyday life does not only encompass living in-with-through one context, not only one practice, but *numerous contextual practices*.

The last sentence of Holzkamp’s quote, then, highlights the complexity of conducting one’s everyday life. It is an effort and challenge to decide whose conducts of everyday life – which all clearly transcend the participation in only one contextual practice – one addresses in a specific situation, and whose one leaves aside. This ‘decision’ is neither wholly rational nor conscious, but depends on one’s state of being-feeling, on experiences made, and on imagined future possibilities. But – and at this point Holzkamp goes beyond the relational ontologies of feminist research and arguably also of Stetsenko’s col-

laborative historical becoming – the single subject, on principal, is in a *possibility relationship* when addressing others’ conducts of everyday life. This is not to say that these other conducts do not play into the single subject’s conduct at all times. However, *which conducts of everyday life the single subject accentuates in relation to its premises, actively takes into consideration when engaging in an action, is primarily up to the single subject*. Consequently, I would say, does the conduct of everyday life concept expand and sharpen the notion of collaborative historical becoming, since in the latter, it remains unclear how the single subject’s engagements play into the collaborative process. The process of conducting one’s everyday life is both a necessary precondition as well as a limitation for collaborating in specific contextual practices: One cannot collaborate with everyone at all times, at least not in meaningful ways. Conducting one’s everyday life, the ongoing re-arranging of sociomaterial arrangements, can subsequently both promote and hinder a “*collaborative purposeful transformation of the world*” (Stetsenko, 2008, p. 471). The emphasis lies here on *purposeful*, as I agree that the collaborative transformation of the world is ongoing anyway. But in order to collaborate such that a collaboration has the chance of becoming purposeful-meaningful-sensible-sustainable for all participants-contributors in the first place, they must have already arranged other arrangements accordingly. On top, the collaboration’s purpose-fullness only shows through influencing the (entire) conduct of everyday life, the emancipatory re-arrangement of other living arrangements.

So what does this imply for the analysis of the situation described around Amanda’s hand doll performance? I already claimed above that many of us learned something meaningful that day, i.e. we learned something that expanded our understanding of our relations to the world, something that went beyond the taken-for-granted meaning structures. The situation expanded our scope of imaginable possibilities for acting not only in a similar situation, e.g. in the same contextual practice, but beyond. For instance, many of us participants may have learned that one can use the frame of an old computer screen to stage a theater play, and we may go home to dismantle the old screen we have at home in order to use the single parts for creating something different, together with the individuals we live our life with there, following a newly negotiated purpose. Eventually someone there, then, films that event and puts it on Youtube. And who knows, maybe this video goes viral and the whole computer-frame-as-theater event kicks off a new trend. But the transcontextuality of the learning process as part of conducting one’s everyday life is only one issue here.

The other point is that most of the participants-contributors present *decided to actively engage in and accentuate the collaboration* – at least Amanda, some of the children, the pedagogue in the background, and of course I myself. We all arranged our lives so that we were able to seize the possibility of being there and of becoming together, of transforming ourselves by transforming the shared world. In contrast, others were physically not present, they were in another location and might have only a posteriori accentuated the situation through verbalized accounts or re-relations, hence in terms of a completely different *sensorial* or *modally communicated experiencing*⁸⁹ – i.e., the collaborative becoming is then re-situated, enacting a completely different set of experiences, imaginations, modes, premises-for-acting, etc. Similarly, I myself could have not been present, thus not being able to learn from and write about it in the way I did. The same goes for the pedagogue and the children who were present, who more or less had the possibility to be somewhere else. Meanwhile, one can be physically present and not find the potential collaboration meaningful, not accentuate it – reflected in the notion that one is arranging one's *sociomaterial* arrangements. Being present is no guarantee for anyone actively relating to the ongoing sociomaterial interplay. It is the single subject who needs to take this step, who feels-thinks that the ongoing interplay may be valuable or rather meaningful to him/her. And this also applies to very young children: As Juhl (forthcoming) shows, toddlers may be transported from place to place, as they are hardly or not at all capable of bridging longer distances themselves. Nevertheless do they conduct their lives: They arrange the arrangements insofar, as they actively relate to a very different set of sociomaterial arrangements depending on the specific given circumstances.

Whether and how a single subject relates to a situation depends on a myriad of situated factors, and I will discuss a few of them throughout the next subchapter. But only by enacting the conduct of everyday life concept can we human beings situate the notion that shared practices implicate *virtualities* (sensu Kontopodis, 2012a), ergo possibilities for collaboratively and purposefully transforming them. Practices also implicate *sociomaterial limitations*, the most evident being our historical-developmental limitations of being subjects, including our bodily limitations of not being able to be physically present in more than one space-time nexus.⁹⁰ Our situatedness makes the shared onto-

⁸⁹ This term is my take on the Russian *perezzhivanie*, often translated as emotional experience or experiencing, which is central in Vygotsky's work (e.g., Ferholt, 2009; Kontopodis, 2012a, pp. 108f; Nikolai Veresov in Fleer, 2013). The term *multisensorial* is borrowed from Sarah Pink (2009), the term *multimodality* from Kress (2010); see below for further elaborations. I thank Stephan Sieland for pointing out these latter authors to me.

⁹⁰ As mentioned before, new media technologies suggest that human beings are able to bridge these

logical processes express themselves as unique – leaving us behind with the mystery of how we are nevertheless able to collaborate in meaningful and purposeful ways, no matter whether we position others and ourselves as children or adults.

Overall, the conduct of everyday life is a context-transcending and thus unifying concept – it unifies and thereby transcends other process-describing terms such as participating, contributing, transforming. It unifies and interrelates experiences and actions across time and space, across the various contexts a subject lived and lives its life in, always in relation to how it wants to live its life, in relation to its directionalities. But the main point is: *the single subject is the unifier and the relater*. The directionality of this unifying process, of conducting one's life, solely rests in trying to gain influence over those very same life conditions one is dependent of, which is purposefully only possible in collaboration with others. There is neither a good or a bad conduct of everyday life, it is neither quantifiable nor cumulative, and one cannot succeed or fail in conducting one's everyday life. The concept interrelates being and becoming by pinpointing an ontologically given process human beings engage in on an everyday basis, trying to act on-with-through both the possibilities and the limitations the participation across different contextual practices implicates. One important aspect of this, which is to occupy us more later, is to coordinate and potentially transform the contradictory and conflictual socio-materialized expectations one's situated participation in these contextual practices affords.

Epistemological differences: Situatedness and perspectivity

“We have different outlooks on what goes on based on the way we relate to each other. In each perspective there is truth, and each perspective is based on ongoing praxis” (Axel, 2003, p. 38).

In the last sub-chapter, I have sought to offer conceptual understandings about the interrelatedness of being through becoming together, an understanding which can potentially overcome the broadly accepted, ontological wedge jammed between children and adults. By adopting a subject-scientific

spatio-temporal limitations, but only at the cost of having to deal with a whole set of other (communicative and thus experiential) limitations afforded by media technologies as sociomaterial arrangements.

relational process ontology, which focuses on how human beings generally relate and engage with, in, and on the world, I showed how concepts such as participating in, contributing to, and transforming practice call for looking in front of all involved-involving participants, beyond age divides. Thereby, we (researchers as human beings) can come to shift the analytical focus towards how human beings collaboratively become through the process of mutually learning from each other in a shared contextual practice. All these processes are unified in the concept of conduct of everyday life, which not only acknowledges the transcontextuality and intersubjectivity of participating in, contributing to, and transforming practice, but also implicates that it is the single subject which unifies the multiplicity of transcontextual and intersubjective engagements. Human beings are thus ontologically speaking the same, in that they are all actively arranging given sociomaterial arrangements in subjectively meaningful ways – they are all conducting their everyday life. Acknowledging this is a first step towards establishing an emancipatory co-research with children as human beings.

Irrespective of this ontological symmetry across human beings does each and every subject experience a unique ontogenetical becoming. So while a single subject's ontology unifies her_him with all other subjects who participate together with him_her in the process of re-producing the world through praxis, one's epistemology diversifies this unity. By one's epistemology I mean one's ontogenetically unique theory of approaching world, which sets one's everyday analytical focus, one's premises-for-action in relation to one's epistemic interests and one's state of feeling-being, while conducting one's everyday life. No one shares the same perspective on the world, no one shares the exact same epistemology, the same truth or ideology. To conducting co-research in the sense of meaningfully relating to each other for mutual self-understanding and learning, then, this certainly creates challenges.

Meanwhile this diversity of epistemologies, of perspectives, which creates struggles and conflicts, is not merely an obstruction towards co-researching world. Quite the contrary: It is what subject-scientific co-research seeks, as it is the diversity of perspectives and the interrelating struggles and conflicts – the *developmental crises*, as Vygotsky (1998/1934) termed it – which are the point of departure for transforming practice, for emancipatory change. If it was not for the diversity of perspectives on the shared conditions-as-meanings, if everyone related to these conditions the same way, there would be no becoming anymore, no process, no development: If most saw the world in the exact same way, most would act on the world in the same way –

what more could an authoritarian regime wish for, than this uniformity and predictability of perspectives and directionalities?

But what exactly is it then which potentially separates human beings? What is it that the single subject conducting his/her everyday life needs to unite, thereby promoting contradictory directionalities inherent to one's conduct of life? What does it entail that one participates across manifold contextual practices?

This sub-chapter argues that participants always have a unique conduct of life in relation to always already shared sociomaterial arrangements, both because their bodies occupy different localities from different angles at different times with different others, and because they are positioned and positioning themselves differently, encounter different expectations, adopt different tasks and agendas: Overall, they imagine different possibilities for acting on conditions, have a different scope of imaginable possibilities for acting. Recalling the Qualitative Heuristics approach by Kleining & Witt (2001; cf. Chapter 2), it is precisely this multi-perspectivity, the coming-together of multiple possibilities for acting, that leads to discoveries. Children, who are ontologically the same as adults but participate in the sociomaterial arrangements under very different conditions, potentially foreground aspects of world other participants do not foreground (anymore). In order to understand why children can imagine possibilities for acting so differently from adults, the following pages will explain how variations of conditions play a role in co-constituting unique and still similar present-future perspectives on these conditions.

Locality and the scope of imaginable possibilities for acting

“Not until I accepted my own limitations was I free” (Malu Dreyer, as cited in *Die Zeit*, Jan. 10, 2013, p. 8; translation NAC).

The subject's relations to the world and its epistemology are limited through its situatedness. As Dreier (2008) emphasizes in his comprehensive definition of the participation concept (see above), “we think of persons as being situated in local contexts of social practice [...]. The embodied nature of personal being implies that persons always participate locally in social practice” (p. 30). From this, it follows that “[i]ndividuals have only a partial grip on and influence over a social practice and a partial ability and knowledge about it. [...] They configure their participation in social practice in a partial *and* particular way” (ibid.). Here Dreier foremost associates a subject's situatedness to its bodily limitations, as the body can be only in one place or locality at a specific

time. In its developmental trajectory, however, the person moves across local contexts of social practice, participates in a range of localities. It is up to the person to establish meaningful translocal connections between the various practices s_he participates in, to make the various participations across contexts “hang together” (e.g., *ibid.*, p. 43), as Dreier calls it. Nevertheless does the participation in a specific contextual practice remain partial, as there are numerous other participations which play into constituting the practice, participations which the single participant only has partial insight into, as they may take place while one is not locally present, but also because insight into the particularities of those participations is limited.

Also Holzkamp acknowledges the significance of locality for theorizing the situatedness of one’s conduct of everyday life in his 1996 article. In his text, he refers to the local limitedness of one’s participation in ‘scenes’ of conduct of everyday life. Such a ‘scene’ is synonymous to what I in this dissertation call a ‘situation’, i.e. a subjectively relevant or meaningful folding or nexus of space and time, in which the social and the material are specifically-uniquely interwoven. In the translated version of his article, Holzkamp’s take on locality reads like this:

“Each individual within a scene of conduct of everyday life is necessarily situated in a specific *locality*. In contrast to the stimulus world [of positivist experimental science], this locality is not to be conceptualized in terms of physical properties and their impact on individual behaviour, but in terms of concrete *factual-social arrangements* from the standpoint and perspective of the individual. [...]

The different parts of a particular location are, depending on each person’s perspective ‘in’ it and the general perceptual conditions, more or less clearly visible, and there are distinct external limits on its visibility or (as we call it) *horizon* according to the given factual-social arrangement. This horizon shifts as the individual moves” (Holzkamp, 2013g, p. 276).

A subject never actively relates to the whole world, even though it may be entangled or involved in the whole world’s ongoingly becoming relations. Its current perception and perspective depend on the concrete factual-social arrangements (or as I prefer: sociomaterial arrangements) that appear subjectively meaningful in the respective scene or situation. The specific locality is co-constitutive of what appears meaningful, and what appears meaningful changes once the subject changes locality. Hence the subject’s *horizon* also becomes limited through the subject’s current position occupied in space, its

place, in relation to the sociomaterial arrangements that co-constitute that place.

When thinking the conduct of everyday life processually, as I propose here, Holzkamp's concept of locality may appear rather static. A locality does not remain the same, it changes and is changed over time, and one's own relations to the locality and its sociomaterial arrangements may change anyway every moment. However, this is implied when Holzkamp writes about moving across localities: Movement through space always already implicates movement through time. Therefore the horizon concept – which is elsewhere little used by Holzkamp – does allow for a dynamic and processual understanding, both in spatial and temporal terms. The horizon is re-situated in relation to the given sociomaterial arrangements, which are themselves changing across time and space. As a consequence, new possibilities for acting emerge at practically every moment one re-relates to newly given circumstances, while others are shunned. He calls this process a *perspectival shift of horizon*: “As a rule, when something new appears, something else disappears – and this is what we mean when we speak of a perspectival shift of horizon” (Holzkamp, 2013g, p. 277).

Dreier's concept of *scope of possibilities* (e.g., Dreier, 2003, p. 15; Dreier, 2008, pp. 25ff) implicates the same processual dynamism as Holzkamp's *horizon*. Dreier draws especially on Holzkamp's *Foundations of Psychology* (1985) in his formulation of the concept. Here, Holzkamp wrote about the *dual possibility*, and reflected on why human beings – who are always situated in a context which is *perceived as a possibility space* – may not merely choose the emancipatory or generalized possibilities for acting, but also restrictive ones, those which may restrict their future possibilities for acting. I understand Dreier's expansion of the dual possibility to the scope of possibility as a concretization of the dual possibility's dialectical-categorical character, i.e. that in practice, human beings usually do not merely perceive two possibilities for acting, but a whole range or scope of possibilities for acting. This does not exclude the phenomenon that under specific circumstances, a subject may perceive only one possibility for acting as meaningful or relevant, thus enacting it as *premise-for-action*. But on principal, the subject perceives a *scope* of possibilities for acting.

For turning a possibility into a premise, then, the subject re-relates to past experiences and its current state of being-feeling (*Befindlichkeit*) so as to imagine future implications of one's potentially upcoming action. This consideration, which precedes every action but must neither be conscious nor in any way rational and is furthermore limited by one's horizon, leads me to re-

formulating Dreier's concept as *scope of imaginable possibilities for acting*. In short, what I perceive and can act on is situated by my first-person perspective on the world, which is in turn dependent on my past situated experiences across localities and positions, my current ongoingly re-situated state of being-feeling, and my future possibilities for acting. These cannot be thought of as separate entities, but constitute an interdependent processual unity (as Holzkamp underlines with the *dual perspectivity* concept; cf. Holzkamp, 2013f). My horizon shifts with every shift in my state of feeling-being, is temporally and spatially more closely linked to currently given sociomaterial arrangements. The scope of imaginable possibilities for acting implies that these spatio-temporal limitations are clearly transcended, as it encompasses not only the currently perceived possibilities for acting,⁹¹ but also those beyond one's given sociomaterial reach. It may un-consciously draw on experiences made long ago and point infinitely far into the future.

Similarly, when re-winding to the above example around the computer screen, Amanda engaged in the hand doll activity in relation to her experiences made in relation to other theatrical performances as well as to this specific audience as well as to the sociomaterial arrangement of the room the computer screen frame was standing in as well as to many other involvements across practices, thus developing a scope of imaginable possibilities for acting beyond the classical setup of audience and artist, of user and producer, of message recipient and bearer. Meanwhile, the pedagogue who decided to dismantle the screen, who asked some of the children to wash the plastic frame over a month later after I reminded her that this may be an option, and who then positioned the frame in the daycare's experiment room, may have already imagined at one of these points in time that a theatrical performance may emerge out of this constellation. Irrespective of whether she did or did not imagine this: The pedagogue sociomaterially co-constituted a possibility for other participants to relate to this plastic frame rather than throwing it out, thus co-constituting a different scope of imaginable possibilities for acting for herself as well as the other participants in the daycare. In my eyes, hence, this specification of Dreier's term transcends what Holzkamp termed one's horizon.

⁹¹ As for instance proposed by Barad (2003, 2007), Kontopodis (2012a), and Neidel & Wulf-Andersen (2013).

The danger of hypostatizing reciprocally co-constituted positionings

One's limited or situated insight into ongoing social practice or praxis is not only due to the physical locations or localities one comes to occupy, but according to Dreier, this is furthermore interrelated with the social positions⁹² one comes to assume in this locality or location:

“[E]very person participates in a context of action from his or her location. In practice these locations may constitute a set of prestructured, interrelated *positions*. Positions are a sub-category or specification of locations in the sense that we proceed from a quasi-physical definition of space and time to the level of a societally organized and institutionalized space and time and its implications for subjects' practice. A set of possible, more or less clearly interrelated positions may belong to an existing social context of action. To varying degrees, participants may select among them, neglect and change them” (Dreier, 2003, p. 15).

One's social position is thus an inseparable part of one's location. Positions depend on the societal and institutional organization of space and time. Picking up on the negotiations of positionings with the daycare participants (cf. Chapter 2), what primarily interests me here is to think about how these positions are reciprocally co-constituted and re-negotiated in a contextual practice. The way Dreier defines a position or a set of positions, these are already given, are societally prestructured. However, even though they are already created entities, they may be changed to varying degrees. But how do the participants make that work? In his 2008 monograph, Dreier offers a specifying example, in which he writes about a married couple's various positions or positionings:

“While their positions as father, mother, and spouse matter to them across different contexts, they matter differently and make them participate differently. A position does not make a person act in the same way in different contexts. The concept of position must be linked to the concept of location to situate a person's experiences, reasons, and participation in her trajectory in a structure of social practice. Then we may ask in which particular ways a person's positions as, say, parent, spouse, and client are played out in different contexts. Positions matter and are realized in situated ways, and persons have different stakes in them in different contexts. Their realizations do not vary arbitrarily as discursive theorizing would have us believe by playing

⁹² In Holzkamp's *Foundations of Psychology* (1985), the position – as part of the *Lebenslage*, the 'immediate' state of being-feeling – was a central category for pinpointing one's position in the capitalist production process based on division of labor. However, he increasingly refrained from using this term. This development can be retraced throughout his articles translated in Schraube & Osterkamp (2013).

down the significance of our situatedness in structures of social practice” (Dreier, 2008, p. 76).

So do positions like father, mother, spouse exist, irrespective of whether participants relate to these positions or not? They are being re-situated according to a respective participation in practice, Dreier notes, therefore there must be an enactment of these positions. But how do positions come to matter in practice, for one’s conduct of everyday life. If it was not for his last two sentences, I would speculate that he was thinking of positions as discursive positionings, but he rejects that possibility. However, discourse may be the connecting link to also think about how positions come to matter in sociomaterial ways, at least if we draw on Holzkamp’s understanding of discourse:

“When the term ‘discourse’ is used in such contexts [here: discussions on structural racism and individual action], this does not only refer to the way individuals or groups talk, but also to the ‘dominant’, officially authorized and enforced forms of language and readings, which always also convey and entail particular forms of practice. This interweavement of discourse and power has been analysed by Foucault in various institutional arrangements (psychiatry, prison, schools). The power aspect of discourses includes – as Foucault has emphasized – the power to define what language is authorized as appropriate and true for speaking about particular issues. By creating certain positive possibilities for speaking with respect to issues which perhaps could not have been verbalized until then, other possibilities of talking are concurrently excluded as inappropriate and untrue. Thus, for example, discourses about minorities, refugees, foreigners or other groups (their ‘nature’, social position, legal status, etc.) contain foregone conclusions on how, in what words and associations, they can be talked about, and hence also on what views, questions and problematizations run counter to the prevailing consensus i.e. cannot come up for discussion” (Holzkamp, 2013e, pp. 160-161).

Discourses about, for instance, social positions co-constitute spaces of possible interpretations, of talking about and thereby also thinking about them. Some possibilities are promoted, others are shunned from discussions. Therefore, in my understanding, they come to matter in the conduct of everyday life because *they co-constitute the scope of imaginable possibilities for acting*. Social positions as discursive positionings are part of the sociomaterial arrangements one comes to live one’s life through.

But the connotations related to a specific social position may change across the contextual practices one engages in, they are re-situated according to others’ conducts of everyday life and the sociomaterial arrangements co-constituting a contextual practice. This variation is potentially productive, as

it points to a relational diversity inherent to concepts, words, language, and other artifacts. They are played with, changed, re-situated by the respective participants and their specific (unique) interplay of overlapping conducts of everyday life. On principal, these social positions are constantly being re-negotiated, i.e. one is constantly being re-positioned, at least insofar as newly made experiences of participants may lead to a changed scope of re-imagining social positions. Furthermore, the ongoing re-positioning is a two-sided, reciprocal process: a social position is ascribed to a subject through other participants, but also enacted by oneself so as to draw on the scope of possibilities this ascribed positioning offers – it is *reflexive*, as Nissen (2012, p. 149) puts it. Therefore, I understand it as a reciprocally co-constituted access point to a more or less de-limited scope of imaginable possibilities for acting. For example, claiming that someone is a ‘child’ both expands and de-limits the child’s scope of possibilities. By saying: “he’s just a kid, he’s just playing,” one may foreclose that the child’s activity is societally productive. On the other hand, few expect a child to be societally productive in the sense of producing monetary value through wage labor, which in turn offers the child more possibilities for engaging in what it rather prefers to pursue.

The danger with positionings (as well as rules, identities,⁹³ conventions, actually any form of sociomaterial arrangement; see below) is that they may not be regarded as negotiable and changeable anymore at some point in time. This is where a positioning or any other term, category, concept becomes corruptible, potentially violent, as the denotations and connotations that persist, that are quantitatively and qualitatively most enforced and sustained, that constitute the strongest (but never immovable) interpretative boundaries, are the hegemonic ones (cf. Hall, 1980). As learned from Michel Foucault, power relations are always part of re-negotiating meanings and thereby positionings. But positionings should never turn into a seemingly immovable category, label, or classification, as expressed in Holzkamp’s often used term *hypostatization*. Holzkamp warned of the consequences of hypostatizing someone, by which “the level of intersubjective communication is tendentially transgressed” (Holzkamp, 2013c, p. 77). Often, a hypostatization of a subject can only be overcome when the contextual practice it has been stabilized and naturalized in-by-through loses significance for the hypostatized subject’s conduct of everyday life, e.g. when leaving a daycare for another daycare or school. During my participation in the daycare, the mother of Peter (cf. Chimirri, 2013a; see below) was hoping that the hypostatizing diagnosis ‘disa-

⁹³ Winther-Lindqvist (2009) shows how a group of kindergarten children constantly re-negotiate their rules for playing soccer, and thereby their social relations to oneself and each other, their identities.

bility in the social-emotional area' would be dropped with Peter's transition to school, since from her perspective, the diagnosis created more struggles for him than it was able to assist him via the extra care-time institutionally provided due to the diagnosis.

The process of reciprocal re-positioning is consequently part of conducting everyday life. And in order to think the conduct of everyday life – one's praxis – as mutually emancipating and-or collaboratively productive, positionings need to constantly be re-evaluated and re-negotiated in relation to their emancipatory potentiality, i.e. in relation to their capacity for expanding rather than de-limiting the development of all participants across contextual practices, of minimizing sociomaterial domination.

Epistemological difference as ontological given: Implications for co-research practice

“All children are equal – every child is unique” (Preissing & Heller, 2009, p. 52; translation NAC).

After the last sub-chapter, it should have emerged that *all human beings are equal – in that each one is unique*. This uniqueness, this diversity of perspectives, is not exclusive to children. Instead, this is an ontological commonality children share with all other human beings. And just like other human beings, children's sociomaterial processes of being-becoming are situated: Their unity of past experiences is limited by the localities and positionings they unconsciously related to, their current state of being-feeling is limited by the localities and positionings they are unconsciously relating to, and their scope of imaginable possibilities for acting is limited by this very situated experiential horizon. And just like other human beings, they thereby do not share the exact same set of meanings for the sociomaterially arranged conditions with others. They therefore need to explore and learn about an other's perspective so as to purposefully transform these conditions.

Nevertheless do participants in a detail of overall human praxis – a contextual practice like the daycare practice – share many conditions-as-meanings, and they may relate to these conditions-as-meanings in unique ways, but simultaneously also in very similar ways as (some of the) other participants. The set of meanings one accentuates for the shared conditions are never the same, but they are also not so different from those others accentuate – for instance through using a very similar variant of the same language arrangement. After

all, one has re-negotiated sets of meanings for conditions across one's entire course of life, and these past experiences are part of one's state of being-feeling, and of one's own perspective. One is able to communicate with others about shared experiences and conditions, one is able to collaborate on transforming these. However, misunderstandings, contrasts, struggles, conflicts, crises, are an inherent part of that collaboration, as one's own perspective on the conditions themselves, including one's own scope of imaginable possibilities for acting together, will always be different from the collaborator's.

In sum, that which may sound like a paradox – namely that the diversity of perspectives on the world is an ontological given across human beings – is consequently a crucial step towards approximating an understanding of human collaboration, of praxis. And this proposition carries the potential for thinking of research as part of praxis. It has far-reaching consequences for how we (social researchers) can conceptualize a collaboration with children. Acknowledging that every human being has a situated and thereby different perspective on the world, is subsequently conducting her_his life differently than any other human being, leads to the necessity of turning the analytical focus of a collaborative co-research project to how these differences, the diversity of perspectives, includes productive potentials for transforming mutually shared contextual practices through purposefully re-making sociomaterial arrangements for the benefit of all contributors of the specific practice and beyond, across contextual practices.

But how can we research-workers systematically work through this newly set analytical focus? How can we do research together with children who are understood as just another other? How do we ourselves relate to the processes of being-becoming, to the conduct of everyday life, of just another other? How are meanings re-negotiated, contradictory directionalities discussed and collaboratively transformed? The double role of sociomaterial arrangements, of conditions-as-meanings, has already been touched: They both render it possible to interrelate human beings' diverse perspectives, and they may simultaneously hypostatize understandings if perceived as immovable, unchangeable. But what exactly does this two-sidedness entail? What role do artifacts and sociomaterial arrangements more generally play in the sociomaterial interplay of conducts of everyday life?

Before comprising further situations I experienced together with the children throughout my daycare participation into the argument, some last conceptual specifications and expansions need be enacted. Starting out with the suggestion that analyzing children's perspectives like any other's first-person per-

spective presupposes overcoming the notion of participant *observation*, the upcoming sub-chapters aim at clarifying how human negotiations of establishing a common sense among participants always entail processes of multimodal sense-meaning-making. Temporary objectifications are inherent to those processes, and are specified as communicative artifacts. This specification helps in better grasping the precise two-sidedness of sociomaterial arrangements and the role they assume in collaboratively approximating sociomaterial self-understanding and thereby mutual transcontextual learning, both of which are regarded as explicitly conflictual processes.

What shall particularly surface throughout these upcoming pages is one's interdependency of others' conducts of everyday life, and why this ongoing interrelating must ineluctably be understood as process and never as product, never as an end in and for itself. Human beings constantly produce communicative artifacts so as to interrelate their conducts of everyday life with one another, artifacts and herewith sociomaterial arrangements which are necessarily both alienating and emancipating, whose relative stabilization is necessary for maintaining interrelations, thus co-creating seemingly immovable conditions for others. However, human beings never *are* conditions for others, but a *precondition* for expanding one's scope of imaginable possibilities for acting: Their praxis, their experiencing and imagining, always already escapes any attempt to fixate it with a meaning, a positioning, a hypostatization (child/adult). Theorizing trails behind the imaginative productivity of conducting everyday life, and this insight should be taken into account when investigating and purposefully transforming sociomaterial practice together.

Children's perspectives as first-person perspectives

The latest since the 1990s, it is a widely accepted fact among child development and childhood researchers that children must be conceptualized as agentive subjects in their own right (see above). From this ontological insight followed the epistemological and methodological challenge of doing research together *with* children rather than *on* children, and the question of how to productively approach children's understandings of the world, to grasp them as knowledgeable *informants* (Kampmann, 1998) or even *co-researchers* (Andenæs, 1991) – by putting the focus on *what* children think instead of on *how* they think (cf. Kampmann, 1998). The predominant aim was to gain insights into their needs for the adults to re-think and re-structure child-related sociomaterial arrangements, for instance educational institutions. In 1991, various researchers from the Norwegian Center for Child Research NOSEB (*Norsk*

center for barneforskning) published a collection of seminar papers which discussed the pros and cons of analytically working with the concept of *the child perspective* (*barneperspektivet*; cf. Norsk senter for barneforskning, 1991). The concept was to assist researchers and practitioners to think the world from the perspective of the child, mediated via data collected thanks to children's participation in research. Even though the papers point to very different conceptual understandings, most contributors agreed that the concept cannot be universalized, i.e. there cannot be *one* child perspective. Instead, the concept calls for a situated understanding of a child's life conditions and its respective perspective on these conditions.

The acknowledgment of a diversity of perspectives across children, depending on their concrete life circumstances, is more clearly represented in the term *children's perspective* (*børneperspektiv*; e.g., Kampmann, 1998) or *children's perspectives* (e.g., Hedegaard, Aronsson, Højholt & Skjær Ulvik, 2012).⁹⁴ Critical Psychology and particularly subject-scientific Practice Research has adopted and re-formulated this latter concept, as it specifically points to the situatedness of anyone's perspective and the ensuing multiplicity of perspectives on shared contextual practices, on dilemmas, contradictions, struggles. Contextual developmental psychologist Maja Røn Larsen, who investigates the difficulties children encounter in and across various institutionalized arrangements and implications for re-arranging these very same institutions, proposes to investigate these "difficulties through the perspectives of the children themselves" (p. 146). She continues:

"By this I do not mean that we, in some kind of existentialist way, 'enter' into the children's minds and observe the world through their eyes, but that children's perspectives are *analytic*, indicating that the research process takes the point of view *of* the child as a subject participating in social communities among other subjects instead of focusing *on* the child as an object [...]. In my observations, I have attended to the direction of children's focus and actions – what is their purpose and trajectory and what are they part of? These observations turn the analytic focus to the situations in which the children participate: The observations and analysis of phenomena situates them in social contexts. *Participation* becomes a key concept, since it gives us the possibility to understand that what are seen as problematic actions are often meaningful in relation to the social communities the children are part of [...]. Children orient themselves in relation to each other doing whatever they do as an integral part of the production of their shared life conditions" (pp. 146-147; cf.

⁹⁴ Sometimes, the terms are used interchangeably. However, as Sommer, Pramling Samuelsson & Hundeide (2010) argue, they point to different theoretical traditions and research fields. While the *child perspective* is mostly used in childhood sociology, *children's perspectives* is usually associated with (contextual) developmental psychology (one of many exceptions to that 'rule': Einarsdottir, Dockett & Perry, 2009).

also Højholt, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2012; Kousholt, 2008, 2011, 2012; Juhl, forthcoming).

As Røn Larsen indicates, the concept of children's perspectives is an analytical concept which directs the researcher's focus on children's actions, their participations in and across contexts for the co-constitution and (re-)production of shared contextual practices. The method she draws on for gaining insight into these participations is that of participant observation. As Jones & Somekh (2011) put it: "Participant observers gain unique insights into the behaviour and activities of those they observe because they participate in their activities and, to some extent are absorbed into the culture of the group" (p. 133). How far the observer, then, is 'absorbed into the group', becomes a 'member', can be formulated as an a priori choice of methods (as hinted at, e.g., in Schostak, 2010). From what I have experienced, both through my participation in the Berlin daycare and through discussions with other qualitative researchers, however, the degree of participation turns out to depend on a highly dynamic process: The 'degree of participation' is situatedly re-negotiated with every research participant (cf. Chapter 2).

Therefore one's concrete relations to the research participants cannot be broken down to a choice of method. For instance, in the computer-screen-frame-as-theater-stage situation, I could most of the time have been considered to be a by-sitter, observing and filming the interplay from a chair standing next to the 3-7 people audience. Nevertheless did the other participants relate to me and my camera. They looked at me, smiled, asked me questions, waited for my answers, involved me completely into the interplay. Meanwhile our interrelated participation could express itself in many different ways, the relationships were still ongoingly changing and consequently also the ways I was being re-positioned: Sometimes I might have been a bystander to some, sometimes an active contributor, sometimes interesting, sometimes dull and boring. But in the end, my participation never solely depended on what methodological stance I assumed, on what method choice I took beforehand. Such an understanding would completely neglect the others' actions, their active re-relating to me and my gear as meaningful possibilities and limitations for acting – it would neglect the "recognition that we owe our very being to the world we seek to know" (Ingold, 2013, p. 5).

Two points follow from that. First, there are no 'degrees of participation': As soon as I as researcher relate to whatever practice I investigate, I become a participant to that practice. This does not mean that all participants actively relate to me (and certainly not all the time): I have become part of their con-

ducts of everyday life, that is irreversible – I have contributed to their practice and transformed it. But as Holzkamp stated, which conducts of life are accentuated as premise for action depends on one's own current engagements. Another participant can re-model the sand castle I co-built without considering my individual contribution for even a millisecond. And second, a participant observation is never merely an observation, even though that may be what the researcher set out to do, even though s_he does not attempt to do anything else than observe: “Observers always have some kind of impact on the observed who, at worst, may become tense and have a strong sense of performing, even of being inspected” (Jones & Somekh, 2011, p. 133). These “negative effects” (ibid.) are – in my experience – prone to occur if the observer does not realize that after all, s_he is a human being, who walks and talks, smells and yells, listens and glistens, sneers and fears. S_he participates with all his/her humanness. *Observation is merely one of the many experiential modes in which one participates in human activity, but absolutely not the only one.* So what I would point-blank claim is that – for example – Røn Larsen did not merely observe and analyze, but what she did during her practice research investigation was to participate in, contribute to, and-or transform one of the many contextual practices she conducted her everyday life across – and based on the ontogenetical becoming we have shared so far as colleagues, I am certain that she would not disagree.

Although these last points raised may seem a bit detached from the discussion on children's perspectives, they are not. Because – as argued above – participation bridges societally constructed age thresholds, refers to an ontological commonality across human beings, children and adults. If participant observation can now be thought of as just another practice participation, suddenly the differentiating specification *children's* perspectives becomes irrelevant. The analytical concept requires re-formulation, as participation in practice is inter-dependent of all participants, irrespective of whether they are children or adults: Just as the conduct of everyday life, participation is a fundamental collective process (cf. Højholt & Kousholt, 2009) or rather a *fundamentally collaborative process*. And the participation in practice is inextricably intertwined with the various conducts of life and first-person perspectives of the participants. I assume this is the reason why, for instance, Dorte Kousholt (2011, 2012) – with reference to Dreier (2008) – puts her research focus on the *family conduct of life* as analytical unity. Participation in a family practice requires to make family life work, make various conducts of everyday life hang together for every participant in meaningful ways, and this in turn requires to relate the various first-person perspectives on the family practice to

each other and to the various perspectives across contextual practices that play into the family practice – perspectives on the sociomaterial, transcontextual interplay: “Peter’s difficulties are complex and interwoven with what goes on at school and between the boys. The different adults’ diverging perspectives are part of his life condition and developmental possibilities. This *multiplicity* of different perspectives and contradictions between different perspectives are matters that the mother in some way must *relate* to and deal with when she tries to *explore* what is at stake for her boy: why he sometimes is so angry and sad and how she can understand his physical symptoms” (Kousholt, 2012, p. 134). Ontologically-epistemologically and thus also analytically, it thus makes no sense to differentiate between children’s and adults’ perspectives, as they form the multiplicity of perspectives which must be understood in their interplay in order to transform this interplay. It is the variation of perspectives, the multitude of points of view, which enables participants to make discoveries (cf. Kleining & Witt, 2001; see Chapter 2), to learn from each other, to – purposefully – transform practice and thereby praxis.

All this presupposes that epistemological differences across human beings – their historical situatedness, their partial and particular relation to the world, their consequently unique first-person perspective, conduct of everyday life, and scope of imaginable possibilities for acting – are understood as ontological commonalities. *Of course, children’s perspectives on the world are different – but not only different from the adults’, but from all other perspectives as well.* Just as an adult’s perspective is different from another adult’s perspective, even though adults may have gone through many more re-negotiation processes across their ontogenetical becomings, and may therefore seem to have more diverse perspectives than children. On principal, though, is everyone unique, and everyone contributes to the ongoing human activity of re-building world differently and in valuable ways.⁹⁵

When it comes to investigating children’s perspectives, finally, I cannot find a good reason for why to think of this research collaboration in any other way than another research collaboration. If we social researchers want to investigate the interplay between children’s and adults’ perspectives and actions, why should we use distinct methods for the two age groups? Is it not possible

⁹⁵ This argument partly relates to a concept widely discussed in Disability Studies throughout recent years: *functional diversity* (e.g., Toboso, 2011). The basic ontological-epistemological premise is the same as in my argument: everyone contributes from his/her situated and limited being in the world to the world. However, some of the basic concepts this approach builds on – strongly drawing on Amartya Sen’s writings, – such as (human) functionings, would require a more elaborate discussion of conceptual similarities and differences, which I do not feel able to provide here in a satisfactory way.

to think of a methodology which offers methods that reflect the ontological commonalities across children and adults?

The biggest problem qualitative research with (especially very young) children faces is the children's supposedly limited vocabulary: we cannot really talk to them, make sense of their utterances, ask them about their perspective. This felt limitation is also deeply ingrained in the qualitative methods used by both Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and (predominantly German) Critical Psychology. Talking is so central to Holzkamp's notion of reason discourse and subsequently also of intersubjective communication, that it is hard to conceive of an alternative method to engaging in a conversation. And also Vygotsky – to me – tends to overemphasize the importance of talking for being able to communicate: “Direct communication between minds is impossible, not only physically but psychologically. Communication can be achieved only in a roundabout way. Thought must pass first through meanings and then through words” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 252).

Practice Research with its focus on processual-relational methods, especially participant observation which includes situated interviews, takes a huge step towards constituting a more encompassing process methodology. In order to develop this potential further, however, I propose to trash the idea that researchers can be participant *observers* (cf. also Mørck & Nissen, 2005). Instead, we are just as much participants in a commonly shared practice as all other participants are – including the children. This re-formulation calls for conceptualizing communication beyond conversation, beyond talking. It calls for a more general theory of communication, since research as participation transcends the de-limited realm of research as research: *Research becomes part of a researcher's conduct of everyday life, in relation to the conducts of everyday life the researcher's conduct of life is-becomes part of.* A researcher's research-related communication to others, consequently, is – again on principal – not any different than her_his communication with others in other everyday life contexts. And this communicative participation in the conducts of everyday life of others, does not only rely on words, on conversation. Here, Practice Research's focus on interrelated conducts of everyday life and (cooperative or collaborative) actions takes center stage, because talk is only *one* specific form of action, even though a very significant one. Nevertheless, as I will try to argue, there is a multiplicity of other actions that can also be considered communicative, and they transcend the realm of verbal language.

As temporary working hypothesis, thus, let us continue with this: We do not only come to understand the other through words, but through all senses, through all modes our perception offers us – through *sensory intersubjectivity*

(e.g., Pink, 2009) including *intercorporeality* (e.g., Csordas, 2008). We come to approximate an understanding of the other through participating in our sociomaterial interplay, verbal and non-verbal. Meanings do not necessarily have to be turned into words so as to become meaningful to the other, for instance to the researcher. We also come to approximate an understanding of the other through re-relating his/her actions to the sociomaterial arrangements s/he is seeking to transform, together with ourselves. We come to approximate an understanding of the other by re-relating his/her actions to our partial and particular perspective on how the other is conducting her/his everyday life, through sharing praxis. For child research, this implies that it is neither enough to ‘seriously’ listen to children, nor to merely observe them: We come to experience them through their actions, in relation to others, the sociomaterial arrangements – and in relation to us, the researchers.

Collective sense-meaning-making as multimodal communicative collaboration

“Knowledge cannot be simply passed on; it must be produced by those who pick it up, those who learn. Learning is self-change, is a research and arrangement process” (Haug, 2003, p. 258; translation NAC).

Picking up this communication-beyond-conversation working hypothesis as further thread, I wish to offer some deliberations on how we can come to conceive of communication as encompassing the relational ensemble of actions which one can – from one’s limited, partial and particular first-person perspective – potentially relate to. In the context of this dissertation, I cannot and therefore will not offer a general theoretical framework for how to do this. Instead I will attempt to cross-analyze and meaningfully weave together conceptual suggestions from different fields on how to approximate a more holistic approach *towards a symmetrical communication across age thresholds*.

Morten Nissen’s book entitled *Subjectivity of Participation* (2012) will serve as background and analytical focus for this process. Rooted in a reconstructionist critique of German-Scandinavian Critical Psychology, he re-formulates Practice Research as *collective prototyping*: “a joint venture between academic-theoretical and practical projects of radical change, where the modeling of the singular practice as prototypical is already contentious in the field itself” (p. 233). Throughout my reading, I particularly focus on how such a collective as joint venture constitutes itself through *collective sense-meaning-making*, as Nissen argues that the ongoing re-negotiation of *common sense* as ideology lies at the

heart of this co-constitution. It is the temporary, fleeting common sense of the collective which may be jointly objectified as – i.e. modeled into – an ideal artifact, for instance a prototypical practice which other projects may meaningfully relate to, temporarily accept and-or contest. My premise-reason-relation to discuss this aspect is connected to my belief that Nissen’s conceptualizations are valuable for understanding why and how a historically situated collective constitutes itself through co-constituting common sense, and this in turn is pivotal for further exploring the contradictoriness of conducting one’s everyday life. Meanwhile, I wish to expand on his argument so as to consider collective intra-actions or interactions of individual participants beyond the uttered word, beyond sense-meaning as primarily related to collectively shared narratives – so as to pinpoint the significance of what Nissen (2012) terms *social habits* (pp. 146ff) in the communicative process. The expansion builds on a specification of sense-meaning-making as *multisensorial* or rather *multimodal semiotic work* (e.g., Kress, 2010), implying that sense-meaning-making collaborations reach across the multimodally experienced-imagined multilayeredness of various everyday life practices – including the materials these practices are mediated by. The term *mode* refers to the situated history of the use of (socio)material artifacts, and into how artifact-related past sense-meaning-making shapes present and future sense-meaning-making:

“Within social semiotics, a mode, its organizing principles and resources, is understood as an outcome of the cultural shaping of a material. The resources come to display regularities through the ways in which people use them. In other words in a specific context (time and place) modes are shaped by the daily social interaction of people. It is these that multimodal analysts call *modes*” (Jewitt, 2009a, p. 21).

Nissen draws on writings from the Soviet Cultural-Historical School, on both Vygotsky (1986) and Leontyev (1979), so as to discuss and ultimately reformulate the analytical differentiation between sense and meaning. He writes:

“If an activity is meaningful, it makes sense. [...] But the two words, ‘meaning’ and ‘sense,’ do not quite convey the same thing, although they are often confused with one another. In a first approximation, we might say that while meaning mediates the unit through the endless texture of praxis, sense resituates praxis in some finite unit” (Nissen, 2012, p. 113).

For Nissen, this unit (of praxis) is the collective.⁹⁶ While sense and meaning are dialectically intertwined, each term points to a different directionality: *meaning* from praxis or ongoing human activity towards the situated unit of praxis, the collective; *sense* from the unit of praxis towards praxis.⁹⁷ He refers to an example from Vygotsky, in which someone makes sense of a book by contextualizing it: “it may be that a book can be contextualized in ‘all the works of the author,’ but this is clearly only one of many possible contexts. [...] [*S*]ense situates meaning in a practical, semiotic context” (p. 115). The collective, according to Nissen, “situates meaning by making sense of it” (p. 116), situates it in the specific context of action, including the context’s historical becoming.

Meaning, then, emerges through the objectification of activity, of praxis. With reference to Marx and Leontyev, he writes:

“Marx’s main point about alienation is to do with *production: how activity turns into object* – torn apart into wages and products. And precisely in this transformation lies Leontiev’s [*sic*] good reason to attribute meaning/sense (or the lack of it) to both: it is through the object that subjective activity participates in praxis. We might say that *it is the objectivity of the activity which provides it with meaning, just as it is its subjectivity which makes its sense.*

This does not, however, imply a separation of objective meaning from subjective sense. [...] It is with the individualization of sense that meaning is left sanctified, in fact alienated, as the neutral objectivity or structure [...]. Without it, sense and meaning can be emancipated as a truly dialectical pair, to designate the ongoing exchange and transformation, as well as the mutual constitution, of the unlimited praxis and its somehow (as context, occasion, situation, etc.) circumscribed unit” (ibid.).

The ethical-political impetus of Nissen’s argument, as illustrated in this quote, emerges when drawing on Marx’s alienation concept. Sense-making and meaning-making are dialectically intertwined. But since sense-making is un-

⁹⁶ While to Nissen (2012), the unit of praxis he refers to is the collective (rather than, e.g., the community; cf. pp. 46ff), I will later pick up my earlier formulation of the conduct of everyday life as that which unifies participations across practices, thereby becoming the unit(y) of praxis. Throughout the following elaborations, I propose that what Nissen writes about sense-meaning (and further down about artifacts) in relation to the collective as unit of praxis, is highly meaningful also for thinking this unit(y) of praxis in terms of the conduct of everyday life.

⁹⁷ Michalis Kontopodis also operates with Vygotsky’s differentiation between meaning and sense. However, he emphasizes that this points to a person-centered approach, while Nissen relates it to collective processes. In a footnote, he writes: “Vygotsky differentiates between *meaning*, that is, the active process of signifying something in interpersonal communication as to make oneself understood and *personal sensemaking*, that is, the transformative process of internalization or interiorization, of those meanings so that they make sense for oneself. This differentiation is central for a person-centered approach” (Kontopodis 2012a, p. 110). A more detailed discussion of this eventual contradiction cannot be offered here.

derstood as something personal throughout (most) specific societal formations or arrangements, since sense is being individualized, its productive dialectical twin, meaning, is left sanctified, understood as (immovable) objective structures. Human beings are alienated from praxis, the ongoing activity of co-constituting and thereby transforming the world, because they are alienated from the production of meaning, ergo the objectification of one's (or here: the collectives') relations to the world. Nissen defines the collective as (a precarious and finite) unit of praxis, as both the subject and the referent of sense-meaning, so as to emphasize the dialectical relationship its single participants may be alienated from. The collective has the potential to – in my words – objectify the dialectics of the sense-meaning pair through collaborative sense-meaning-making.⁹⁸

The dialectical relationship between sense and meaning furthermore implicates that subjects as partakers in collectives need to (partially and particularly) subject themselves to already existing power relations, to the respective collective's ideology or *common sense*, so as to be able to participate in and collaborate through the collective. The single participant is therefore constituted in and simultaneously co-constituting this common sense as ideology:

“The understanding we have built so far of the collective in and for itself, as constituted in and constituting ideology, already implies a subjectivity of participation. [...] The main point, as already stated, is to use the concept of participation to mediate the two sides of subjectivity [...]: on the one hand, subjectivity as ‘thick’ agency – that is, not merely as a kind of cause of events in the world, but complete with intentionality and reasons with which we can identify – and on the other hand, subjectivity as constituted in power, in subjection and objectification” (Nissen, 2012, p. 194).

For Nissen, ideology and power are inherent to participation: One cannot escape power and ideology, it is part of the ways society at large has socio-materially organized or pre-arranged praxis and thereby possibilities for participation. In the process of objectifying as sense-meaning-making, one cannot not draw on already existing understandings and sociomaterial arrangements (cf. also Marx, 2007) – sense is dialectically intertwined with meaning. This is the only way one can make oneself communicable, understood, heard – *can act communicatively* by drawing on ideologically drenched and power-laden signs and symbols while simultaneously seeking to transform

⁹⁸ This comes very close to what Kontopodis (2012a) termed *virtual development*, development which can only be promoted through collective action.

them in moments of struggles and crises, potentially by oneself, virtually in collaboration (cf. Kontopodis, 2012a).

Following this train of conceptualization, the re-production of common sense as ideology is inescapable when communicating with others. In order to make oneself understood by others, one needs to draw on pre-arranged sets of objectified meanings, on already given sociomaterial arrangements, as I have called them throughout this text (cf. particularly Chapter 2). The specific sociomaterial arrangements one has to relate to, make sense of, depend on one's situated relation to the world across the collectives one participates in, through the other participants of the contextual practices one conducts one's everyday life with-in-through. So as to conduct one's everyday life and thereby contribute to praxis, one cannot not only avoid relating to the already established common sense of a collective, to the collective's ideology: *One actually also cannot avoid re-producing it, stabilizing it, in order to make oneself understood* – and consequently in order to meaningfully interrelate others' conducts of everyday life to one's own conduct of everyday life. Education as socialization could – from my perspective – thus be re-termed as ideologization: The child is supposed to appropriate from others how to make itself heard and understood, to learn how it can establish common sense with the adults, for instance through acquiring the language skills necessary for explaining its actions and intentions – and thereby for contributing to the collective practice, for potentially transforming it. This may seem paradoxical, but actually it's 'pure' dialectics: Subjection to common sense is a necessary means for collaboration, for the purposeful co-constitution and transformation of praxis via one's participation in contextual practices. This implies that *every collaborative transformation* – no matter how emancipatory it may appear – *inescapably re-produces elements of common sense*, of a collective's hegemonic ideology (cf. also Hall, 1996).

However, as Nissen (2012, p. 194; see above) emphasizes, participation is not merely subjection. When conceptualizing the subject as participating across collectives, the subjection to common sense through the process of socialization-ideologization merely serves the purpose of creating the fundamental communicative ability to collectively objectify meaning, ergo *to transform praxis through collective prototyping*. This objectification of meaning implies the collaborative creation of meanings-as-prototypical-artifacts, which transcend the situated common sense of the collective: “the collective situates meaning by making sense of it; and meaning transcends the collective and returns to constitute it as meaningful” (p. 175). The transformed meaning a collective produces through collaborative externalization-objectification transcends the es-

tablished common sense, and this in turn constitutes the collective as meaningful, as contributing to the transformation of existing sociomaterial arrangements and thereby praxis.

What remains to be clarified for my argument is: How does this connect to a single subject's conduct of everyday life? How do we need to modify the above said when exchanging Nissen's collective as unit of praxis for our conduct of everyday life as unity of praxis? As mentioned above, Nissen claims that human beings are alienated from the process of transforming meaning and consequently from contributing to praxis. Therefore, it needs to be acknowledged that subjects transform praxis through collective participation, and that this is the basis for prototyping alternative artifacts-practices-arrangements. To him, the individualization of sense is what blocks the way towards this realization. His suggestion is to focus on the collective production of meaning through prototyping, on the 'outward-directed' objectification of sense-meaning and its productive-transformative implications for the collective's common sense. I agree to assuming this focus, and at the same time I miss assuming a second focus, a focus on the productive-transformative potentials of the 'inward-directed' objectification of sense-meaning – of how *one's own common sense across collectives may also change through the imagined transformation of praxis*, thus transforming one's conduct of everyday life so as to potentially be able to actually transform a contextual practice through collective participation. After all, it is the single subject that needs to interrelate change in one contextual practice to the other contextual practices it lives in-with-through, and to re-arrange participations accordingly.

Dialectical objectification processes as multimodally experienced-imagined communication

“Human beings make their own history, but they do not make it as they please under self-selected circumstances, but under immediate and already existing, given and bequeathed circumstances” (Marx, 2007, p. 9; translation NAC).

For the sake of building productive conceptual bridges, sense-meaning objectifications can also be understood as (fleeting) entities. That offers me the possibility to link Nissen's arguments to Michalis Kontopodis, who – with reference to philosopher Bruno Latour – considers time as fabricated through action: “Bruno Latour (2005b) introduces the notion of the *'fabrication of times'* to speak about the *relational* or *mediated* creation of various temporalities. This

implies that entities do not exist *in* time, but time is *made of* entities that are put together in a particular constellation during action” (Kontopodis, 2012a, p. 92). In order to make this link work, it needs to be taken into account that for Latour, these entities also encompass non-human ones. I myself, however, consider human action the only action we (as human beings) can *productively* take into consideration, as we are bound to our situated ontogenetical becoming, our human perspectivity, in our actions – our very own perspective as humans is the only one we *can* assume. With this preconception in mind, time and any other sociomaterial arrangement can be considered as consisting of a network of objectifications constituted by *communicative actions* (see below). Communicative actions build on already given, pre-arranged objectifications-entities – they uphold given sociomaterial arrangements-ideologies we come to live through-with-by. However, human beings are constantly re-arranging and thus transforming these entities through the *process* of sense-meaning-making, are *imagining them to be different*. For instance, imagination transgresses irreversible time: “If I had not broken with my friend, we could now collaborate on painting together”. One can imagine experienced ‘facts’ as objectified entities to be different, while one’s imagination itself draws on these objectified experience-artifacts so as to re-relate them to the current state of being-feeling and one’s scope of possibilities for future (communicative) action. So far, however, imagination may be misunderstood as nothing more than the creative re-arrangement of already given and stabilized sense-objectifications. But that would ignore the fact that imagination may simultaneously transcend these given objectifications due to re-relating to them in other-than-for-oneself-usual (or non-naturalized) ways – hence my addition to Dreier’s term: scope of *imaginable* possibilities for acting (communicatively). How is it possible, then, that a subject’s imagination may transcend its objectifying sense-meaning-making through experiencing, thus transforming its conduct of everyday life? First of all, I wish to argue that *experiencing is a multimodally mediated, ongoing process* – and it is *dialectically interrelated with the process of multimodal imagining*. Experiencing-imagining may therefore transcend single sense-meaning-objectifications – at least when considering an objectification as a sense-meaning-product rather than a sense-meaning-process. Second, this transcendence includes acknowledging the metaphysics of the other, i.e. the dilemma that the developing other is always already a step further in its multimodal experiencing and imagining than what oneself can objectify as sense-meaning-product, an experience-imagination-*snapshot-artifact*.⁹⁹ One can

⁹⁹ I propose to call artifacts, whose underlying relational time-space processes including contradictory directionalities sociomaterialized through them do not afford an accentuation in practice, whose be-

never come to fully comprehend the other and his/her first-person perspective, no matter how much one shares one another's ontogenetical becoming (e.g., Schraube, 2012). In that sense, *the other's conduct of everyday life is never graspable as object*, always escapes an objectification-as-product. And the same holds true for one's own conduct of everyday life as well as the contradictory directionalities it enacts. It is therefore concepts about human being-becoming must ineluctably be understood as process-describing concepts, and cannot serve the aim of objectifying oneself or the other as product.¹⁰⁰

Nissen seeks to resolve dilemma of the other always escaping one's understanding by re-formulating the subject as collective, including the (necessary) objectification of the other as object/product through recognition so as to be able to collaboratively act.¹⁰¹ My take on it would be to *understand objectification more as process and less as product* – particularly when relating-to other human beings. Otherwise we risk to lose sight of the interrelated processuality, the complexity and complicatedness of conducting one's everyday life in relation to others' conducts of everyday life – and of the (un-conscious) multimodality of experiencing, imagining, and acting. *Conducting one's everyday life transcends meta-participation*, which is Nissen's term for describing the interrelatedness of participations across various collectives (e.g., Nissen, 2012, p. 122). Just to be clear: I do not disagree with Nissen's emphasis of the collective as necessary for re-establishing a dialectical understanding of sense-meaning in everyday life. But: a subject participates in multiple collectives, and needs to processually make sense-meaning across these various participations in order to make them hang together in subjectively meaningful ways. It is the ensemble of one's relations to others in-and the world one has a partial and particular perspective on, and theorizing this ensemble as meta-participation across collectives may fall short of acknowledging the processual diversity of participations and contributions in collectives which are constantly changing. To me,

coming is in that sense supposed to be taken-for-granted, *snapshot-artifacts* or merely *snapshots*. It may appear temporarily irrelevant to the 'users' where the artifact came from and how it got to matter in a specific situation for what reasons, i.e., who produced them why and where and under which historical circumstances are questions not posed or accentuated as relevant. They just are, given, for one to re-relate to in the here and now, as experiential-imaginary snapshot of a space-time nexus. The relational processual quality of the sociomaterial ensemble of a situation tends to be bracketed out.

¹⁰⁰ This impossibility of objectifying the other as product, then, interrelates the other's process of conducting everyday life to one's own conduct of everyday life: One's own imaginativeness escapes one's possibilities for objectifying the process of imagining and thereby of becoming as product, just like the other's becoming escapes one's objectification efforts. Conducting everyday life is – just like praxis – always a step ahead of the process of objectifying and theorizing about it.

¹⁰¹ Nissen (2012) builds on Hegel's concept of recognition in order to link the participant to the collective, i.e. the participant recognizes her_himself through recognizing the other participants recognizing her_him. Or as he puts it: "I relate to you; this already presupposes a we; I relate to us, just as we relate to me; we relate to You, as part of a larger Us, but also as a plurality of participants, etc." (p. 172).

therefore, the unit of praxis, or rather that which unifies praxis, which needs to act on-through-with the sense-meaning-making, is the subject conducting its everyday life. *It is the subject that needs to ultimately make sense-meaning of a collective in order to communicatively act through the multiple collectives it engages in.* This processuality of communicatively acting across perspectives becomes more apparent or graspable when turning the *analytical* focus from the collective externalizing objectification of collective products/objects/prototypes to the *internalizing objectification process* – without re-instating the sense-meaning-making-dualism.

So let us shortly focus on the question of: how is *sense-making* productive? Is it at all, and if it is productive, who is the subject and the referent of this objectification? My next working hypothesis would be that we (human beings living in, through, and with capitalistically arranged life conditions) are not only alienated from the meaning-making process and its prototypical outcomes – as Nissen writes, – but also from the productivity of the sense-making process. As mentioned, objectification is also part of one's sense-making: One's past relations to the world are constantly being re-objectified as experiences in the scope of imaginable possibilities for acting, expressed in one's current state of *feeling-being* (sensu *Befindlichkeit*). The subject's 'inward' objectification processes, meanwhile, are always already connected to potential 'outward' processes – they cannot not be, as the 'inward' objectification always takes place in relation to the world, or rather to ongoing sociomaterial activity, praxis. In his sub-chapter on objects, objectivity, and objectification, Nissen focuses on the 'outward' objectification process, or externalization, while simultaneously pointing to its 'inward' directionality:

“Praxis, in general, is a process of production: subjective activity is externalized and realized as objects – or to be more precise, as the intended transformation of objects. Further, objects of practice are not isolated but mediated through endless networks of meaning. Attending to process and mediation allows us to regard the mediated objects of practice not only as its object- focus, that is, that thing which is faced and dealt with (German: ‘Gegenstand,’ standing opposed), but also in the light of their mutual presupposition, interrelations, and intended transformation, that is, as *means and ends*. As we saw, although this process of objectification is what reproduces us and our ways of living, it is also inherently creative; the transformed objects transcend our intentions and form conditions for new practices and new ways of living” (Nissen, 2012, pp. 116-117).

As Nissen proposes, the 'outward' objectification at once creates both new means *and* ends which also have an 'inward effect': It re-produces us and our

ways of living. It offers us new possibilities as well as limitations for relating to the world, it is inherently creative. In my understanding, this points to the situatedness of the subject (for Nissen the “radical situatedness of the collective”; cf. pp. 119ff), its partial and particular way of relating to these new possibilities and limitations – which, as I suggest, in turn relates to the ‘inward’ directionality of the objectification process: Not all newly produced possibilities and limitations can be turned into a subject’s (or a collective’s) sense-meaning, also because one stands opposed to this objectified artifact in a *possibility relationship* – one can, but must not accentuate the outcome of one’s own contribution to a collective objectification. Hence, *objectified meaning transcends – in simple terms – the ‘sense-maker’*. As mentioned: “the collective situates meaning by making sense of it; and meaning transcends the collective and returns to constitute it as meaningful” (Nissen, 2012, p. 175).

The objectified meaning transcends the intended purpose of those who co-constituted it, ergo the collective – there always remains a *meaning surplus*, there are always contradictory directionalities and herewith *unintended* or *unanticipated consequences* emerging in relation to artifacts (cf. Winner, 1986; Nye, 2007). An objectified meaning – an artifact as part of a sociomaterial arrangement – therefore always affords further development, as it offers new challenges to its creator. When relating this two-sidedness to a single subject’s conduct of everyday life, it becomes necessary to not only consider how ‘outward-directed’ sense-meaning may transcend its creator, but also how ‘inward-directed’ sense-meaning may do so – i.e., understand how *past sense-meaning-making objectified as snapshot-experience-imagination may transcend its creator’s current state of being-feeling in the process of re-experiencing-imagining that process*. From my perspective, this presupposes comprehending one’s relation to any objectification not in terms of relating to a single objectified snapshot-experience-imagination. Instead, *one’s relation to any artifact must be understood as a processual relating-to a multimodally experienced-imagined set of interrelated sense-meanings*, a relating-to a past or currently experienced-imagined *situation* or *scene* of conducting everyday life.

Consequently conducting one’s everyday life is the process of continuously re-relating to one’s own multimodally experienced-imagined past situations in relation to multimodally experienced-imagined future situations via one’s multimodally experienced-imagined state of feeling-being, as anchored in one’s current situation (locality and positioning) – a process which always already encompasses others’ conducts of everyday life, which is *always already communicative*. Sense-meaning-making as the process of objectifying interrelated objectifications thus serves the process of communicating, of mediating

past-present-future relations to others. This understanding builds on Nissen's proposition that objectifications-as-objects serve the purpose of exchange. He continues the above passage as follows:

“These general points about objectification do not yet take into account that praxis is differentiated into collectives. If we do this, the contradiction between the endless mediatedness of object-meanings and the differentiation of praxis into units – collectives – engenders the simple fact of *exchange*. Objects are exchanged between collectives, and it is this exchange which realizes mediation, and thus, the meaningfulness of the productive transformations in the collective” (Nissen, 2012, p. 117).

Again I suggest that it is possible to exchange Nissen's collective with a single subject, on the premise that the subject is conducting its everyday life in an inextricable relation to others and-in the world, constantly exchanging objectifications across (imagined and actualized) collective participations or collaborations. If it was praxis that would be differentiated into conducts of everyday life, then objectifications would be exchanged between subjects conducting their everyday life. These subjects or participants would thereby realize the mediation and meaningfulness of productive (imagined and actualized) transformations across conducts of everyday life.

Exchanging the collective subject with the single subject collectively conducting its everyday life as both subject and referent of the two-sided objectification process requires, however, that the objectification processes are to be understood in multimodally mediated, truly processual ways. The *exchange of objectification processes, situations or scenes* rather than the exchange of objectification products among and across subjects is what I would call the *process of communication*. This communication consists of communicative actions, which to me are precisely the single moments of objectification exchange, with one another, through oneself. In order to elaborate on the processuality of objectification, I draw on an article of sociologist Hubert Knoblauch's, in which he – building on a different ontological-epistemological foundation than me – lays out his understanding of objectivation (which is synonymous to objectification):

“In the social constructivism of Berger and Luckmann, objectivation designates not only ‘signs’ as part of an institutionalized structure of signs, it also includes any other ‘meaningful’ object of action as well as those fleeting processes which are labeled bodily expression. Its ambiguity is increased since, semantically, ‘objectivation’ designates both a process and an objectivated product (i.e., ‘material carriers’). To define what is meant by this, consider that objectivation may, firstly, refer to the material carriers of meanings, that

is, signs and symbols, which are structured in terms of systems (as, e.g., language). Secondly, although Mead, Schutz [*sic*] or Habermas seem to consider language as the paradigmatic form of communicative objectivation, Baudrillard (1968) and Lury (1996) make it quite clear that ‘things’ are materializations of meaning. Cars, flavors (like wine), or tactile perceptions (as in, e.g., communication with and between the deaf-blind) can be considered as objectifications and can even be conventionalized and coded into sign-systems or related to linguistic systematizations. Objectivations of this kind also include clothes, tattoos and architecture [...]. Thirdly, while semiotics and structuralism stressed the role of the material character of objectifications as the grounds for their ‘structure,’ pragmatism stressed the fact that objectivation is embedded in action. This becomes particularly evident in bodily expressions, that is, if objectifications are nothing but temporally fleeting forms of communicative action” (Knoblauch, 2013, pp. 302-303).

Even though it would be expedient, I can – in this artifact called dissertation – neither offer a detailed discussion of Knoblauch’s approach entitled *Communicative Constructivism*, nor of his manifold theoretical inspirations.¹⁰² Instead I will re-situate this passage in the already made argument (and cling to the notion of objectification rather than objectivation), as I find it helpful for conceptualizing communicative actions in their multimodally interrelated processuality, thus further concretizing the multimodally experienced-imagined processuality of the conduct of everyday life.

According to Knoblauch, *objectification designates both a process and a product*, ergo a material carrier or an artifact as well as its becoming. The material carrier objectifies the process of objectification, which, in my understanding, could be seen as a process of situated (experienced-imagined) re-negotiations through communicative actions in relation to objectified sense-meaning-relations (experience-imagination-snapshots). Some of these objectifications are verbalizable, because they are objectified re-arrangements of an already existing, widely accepted sociomaterial arrangement (rather than system) of objectified signs and symbols, for instance a language. The ‘thing’, the material carrier or artifact, then, also embodies a process, which may, however, not be verbalizable, as *its multimodal qualities may transcend an already established and*

¹⁰² Nevertheless, I wish to point to the fact that Berger & Luckmann (1966), whose framework Knoblauch seeks to expand, also built on Marx’ notion of externalization – just as Nissen does. Knoblauch (2013) writes: "In linking it [their theoretical argument] to Marx’ materialistic notion of externalization and Durkheim’s positivist idea of society as an ‘objective’ fact, they [Berger & Luckmann] argued that, not only does the social world result from social action due to the fact that these actions infer meaning from the world while simultaneously affecting the world [...], but they concluded that reality *in toto* is being constructed socially" (p. 300). As Axel (2011) notes, however, Berger & Luckmann’s position is "based on the idea that everything relevant is known when we act" (p. 76), thus disregarding the situatedness of living and the ensuing partiality or limitedness of knowing – a situatedness which is also foundational for Nissen’s approach.

conventionalized sociomaterial arrangement. This may be a taste, a sound, a tactile perception – as well as a car or clothes, as Knoblauch writes.

Now to the relevance of this: If we consider that objectifications, material carriers, designate a process, then its outcome, an (eventually very fleeting) objectified experience-imagination-snapshot, is both an impression and simultaneously an expression of the process of making sense-meaning. However, *this does not mean that the impression-expression of this process, the objectified experience-imagination-snapshot, can ever fully designate the complexity and-or complicatedness of the objectification process*, of experiencing-imagining the objectification. Let me exemplify that by drawing on Knoblauch's suggestion to imagine drinking a sip of wine.

So do imagine to drink a sip of red wine. The unfolding taste of the wine, throughout the process of drinking it, already transcends the objectified objectification of this experience, that which is communicable to oneself as well as another – even if you have made many experiences of tasting wine and of verbalizing this experience before, for example if you are a sommelier (which I am most certainly not). Nevertheless is it an objectification process and therefore a communicative action, in the sense that the process tells us something so as to tell others about it: We establish a potentially verbalizable relation to this sip of wine. Meanwhile the multimodality of the experience transcends our own ability to put words to it, to objectify it as experience-artifact, to communicate it to others – the taste-experience transcends the words “it tastes fruity and fresh”. The process of experiencing the taste is a situation we can potentially learn from and (imaginatively) re-relate to the next time we drink another sip, or the next time we talk about drinking wine with a friend, or see a bottle of (red) wine, or whatever premise-reason-relation there may be to re-relate to and thereby accentuate it. The reason for re-relating to an experience transcends my possibility to put words to it, as the premise-reason-relation is based on yet another highly complex, multimodally experienced-imagined sense-meaning-process. For instance if you have a friend who told you he always liked to drink this specific wine, even though he never did drink it together with you, and the friend has a serious accident, suddenly you may imaginatively re-relate to the process of tasting this wine in all its multimodal complexity, including what you may have seen, heard, etc. throughout that process,¹⁰³ during the subjectively framed situation of drinking wine; even though the re-relation is always already re-situated, re-imagining the experienced situation may now transcend the initially objecti-

¹⁰³ Bezemer & Jewitt (2010) refer to visual, gestural, written, spoken, three-dimensional representations or rather objectifications.

fied experience-artifact ("tastes fruity and fresh"). This *re-relating already has a different directionality than the initial experience*, thus giving it another sense-meaning. This novel sense-meaning may be collaboratively productive, for instance because you suddenly feel like visiting your friend in the hospital to find out whether and how you may need to re-relate to his/her forcibly changed conduct of everyday life in order to keep on collaborating together on a potentially transformative project, thus engaging in the process of purposefully changing your own conduct of life so as to uphold and foster your collaboration.

Collaborative sociomaterial self-understanding as prototyping

Irrespective of all ontogenetical commonalities across human beings, and irrespective of the necessity to establish common sense with one another, to partially and particularly adopt other participants' epistemologies-ideologies, there remains an unfathomable repertoire of subjectively unique and thereby diverse ways of relating to the world. The diversity of perspectives and conducts of everyday life, as developed throughout unique, multimodally mediated experiences-imaginings, ongoingly re-arranged according to one's unique state of being-feeling and one's scope of imaginable possibilities for acting, offers an inexhaustible source of learning possibilities, possibilities to transcend one's own common sense, one's own truth, one's own understanding of one's own and other human relations to the world. Learning through relating to a multiplicity of perspectives is what Holzkamp's concept of social self-understanding is about (cf. Chapter 2). In this sub-chapter, I attempt to specify his concept as *collaborative sociomaterial self-understanding*, a concept which is supposed to clarify how *both children and adults can come to mutually learn from each other* (cf. Højholt & Koussholt, 2011) through partly and partially sharing each other's ontogenetical becoming via communicatively collaborating in and across diverse contextual practices.

Before, though, let me recapitulate and sum up what follows from the above conceptual expansion of dialectical objectification as multimodally experienced-imagined sense-meaning-processes or communication. This encapsulates the further foundation for re-considering how children and adults are able to sociomaterially and multimodally communicate across age thresholds:

1. Objectification as a multimodally experienced-imagined process (sense-meaning-making) can be communicatively transcended both by a single subject as well as a collective, as it goes beyond the initial

purpose or directionality of the (collective) objectification of sense-meaning (objectified as a potentially process-concealing experience-imagination-snapshot, a term, word, re-presentation, classification, standard, norm, social positioning, location, prototype, model, an artifact – or rather a sociomaterially mediated ensemble of objectified sense-meaning-relations, a sociomaterial arrangement).

2. Even if imagined ‘only’ by a single subject, re-relating to an experienced objectification-as-process may lead to unexpected, potentially productive discoveries. This is due to the multimodal experience-imagination process transcending that which one actively relates to and which one objectifies-as-product or snapshot through a specific situation, which is merely a detail of the overall process. Ergo, one’s partial and particular perspective on a (transformed) sociomaterial arrangement may radically change when re-relating to it, the re-imagination process thus transcending the initial sense-meaning-making (including temporal relations; cf. Kontopodis, 2012a).
3. This imaginative potentiality enables human living, but only if materially carried to another human being, both consciously and unconsciously, through all possible modes of human impression-expression – as *virtuality*, in my understanding the imaginative potentiality for meaningful, purposeful, transcontextual collaboration. Praxis collaboration is exclusive to human beings, as we share common ontological preconditions for relating to the world through an enormous variety of modes (modes are not to be mistaken for the ‘five senses’, i.e. a deaf-blind may not dispose of the possibility to relate to the world through two potential sense channels, and this may hinder collaboration; but it does not make collaboration impossible, since collective communicative multimodal action transcends the physicality of the single senses).
4. Learning through sharing or mutually participating in one another’s ontogenetical becoming encompasses all modes of experiencing-imagining, cannot be broken down to shared objectifications-as-products, but to the relational ensemble of the experience-imagination process.
5. One’s scope of imaginable possibilities for acting both builds on and may simultaneously virtually transcend common sense or ideology. However, one’s attempt to communicatively objectify an imagination process may fail if the single communicative steps are not commonsensical to any other, cannot at all connect to another’s scope of

imaginable possibilities for acting, another's epistemological-ideological framework or sociomaterial arrangement of communicative snapshots.

6. One's action is also communicative to oneself, to one's scope of imaginable possibilities for acting. However, if one cannot relate something subjectively meaningful to someone else's common sense, if it does not become meaningful to someone else, then it turns meaningless to oneself – as that which one communicatively acts for is praxis, is collaboration.
7. One can relate to the product of an objectification process, created through a collaborative process, without taking this former collaborative process into consideration – one's partial and particular relation to the product is alienated from the complexity of the process sociomaterialized in a product. Nevertheless can the dynamics of relationships (e.g., through others using this object in 'novel' or unexpected ways; or through the dynamics of the weather, the light, etc. changing one's impression-expression of the product) promote learning by challenging one's own common sense, whereby one can re-relate to different aspects of the process.
8. Nevertheless, the more modes to relate to these sociomaterialized processes openly address and transparently take into consideration, the more learning virtualities they carry – learning implies sharing processes, for instance one another's ontogenetical becoming, in all its virtual communicative modes.

Communication and social self-understanding thus always build on the interrelation of that which unites and that which separates, ergo establishing a collective common sense and challenging this common sense through sociomaterial communicative interplay, thereby potentially establishing a modally transformed collective common sense or ideology. Rules for a soccer game among daycare children, for instance, emerge out of a pre-negotiated and pre-arranged set of sense-meaning-relations, of sociomaterial arrangements, thereby establishing a commonsensical basis from which to re-negotiate the rules according to a multitude of other situated arrangements (e.g., social positionings; cf. Winther-Lindqvist, 2009).

Objectifications-as-products, potentially process-concealing artifacts such as classifications-standards-models-rules, should therefore be understood as fleeting entities that serve no other purpose than to productively re-relate to them throughout one's collectively co-constituted process of conducting everyday life, thereby potentially transforming them. They are indeed *prototypes*

(Nissen, 2009, 2012), i.e. they offer a situated, partial and particular (modally de-limited) understanding of a multimodally mediated collaborative process, one that is multimodally re-situated by anyone re-relating to this prototype. Prototypes therefore always carry a meaning surplus and herewith contradictory directionalities, may lead to unintended consequences, are in this sense *multistable* (e.g., Hasse, 2008, 2013; Rosenberger, 2011), as the multimodality of experiencing, imagining, conducting one's everyday life cannot be fully re-presented in-by-through such a prototype. An approximation of a multimodal understanding of collaboration can only be achieved by actually collaborating with others, by constantly re-creating prototypes that still do not cover the multimodality of experiencing-imagining-living (and never will cover it).

Holzkamp (2013g; see Chapter 1) acknowledges the centrality of approximating an understanding of each other's relations to the world, specifically relations to shared life conditions the participants problematize, so as to collaboratively change them through sociomaterial communicative actions. *This is achieved by establishing an intersubjective frame of understanding, a reason discourse, in which the other communication partner is exactly not objectified-as-product, in which the other is not hypostatized.* The danger of hypostatizing the other is inherent to communication sensu sense-meaning-making, to establishing common sense through (verbalizable) objectifications. For instance, when two 'pedagogues' talk about helping a 'child' who they believe has 'difficulties in reading', this objectification 'child' may be meaningful when trying to find out which participant they are referring to, to establish common sense for common action. However, in case they do not only temporarily adhere to that classification-positioning, do not understand it as a temporary prototype, the classification may hypostatize the child as product rather than as a human being who is ontogenetically becoming. Then the child easily turns into the object of intervention rather than being acknowledged as a co-participant who needs to actively contribute to transforming the relational ensemble as collaborator in order to learn (e.g., in terms of a beyond-interventionist, joint developmental project; cf. Sutter, 2011). It is the child itself who needs to integrate the process of reading into its premises-reasons-relations, into its conduct of everyday life. What pedagogical-educational professionals can do, rather, is to multimodally communicate to the child (via available sociomaterial arrangements, as well as as other collaboration partners accentuated by the child) how meaningful reading can be in order to actively contribute to human communicative collaborations across contextual practices, ergo to praxis. And thereby, the pedagogues would learn about meaningfully communicating purpose-

fullness to a child, which may serve as re-relatable prototype – not as fix solution – the next time they face a similar ‘problem’ or rather struggle.¹⁰⁴

Basically, then, mutually approximating a social self-understanding implies an exploration of perspectives and of premises-reasons-relations in relation to a problematic sociomaterial arrangement – it is a dialogic re-negotiation process of mutually approximating each other’s premises-reasons-relations so as to make it possible to collaboratively act. This process is prone to lead to discoveries for each participant along the way, to transcending common senses by re-negotiating a transformed common sense, or in Holzkamp’s terms: establishing a *meta-subjective mode of understanding* (Holzkamp 2013g; see Chapter 1). However, this transformed common sense again only serves as prototype for the next action, the next collaboration, for the next discovery, for the next transformation.

The reason I wish to specify social self-understanding as *mutual sociomaterial self-understanding* is that it needs to encompass 1) the multimodality of ‘understanding’, or rather of communicating, experiencing, imagining, living, all of which are *mediated through material carriers* (sensu Knoblauch, 2013; see above); and 2) the dialectics of sense-meaning-making through prototypical objectification processes as both impressing and expressing processes, ergo that communication as impression not only leads to changing one’s scope of imaginable possibilities for acting, but that communicative acting must also result in a collaborative sociomaterial expression in order to impress itself as meaningful in the scope of imaginable possibilities for acting.

So as to underline the sociomaterial interrelatedness of understanding and communicating, this most crucially implies thinking communication beyond sense-meaning-relations which are verbalizable as objectification-products. If we understand communication as process, as actively interweaving conducts of everyday life and herewith ontogenetical becomings, then it may become obvious how we not only learn from talking to others, but from communicatively acting (or semiotically working) with others in multimodal ways. Adults who share a big part of their ontogenetical becoming with young children implicitly and explicitly ‘know’ that they can ‘read’ a child’s communicative actions, materially ‘carried’ from the child to the adult (and vice versa) via gestural, aural, tactile, olfactory, auditive, etc. processes in relation to commonly

¹⁰⁴ I choose the ‘child’ as example also because it is an objectification widely accepted as commonsensical across an enormous amount of collectives. The more widely accepted such an objectification is, naturally, the more complicated it is for the participants to understand this objectification as prototype rather than as a fixated, immovable entity or sociomaterial arrangement. It is similarly difficult to challenge and transform objectifications related to collectives arranged through their ‘belonging’ to a nation state, for instance the objectification ‘German’.

shared sociomaterial arrangements. Such communicative, inherently mutual processes are always already related to objectification processes, are always anchored in a commonly shared sociomaterial arrangement. Both communication partners (Holzkamp's *research dyad*) processually explore each other's communicative actions and thereby try to approximate the other's past-present-future premises-reasons-relations. This is also the process child researchers engage in, who decide to actively participate in – rather than merely observe – a shared practice with the child, consequently interweaving ontogenetical becomings, i.e. their conduct of everyday life with the conduct of everyday life of the child.

Such an interweaving may lead to prototyping a temporary mutual sociomaterial self-understanding even with very young children, as for instance explorative qualitative child research with toddlers has shown (e.g., Johansen, 2007; Juhl, forthcoming). Extending social self-understanding beyond the dialogic exchange of verbalizable objectifications furthermore transgresses most child-related theorizing, in which very young children are regarded as too young to be understood as co-researchers or rather collaborators. In sum, child researchers (as well as any other adults) learn from children by learning with children, as *mutual apprentices* (e.g., Pontecorvo, Fasulo & Sterponi, 2001; cf. also Hedegaard, Aronsson, Højholt & Skjær Ulvik, 2012), in a process of interdependent learners learning (Lave, 1996), through multimodal communicative experiencing-imagining. Collaborative understanding as sociomaterial self-understanding is thus a mutual and abductive process – it is a re-situated re-negotiation of approximating each other's understanding in relation to a shared directionality or *concrete utopia* (Nissen, 2012, pp. 165ff; with reference to Bloch, 1967; cf. also Marvakis, 2007), towards jointly developing-transforming commonly shared sociomaterial arrangements. *Generalizations* or mutually shared expressions across collaborators or contributors to practice are temporary, flexible, but necessary prototypes for continuing the re-situated negotiation process.

Mutual transcontextual learning through conflictual collaboration across collectives

“Also for the single individual, learning processes [...] are not characterized by a general peaceful growth of world knowledge [...]. Instead, they are rather experienced as insecurity, as inquietude, as doubt, as a breach, precisely as upheaval, as the transformation of habit, of validities, of the taken-for-certain-and-right, as something novel, which also forces oneself to live differ-

ently, as such a transformation of one's way of living, as contradiction" (Haug, 2003, p. 259; translation NAC).

Transformative collaboration through mutual sociomaterial self-understanding may evoke notions of a harmonious community of learners, who are engaged in understanding each other's relations to jointly shared sociomaterial arrangements so as to productively change them. Throughout various fields and especially in relation to children's learning with-through media technologies, similar notions enjoy increasing popularity. This view, for instance, resonates in the concept *Connected learning* (Ito, Gutiérrez, Livingstone, Penuel, Rhodes, Salen, Schor, Sefton-Green & Watkins, 2013), which "advocates for broadened access to learning that is *socially embedded, interest-driven, and oriented toward educational, economic, or political opportunity*" and "is realized when a young person is able to pursue a personal interest or passion with the support of friends and caring adults, and is in turn able to link this learning and interest to academic achievement, career success or civic engagement" (ibid., p. 4). Connected learning and similar concepts which highlight community-based approaches to learning thus tend to highlight the harmonious aspects of learning together.

On principal, there is nothing wrong with learning together and enjoying it. However, the harmonious aspect of collaborative learning merely covers one side of the learning-through-participating-coin. As can be seen in the above citation from Ito et al. (2013), the directionality of the described learning process points towards learning so as to optimally integrate oneself and one's conduct of everyday life into pre-formulated sociomaterial arrangements, which are re-presented in notions such as academic achievement, career success and civic engagement. With reference to Nissen (2012; see above) one might say that these learners would be alienated from objectification as meaning-making, from co-producing praxis through the transformation of those very same sociomaterial arrangements whose ideological common sense they are supposed to take for granted. Community-based learning theories therefore run the risk of overtly focusing on individualized sense-making, on learning to live in accordance with the ideology the collectives they participate in take for granted (collectives ranging from fellow global or nation state inhabitants to a dyad) – while the other participants exclusively serve the purpose of supporting the individualized learner in effectively and efficiently subjecting itself to common sense. What is missing in such an understanding of learning is *learning for the sake of questioning and collectively developing common sense through endless re-negotiations of this very same common sense*, ergo actualizing one's

“subjectivity as ‘thick’ agency” (Nissen, 2012, p. 194). What is missing are the dialectics of sense-meaning-making, and consequently the mutuality of learning processes (cf. also Højholt & Kousholt, 2011).

Since everyone’s perspective and conduct of everyday life are founded upon a unique ontogenetical becoming, everyone constitutes unique epistemological relations to the world, everyone constitutes an own truth, an own multimodally experienced-imagined common sense, an own repertoire of prototypes, an own scope of imaginable possibilities for acting. Nevertheless does collaboration through communicative actions rely on partially and particularly subjecting oneself to the common sense of the collectives one lives in-by-through (including the material carriers and modes they prefer to communicate by). Making sense-meaning across collectives – which may suggest highly differing ideologies – implies not only re-negotiating one’s own ideology or common sense, but simultaneously implies *communicatively acting on co-transforming the ideologies of the manifold collectives one participates in-with-through*.

Participating in a diversity of collectives and thereby having the opportunity to relate to and contrast different perspectives thus becomes of crucial importance: Learning requires perspectival and thereby ideological *challenges*, which may take on the form of misunderstandings, struggles, conflicts, (personal) crises. One needs to learn about existing sociomaterialized ideologies, their possibilities and limitations, so as to compare them, let them question one’s own ideologically varying conduct of everyday life which seeks to integrate multiple collective participations. As subject-scientific feminist psychologist Frigga Haug (2003, pp. 73ff) writes, order is connected to disorder, insight and reflection to bafflement. Comparison, then, is a learning arrangement which should lead to *productive inquietude*, ergo “experiencing that one owns a knowledge which is eerie” (p. 85; translation NAC). She abducts this conclusion through her reading of German poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht’s dialogic piece *Refugee conversations*, in which Brecht addresses the question of how one comes to learn through experience while using the method of comparison as learning arrangement for the reader. Haug reads Brecht’s piece as a learning arrangement, a – in my words – sociomaterial arrangement which reflects and twiddles with a reader’s learning-as-process in relation to the de-limitations the linearity of a dialogic text implicates. Brecht plays the different elements of experience-established (objectified) common sense off by contrasting well-known and taken-for-granted ideological elements which are constitutive of everyday conversations with other well-known and taken-for-granted ideological elements which support and contra-

dict the earlier elements. The aim is to lead experience-objectified-as-common-sense into crisis.

Ole Dreier (2009a) similarly underlines that human beings learn through comparing-contrasting experiences:

“Human beings learn by having chances to compare similarities and differences. When children experience other things being done; things being done in other ways; other relationships where other things are possible or allowed, children gather these experiences and may reflect on the similarities and differences between them. They also compare the experiences with their usual or ordinary life. Furthermore, visits to similar places, such as to the homes of friends, or talks with friends about their respective lives at home, grant opportunities for learning by comparing” (p. 179).

What I learn here is that the participation in manifold collectives *across contexts* is what possibilitates the comparison of similarities and differences, due to the diversity of localities, social positionings, and common senses these various participations imply. This is what the *process of learning* is: *Expanding the scope of imaginable possibilities for acting across collectives, transcontextually, so as to collaboratively transform shared sense-meaning and thereby the pre-arranged and jointly shared sociomaterial arrangements the various collectives take for granted.* The related renegotiation process implies living through *struggles*, as the already-established sense-meaning which rendered collaboration possible in the first place is contested, thus disquieting and shaking the foundation of this very same collaboration. What a transformed sense-meaning would lead to, may look like, may possibilitate and simultaneously de-limit, is a site for (ideological) struggle, a clash of contrasting perspectives, which in themselves are incoherent and heterogeneous due to the diversity of ideologies one’s participation across different collectives affords.

The sociologically inspired Cultural Studies tradition situates this struggle primarily in between collectives, terms culture itself the site of struggle: “Culture is the site of the struggle to define how life is lived and experienced, a struggle carried out in the discursive forms available to us” (Grossberg, 1996, p. 158). The struggle takes place through – in the broadest sense – communicative actions, and is additionally de-limited by the discursive forms (or objectification-products and communicative modes) we are able to and find meaningful to exchange. But, as argued above, communication is two-directional, does not only point to objectified meaning, to externalization, but also to sense. Already Vygotsky made clear that such a (cultural) struggle is simultaneously a developmental struggle for oneself – it may lead to personal crises:

“For Vygotsky, development does not unfold in a linear way, driven by natural forces – as in many other developmental theories – but is a struggle, a *drama*. In drama, a person experiences a crisis that is caused by at least two contradictory forces that collide [...]. Transcending boundaries between the individual and the social, Vygotsky perceived personal crises as reflecting broader societal, economic, political and ethical contradictions” (Kontopodis, 2012a, p. 12).

As Kontopodis underlines with Vygotsky, the struggles one faces while conducting everyday life are never purely personal, but are always intertwined with broader contradictions. In my understanding, culture is the mediating site between the subject and the (societally, economically, politically, ethically, etc.) sociomaterially arranged world. Hence, one’s own struggle is always related to cultural struggles – one’s own relations to the world reflect the sociomaterially arranged contradictions human history has co-constituted. However, culture is unfathomably heterogeneous, as it consists of an innumerable amount of human interrelations to each other through world, of an uncountable amount of collectives. This means that one can never participate in fighting out all cultural struggles: One can never resolve all contradictions oneself is confronted with, but needs to take into account one’s situatedness, ergo one’s limited scope of imaginable possibilities for purposefully collaborating with those collectives one is participating in. The collaboration may then lead to collaborating with other collectives, and so on. However, one is never able to collaborate with everyone, one is situated historically, in space and time, as well as ideologically: Collaboration requires a re-negotiation of shared ideology, and this may lead to clashing with the ideology of another collective, thus leading to yet another struggle.

To me, then, *the conduct of everyday life is the site of struggle*. In order to expand agency, one needs to meaningfully-purposefully communicate-collaborate with those one’s conduct of everyday life depends on. Meanwhile maintaining¹⁰⁵ these collaborations requires changing the very same sociomaterial arrangements the collaboration depended on, otherwise there is no development of the relationship, no mutual learning. If there is no development, the collaboration may cease, as it is not impressed-expressed through transformation. One may then try to leave this collaboration behind, but the past collaborators’ conducts of everyday life are still inextricably intertwined with

¹⁰⁵ Maintaining-transforming is termed differently throughout different subject-scientific approaches, implying (slightly) different analytical foci. Højholt (2011), for instance, suggests the term "structuring" (p. 82). Kousholt (2011) underlines that "making everyday life work" also relies on re-producing the "structure, stability, and ordinariness of everyday life" (p. 104). Axel (2011) writes about rules, habituations, and institutionalizations "that we maintain and change" (p. 77).

one's own conduct of everyday life, which may in turn result in irresolvable contradictions (or dilemmas) when attempting to ignore them.

As psychologist Erik Axel points out, conflict will always be inherent to cooperation/collaboration,¹⁰⁶ as the process of collaboratively acting through communication always transcend what we can explicitly share about it, our knowledge:

“[E]verybody knows something, nobody knows everything, and neither do we know everything relevant together; therefore, it is constantly possible that we disagree. We must make do with what we know in the situation in which we find ourselves, and the connections in which we move appear to us as contradictions, changing with our location and our previous experience. We have a perspective on things from our location in our connectedness with others, we depend on each other, we are involved in common causes – moving while we move them, and at the same time, our limited insight make us understand things partially: We are in *conflictual cooperation*” (Axel, 2011, pp. 76-77; cf. also Axel, 2003, 2009).

One's own as well as a collective's situatedness and the limited communicative means-ends-objectifications to impress-express oneself always trail behind praxis and thereby the process of conducting everyday life, also because these objectifications will never be able to fixate the processes, will never be able to fully re-present them with shareable impressions-expressions. Therefore, there will always be contradictions, there will always be conflict. The point is to understand these as productive rather than destructive, to understand struggles across perspectives, contexts, collectives as possibilities rather than limitations. The point is to understand that in order to mutually learn from each other, we need both collaboration *and* conflict – ergo *conflictual collaboration*.¹⁰⁷ What is needed is an *inherently sociomaterial understanding of conducting one's everyday life through conflictual and thereby developing collaboration across diverse collectives and thereby contexts*, where a collective's (and thus one's own) common sense challenges another collective's (and thus one's own) common sense, but where this challenge is taken as productive element of upholding the collective through changing it. This is the dialectics of singularity and multitude, particularity and generality, of continuity and change, of repetition and differ-

¹⁰⁶ As I consider human cooperation to be productive, to always consist of creative work, I prefer the term collaboration over cooperation. Cf. also the rejection of the term coordination in Tolman (1994, p. 103; see Chapter 1), which he describes as standing in opposition to a fundamentally shared subjectivity.

¹⁰⁷ That conflict and struggles are inherent to learning is an argument widely accepted across Practice Researchers. For instance, Holland & Lave (2001) write about *conflictual participation*, Kousholt about the family as a *conflictual community* (e.g., 2011). The same holds true for many learning approaches based on the Cultural-Historical School (e.g., Hedegaard, 2012; Kontopodis, 2012a).

ence, of stability and flexibility, of equality and diversity, of envelopment and development, sense and meaning, of the already-existing and the novel, of the cyclical and the virtual life, of collaboration and conflict – unified in the process of conducting one’s everyday life through others, always already in relation to the jointly shared communicative, cultural, or rather sociomaterial arrangements we perceive as world.

Exemplary situation analyses: Jointly struggling with the sociomaterial

Up to this point of the chapter, I admit to have taken quite a theoretical detour: The concrete co-research with the children was almost exclusively represented through the description offered around the monitor-theater interplay. However, neither the hitherto discussions and analyses from Chapter 1 nor from this chapter would have emerged as more generally meaningful to delve into without experiencing-imagining my participation in the relational ensemble of the daycare practice. In order to be able to move the analyses further throughout the rest of this dissertation, the conceptual-analytical framework first afforded tweaking and tuning, specification and clarification. Particularly after experiencing the struggles I faced when entering the daycare as discussed in Chapter 2, I first aimed at having a better grasp on how I as research-worker was involved-involving others’ conducts of everyday life through the understandings and directionalities I sought to integrate into the ongoing institutional practice’s and its more or less maintained common sense. Why was I struggling, and was it counterproductive that I was struggling? Why did I encounter resistance when attempting to engage in a potentially emancipatory co-research with children? Whose resistance was I encountering and why? Was it primarily the children’s, the pedagogues’, the parents’? And how is it that I, irrespective of this resistance, learned so much about the perspectives on media artifacts both in this specific practice and beyond? How could I explain the process grounding my discoveries? How could I explain my changing relating-to others and the sociomaterial arrangements in terms of its interplay? How was my conduct of everyday life interweaving with the others’ conducts of everyday life, particularly the children’s?

It became necessary for me to further explore how sociomaterial interplay unfolds as interrelated and interdependent conducts of everyday life through sociomaterial arrangements. What complicated this epistemic process was

that *arrangements play a double role* here: They both render learning through exchanging communicative artifacts possible and may simultaneously shut down the mutuality of this process if not understood as both product and process. Generally speaking are sociomaterial arrangements a *condicio sine qua non* for human communicating and co-constitute the contradictory directionalities which are in play in such an interplay, as they are inherent to the processes of experiencing and imagining. Meanwhile, one's conduct of everyday life as past-present-future relating-to sociomaterial arrangements, of common sense as ideology, may transcend the snapshot quality of a given artifact in its relational ensemble, by considering artifacts as processual and thereby changeable. One's own process of experiencing-imagining thus transcends the objectifications it necessitates: One's own theorizing always trails behind one's praxis. It is therefore so crucial for human existence to acknowledge the other's conduct of everyday life as process (albeit temporarily objectified), as the other co-constitutes the praxis one is oneself part of and makes it possible to experience-imagine different ways of relating-to and acting through praxis.

Adults as 'full citizens' assume the societal role of primarily establishing, maintaining and transforming the conditions for children. These sociomaterial arrangements may render it almost impossible for children's alternative accentuations of given arrangements and herewith directionalities of action to be taken seriously, to be considered a meaningful contribution towards purposefully co-transforming world. The legislative and pedagogical-educational arrangements discussed in Chapter 2 point to this problem, particularly by suggesting how to deal with a child-as-not-yet-fully-recognized-citizen while concealing what the child ought to become through the sociomaterial arrangements established and maintained: an employed adult contributing to upholding the current societal arrangement through its labor force and citizenship. A pedagogical-educational practice's contradictoriness of directionalities is hereby upheld if not further exacerbated, and both the professionals and the parents as differently positioned contributors are more or less left alone with unfurling these concealed directionalities through an educational practice which is itself co-arranged in contradictory ways.

Relating to a relatively novel common sense is prone to leading to struggles, struggles that have been touched in Chapter 2. As these struggles were reconsidered a necessary element of conflictual collaboration and mutual learning, they can now be analyzed through a productive lens. While I was foremost interested in the children's situated struggles with media artifacts, their struggles with media artifacts were transcontextually interrelated with their

struggling with other sociomaterial arrangements which interrelated their struggling with other participants' struggling with the arrangements which *interrelated my struggling with jointly shared struggles*: sociomaterial interplay as intertwined struggling. The question of 'who does one struggle with?' must thus be re-formulated as 'what communicative arrangements do we struggle with?' in relation to our conducts of everyday life's intended directionalities. While participating in the daycare practice, I attempted to put into action an emancipatory directionality. However, this was in itself contradictory: I do not enact an emancipatory directionality throughout my entire conduct of everyday life. I enact different directionalities and ideologies in relation to different collective practices I engage in.

What should emerge throughout the following exemplary situation analyses is that I myself *had to* enact contradictory directionalities throughout my participation in the daycare: After all, I was the solicitant here, seeking collaboration, and did not want to get thrown out of the institution right away. The contradictoriness inherent to my own conduct of everyday life only became tangible for my analyses once I started understanding that contradictions are what make the sociomaterial interplay of a multiplicity of conducts of everyday life move. The contradictions, the various tasks, agendas, directionalities keep it alive as conflictual collaboration. And while the more or less maintained common sense among the contributors on the one hand makes it possible to nevertheless interrelate and collaborate, it easily also conceals those naturalized contradictions that clearly afford transformation, those which uphold domination and injustice by systematically foreclosing specific processes of experiencing-imagining together. What I focus on now is how my intended directionality clashed with some of the daycare practice's intended directionalities, those rendered more or less commonsensical. As will be shown, these clashes or struggles led to discoveries relevant to my later conduct of everyday life in the daycare as well as beyond. For now I analytically de-center from those contradictory directionalities clearly interwoven through digital media artifacts, so that in the chapter following hereafter, I can pinpoint how media artifacts intensify the contradictoriness un-intentionally maintained through the daycare practice's sociomaterial interplay.

Struggling with the other, episode 1: The daycare staff

Prior to starting my actual fieldwork stay in the daycare, I conducted a one-week pilot study in order to obtain a first impression of the persons I would want to work with (children, staff, parents) and the conditions I would need

to take into account (materialized space-time arrangements) while ‘following’ those persons. I was also granted the opportunity to give the pedagogical staff an introduction into my project during a regular staff meeting. I told the staff that my main research interest consisted in exploring how the children’s everyday use of (especially new) media would show in the daycare, what possibilities and difficulties would emerge, specifically how children would use media-related meanings in the interaction with others (again children, staff, parents). And I told them that while being part of the everyday life in the daycare, I needed their assistance in order to conduct my research: Not only had I never before worked in such a context and therefore no experience with regards to the everyday procedures and arrangements, but I also asked them to inform me whenever situations were occurring they thought might be relevant to me.

Meanwhile the presentation slowly gave ways to a group discussion, stirred by a comment from the daycare leader: Different staff members started referring not only to possibilities, difficulties and societal demands related to child-technology interactions they encountered, but in relation to own and other adults’ experiences when using various media technologies at home, at work, in public transportation etc. Suddenly the topic was not merely education and the child-technology relationship anymore, but everyday human-technology relations in more general terms: They reported on what they found challenging and contradictory in everyday situations, and how one (as pedagogue and/or parent) can never be sure to do the ‘right thing’ with regards to media technologies. In my interpretation, they were already connecting their ‘everyday research interests’ to my research interests.¹⁰⁸

This re-situated phenomena description marks my first attempt to bond with the daycare staff. By *bonding* I mean that I was trying to enlist them as co-researchers, trying to get them interested in my research interest (the children’s perspectives on their everyday relations to media technologies) so as to be able to collaborate with them on this my research topic. Following the theoretical-methodological framework re-presented in Chapter 1, I could have expected this to work. It took me a considerable amount of time to realize that I had effectively conned myself into believing that I could delve into an established practice and get everyone interested in my perspective, in my research problem, with a sleight of hand: By demonstrating how enormously relevant and valuable my project was – to myself.

In terms of a priori designing a research process, I still regard it as sensible to kick off a long-term participation with presenting project, problem, research interest, approach, and intended directionality. But I would not expect them to respond with ‘yeah’ and ‘amen’ to this request anymore. Had I not already

¹⁰⁸ This phenomena description is a partial re-production of a phenomena description also offered in Chimirri (2013b).

teamed up with the daycare leader Rebecca through our family-relation, had not already gotten her interested in my project, this staff meeting could have turned out producing a Gordian knot of misunderstandings. Albeit describing it above and in Chimirri (2013b) as ending up in a productive group discussion, I could sense that during my monological presentation, the others' interest was slowly freezing away.

What broke the ice was Rebecca asking about the role of media artifacts in the transcontextual conduct of everyday life: She asked whether I would also investigate how they themselves, the daycare staff, are dependent on media artifacts, and how society in general is dependent on media. It was this perceived dependence of children *and* adults that was obviously a topic of interest to many staff members. The ensuing discussion revolved around the more general societal relevance of my project, also because the Rebecca straightforwardly said: "We also want to benefit from your project!"

The daycare leader was thereby able to unseal the social positioning jar, ergo my positioning of a (greenhorn) doctoral student, a complete stranger, who after three days of participation was now suddenly expecting the staff to assist him over the course of many months in investigating the research question he himself deemed most relevant. I was now being challenged to tell them what they would get out of the collaboration, not only in relation to developing the contextual practice of the daycare: They were keen on learning how the project would *benefit their conducts of everyday life*, what *emancipatory relevance* the project would have across contextual practices. This re-negotiated positioning caught me a bit off guard, including the expectations related to this positioning. I did not see it coming, even though this re-positioning was what I had simultaneously been hoping for: I wanted them to perceive themselves as co-researchers, as collaborators, as meaningful participants to the research project – but primarily to *my* research project. Now we were suddenly discussing how my research project could additionally turn into *their* research project, how they would not be co-researchers to the researcher's project, but how we would all be co-researching media artifacts' influences on our shared ontogenetical becomings as a collective endeavor.

Only then did I realize that I also needed to explore the other adults' first-person perspectives, not only the children's – they were already involved in the project, and wanted to be involved more, and thereby involved me in their involvements, and vice versa (cf. Neidel & Wulf-Andersen, 2013). I realized I would need to investigate the staff's expectations and directionalities – next to the children's and the parents'. Initially, I dreaded intervening into the established practice, as I would not be able to offer any normatively better

ways of arranging it. My aim was to *explore* how one can come to approach a practice established around children so that one can learn from these children to – eventually, in a follow-up project – consider planning an intervention around media artifact use in preschool education.

What started to dawn on me was that I was taken in by a fallacy, the fallacy of being able to merely explore a practice via the method of participant *observation* – it dawned on me that this would be impossible: Alone through my curiosity and questions, I would get involved in re-producing the established practice and thereby transforming it, while simultaneously involving others in re-producing and transforming my research practice, no matter how much I would try to avoid it. However, it took me a considerable amount of time, until after my stay in the daycare, to conceptualize what happened throughout that stay. I drew some initial conclusions in an article (Chimirri, 2013b), namely that:

“First, human living is historically situated and sociomaterially mediated: One’s own conduct of everyday life takes place in relation to others’ conducts of life and the material conditions at hand. Second, this conduct of everyday life takes place across various contexts and shared practices: One’s own perspective on the world draws on experiences from a multitude of contexts – it is transcontextual. Third, the researcher must acknowledge that s-he accesses a researched practice from a specific position in society, with a particular perspective that draws on a multiplicity of transcontextually mediated experiences, and that s-he co-produces joint possibilities and limitations for action in the investigated practice” (p. 84).

I have argued for these points earlier, but feel like I need to underline one aspect: The transcontextuality of experiencing, imagining, and living, of conducting one’s everyday life, implies that we need to understand Practice Research as *Praxis* Research. As the above group discussion illustrates, conducting one’s everyday life is always already connected to transcontextually ongoing human activity, refers to situations or scenes of conduct of everyday life across all those space-time nexuses one has multimodally experienced-imagined. So while (communicative) actions are situated in and constitutive of a specifically organized or arranged context (cf. Axel, 2011), they always already point beyond this context, across contexts and contextual practices, *towards praxis*.

Intraference 1: Struggling with the weather

While writing these lines, it is early afternoon and I am sitting on a north-west-pointing balcony in Berlin, Germany. The shade of the high-grown plants my partner sowed half a year ago protect me from the most dreadful temperatures the sunlight materially carries for me to relate to. Nevertheless, the thermometer already measures over 30 degrees Celsius in the shade, and later today the temperature will climb up to at least 36 degrees. This I did not anticipate: Before traveling here from Denmark in order to retreat and write in relative peace and quiet, I experienced-imagined it would be great to be able to sit outside the whole day, feel the breeze stroke my skin, hear the leaves rustle and the birds singing, while enjoying relaxed 25 degrees in the shade. That way, I would have been able to combine my craving for being outside during summertime with my duty and simultaneous opportunity of writing this dissertation.

It could have been perfect, if it was not for these unbearably high temperatures and humidity. Although sitting outside, successfully having fled the dull inside of the apartment and-or office, I now feel captured and contained by the weather. I hardly want to move, my legs hurt from being under-challenged, and still I sweat like a marathon runner. When it comes to thinking, writing, imagining what I would want to write, it almost appears impossible to productively relate to anything beyond this currently given context – my imaginations keep on revolving around taking to a lake instead.

One's relation to weather conditions-as-meanings is relevant for conducting one's everyday life, for one's state of being-feeling, for one's scope of imaginable possibilities for acting – it is psychologically relevant. This relevance clearly emerged also during my participation in the daycare: Activity agendas, collective engagements, possibilities for collaboration – or in short: the daily contextual practice – were clearly re-arranged in relation to the weather. Again, this seemed to be common sense among the staff and all other practice participants, but I only noticed this: processually. One week into the main study, I start noting weather information right on top of my research diary's daily page – together with weather-related particularities or re-arrangements. On May 9, 2011, it reads: "Weather: sunny, 25 degrees (almost exclusively outside play)". Evidently, I noticed that the adult participants' weather-related common sense enacted the relating-to particular sociomaterial arrangements when trying to arrange the day or even week. Weather forecasts were regularly checked, especially when planning an excursion throughout the upcoming days.

Evaluations of what re-arrangements the weather afforded were made collaboratively, especially among the pedagogues, sometimes together with the parents, seldom together with the children.¹⁰⁹ With regards to negotiating about wearing or not wearing potentially risk- and illness-preventing clothes, the children were granted little leeway in the decision-taking process. But irrespective of what clothes they had on, they productively re-related to the weather conditions as something little changeable, as something one can nevertheless purposefully interweave with one's collaborations and learning processes. On the other hand, disposing over the alternative of taking the collaborations into the daycare's building was also being accentuated by the children, accentuated in terms of augmenting the evident joy of being able to relate to the weather in at least two different ways.

These communicative collaborations included the ongoing exchange of communicative actions referring to one's state of being-feeling, rather than merely pointing to 'hard facts' the weather forecast presented. The variables the weather forecast interpreted in specific ways were a point of departure for co-arranging collaborations, but were situatedly re-considered and re-negotiated by the practice participants – according to the various contradictory directionalities and positionings in play throughout the interplay. Still, the variables were considered as mere means for collaboration, not as ends in and for themselves.

The sociomaterial interplay in the daycare afforded me to consider both the conduct of everyday life (including one's state of feeling-being) as well as the weather as dynamic and interrelated processes, rather than as an ensemble of operationalizable variables. Weather processes can of course be objectified-as-products, operationalized, as a multitude of measurable variables – just as human behavior can be. But this operationalization can never account for the objectification *process*, the processual interrelations of material flows, which are fleetingly materialized in a temporary artifact, an entity, a variable. Only if we stop conceiving of the conduct of everyday life as well as the weather and any other sociomaterial arrangement of these human-weather-relations as processes, if we hypostatize our relational-processual understandings, if we forget about praxis, its interrelatedness and directionality, would it make sense-meaning to conceptualize our relation to the weather as nothing more than mediated through operationalizable variables.

¹⁰⁹ I never experienced 'weather' to be the theme of a pedagogical project, even though one might assume that it might be quite a significant sociomaterial arrangement for conducting everyday life, and for identifying *key situations* in a child's life (cf. Chapter 2).

A relational-processual conceptualization of human-weather-relations has been put forward by Ingold: “The *experience of weather* lies at the root of our moods and motivations; indeed it is the very temperament of our being. It is therefore critical to the relation between bodily movement and the formation of knowledge” (Ingold, 2010, p. 122). The weather is not a condition ‘out there’: We human beings are of the weather, the weather is of us: “A living, breathing body is at once a body-on-the-ground and a body-in-the-air. Earth and sky, then, are not components of an external environment with which the progressively ‘knowledged-up’ (socialized or enculturated) body interacts” (ibid.).¹¹⁰ In my words: We human beings do not exist outside our relations to the weather, we are always already involved-involving the weather as meaningful co-arrangement in our state of feeling-being, and herewith in our doings, in our (communicative) actions, our collaborations. Whether we accentuate it as premise-for-acting, whether we turn our analytical focus to it, however, depends on the relational ensemble of our sociomaterial conduct of everyday life.

Weather phenomena could thence be understood as multimodally experienced-imagined, interrelated sociomaterial arrangements, which are, just as any other sociomaterial arrangement, merely *co*-arranged by human beings, and which are in flux, consist of a multiplicity of interrelated material flows, including the *human material flow* (cf. also Ingold, 2012). Based on my analyses of the participants’ perspectives, then, the only way to approximate a meaningful or productive understanding of weather processes for collaborating, is to establish a re-situated mutual sociomaterial self-understanding of differently accentuated conducts of everyday life in relation to differently accentuated aspects of weather – without forgetting that both are interrelated processes, both with a (mostly) *unknowable future*.

We human beings should not fool ourselves into believing that we could foresee or control all those conditions we are dependent of, which co-constitute our scope of imaginable possibilities for collaborating. Many of these conditions are only minimally *co*-arranged by humans, or rather: Human beings sociomaterially arrange their sense-meaning-relations to these

¹¹⁰ The parallels between Ingold’s approach and the intra-active relations or forces in Karen Barad’s agential-realist approach (e.g., Barad, 2003, 2007) are striking. A critical interrelating analysis or diffractive reading of the two would deserve a monograph or more in its own right. Ingold himself refers to Barad in his latest article collection: “As science studies scholar Karen Barad (2007:185) has eloquently put it: ‘We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because ‘we’ are *of* the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming!. Only because we are already of the world, only because we are fellow travellers along with the beings and things that command our attention, can we observe them” (Ingold, 2013, p. 5). An article by Alberti & Marshall (2009) discusses both authors’ work in relation to each other and analyzes their ontological premises as well as their understandings of material(ity).

conditions. But particularly the least foreseeable conditions fuel imaginative potentials, are essential for virtually transforming human praxis. If the weather however was radically changing all the time, if no collective habituality or common sense was established in relation to the weather (e.g., seasons), other human-world-relations could not be purposefully developed. The processes of maintaining and transforming are interrelated, and both require human efforts that go beyond taking sociomaterial interrelations either for granted or as fully foreseeable-controllable.

Here, learning together with and from children's situated relating-to weather conditions through meaningfully accentuating them and purposefully rearranging their collaborations accordingly may help us conceptualizing and operationalizing adults not to forget about the processual interrelatedness our conducts of everyday life share with other animate and seemingly inanimate processes which constitute world. But if learning together with children shall seriously be actualized, virtually, then the children's directionalities for acting differently on conditions than what is commonly expected must be taken seriously.

Struggling with the other, episode 2: Ant egg emancipation

Rummaging around in the garden after one and a half months of participation, exploring activities and actions, hunting for relevant video-mediated experiences: I spot Leo and Ben, who are crouching besides the slope of the little hill, the garden's only 'real' hill, 2-3 meters high. It is situated close to the garden fence and in proximity of the daycare grounds' entrance-exit. Leo and Ben are shoveling on the far side of the hill, not easy to see from the house or the benches. They are digging for ant eggs, that is what they tell me. I direct my camera at their shovel-extended hands and at the small ant holes that capture their interest. Their hands are already covered with fleeing ants. Leo and Ben want to dig deep, so as to find the ants' eggs. I wonder whether ants actually lay eggs. I ask them. I do not doubt their appraisal that, of course, ants lay eggs. I keep on filming. Other children observe, comment, and engage again in something else. The deeper they dig (now about 10cm or so), the more I believe they will succeed. They do. And celebrate. And dig further.

After around 15 minutes, one of the pedagogues (Mathilda) appears, whom I had not warmed up to yet. She is upset. That upsets me, because I do not know what the matter is. I keep on filming for another minute, trying to more or less hide this activity from her. I feel caught without knowing why. She explains, with a stern voice, that the 'mountain' is holy. Well, not holy, but one is not allowed to dig there, as it is supposed to stay green and it cost the daycare 6000 Euros to build it. The children know so and I should, too.

Well, I don't! ... I think to myself, and I apologize nevertheless. Why? Am I here to reprimand children? I don't think so! ... I think to myself.

The crowd dissolves. For 5 minutes or so. Then I spot Leo and Ben at the slope of the hill again, this time together with Maria. I look around, no pedagogue in sight. I start filming *Ant eggs reloaded*. The film is to last 16 seconds, and meanwhile I am torn in between positionings: I am fascinated by the further digging activity, curious about what else they might unearth; meanwhile I would like to tell them: "don't dig, don't dig", fearing that the police will find us. And so it comes: The same pedagogue, Mathilda, uncovers our covert operations. Of course she declares it "unbelievable" that I just let them shovel even though she just told me that they are not allowed to. First, I am mortified, fearing some sort of sanctioning. I obviously got hooked up with the wrong gang here, they got me into trouble, not my fault.

I reconsider. Who am I here for, who am I primarily interested in working with? After a while, I gather my courage and walk up to Mathilda. I tell her that I am not a pedagogue, and that I want to be part of the children's collaborations no matter what they are doing, also when they disobey. If you don't understand that, then go to hell! ... I think to myself. Well, at least she never bugged 'us' again.

And I felt a big relief finally having discovered who I actually wanted to team up with all along. Not the pedagogues, not the parents, but those young human beings whose actions are the least expectable and foreseeable to me.

Before the here described situation occurred, before re-negotiating my positioning with Mathilda (the pedagogue), I felt like I was participating in a contextual practice in which power relations hardly played a role, at least between staff and children – and me: The staff seemed to, as the *Situational Approach* (cf. Chapter 2) suggests, acknowledge that the children should have a strong say in organizing and arranging activities, excursions, projects, that they should be regarded as agentive subjects. It took me a while to realize that I was still much caught up with centering on or directing my learning at the daycare's more or less maintained common sense. And the common sense did not explicitly point to power asymmetries between pedagogues and children. It was different in relation to the parents, whose *natural right to educate and care* (cf. SGBVIII, §1) the pedagogues considered to somewhat obstruct meaningful collaboration on behalf of the children. Furthermore, my impression is that the parents were rather perceived as the institution's clients than the children were, and simultaneously also as their employers (abstractly represented via state institutions). This multiple and contradictory positioning further complicated collaboration: The pedagogues at times felt at the mercy of the parents, who are legally permitted to take all important decisions for

the child; meanwhile the pedagogues used all possible 'legislative weapons', e.g. doctors, speech therapists, etc., to fight back when they felt helpless, getting entangled in irresolvable-seeming dilemmas around a child in difficulties; this in turn made some of the parents feel at the mercy of the pedagogues. This was a *vicious circle*, whose inherently contradictory arrangement conjured up competitive elements, i.e. competition for the sake of socially dominating the other (a differently positioned, social group).

The power asymmetry between children and pedagogues was less obvious, more difficult for me to identify: It was primarily mediated through the widely accepted ontological asymmetry between 'child' and 'adult' (cf. Chapter 2). By pinpointing who is 'child' and who 'adult', *re-negotiations of power relations and herewith of practice-guiding political-economical directionalities were off the beaten track*. Children were kept out of important negotiation processes: When it came to these, pedagogues were primarily struggling with re-negotiating power relations with each other and the parents, rather than with the children. Mathilda, the pedagogue, understood the digging for ants as harmful, for the daycare's economy and herewith for all participants' conducts of everyday life. The question to re-negotiate – in my eyes together with the children – then here becomes what contradictory directionalities the professionals as well as the other participants should prioritize. For instance: Children's curious and at times economically insensible explorations, or the institution's budget plans eventually marred by these explorations? In this taken-for-granted setup, I represented an unusual case, clearly positioned as a 'sensible adult' by most participants, but one that increasingly cared less about telling the children what was right or wrong, what they should or should not do. I would attempt to avoid that children get hurt, that they potentially harm themselves, oppress each other – just as I would with any other human being. But that was that, after the above described situation.

This situation was thus decisive for triggering an analysis of the political-ethical specificities of my project's emancipatory directionality. That day, I decided to first and foremost side with the children, become their 'accomplice', by putting my analytical focus on my relations to their interrelated ontogenetical becomings – ergo to focus on *their* contributions, *their* collaborations. Their perspectives were heard, acknowledged, their voice was taken seriously by the pedagogues – but not so much their actions, not their explorations of power relations and contradictory directionalities. I wanted the children to understand me as someone they could explore the world together with, someone who was trying to figure out how they made sense-meaning of the daycare practice's sociomaterialized contradictions.

This clarification of the positioning I wanted to assume, in relation to Mathilda, the other staff members, myself, and especially the children, was significant for further disentangling “one’s own entanglement in the suppression of others” (Osterkamp, 1999, p. 467). Which power positioning was I aiming at assuming, which power positioning was I expected to assume by the various participants? After de-stabilizing my positioning as expert already during the initial staff meeting, the staff members at least expected me to assume the positioning as adult. The day I collaborated in the search for ant eggs, this positioning was re-negotiated. It illustrated how, up to that point but of course also beyond, my participation was ideological, could not entirely circumvent positionings maintained throughout this specific practice. As Carpentier & Dahlgren (2011) argue, the neglect of the ideological embeddedness of one’s participation may be ingrained in the progressive-sounding but highly polysemic notion of *participation* itself:

“The signifiatory diversity that characterises the concept of participation should come as no surprise, as participation is not a fixed notion, but is deeply embedded within our political realities and thus the object of long-lasting and intense ideological struggles. Ideology does not stop at the edges of academic analyses; it is an integral part of any analysis. This precept compels us to emphasise the unavoidability of the positioning that any author who intervenes in these debates faces, whether acknowledged or not. The lack of acknowledgement of participation’s ideological embeddedness, and the myopia for participation’s signifiatory diversity, comes with a danger, as this myopia often pays lip service to the politics of the status-quo by ignoring more radical forms of participation. Denominating all social process [*sic*] as participatory makes it impossible to distinguish between different social practices, different loci and contexts, and different types of power relations and (im)balances” (Carpentier & Dahlgren, 2011, p. 9).

Focusing on the children in an institutional context, then, from my perspective opens the possibility to explore these “more radical forms of participation”. Children exactly juggle and struggle with the boundaries sociomaterially drawn around *their* participation, as their participation is not considered an ontological given, is less taken-for-granted than the societally meaningful participation or contribution of an (officially fully recognized) adult citizen. However, and here we return to the two-sidedness inherent to any arrangement, the positioning as child, especially as ‘small child’, and the implicit limitations with regards to being taken seriously, also grants *opportunities to explore and test these more radical forms of participation*, for instance to keep on digging for ant eggs even though they were just told not to. Children in (German) day-care institutions are granted a societally unique, historically negotiated posi-

tioning as ‘toddler’ or ‘small child’ (*Kleinkind*). This positioning encompasses the opportunity of exploring sociomaterial arrangements, their possibilities and limitations for expanding the scope of imaginable possibilities for collaborating, including how historically arranged processes of social domination re-arrange these sociomaterial arrangements. Exerting social domination through hypostatized positionings is an extremely powerful tool, for instance when adults claim that younger human beings are less knowledgeable, less skilled, no ‘full’ or ‘real’ human beings. Children pick up on such commonsensical hypostatizations and make them meaningful for their actions, their collaborations – they explore ‘how far they can go’ through temporarily accepting such a common sense framework.

This exploratory space is increasingly being contested: Exploration is increasingly substituted with fixated learning curricula in the German daycare and elsewhere. Furthermore, even though the children in the daycare I participated in were – qua pedagogical approach and the centrality of the *key situation* concept – understood as the main boosters for co-constituting pedagogical projects and explorations, their eventual rejection of the established common sense – not to dig into a hill which was so expensive to set up in the first place – was still not taken seriously. Such situations are subsequently *not perceived as a struggle with and questioning of the common sense of the adult participants*. Therefore, although the positioning as ‘small child’ may also render possible exploration opportunities, the *de-limitations implicit to this positioning*, ergo that their actions and collaborations are not regarded as potentially questioning the established common sense, *outweigh the productive aspects*. The same applies to the notion of ‘play’, at least when building on its traditional understanding that play is not to be taken seriously, is no productive activity (see above Interlude).

That does not mean that we can or should leave all established positionings and other sense-meaning-relations behind, but instead open them up for renegotiations:

“To take on a new perspective obviously does not mean throwing out all of our knowledge; what it supposes, rather, is that we will relativize that knowledge and critically revise it from the perspective of the popular majorities. Only then will the theories and models show their validity or deficiency, their utility or lack thereof, their universality or provincialism” (Martín-Baró, 1996, p. 28).

The popular majorities liberation psychologist Martín-Baró envisions are the oppressed-suppressed populations of Central and Southern America. Follow-

ing Paulo Freire's liberation pedagogy, he argued that a societally relevant psychology cannot be *for* the oppressed, but *of* the oppressed: The oppressed need to liberate themselves from the ties of a science dominated by the elite, they need to be the ones re-negotiating the common sense, the ways in which we human beings understand the world – in order to create an equal society, free of social domination.

I believe that the popular majorities need to encompass everyone (including children!), and that social science should not aim for liberation from subjugation – as subjugation to common sense is necessary for communication-collaboration. Instead, the aim should be to *promote radically situated democratic explorations and re-negotiations of this common sense*, for instance of positionings, *from out of the collectives one participates in and contributes to on a daily basis*, and *across these very same collectives one conducts one's everyday life through*. This presupposes that a society free of domination, in which everyone acknowledges one's dependence of others for the sake of purposefully maintaining-transforming sociomaterial arrangements, is the foundation of such a mutually shared directionality.

The day Leo and Ben dug for ant eggs, they were supported and backed up in their exploratory activity through my exploratory interest. It was helpful for the children to collaborate with me as an 'adult' who also tended to question some of the established common sense, who – at least – spread the word that the ban on digging into a hill seemed rather little meaningful to me. Together, we explored and re-negotiated the common sense not only among us (the diggers and supporters), but also in relation to the other practice participants. Our approach was *democratic and playful*: The *ongoing re-negotiation through making sense-meaning of rules of given sociomaterial arrangements* (including the rules for playing at the hill) *was fluid, transient, temporary*. In the moment we collectively fled from Mathilda and her reprimand, we created a prototype that may have been read as unquestionably accepting the given set of rules. Instead it was rejected and re-negotiated five minutes later, and a new prototype was instated which made me re-consider my positioning as well as the broadly maintained common sense around the positioning 'child'. Without the children's explorative collaboration, this would not have happened.

Children learn through adults, just as adults learn through children – one learns from how other human beings meaningfully and purposefully relate to the world. For instance, *adults may learn that rules are negotiable*, and that these negotiations are pivotal for collaboratively expanding agency, just as Ditte Winther-Lindqvist's research collaboration insinuates:

“Rather than accepting explicit, general, and abstract rules, they [kindergartners] seem more concerned to create rules that fit their worldview and the local understandings of themselves and others. [...] They demonstrate the degree of their influence by their ability to define their place in the social order and make the rules governing their shared play” (Winther-Lindqvist 2009, p. 73-4).

Intraference 2: Struggling with the verbalizable

In their ongoing struggle to develop their agency, expand their scope of imaginable possibilities for acting, as seen children explore sociomaterial arrangements that are commonsensical to the collectives they can act through. They learn about how other human beings relate to the world, about their perspectives, in order to explore what possibilities the world offers for contributing to praxis, to the ongoing human activity of re-producing and transforming the world. This they have ontologically in common with adults.

Seemingly irresolvable problems emerge when this learning-through-others, through relating one’s own conduct of everyday life to others’ conducts of everyday life, is itself naturalized or rendered static. If the process of human living always escapes the objectification, if for instance a word is never able to fully capture an emotion, the quest for knowledge is transferred to that which seems objectifiable-as-snapshot, (temporarily) graspable – even though the emotion is not fully re-presentable, suddenly the emotion objectified-as-word is considered to hold more truth to it than the process of multimodally experiencing-imagining the emotion, making the re-presentation the primary means for imagining possibilities for acting and collaborating. But this neglects the fundamental directionality of human living, the necessarily collaborative expansion of agency. Objectifications-as-products are temporary impressions-expressions necessary for communicating with the other, for exchanging perspectives in order to collaboratively maintain and transform praxis. However, this communication transcends the verbalizable, communicating is multimodally mediated. Communicating through written and spoken language, meanwhile, has historically taken center stage in sociomaterially arranging human relations to each other – also in pedagogical practice (cf. Chapter 2). Maybe, then, “[l]anguage has been granted too much power” (Barad, 2003, p. 801), as philosopher Karen Barad notes in the opening lines of her *Posthumanist performativity* article.

One spring day, I am walking down a path together with a colleague-friend, an asphalted path leading through the nature reserve behind our university campus. We are talking about our work, the chapters we are currently writing

on. In order to explain my current argument, I ask her and thereby myself: “Why are we taking the paved path? We could just as much cut across the field.” Without having it made a verbalized topic beforehand, we have somehow already agreed to walk together *on the path*. During the process of conversing with each other, we share this common sense without verbalizing it. How is this possible? Maybe, the infrastructure or sociomaterial arrangement laid out by others before us *affords* it sensu Gibson (1966, 1979). My colleague-friend suggests that we may implicitly expect the path to lead us somewhere, that there will be an aim, a purpose, we will not get lost. She assumes that the municipality had a good reason for directing us along this path. But do we want to stick to this taken-for-granted or hegemonic reading of the path’s sociomaterial arrangement, now that we have uncovered it, have questioned our implicit acceptance of this reading? We would still have the possibility to just cut across the fields, we even know there will be no fence stopping us. But we decide not to. Because without verbalizing it, we agreed that we would take this walk so as to focus on each other’s writing processes, so as to talk, so as to direct our attention to sharing words, to the verbal mode of communicating.

Nevertheless, many of the ongoing re-negotiation processes which take place meanwhile do not require verbalization. Much of the common sense we establish builds on the multitude of modes, potentially encompasses all aspects of communication. Relating the communicative process of talking to the communicative process of walking in the sunlight under the dynamically moving clouds, next to the long grass bending in the wind; experiencing-imagining this multimodally and transcontextually together makes us able to relate our conduct of everyday life to the other’s conduct of everyday life in more meaningful ways – *if* we direct our attention beyond our initially only intended purpose of talking, beyond the mode of verbal communication – *if* we take into consideration that collaborating transcends talking, and that humans draw on and co-constitute sociomaterial arrangements so as to collaborate and develop agency together. It is consequently possible for me to relate now to my state of being-feeling in that situation in its multimodal complexity, re-experience-imagine my relations to my colleague-friend – which transcend verbalizable friend-colleague-positionings, – to our work, and to other details of world playing into that situation.

Basically, sociomaterial arrangements are synonymous to what Holzkamp calls *tools*: They serve as anticipated collective provision so as to minimize future dangers, supply shortages, etc. He writes: “The produced tools are thus not kept for individual use, their generalized usability is rather a social gener-

alization: They are at the disposal of the social collective in case they are needed [...]. The cognitive aspect of the creation of means for generalized ends and the social aspect of collective provision are here merely two sides of the same developmental process” (Holzkamp, 1985, p. 174; translation NAC). This *means-end reversal* (cf. also Tolman 1994, p. 97) implies that the means are being provided to the next generation before the next generation is able to formulate the means’ ends. Children – as newcomers to praxis, so to say – are confronted with a whole array of sociomaterial arrangements that they cannot and do not know what they are good for, what purpose they are to serve. Therefore is the process of exploring how others relate to the given sociomaterial arrangements so pivotal for expanding one’s scope of imaginable possibilities for meaningfully relating to existing sociomaterial arrangements. However, the production or objectification process which led to a sociomaterial arrangement is unknown to most adults as well – they are just as alienated from the originally intended ends as the children are. They themselves re-relate to existing sociomaterial arrangements, explore them together with others in relation to further sociomaterial arrangements (e.g., manuals) so as to come up with a common sense, a generalizable usability or directionality of use. But this common sense remains sense-meaning-less if it is not used for re-negotiating its very same sense-meaning-relations, if it not used for yet another collaborative *process*.

Almost all situations I participated in during my daycare stay similarly highlight the children’s use of sociomaterial arrangements (including specific artifacts such as digital media artifacts) for the purpose of furthering collaboration. Every above re-presented, re-situated phenomena description can be read in this light. Other situations I multimodally experienced-imagined revolved more specifically around digital media artifacts as part of the relational ensemble. For instance, children referring to characters from mediatized narratives, ergo characters from books, television series, movies, computer games, etc., re-presented on everyday merchandising products such as shirts, caps, pen and pencil cases, as well as as through plastic figures and other toys. In one situation, Joey showed me his Kung Fu Panda plastic figure. I asked about who he watched the movie with. Suddenly, from one second to the other, he and his friend Ben performed all the Kung Fu moves they learned from the movie and from situatedly re-relating to it. And talking about multimodal experiencing: they not only showed me the moves – they made me feel them, too.

But what happens when the means-end reversal cannot be used for furthering collaboration, for re-instating or rather re-negotiating a transformed shared

end? What if, for example, no common sense can be established with a significant other around a given means, around an existing sociomaterial arrangement? What if no new purpose can be imagined, the means just being means for nothing one can make sense-meaning of, at least nothing that appears to be purposeful in the given situation? In the following sub-chapter, I underline that also the artifacts of a research-worker like I myself need to be understood as point of departure for further collaboration, and never as a research process' punch line.

Struggling with the other, episode 3: Re-situated ethics for collaborating across time and space

Several times I observed how six-year old Peter wanted to be understood as and called *Sonic* while playing with the other children in the daycare. First I was not sure whether he meant the videogame character I still knew from my own youth. The fact that Peter (when asking him about it) referred to Sonic as a dog, while the character supposedly represented a (highly stylized, blue) hedgehog, intensified my doubts. However when joining another situation in which Peter wanted to play 'Sonic the dog', another child told him that Sonic was supposed to be a hedgehog. Although Peter stuck to his own understanding, he formed a sort of crest with both hands and budged forward in a ducked position, similar to how the character would do it. Hence I got curious, did a bit of research on the Web, and alas: Sonic was still around. Since 1991, it starred in an enormous amount of follow-ups, reissues, and adaptations, also for the hand-held Nintendo DS. I had already learned from the pedagogues that Peter possessed such a game console, and I then found out that he also possessed a Sonic game. Furthermore he was aware of an Anime series broadcast on private television starring Sonic and his friends as well as the according card game.

I asked Peter why he wanted to be Sonic. In at least two situations, he answered that he would like to be Sonic because it is always helping its friends, and Peter also wants to help his daycare friends. In the observed situations, however, the other children did not accept his 'help' and Peter's role as 'helper', and they did not actively include Peter in the shared activities. One time he was accepted as 'Sonic the dog' in a role-playing activity, but not as 'Sonic the helper'. In another situation, his insisting on Sonic being a dog led to incomprehension on behalf of the other children, and subsequently to Peter being excluded from the activity. The fascination Peter held for this character as well as other characters from videogames and cartoons was obviously not shared by the other children (not by his two years younger brother either). Inter alia this may have contributed to the matter of fact that in my recordings and notes, no child referred to Peter as a 'friend'. Furthermore he participated less in shared activities than the other children I focused on. The pedagogues also struggled with comprehending Peter's interests and actions. Re-

peatedly occurring ‘fits of rage’ had already led to Peter being diagnosed with having a ‘disability in the social-emotional area’ one year before. Albeit this diagnosis provided the institution with means to finance an extra amount of pedagogical care, conflicts between Peter and other children as well as Peter and the pedagogues kept on manifesting themselves. Peter’s mother did not understand why these conflicts persisted. From her perspective, Peter was merely ‘more sensitive’ than other children. When I visited Peter and his mother and brother at home, though, he started a quarrel with his brother which lasted several minutes: The brother was using the charging cable for his Nintendo DS while Peter’s console also needed additional power. The quarrel culminated in Peter hitting his brother, followed by his mother taking Peter’s DS away and imposing a one-week gaming ban on him. Then Peter screamed and flailed around until his mother returned the console to him so that she and I could resume our interview.

I previously analyzed this described situation in one German language and one English language article (Chimirri, 2012a, 2013a). In these articles, I primarily struggled with and analyzed Peter’s struggles with the other daycare children (including his brother Bobby), with the pedagogues, and with his mother. In the subsequent analysis, I wish to focus on how the analysis of the sociomaterial interplay and particularly Peter’s perspective provided in the articles served as prototype for re-negotiating a common sense with Peter’s mother as well as the daycare leader Rebecca. This common sense established and transformed our collaboration across time and space. In this relation, I briefly discuss whether and how this research project’s directionality can be understood as emancipatory.

I shared the German version of the above phenomena description with Peter’s and Bobby’s mother before submitting the article building on this description. Foremost I wanted to ensure that she – and mediated through her perspective also her sons – would be able to follow and influence the objectifications put forward by me to describe their participation. This understanding diverges from applying *communicative validation* as method for double-checking or guaranteeing the “adequacy of the researcher’s understanding” (Groeben & Scheele, 2000; with reference to Lechler, 1982), an important element in dialogic hermeneutics and related qualitative methods. My re-situated phenomena descriptions, my re-presentations of – to me – subjectively relevant, interrelated situations, are as adequate to my – intersubjectively constituted – interpretation or understanding in relation to my research focus as possible. The adequacy – just like the authenticity – of my interpretations cannot be challenged: The artifact that I create, this dissertation, is undoubtedly a re-situated re-presentation of my very own situated perspective on the multimodally experienced-imagined relational ensemble. What could

be challenged, however, are the objectifications I re-produce for describing this experienced process. For instance, if I hypostatized any of the involved-involving participants as the wrong-doer, the sole responsible for the struggles Peter faces, then this *should* be questioned and challenged. What I wanted to make sure and always would want to make sure throughout all my communicative actions, is that I do not want to foreclose an actual meaningful and purposeful (imaginable) possibility for further collaboration. Consequently, I do not want to hypostatize an other by labeling-classifying-positioning her_him, by reducing the process of human living, of interrelated ontogenetical becomings, of feeling-being, to a seemingly immovable and thereby non-negotiable category-characteristic-trait. What I basically asked Peter's and Bobby's mother, then, was whether the publication of this (pseudonymized) description would hinder our further collaboration. If so, what would I need to change from her perspective? And if these proposed changes would challenge my argument, if I feel-think it might hinder my further collaborations with academic colleagues because it distorts what I would like to argue for, then I would need to re-negotiate my interpretation with the mother – also because I would like to continue our meaningful collaboration, both with her and her sons.¹¹¹

In this case, a re-negotiation was not necessary: She found my interpretation and also the analysis later re-presented in the article valuable and helpful. Up to today, we are in touch via e-mail about her and the boys' ontogenetical becomings – for instance on the increasing competition among the brothers in relation to specific video games as well as in relation to Peter's competitive experiences in school – and are planning on having a face-to-face meeting soon again together with Peter and Bobby in order to further discuss our discoveries. By the way: I can only *assume* that the boys do not feel-think that my interpretation may obstruct our further collaboration, from how I experienced our prior collaborative activities. I cannot expect them to anticipate the consequences of publishing such a re-situated description. Meanwhile, I can also not be sure that the adult participants can anticipate these consequences, including myself. But I can postulate that for one, this is *my* perspective on a complex and complicated process of interrelated participations-contributions,

¹¹¹ I am still going through a similar dialogic-collaborative process with the daycare leader. Furthermore, I offered to every adult participant the possibility to closely follow the research process and be asked-informed about publications via e-mail and telephone communication, so as to collaborate beyond this project. Maybe I did not clarify my intended purposes for a further collaboration enough, maybe others were just not interested in meaningfully upholding the collaboration with me: In the end, two more families commented on my articles once, none of the staff members did. I certainly hope that the conceptual advancements presented in this dissertation may serve to establish a more purposeful co-research practice, ergo make a future project more meaningful to all collaborators.

for which no single subject is ever to be blamed apart myself. Furthermore, I can attempt to describe these interrelations in processual ways, where objectifications serve as nothing more than temporary prototypes so as to establish a questionable and challenge-able common sense. I attempt to avoid hypostatizing any individual subject's relation to the world.

Consequently, I am committed to Morten Nissen's proposal to "capture ethics as emergent and participatory, as constitutive of collectives, and thus as productive and situated, as reflexive, and as at once ideological and critical of ideology" (Nissen, 2009, p. 146). As touched in Chapter 2, ethical decision-making needs to be understood as situated ethical re-negotiations with those participants-contributors one collaborates with across time and space, always already acknowledging that without their participation-contribution, the discoveries made would not have surfaced. The authors and publishers, those who make these collaborative discoveries public, are indebted to the other collaborators, in that the other collaborators are just as much human beings as the authors and publishers are: They are simultaneously being and becoming, are conducting their everyday lives, are engaged in the process of contributing to praxis – including the re-production of contradictions, including the attempt to develop agency while facing challenges, struggles, conflicts, crises. The processuality and directionalities of living life together must be rendered as explicit as possible throughout descriptions-interpretations-analyses which re-present situations of human living, thus possibilitating purposeful collaboration rather than inhibiting or foreclosing it. *It is in this sense that the dissertation's project is directed towards and indebted to an emancipatory co-research practice.*

Jointly questioning the maintained: Children as the only newcomers to praxis?

The closing chapter proposed a number of conceptual clarifications, specifications and advancements based on discoveries made during and in relation to my participation in a specific Berlin daycare practice. This conceptual work shall first and foremost enable social research to conceptualize children and collaborate with children *not as children but as human beings*. The aim was to encounter the daycare children at ontological eye-level, to not a priori label them by hypostatizing them as children. Instead the project's intention was to establish a frame of intersubjective understanding so as to jointly explore each other's perspectives on shared struggles in the process of relating-to so-

ciomaterial arrangements, e.g. digital media artifacts. This required putting the analytical focus on ontological commonalities across age thresholds, commonalities across human beings that simultaneously imply differences across human beings: Human beings have in common that they all live through a diverging set of experiences and imaginations, that they ground their state of feeling-being as well as their scope of imaginable possibilities for acting-collaborating in a unique ontogenetical becoming. Consequently each human being has a unique first-person perspective on her_his situated relations to the world – irrespective of whether they are sociomaterially labeled as child or adult, as pedagogue or parent, as researcher or researched.

The situations I experienced throughout this participation clearly underline epistemological differences as ontological given. In particular, the discoveries made suggest that children are actively conducting their everyday life across a multiplicity of contextual practices, of collectives, of collaborations. And just as any other participant-contributor to praxis, they are struggling with having their actions being taken seriously, with being acknowledged as collaboration partners in re-negotiating, re-arranging and thereby transforming the once established and more or less maintained practice. Basically, then, human beings share a common directionality throughout the conduct of everyday life, that of expanding one's scope of imaginable possibilities for purposefully acting on the world together. And still do they struggle with each other instead of together. How come?

The hitherto analyses already suggest that the crux is to be found in the sociomaterial arrangements human beings have arranged and are constantly re-arranging, which mediate between and across the multiplicity of first-person perspectives (including language, positionings, technological artifacts, etc.). These are not able to account for the relational processuality of either individual human living or collaborative praxis. Human being-becoming, ergo the multimodally mediated process of living-experiencing-thinking-feeling-imagining, is never and will – presumably and hopefully – never be fully arrange-able through sociomaterial objectifications. Nevertheless do communicative-objectifications-in-action, both verbal and non-verbal artifacts, bridge across perspectives, possibilitate collaboration and praxis. But instead of fixating and thereby naturalizing the common sense we collectively constitute so as to coordinate our joint activities, ergo the sense-meaning-relations we share with others, we need to consider the processuality of sociomaterial relations including the ongoing flow of human and non-human materials. I.e., we need to communicate the *processes we are involved in and involving others in*, for the sake of *collectively-democratically re-negotiating situated ideological prototypes*. These

prototypical common senses need to explicitly encompass our shareable hopes/wishes/directionalities for emancipating our human relating-to each other and to all those non-human processes of the world our existence depends on and is inextricably intertwined with.

This relational-processual understanding of constantly engaging in sense-meaning-making, in communicative actions with oneself in relation to others in relation to virtual collaborations, demands an understanding of knowledge as historically situated, ideological, and negotiable. It also demands acknowledging a *metaphysics* of human existing through the world, in the sense that we always experience the non-human world through an ensemble of human relating-to, always intersubjectively, but that the others' ontogenetical becomings – and thereby also one's own – always already escape a communicative objectification (be it potentially realizable or virtually actualizable sensu Kontopodis, 2012a). Our knowledge of the world, so to say, always already serves as common sense so as to imagine meaning, a meaning we can only retrospectively make collective sense of again: Praxis as well as the conduct of everyday life as relationally ongoing processes always already transcend our theorizing about it.

The point is thus not to objectively capture praxis, and neither to objectify conducts of everyday life nor the implicated human relating-to non-human processes. Instead, a *relational-processual and situated understanding of knowledge* serves to more meaningfully intertwine human-human-relations – their ontogenetical becomings – through temporary mutual sociomaterial self-understanding. It enables a purposeful and multimodal conflictual-collaboration-through-communication, so as to productively re-arrange and develop human-non-human-relations in ways that reflect the limitedness and situatedness of this very same human knowledge as well as the relational processuality of life in general. The concepts specified and partly advanced here shall exactly reflect this processuality: They inherently communicate one's situatedness and limitedness, one's interdependence of other human beings and of the non-human world; they call for humbleness and a multimodal-symmetrical dialog, a dialog which promotes the transcendence of domination and injustice across compartmentalized sociomaterial practices. Such a dialog intertwines thinking with feeling with experiencing with imagining and bridges age thresholds.

Conducting everyday life implies to intersubjectively and transcontextually explore the world, while never losing one's curiosity, never ceasing to seek the next challenge, to play with the given, to transform sociomaterial relations by becoming part of them, by contributing to them. Partly and partially rely-

ing on and trusting-naturalizing collectively already established common sense is unavoidable, is one side of the coin – it enables us to partly and partially transform this very same common sense. Hence, exploration simultaneously implies appropriation and transformation, experiencing and imagining, maintaining and revolutionizing. Through drawing on Henri-Louis Bergson's process philosophy, which also influenced Whitehead's relational process ontology, Pernille Hviid's collaborative discoveries underline this dialectical-processual relation:

“On the basis of [...] [my] empirical investigations of children's development, it emerges that novelties can maintain, and that the maintained can be precisely maintained by novelties, as was proposed by Bergson's [...] philosophy. Looking closer at the dynamics of the maintained, remaining turns out to be a highly active process, a deliberate engaged choosing of opportunities to re-experience or experience from a new angle what seem[s] important to be maintained in life and as oneself. Under the 'smooth' surface of stable developmental periods, as Vygotsky described, occurs an enormous effort to repeat, elaborate, and refine” (Hviid, 2012, p. 51).

Drawing on Hviid's conclusions, I would thus understand children as 'natural newcomers' to the previously maintained, pre-arranged sociomaterial relations, to praxis arranged as compartmentalized, contextual practices. Children are not merely newcomers to a particular community of practice, for instance a family using media, as Johansen (2007) suggests. Children are explorers and challengers of the already given on a more generalizable level: To them, the novel lies in all the already established, in the maintained – across various communities of practice. Maintaining as process is itself novel to them, is thus part of their sense-meaning explorations.

Adults – the 'oldtimers', to further borrow terms from Lave & Wenger (1991) – also relate to the already given so as to seek out potentialities to change this already given, to develop agency. Maintaining is always a part of conducting everyday life, as both Holzkamp and Dreier remark (cf. Chapter 1). Meanwhile, the maintained relations to conditions-as-meanings also change, thus creating a novel challenge for re-establishing something worth maintaining, a re-negotiated common sense. Challenges, struggles and thus conflictual collaboration are implicit to conducting everyday life: That does not change across one's lifetime. What I believe does change over time is one's analytical focus in relation to societal expectations: Throughout the conduct of everyday life of children, learning to maintain, doing the commonsensical, are promoted and highlighted as directionality; throughout the conduct of everyday life of adults, learning something different, doing something novel, are

promoted and highlighted as directionality. In turn, this means that *throughout childhood, novelty is being naturalized*, while *throughout adulthood, maintaining is naturalized*. For instance, as an adult one is supposed to successfully maintain one's family ties. As a child, one is supposed to increasingly question one's family ties and to leave the commonsensical, ergo the family ties, partly behind – develop self-responsibility, independence, etc.

So what would happen if we started learning across age thresholds, if we started questioning these naturalizations by acknowledging that all of us human beings are conducting everyday life, and that throughout this process, we are facing very similar challenges and struggles in relation to jointly shared, contradictory sociomaterial arrangements another's perspective might shed new analytical light on? What if we understood children's struggles with and around digital media artifacts, as Peter's above presented struggle in relation to Sonic the Hedgehog, not merely as a child's isolated struggle, but instead as a jointly shared human struggle, as a challenge to everyone's conduct of everyday life? What if we explored and tackled such struggles together, as collaborators?

Interlude:

Learning for what again?

During one of the last days of my stay in the daycare, on a rather cool summer day, I participate in a situation in which Ralf, one of the two pedagogues-positioned-as-male, engages with a few boys in a ‘knights and castle’ game. The knights and the castle are plastic toys stemming from the Playmobil toy series. Each of the participants maneuvers at least one knight figurine, and they make the figurines fight against one another as well as engage in additional more or less regular knight activities in the castle (feasting, sleeping, cleaning, conversing, etc.). At one point, Eric joins the scene. He has a Matchbox toy car in his hand and makes it drive across the carpeted room. He decides to join the knights and castles group, and to make his Matchbox car drive all over and across the medieval scenery. The pedagogue Ralf does not approve of this interference, as it does not ‘fit’ the context the others are playing in. He tells Eric to play somewhere else if he does not want to stop playing with his car.

Half an hour later I meet Ralf in the staff kitchen while getting coffee. First I ask him whether he saw any clear references to media contents in the knight and castle game, and how the children would else know about the ‘usual’ activities knights would partake in. Ralf does not know for sure, but assumes they picked up their references from oral stories or books. And why did he want Eric not to join in with his car play? Is that not just as meaningful a reference? Ralf says he would like to keep the various ‘play worlds’ separate from one another. Else the variety of narratives might confuse the children.

This is not the first time I hear him say that. Also Axel, the other male pedagogue, fears especially this confusion of different ‘worlds’, foremost the mix of ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ worlds. And if children bridged across media-related and other experiences, the children should at least stick to the contents of one show, one video game, one historical epoch, one conclusive narrative, are not to interrelate too many references or experiences – else this may lead to ‘sensory overload’: They might ‘get lost’.

In the first on-the-spot analysis of my field note from that day, I write: ‘Ralf’s view is completely opposite to my understanding of productive imagination’. Does the Situational Approach not explicitly promote creative activities, to not merely stick to story-telling but to engage in active story-building? Then why compartmentalize these narratives, shut them down for productive interrelations?

In the light of the expanded conceptual framework presented in the last chapter, I would re-situate my on-the-spot analysis and suggest a more relational-processual reading: That what both Ralf and Axel might have really feared was that the children's overtly creative engagements may conflict with one of the daycare's primary directionalities, i.e., to prepare the children for what will be expected of them in the near future and circumvent fear of failure. If Eric, for instance, never learned that the knights lived in a historical epoch in which cars did not exist yet, his perspective might be strongly contested by his later school teachers. It might be contested even earlier, when meeting peers or other adults who challenge his imaginative combination of both epochs (just as Peter was heavily challenged when it came to classify the beastly descent of Sonic, the Hedgehog; cf. Chimirri, 2013a; see above). Particularly throughout Western nations, we human beings sociomaterially arrange our contextual practices in strongly compartmentalized ways. Since there are diverse ideologies in play across the various practices, some certainties that are valid or commonsensical across most practices one conducts one's everyday life through also facilitates collaboration – among other that knights did *definitely not* battle each other in stock cars. Then again, if it was an adult coming up with the idea of transferring a medieval knight into contemporary times, in which both the knight and a car (or many cars) meet, suddenly the idea might turn out to be a relatively successful movie production – as happened with the French comedy *Les Visiteurs en Amérique* from 2001. So why is the radically novel-imaginative-creative so feared when children come up with it, try to bridge across situations and epochs, across transcontextual and multimodal experiences-imaginings? And why is it potentially celebrated when adults engage in similar ideas, especially through art? Maybe, the way we human beings have sociomaterially arranged particularly the pedagogical-educational practices does not allow for *taking the time* to meaningfully relate to the sense-meaning-processes the children wish to engage in, to meaningfully relate to the impressions-expressions of their imaginative powers – and thereby to actualize the children's virtualities together with them. Furthermore, we adults are certain we know better, and in some regards, we might – for instance what common sense is needed not to get yourself killed at home or in traffic, what common sense is needed so as to be able to collaborate through bureaucratically organized collectives of the nation state, etc. Meanwhile, we might forget that this common sense is negotiable, changeable, and at times it might make sense-meaning to challenge a collective's common sense, to evaluate its livability, its emancipatory potentialities, its societal relevance. Sure, establishing common sense is necessary, but once it is

compartmentalized, is absolutely taken-for-granted in one contextual practice, is practically immune to outside challenges, this situated knowledge becomes authoritative, static, and thereby *de-humanizing* – it loses its processuality, its ability to be developed and transformed for the better. So why not collaborate more actively with the children, let them challenge common sense *together with us adults*, so that we can mutually learn that sociomaterial arrangements – including media artifacts – are always already there to be revised and enhanced? In relation to Langdon Winner's (2007; see below) call for making the right to shape technology a fundamental Human Right, one might ask: Should children then not have the same right to shape or co-arrange technology as adults do?

Chapter 4:

Collaborators conducting their everyday lives with media arti- facts

In the last chapter, I concluded that what daycare children and all other human beings essentially try to develop are their emancipatory-democratic possibilities for expanding given sociomaterial arrangements for collaborating through collaborating with others. In order to do so, we human beings relate to already established sense-meaning-relations for these sociomaterial arrangements, learn together about historically developed cultural understandings through the process of relating-to other situated first-person perspectives. We learn about that which was maintained and appears maintainable, meaningful to uphold, and meanwhile we seek to impress-express our first-person perspective through contributing to and thereby co-transforming these sense-meaning-relations.

Communication researchers Meikle & Young (2012) similarly highlight the relevance of studying the processual interrelatedness of maintaining and transforming sense-meaning-relations, which to them lies at the heart of media and communication studies:

“[T]ensions and interplay between contestation and continuity are central to the study of media and communication. From one perspective, communication is all about contestation, about transformation, about the exchange of information and meaning. ‘Communication,’ writes Klaus Bruhn Jensen, ‘is the human capacity to consider how things might be different’ (2010: 6). Much media use can be understood as the sending of messages across space for the management of complex societies [...]. Messages, information, communication itself are ‘differences that make a difference’ (Jensen 2010: 40). But from another perspective, communication is also about maintaining continuity, about maintaining society and culture through time [...]. In this view, communication is not just about bringing about transformation through the dissemination of new information, but also about maintaining relationships, about maintaining the continuity of cultures through time” (Meikle & Young, 2012, p. 9).

With reference to Danish communication researcher Klaus Bruhn Jensen and his theory on *Media Convergence*, Meikle & Young underline the relevance of communication for exchanging and contrasting one's own perspective with another's, for contesting or challenging one's own common sense through media-distributed objectifications. The authors emphasize that communication furthermore serves the purpose of maintaining relationships and continuing culture – ergo: in upholding common sense with one another. While Meikle & Young highlight the two-sidedness of communication, whose function is to both contest and maintain, I add that *upholding some common sense is necessary for contesting and challenging this very same common sense*, so as to in turn renegotiate and thereby transform common sense in collaboration with others. The purpose of the two-sided communication process is to collaboratively experience-imagine an alternative common sense through co-creating objectifications which impress-express prototypical artifacts-practices for overcoming jointly shared struggles.

Communication or rather a communicative action can, in this sense then, be as little as a gesture indicating one's love and care, which is picked up by an other who partly and partially shares the same common sense, feels reassured, and smiles. No matter what, the gesture served to maintain the established (loving) common sense. However, this gesture could have been novel to this relationship, only imagined by the one agent in relation to an experience, and then put into communicative action. The receiver may be able to meaningfully relate to the gesture, for instance because it builds on a cultural reference that the dyad has not experientially shared before, but which both have experienced elsewhere. It may also be a completely novel gesture to the receiver, s_he may be surprised, overwhelmed, feel challenged by it. Nevertheless, the gesture builds on the already established, loving common sense: The receiver may – irrespective of its novelty – read it as loving gesture in that very moment, as the dyad jointly shared a transcontextually and multimodally experienced-imagined background with one another. In case it was novel-surprising-challenging-contesting, the intended receiver may at a later stage meaningfully re-relate to this gesture, re-producing an artifact which denotes a process that the other may or may not be able to re-relate to (as the initial gesture might have been unconsciously re-produced). The gesture and with it the related process, the situation in which it emerged, may become part of the dyad's common sense, if both are able to meaningfully re-relate to this shared process. If only one of the two is able to re-relate to it, re-produces it, the other may enact a different communicative mode and – for

instance – *ask* about the context of the gesture or rather its underlying process. The gesture may thereby become part of the dyad’s shared common sense – however, the modal quality of the initial experience has by that time changed, as also verbal artifacts have been added to the sense-meaning-relations established in relation to the gesture.

I agree with Knoblauch (2013; see Chapter 3), hence, that communication denotes both the process of objectifying as well as the objectified material carriers re-produced (or ‘prod-used’; cf. below) throughout this process. Objectifying process and objectified snapshot-artifact are inseparably intertwined, may only be alienated from each other when ignoring the processuality of the artifact, of the object – for instance a gesture. Seen in this light, the creation or rather re-production of every artifact is a communicative action which is in and for itself processual and which *potentially* and *virtually* (sensu Kontopodis, 2012a) serves the purpose of conducting one’s everyday life. Every artifact, be it ever so unnoticeable, hidden, small, every word, deed, wink of an eye, *can* be communicative and collaborative – if there is someone co-present who accentuates it.

Meanwhile, objectifying a process in an artifact – alienating an artifact from its re-production process – can also be liberating or emancipatory, as developmental theoretical psychologist Athanasios Marvakis (2013) notes. In my interpretation of his conference paper, this implies for my hitherto deliberations: An artifact can wander, may travel across time and space, while the underlying processes were situated. Artifacts may therefore offer re-relating potentials to a greater number of potential collaborators, who in turn are alienated from its underlying transcontextual and multimodal process. Thence, the sturdier an artifact, the longer-lasting its materiality, the more often it may be re-produced across collectives, the more it may be maintained and rendered powerful in the sense of meaningful to many. Yet, the more perspectives may relate to it, the more the receivers are alienated from the underlying process, the more the originally intended sense-meaning-relations may be transformed – the more it may be differentiated. To me, then, *the risk lies foremost in neglecting the artifact’s underlying processuality, in methodologically-analytically neglecting the dialectical unity of production and reproduction, of alienation and emancipation, the artifact’s historicity and relationality*: If we hypostatize human relations to an artifact or a sociomaterial arrangement as always already given, as immovable, unchangeable, static, then the alienated artifact may lose its emancipatory relevance, its relevance for meaningfully re-relating-to it collaboratively, so as to *play* with its sense-meaning-relations, re-situate it together according to currently shared needs, concerns, hopes – so as to productively transform it.

What the upcoming analyses of children's everyday situations interrelated with media artifacts are to show, is that the children in many ways approach media just like any other sociomaterial arrangement. And in many ways, media artifacts are not any different than any other complex ensembles of objectified communicative artifacts. But what is specifically unique about them is that *their intended societal purpose is to communicate across time and space*, is that they are sociomaterially arranged so as to promote communication via (alienated) material carriers, irrespective of the underlying relational processes. In that sense, media artifacts' power and mandate to maintain and differentiate a culturally de-limited ensemble of sense-meaning-relations is taken-for-granted, thereby pre-arranging the scope of imaginable possibilities for collaborating through them. This specificity, the intended directionality of facilitating human communication across time and space, goes hand in hand with their power to define what communication itself is: What is essentially communicated is 'content' and 'information'. What seems to in turn be taken-for-granted, naturalized, are the communicative modes through which these contents and information emerge, the material carriers through which these are communicated. So while content and information are strongly contested, for instance among the daycare's adult participants, the communicative 'form' and the ensuing de-limitations regarding the afforded modes of experiencing-imagining are widely accepted. So *while both 'content' and 'form' are sociomaterially arranged in relation to each other and consequently depend on each other, 'content' foregrounds the social aspects while 'form' foregrounds the material aspects*, and the latter appear mostly immovable, unchangeable, ontologically given.

The children I collaborated with did partly and partially take these sociomaterial meta-arrangements for granted as well. But the children more outspokenly struggled with the common sense they were suggested to subject themselves to: They *struggled not only with the contradictoriness of 'content', but also with the contradictoriness of 'form', ergo of the communicative mode sociomaterially afforded by a media artifact in this specific relational ensemble*. This may be due to the fact that young children, irrespective of current design approaches which conceptualize every media user as content producer (catchword *user-generated content* or *UGC*; e.g., Östman 2012), are granted the least possibilities to themselves create such content: The usual communicative methods (or 'cultural techniques') needed to engage in content production via digital media – most basically: writing – are only partly at their disposal yet. Other-than-usual communicative methods and modes are therefore foregrounded in the children's processes of relating-to media artifacts.

It is these alternative methods and modes that I set out to explore when coming to the daycare. I now draw on the advanced conceptual-analytical framework to re-situate the situations experienced – situations in which the children as well as the adult participants ‘played’ with and in relation to media artifacts, challenging their sociomaterial qualities, struggling with their modal de-limitations, the contradictory directionalities sociomaterialized through them, often together. The quest throughout these analyses is to take their perspectives seriously by taking their collaborations across age thresholds seriously.

Exemplary situation analyses: Media artifacts co-arranging a daycare's sociomaterial interplay

“For many people, the media are no longer just what they watch, listen to or read – the media are now what people *do*” (Meikle & Young, 2012, p. 10).

When embarking on my study, I decided not to preemptively define digital media artifacts. It was an analytical decision taken so as to be open-minded towards the children’s perspectives and actions, in relation to both the media artifacts’ ‘content’ and ‘form’. My own perspective on media artifacts was to be challenged, by engaging in the children’s media-related activities. It is nevertheless against the background of my prior understanding of media artifacts I now come to analyze the children’s perspectives. These preconceptions are more or less re-constructible in terms of what Livingstone (2005) writes about an *infrastructural understanding of new media*, which she co-developed with Leah Lievrouw (cf. also Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006). They shared similar concerns as I did at the outset of my project, concerns that media may be understood in an overly technical and particularly one-sided manner. Therefore they “argued against defining new media in terms of particular technical features, channels or content and, further, against both technological and social determinisms when accounting for change” (Livingstone, 2005, p. 1). Building on Susan Leigh Star’s and Geoffrey Bowker’s concept of *infrastructure* (Star & Bowker, 2002; cf. also Star, 1999; Star & Bowker, 1999), Livingstone and Lievrouw instead “sought to integrate technological, social, political and economic factors, analysing information and communication technologies in their associated social contexts” (Livingstone, 2005, p. 1). Livingstone continues:

“These communication and information infrastructures, we suggested, have three components: the *artefacts or devices* used to communicate or convey information (raising questions of design and development); the *activities and practices* in which people engage to communicate or share information (raising questions of cultural and social context); and the *social arrangements or organizational forms* that develop around those devices and practices raising questions of institutional organisation, power and governance” (ibid.).

What needs to be investigated, then, are the interrelations between these three component processes, while the research questions should be grounded in the general public’s “everyday experiences, needs and hopes” (ibid.; for this focus, cf. also Silverstone, 2005; Bakardjieva, 2005; Hartmann, 2009) in relation to new media. Thereby, they avoid fixating beforehand any set relationships between the three components, setting the analytical focus on the the interrelations of “both social shaping and social consequences” (Livingstone, 2005, p. 1). Meanwhile, Livingstone emphasizes, it should be recognized that “artefacts, activities and arrangements are inherently culturally and historically conditioned” and that the “dynamic interrelations [between the three component processes] are far from infinitely flexible” (ibid.). Thus, she adds, “our stress on the term infrastructure is intended to capture the ways in which these artefacts, activities and social arrangements (and the relations among them) become routine, established, institutionalised, variously fixed and so taken for granted in everyday life” (ibid.).

The characteristics of new media, at the same time, erode the traditional linear sender-receiver-model of communication: The ‘audience’ of one-to-many communication channels (television, radio, newspapers, etc.) are now given the possibility to impress-express their diverse perspectives through new media. So while the traditional audience was also socioculturally embedded, made viewing-reading-listening both a singular and a collective experience (in my words: through retrospectively-collaboratively re-relating to the viewed-read-listened-to), new media now explicitly – i.e. sociomaterially or infrastructurally – account for this diversity of perspectives:

“In so far as they engage with new media, we can start by assuming people are diverse, motivated, resistant, literate, and so forth. Similarly, mediated content and forms are now socially diversified (rather than directed primarily at the masses), channels are technologically convergent (rather than distinct systems), and mediated communication processes are interactive (many-to-many rather than one-to-many with separate producer and receiver roles)” (Livingstone, 2005, p. 2).

New media infrastructurally allow for a diversity of media-related activities which are to reflect the diversity of perspectives. Livingstone notes that therefore, the ‘audience’ term may be out-dated for labeling the users, as it does not capture this diversity. Instead, she proposes to think of the users as *people*, since people “are at the centre of new media practices, design and social arrangements across all spheres of society – as workers, students, entrepreneurs, information-seekers, parents, political activists, fun-seekers, criminals, even researchers” (p. 3). And she continues: “*People* privileges no one academic discipline, asserts no new jargon, takes their plurality and diversity for granted, and includes us, the observers, within the analysis” (p. 2). If media-interested researchers work with the term ‘people’, they can account for the multiplicity of other sociomaterial arrangements media are interwoven with, for instance how people are (sociomaterially) positioned as ‘citizen’, as bearers of legislatively ascribed rights, but also as someone ‘creative’. And most centrally, they can take into account how they themselves – the researchers – are just as much part of this audience as the other people are (cf. also Chimirri, 2013b).

Research’s focus must thus be put on how people engage with new media and on their “creativity in moulding technological innovations to their needs and contexts” (Livingstone, 2005, p. 3). However, as already emphasized, “artefacts, activities and arrangements are inherently culturally and historically conditioned” and “dynamic interrelations [between the three component processes] are far from infinitely flexible” (p. 1). *Just as new media are not entirely novel, so can the activities people engage in through new media not be entirely novel.* They build on the already existing artifacts-activities-arrangements, therefore also future activities can be rather understood as creatively recombinant: “*New media artefacts, activities and arrangements are recombinant in character, socially shaped by what already exists, what goes before*” (p. 3). The point of research (and policy) is then to work out and promote critical and productive literacies, ergo developing alternative readings of the already existing artifacts-activities-arrangements which allow for questioning and eventually overcoming “the persistent reproduction of inequality among the population” (ibid.) through creatively recombining the already given sociomaterial relations.

Livingstone’s focus on *people* furthermore implies that it cannot be up to a few, an elite, to engage in this creative re-combination. After all, media are co-constitutive of our overall relations to the world, we always already live in a world pervaded by media, if we want to or not (cf. also Deuze, 2012):

“New media artefacts, activities and arrangements are ubiquitous in their social consequences. Our point here is to stress the ubiquity of the social consequences re-

ardless of whether or not individuals are ‘users’ or ‘nonusers’. While some play a greater role than others in shaping the new media environment, all must live in it, though again the inequalities matter. And what of changing boundary between on and offline, or new and old, or mediated and face-to-face? What are the consequences of ubiquitous information and communication for traditional/alternative activities and arrangements? How are the latter *remediated*, and how is the resulting array of *opportunities* altered? Particularly, do ubiquitous information and communication enhance *choice*, furthering the rights agenda, enabling and empowering people? Or does choice serve other interests, confusing and undermining opportunities, enabling exploitation and disempowering people?” (Livingstone, 2005, p. 4).

There are sociomaterial inequalities in the re-production and transformation of shaping the media (and the overall) environment, and furthermore does not everyone care about and accentuate the media environment. But new media are part of everyday artifacts-activities-arrangements, of sociomaterial human living. Fundamental political-ethical questions as raised by Livingstone – especially whether ubiquitous information and communication enhances civic participation – become questions pivotal to all people, to all participants, as all are already involved-involving in the process of *mediatization* (e.g., Krotz, 2009).

Many of the concepts and suggestions Livingstone (together with Lievrouw) proposes to work with resonate strongly with the conceptual-analytical framework I have proposed throughout this dissertation so far. However, some *incongruities* also emerge, which may be due to differing ontological-epistemological presumptions in relation to what *subjectivity* implies (cf. also Chapter 1):

1. Most importantly, to me the ‘people’ are human beings participating in and contributing to praxis, i.e. across a variety of contextual practices. It follows that *participation goes beyond ‘civic participation’*, is an ontologically given process, inherent to the process of conducting everyday life.
2. Expanding the scope of imaginable possibilities for communicatively acting and collaborating transcends such notions as ‘opportunities’ or ‘choices’, in the sense that *opportunities and choices are something one is confronted with, not something one co-develops*.
3. Furthermore, the *expansion of the scope simultaneously implies a de-limitation of the scope* – what is needed are literacies-concepts which assist in focusing on the meaningful, the societally relevant aspects in life, which

assist in collaboratively re-negotiating one's own ideology according to a shared hope/directionality.

4. I agree that the interrelations between artifacts, activities, and arrangements are not infinitely flexible, as re-combinations or re-arrangements of these sociomaterially arranged relations build on the already given, are situated in the existing relations (as also Marx stressed). However, these sociomaterially arranged relations are not historically and culturally conditioned, as Livingstone writes, but historically and culturally *mediated through meanings accentuated in situated ways*. There is a difference here: conditions seem ubiquitous and almost immovable – mediations (in the broadest sense) are situated sense-meaning-relations for conditions which are always re-negotiable across the diversity of perspectives which maintain-transform them.

Hence, instead of focusing on the interplay of artifacts, activities, and arrangements, we media-interested researchers should focus on creative-recombinant activities, ergo on the ongoing collaborative re-negotiation of human sense-meaning-relations to media artifacts. These *media artifacts are in turn interrelated with a multiplicity of other artifacts and appear as inherently contradictory sociomaterial arrangements, as a relational ensemble affording contradictory directionalities for acting through them*. We should focus on these activities, *media-artifacts-in-practice*, because in any way, this is the only possibility we can 'access' this interrelation, as we ourselves are bound to our humanness, our perspectivity, to the situatedness of our own relations to the (mediatized) world. And as also Livingstone (2005) emphasizes with the 'people' term, we researchers should not forget that we are not merely observers of these practices co-arranged by media artifacts, but actual participants in and contributors to the investigated sociomaterial practice (Chimirri, 2013b).

Throughout the upcoming analyses of re-situated phenomena descriptions, I wish to primarily discuss the specificity of (new) digital media artifacts in comparison to any other sociomaterially arranged artifact the children (as well as the other participants) in the daycare relate to. One of the reasons I refrained from clearly defining what new media or digital media are to me in the beginning of my project was my premise to explore this specificity, the everyday relevance of new media artifacts, together with the children. Furthermore, the definitions I found most helpful to work with were the rather flexible ones, for example the following:

“New media (with 'the Internet' at the top of the list as a kind of archetype) have become everyday technologies, thoroughly embedded and routinised in the societies where they are most widely used. New media have not replaced older media, any more than broadcasting replaced print in the mid-20th century. Rather, people's information and communication environments have become ever more individualized and commodified, integrating print, audio, still and moving images, broadcasting, telecommunications, computing, and other modes and channels of communication and information sharing” (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006, p. 1).

New media are everyday technologies, their use is thoroughly embedded and to some extent routinized. However, I find that the sense-meaning-relations for these new media in – for instance – the daycare practice I exploratively participated in are not as routinized as Lievrouw & Livingstone insinuate. *All participants struggle with making these artifacts meaningful for their conducts of everyday life with others across contextual practices*, their sense-meaning-relations are constantly being re-negotiated and thus becoming. Meanwhile, these artifacts as well as the relations to them converge into each other, into other sociomaterial arrangements, to the extent that they become almost indistinguishable from other co-arranging arrangements. Whether they further, for example, individualization and commodification, is an issue to be explored collaboratively, particularly with the children. The convergence aspect seems to be pivotal – thus new media are often also termed *convergent media* (e.g., Flew, 2009; Jensen, 2010; Meikle & Young, 2012; see above). These convergent media may gather activities related to other sociomaterial arrangements (including other media artifacts) in ever fewer devices, most evidently the (mobile) personal computer, the smartphone, the tablet.

Could it be that these newer convergent media more meaningfully reflect praxis including the single subject's multimodally experienced-imagined conduct of everyday life? If so, how can we purposefully collaborate through increasingly converging media, artifacts which potentially re-present our inherently contradictory conducts of everyday life in more meaningful ways, but simultaneously bring together and interweave an unfathomable variety of contradictory directionalities for acting through them?

My hope for this last chapter is to offer a glimpse of how the expanded conceptual-analytical framework may be rendered particularly meaningful for the analysis of pedagogical-educational practices which are sociomaterially co-arranged through an ensemble of media artifacts. The point is not to find a more precise explanation for what these (converging) media artifacts are, but to instead focus on how these media artifacts emerge as meaningful throughout a daycare practice's sociomaterial interplay, how they co-arrange the in-

terweaving of conducts of everyday life. I.e., I will focus on what the human beings I collaborated with actually did and attempted to do through these artifacts so as to further their collaborations – and on how specific media artifacts both possibilitated and inhibited the intended emancipatory directionalities of both the daycare practice and of my research project.

Struggling with media-related concerns and media-promoted competition

John and Bobby are friends, close friends: They are part of one pre-arranged daycare group, but also engage in many activities together outside of the group. One of their favorite pastimes during my presence is to play Mario Kart, the video game first developed by Nintendo in 1992, in which Mario and his brother Luigi race their friends and foes from the legendary Super Mario game series on little go-karts – and in which they nudge each other and throw tortoiseshells as well as other objects in order to win the race. Both Bobby and John seem to know the game very well, and they refer to it and spin it off multiple times throughout their various joint ventures. Interestingly, Bobby owns the video game for his Nintendo DS portable console and has also played it on Nintendo's Wii system several times, while John has – according to his father – no console system at home and is also not supposed to play video games anywhere else. But irrespective of whether John 'truly knows' the game or not, he and Bobby are able to draw on the game's contents to collaboratively re-arrange their joint activities.

Usually this collaboration runs rather smoothly, except for little details which tend to create very short-termed conflicts and call for a re-negotiation. But mostly, they both seem to really enjoy these collaborations. One sunny summer day, however, the conflictual element of the collaboration temporarily hinders a further collaboration. When I join the two, they seem to still have a more or less harmonious interplay going, gently nudging themselves in the garden. Then, Bobby nudges John harder, almost bringing John off balance and to the ground. John looks like he is not enjoying the activity anymore, but Bobby nudges him once more. John tells Bobby to stop. And I ask Bobby why he is nudging John so hard. Bobby answers that one needs to nudge the other hard so as to end up first in the race.

Meanwhile, John stands next to the two one-seat swings, which are set up in the midst of a sand pit and are occupied by two other boys. Both he and Bobby look pensive, maybe sad, are quiet. Suddenly Bobby asks John about his age. John says that he is 5. Bobby claims that this is not true. He cannot believe that John already turned 5, as John did not celebrate his birthday. John persists on him being 5, and says that he did celebrate. Bobby calls him a liar, himself looking really sad and torn. He says, more to himself than to any other one of the participants, that John often lies, and that John laughs about him. And when he laughs, he lies.

The boys on the swings underline that John is right about his age. Also I try to tell Bobby that to me, it seems as if John was not lying. John takes over one of the swings, which was just given away by another child. That re-directs the conflict to turn-taking on swings. Now Bobby accuses John of always using the swing, and of swinging too long. The discussion goes on. At one point, another boy on the swing looks at my video camera and asks whether I can take photos with it. He laughs, and John laughs as well. Now Bobby accuses John of again laughing about him, and calls him once more a liar.

Then Bobby re-directs the conversation to what might be underlying the conflict: That John never comes to visit him, because, supposedly, he lives too far away. And if John does not stop lying, he will never ever be able to visit Bobby, which to me sounds like both an invitation and a ban. Slowly I get the impression that I can relate to this conflictual collaboration's premises-reasons-relations. Bobby's accusation of lying is also connected to the visits that do not take place: For instance does he accuse John of lying about the distance to his home – John had used this as explanation for not being able to visit Bobby.

Bobby then starts using a wooden stick to throw up sand. The sand sometimes hits John, who got off the swing. John tells Bobby to stop throwing with sand. Bobby does not stop, grins. Then John uses his foot to throw sand on the kneeling Bobby. I ask Bobby how he can be so sure that John is lying about his age. John once more emphasizes that he is not lying. Bobby says that he does not believe John, because John always nettles him by laughing.

John leaves, looking frustrated. He says that he leaves Bobby alone now. Bobby throws the stick away. He picks up his matchbox car which represents Lightning McQueen, the main character from the animation movie *Cars*. He makes the car roll on the side of the swing construction. Sometimes he looks over his shoulder to see what John is doing. I ask him whether he is sad now. With a soft voice, he says he is not – because John is lying. John is lying about his age. And he is lying because he is not going to school! With 5 one goes to school, but since John is not at school, he cannot be 5. Suddenly our conversation is interrupted, as a pedagogue approaches me and asks for help with a computer problem.

The unfolding of events described here could be termed a *crisis* or *drama*, which Kontopodis defines – with reference to Vygotsky – as “an intensive experience of conflict, contradiction and qualitative change that leads to unpredictable, yet unforeseen results” (Kontopodis, 2012a, p. 91). It is a *personal developmental drama* for both boys, it is a shared crisis – and yet it is not only personal: “[A] *crisis* is experienced subjectively as a *personal drama* and at the same time reflects broader socio-economic and ethical political contradictions. A *personal* or *developmental crisis* is part of a broader crisis” (p. 11). Kon-

topodis argues that a personal crisis reflects a societal crisis, and in his book he relates a variety of youngsters' personal crises experienced in pedagogical-educational arrangements to "nowadays' crisis of neoliberalism" (ibid.).

In the analysis of the above interplay between John and Bobby, I would not take my generalizations that far. However, their conflictual collaboration was undoubtedly interdependent of a number of other conducts of everyday life, and subsequently of other conflictual collaborations. What only slowly emerged as being the conflict's catalyst, namely the facts that John never visited Bobby and that Bobby was not invited to celebrate John's birthday, fueled by Bobby's premonition that John may soon leave the daycare institution for going to school, interrelates their conflict with the conducts of everyday life of John's father and of Bobby's brother Peter. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Bobby's brother Peter was considered to be 'problematic', to display 'fits of rage', to suffer from a 'disability in the social-emotional area'. As I argue in Chimirri (2013a), this evaluation was closely related to his evident interest in video game and TV characters other participants could little relate to. Somehow, Peter got caught in a web of hypostatizations which neither he nor his family nor the pedagogues were able to untangle.

Meanwhile, the web of hypostatizations had also been thrown over the brothers' single mother and over Bobby himself. One of the adamant prejudices maintained was that both brothers were allowed to play every possible video game and watch every possible show on TV that they wanted, suggesting that the mother disposed of too little resources to keep the boys otherwise busy. When I was visiting the family at their place, each of the brothers did indeed possess a portable Nintendo DS console, and they were very keen on showing me what they were all able to do with their consoles and especially their games – i.e., how 'able' they were in competing with the console's 'artificial intelligence'. The mother – who was the parent most interested in engaging in a longer-term collaboration with me – also admitted that sometimes, she needed to 'give in' to her sons' wish to play on the DS longer than she considered to be 'good for them'. Meanwhile, she definitely was not the only parent facing that struggle in daycare – nevertheless she felt like the only one facing this struggle (cf. below).

A consequence of these hypostatized, seemingly immovable positionings of Bobby's family was that the pedagogues were very concerned not only for Peter's, but also for Bobby's further educational trajectory. Some of the pedagogues were stricken by almost every *media panic* (Drotner, 1999) discursively present in relation to children's 'excessive' video game and television enactments. Most prominent were the panics already brought forward by Ralf and

Axel in the last interlude, ergo fears about children succumbing to *sensory overload* or *information overload* (re-currently re-suggested: e.g., Lipowski, 1974; Halpern, 1975; Thomas, 2007; cf. also Cardany, 2010) and about children losing their ability to differentiate between the ‘real’ and the ‘virtual’ world (for an alternative approach to overcoming the latter divide, cf. Søndergaard, 2013). Meanwhile, these media-child-related concerns were not exclusive to the pedagogues: The most skeptical comments were put forward by John’s father, who told me that based on everything he had seen-read-heard, media contents are the chief cause for a degenerating youth. For instance, children increasingly lose respect for the elderly and their agendas, and they tend to just pick up and repeat curse words found on TV shows. The father had already discussed this concern thoroughly with the pedagogues, as he believed that the daycare did not safeguard John enough from the ill media influences he experienced through other children.

Seen in this relational-processual light, then, first speculations about the reasons for why Bobby and John were not able to see each other outside of the daycare’s premises are substantiated: John’s father fears that John might ‘degenerate’ in case he spends too much time with media-passionate Bobby and his ‘problematic’ brother Peter. Bobby is in turn afraid to lose his friend John as soon as the latter goes to school, as the bonds were not strengthened beyond the daycare context. Bobby’s intense frustrations may arise from his impression-expression that he and John are not able to collaboratively overcome this crisis, this conflict – they cannot develop their relationship further in this regard, not without the collaboration of others. The crisis is indeed not exclusively Bobby’s, and also not exclusively Bobby’s and John’s – *it is connected to crises between families and families, families and pedagogues, in relation to the sociomaterial arrangement of the daycare practice, including its legislative and pedagogical set-up*. Bobby and John’s crisis is an impression-expression of contradictory directionalities as premises-for-collaborating across a variety of conducts of everyday life, coming together and clashing in this one specific situation.

Also the way the dispute between John and Bobby was settled interrelates their personal crisis to a broader crisis. If analyzed in isolation, their nudging each other, throwing sand, etc. could easily be misread as primarily triggered by their strong interest in playing a competitive racing game like Mario Kart. Competition is certainly also promoted through media, e.g. video games, quiz shows, sports broadcasts, etc. But it is re-produced in many more arenas of everyday life as well, permeates our sociomaterial arrangements to a large extent. Related questions are: Who’s got more power, money, influence, participatory possibilities, etc.? Who is more loved? Who is higher up the social lad-

der? Who is one's *best* friend? Competition lies at the very heart of how we human beings have been and are arranging our sociomaterial relations to the world – political scientists and philosophers claim that across the globe, we (increasingly come to) live in *competition states* (e.g., Cerny, 1990, 1997; Horsfall, 2011, 2013; Pedersen, 2011).¹¹² Particularly in pedagogical-educational practices, it becomes evident that competition is a main arranging principle throughout many states, through practices of prompting, (standardized) testing, and comparing (quantified) results – a principle which also surfaces across children's perspectives on testing situations (cf. Kousholt, 2013). After all, knowledge is re-currently conceptualized as a resource for competing on the international marketplace, reflected in terms such as 'knowledge economy', 'knowledge management', 'knowledge society' (cf. Peters, 2001; also Liessmann, 2006).¹¹³

In almost all varieties of games, furthermore, competition plays a central role.¹¹⁴ Therefore, it is hardly surprising to find competitive elements in this re-situated phenomena description re-presenting a detail of Bobby and John's ongoing conflictual collaboration, their 'friendship'. All sociomaterial arrangements and most obviously games can be read and acted out in competitive ways, here even the sand and the swing – *albeit that may not be the intended purpose or directionality of these arrangements*. While during my participation, playing with sand usually served the purpose of exploring its material qualities so as to collaborate on co-constructing by re-arranging it as a new ensemble (for instance as a castle, an imagined cake), using the swing could be associated with what French philosopher Roger Caillois (1961) called *ilinx*, ergo testing the limits of one's vertigo. But also Mario Kart or video racing games in general enact *ilinx*. Competition is thus only one element of gaming, however an element which is easily foregrounded, which multimodally suggests itself for establishing common sense among various players in relation to the game's sociomaterial arrangement. In Mario Kart DS, for instance, the winner of a race looks incredibly happy: The winner jubilates while a big '1.' appears on the screen. Meanwhile, the other racers shake their heads. Additionally racing

¹¹² Cf. also the 2010 Special Issue on *Understanding Competition States* published in *Policy Studies*, 31(1).

¹¹³ One of the interesting paradoxes of the 'knowledge society' is that while human beings increasingly rely on 'expert knowledge' in arranging their conducts of everyday life, thus raising the value or relevance of such knowledge, much of it becomes increasingly questionable, de-valued through the monetary influence exerted on science through the industrial-economic sector, thereby undermining the assumed independence of 'expert knowledge' (Kohlenberg & Musharbash, 2013, p. 13).

¹¹⁴ If one follows Caillois' classification of games, however, competition or *agon* is merely one out of four play forms (cf. Caillois, 1961). For instance, a race game like *Mario Kart* may be understood as a combination of *agon* and *ilinx*, ergo a game causing the feeling of vertigo, e.g. through fast movements. Although it may be worthwhile analyzing these games in terms of Caillois' classification, I cannot offer such an analysis here.

and other sports games always display numerous statistics which compare the different players' quantifiable merits. In Mario Kart one's current race ranking is displayed during the race and one's overall ranking thereafter.

In the end, though, Mario Kart is certainly not the most competition-promoting sociomaterial arrangement. More or less everything can be turned into a competition as soon as the *process of comparing* does not serve to differentiate and contrast, to discomfort and question the taken-for-granted, but is instead enacted to compare one's measurable or quantifiable skills, competences, friends, properties, etc., thus hypostatizing one's own and the others' becomings and (joint) doings. Overall, then, competition can always be part of conflict and consequently of conflictual collaboration. At times, competition – e.g. through games – may be conducive to establishing common sense with others, as grounds for collaborating. Nevertheless does a competition only seem to become meaningfully productive when understood as characterizing an ongoingly changing, re-situated, re-negotiated prototypical situation in the ongoing process of collaborating with each other. But irrespective of what verdict one decides to announce in relation to the ubiquitous phenomenon of human competition, such phenomena and their contradictory directionalities must be analyzed and discussed in its relational ensemble, societally, across age divides – as they clearly affect everyone.

Struggling with a snapshot-artifact's de-limited communicative modes

In the last re-situated phenomena description around Bobby & John's conflict, I noted that my presence as well as the presence of my video camera clearly played into the situation's sociomaterial interplay. On the one hand, both sought me out as a collaboration partner, who was to support either perspective. What I attempted to do, instead of siding with one party, was to question the preclusions particularly brought forward by Bobby – I attempted to keep the meaningful dialog alive, as part of their conflictual collaboration. On the other hand, the fact that I was filming the situation simultaneously intensified the conflict, as a fellow participant (the other boy on the swing) spotted my camera and asked whether I could take a photo of him swinging. Meanwhile he laughed, and John joined the laughter. Bobby, however, was still troubled by the assumption that John frequently tended to lie to him and laugh about him, so that he mistook John's laughing at my camera for John laughing about Bobby, thus contributing to Bobby's frustration. As highlight-

ed throughout Chapter 3, I could not circumvent interweaving my conduct of everyday life with all the other daycare participants' conducts of everyday life. The media artifacts I myself introduced into the practice played a *specific double role* here: As shown, they became the *point of departure for situations that else would not have emerged*; and additionally, they *co-arranged my own perspective on my daycare participation by co-creating modally de-limited artifacts for me to retrospectively relate to*. This substantiates that contradictory directionalities-for-acting, both action possibilities and limitations, are relationally-processually sociomaterialized through media artifacts.

The means I enacted for co-constituting my 'empirical data' were a digital video camera, a digital photo camera, a digital audio recorder, and my paper notebook. Each of these means turned into ends in and for themselves at some point throughout my participation. For instance, the digital audio recorder provided to me by my university emitted a clearly discernible rolling noise every five minutes or so, which called for wonderment on the side of my conversation-communication-collaboration partners and a rather provisional than professional explanation from my side. So *while I enacted the audio recorder, it co-enacted the situation and specifically the conversation recorded* (on the reciprocal two-sidedness of enactments, cf. Højgaard & Søndergaard, 2011). However, this would also hold true if the audio recorder did not 'disturb' the conversation: Its presence alone, even if indiscernible for one of the conversation partners, would co-enact the situation – or at least co-enact the data file re-presenting the situation. When re-relating to the recorded experience in relation to re-situated past-present-future-relations, then, it would in any case be co-enacted by the recording device's modal possibilities and limitations. It could thus be said that neither research enacting microphones nor the microphone itself are neutral – they always co-transform the research practice (and not exclusively the *research* practice: cf. Mørck & Nissen, 2005).

The recording device most explicitly accentuated by others as action premise was my video camera. It was a rather small artifact, and its design was reminiscent of a black smartphone. Accordingly, it was first identified as a phone by many children, which may be a reason for their initially rather limited interest in that device – the phone had presumably already become too naturalized to find it meaningful for further collaboration.¹¹⁵ After a while one child found out about the camera's intended use: It spotted the small monitor, got

¹¹⁵ This limited interest was anticipated by a pedagogue I talked to on the first day of my participation, who said that the (mobile) phone is so ubiquitous in the children's everyday lives that they hardly find them fascinating anymore. In fact did I experience only one single situation in which children referred to a phone throughout a 'playful' collective engagement.

closer, double-checked whether the monitor picture corresponded to what was on the other side of the device, asked me about it. Suddenly word spread quickly among the 3 to 6 year-old children that I was in the possession of a video recording device. For some time, I struggled with participating in joint activities without having the camera explicitly accentuated. At that point in time, I believed this to be counter-productive for my research process, as it took the focus away from the children's self-initiated engagements I intended to 'observe'. Therefore I refrained from enacting the video camera on a regular basis for a while.

After a few weeks of more limited camera enactment, however, the two pedagogues who initiated the Technology Project (see below) made my video camera an explicit part of one of the group meetings with the children, as they were planning on filming their trip to a photo development studio with another video camera. They therefore used my video camera as somewhat already known or commonsensical frame of reference. Thereafter the proverbial hell really broke loose, i.e. it appeared as if nearly everyone in the daycare was finally aware of the existence of my camera. The amount of video files co-created after that discussion underline that I gave up on my initial worries to interfere with what I was observing and *re-positioned the video camera as potentially promoting further collaborations* – particularly with the children. Only one day after the group meeting, I was asked to film a group of girls while sliding and zip-lining in the garden. Later some boys – next to Bobby and John also Manuel – performed a car race for the camera by sitting on chairs, turning on imagined steering wheels, and changing gears with their imagined stick shifts. Overall, *my intended enactment of the video camera as collaboration-promoting artifact enacted novel struggles and discoveries*. For instance, many children were disappointed when realizing they could not look at the filmed material right away. Word had obviously not spread that even though the video camera's monitor displayed what it was recording at that very instant, it was not able to playback already filmed material.

This pointed to many of the children having established the expectation that cameras can generally playback recorded material. The children expected my video camera to offer the same scope of possibilities for collaborating as the digital photo cameras the pedagogues were frequently using so as to document pedagogical projects and the children's developmental steps. When using the digital photo cameras, it was common sense among the pedagogues and the children to instantly re-present the pictures taken to the children. Additionally, the pedagogues often re-produced photos taken during an excursion or a bigger project at the next group meeting, and instead of printing them, the pedagogues re-

produced them on the photo camera's display. Implicitly, the pedagogues were enacting the *stimulated recall method*, "an introspection procedure in which (normally) videotaped passages of behaviour are replayed to individuals to stimulate recall of their concurrent cognitive activity" (Lyle, 2003, p. 861). In qualitative social research, it is also common to use (auto)photography to stimulate the recall of, e.g., decision-making in technology-mediated classroom practices (e.g., Fox-Turnbull, 2009). In the Berlin daycare, the *purpose the pedagogues pursued* by enacting the recall of experiences via photograph-stimuli was to discuss the further collaboration with their children's group, i.e. to discuss how they could *build on their collectively made experiences so as to co-arrange future activities*. The method was thus seen as helpful for identifying (or rather approximating) the children's perspectives and possible *key situations* (Chapter 2), ergo to explore the children's experience-imagination accentuations as premises for future pedagogical actions.

Seen from the perspective of the pedagogues, then, the stimulated recall method's aim much resembles the aims pursued by some of the extensions of Frigga Haug's *memory work* approach (e.g., Haug, 1992, 2003). With reference to a recently published edited volume on the social and pedagogical relevance of memory work (Mitchell, Strong-Wilson, Pithouse & Allnutt, 2011), Kontopodis (2012a) describes memory work as "the conscious remembering and study of individual and shared memories, a process that allows [for example] students to see their future as something that belongs to them and that they can influence in some way for the better" (p. 66). However, in my case Kontopodis' words primarily describe the directionality the pedagogues pursued through this activity – co-arranged by the search for key situations and the pursuit to purposefully co-arrange future pedagogical projects building on these key situations. Whether the method, hence, was relevant and helpful for the children to co-arrange their future sense-meaning-relations remained undiscoverable to me. What I experienced was that the children I filmed and who wanted to look at the film right thereafter never returned to me so as to watch it on another media artifact, even though I offered it. Their interest to build on the film for further collaboration appeared to be quickly passé, so to speak.

That may support claims more or less stating that sharing digital photographic image primarily serves the purpose of living out one's narcissistic vein for a moment – particularly when connected to social networking sites (cf. Mehdizadeh, 2010). My discoveries point to a different direction: *The temporally proximal re-relation* to an audio-visually mediated, rectangularized objectification of a shared experience *may expand collaboration possibilities* – as *the current*

*collaboration process between the camera operator and the filmed subject is still accentuated by both as premise for further action and may be therefore directly and meaningfully continued. Once this collaboration has not been accentuated for a while, however, a photo may not appear very productive for actively re-relating to an ongoing collaboration. After all, it is a modally highly reduced snapshot-objectification of a multimodally and collectively experienced-imagined process. Of course, it may support the re-relating-to certain details of the collaboration – the photo as meaning thus potentially “transcends the collective and returns to constitute it as meaningful” (Nissen, 2012, p. 175; cf. Chapter 4). But the collective is constituted by a multiplicity of interrelated meanings, some of them reflecting the multimodality of the intersubjective relationship in much more complex and comprehensive ways than a photographic image. Consequently, I propose that when related-to in *temporal proximity*, a *potential snapshot-artifact* such as a photographic image *may add another productive web of meanings to the accentuated collaboration process*, throughout the ongoing communicative re-negotiations of past-present-future sense-meaning-relations. When *temporally more distal*, *re-accentuating the collaboration in meaningful ways may require more than a snapshot-artifact which references or indexes a past shared experience* – it requires collectively enacting a more complex and comprehensive web of sense-meaning-relations, one that calls for conflict and development, rather than for harmony by dwelling on and fetishizing-hypostatizing a jointly shared past experience by means of a photographic image. But also the temporally distal image-as-meaning can be read in either way: Polemically put as either a static objectification fixating a visual detail of a collaboration shared in the past, thus eventually reducing a process to a quantifiable commodity which is relatively meaningless for further developing the conflictual collaboration, an end in and for itself – or as a means for collaboratively and multimodally re-negotiating sense-meaning-relations, as part of an ongoing process, of praxis. The *processes underlying a potential snapshot-artifact*, an objectification-as-product, *can thus be re-accentuated* as part of a broader relational ensemble of artifacts – ergo as part of a sociomaterial arrangement. This predominantly social relating-to process changes the quality of the predominantly material artifact, substantiating the notion that *an artifact is never ‘purely’ material, but always already sociomaterial*.*

Thence, I suggest that neither the photo camera nor the photographic image are agents or *actants*, as proponents of Actor-Network-Theory might sustain (cf. Latour, 2005a). Instead, such media artifacts – those intended to enact communication, i.e. the photographic image, as well as those intended to co-produce such communicative material carriers, i.e. the photo camera – co-

constitute the scope of imaginable possibilities to relate to sociomaterial sense-meaning-relations differently: They *co-enact a different analytical focus for collaborating with one another*. They are co-constitutive of how we human beings imagine our relations to the world, how we re-relate to our experiences, thereby also co-constituting our current state of feeling-being. If we human beings come to primarily accentuate experiences through the necessarily limited communicative modes offered by technological objectifications, *we may 'forget' to accentuate all those other communicative modes inherent to the process of living and of co-arranging these artifacts* – they may gradually-historically take a back seat in the jointly shared common sense.

The processes of touching or smelling are just as important to conducting one's life, to living, as the processes of seeing and hearing accentuated by audio-visual artifacts are. One may say – and here I borrow from Barad (2003; cf. Chapter 3) – that the audio-visual modes of experiencing, imagining, and acting have been granted too much power. And not only that: The static, the immovable, the objectification-as-snapshot-product, has been granted too much power (ubiquitous on-line posting of photographic images, status-updates, etc.). Instead of understanding experience, imagination, action, and knowledge as collaborative processes, as intersubjectively intertwined and always already future-oriented, the ubiquity of *snapshot-artifacts* such as photographic images or video films tends to be fetishized, naturalized, taken for granted, while one's sense-meaning-relations to them are individualized. And re-iterating Nissen: "It is with the individualization of sense that meaning is left sanctified, in fact alienated, as the neutral objectivity or structure" (Nissen, 2012, p. 116), the consequence being that such snapshot-artifacts may come to appear non-ambiguous, unquestionable, unshakable, unchangeable, may not be accentuated as premises for further collaboration.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ This, among many other aspects, may be promoted by the sleek superficiality of many communicative design artifacts like the iPhone, which through its form – according to social psychologist Harald Welzer (August 11, 2013, in an interview on German television) – communicates historylessness, the communicated absence of history as well as the subsequent absence of politics (sensu Winner, 1986). But a historical (communicative re-production) process underlies every artifact, and as living implies conducting one's everyday life processually and connecting one's conduct of everyday life to others' conducts of everyday life, there is absolutely no possibility to connect to the ontogenetical becoming which have co-arranged this artifact. Through its form, so to speak, collaboration is qua design rendered as little possible as possibly possible.

Struggling with the Technology Project's teaching-learning arrangements

The pedagogical project most evidently co-constituted by my research project's intended directionality throughout my participation in the daycare was the so-called *Technology Project*, whose single elements intermittently took place over a period of almost two months. What is peculiar is that it is retrospectively impossible to pinpoint who initiated the project as project. Factually, the pedagogues who were particularly engaged in maintaining and furthering this collaboration were Babette and Eva. Both were also very engaged throughout the group discussion revolving around the media's influence on the everyday, which emerged during the staff meeting where I initially presented my research project (cf. Chapter 3). And both Babette and Eva – who supervised one of the middle-aged children's groups (4 to 5 year-olds), which was composed of around 10-15 children (sometimes befriended children joined) – showed heightened interest in collaborating with me throughout and after my stay at the daycare.

Throughout the Technology Project, Babette and Eva sought to give a trans-local and transcontextual experiential introduction into technological artifacts and technologically mediated processes necessary for looking at digital photo images. From a situated point of view they prototyped a 'best practice' for this practice. They step by step, week by week, explored another detail of the ensemble of artifacts needed to watch the photos: the battery recharger, the memory card for the photo camera, even the fuse box. These discoveries were extended to other technology-related practices, other electricity-dependent artifacts (fridge, freezer, lamps, dishwasher, ventilator, etc.), at the daycare, at home, at the photo lab – translocally or rather transcontextually.

Irrespective of the pedagogues' exploratory impetus, the processes that made up this project illustrate the contradictory directionalities that come to the fore when attempting to engage in a potentially emancipatory project with children around media artifacts, while maintaining an abstract understanding of what a pedagogical-educational project is expected to achieve. The Technology Project gradually called for a *situated re-negotiation of where the pedagogical project may be heading*, of what its purpose should be – *and of what purpose the electronic artifacts under scrutiny as well as self-developed teaching-learning artifacts should be*. The children were involved-involving in these re-negotiations, but in the light of the implicitly maintained teaching-learning meta-arrangement as well as the prioritization of verbal communication over other communicative modes, their suggestions were little accentuated.

I will selectively re-narrate the unfolding of this project in a chronological order and analyze it piece by piece:

A good week after initiating the main phase of my participation in the day-care, Eva tells me that 4-year-old Janet would like to show the rest of the children's group photo images from her recent holiday. Janet went to Iceland with her parents, and they compiled a selection of photo files on a DVD. The photos are to be shown the next day, but instead of just displaying them on the screen of either one of the available desktop computers or the day-care's laptop, Eva and Babette decide to ask the leadership whether they could utilize the projector usually stored away in the office. As the projector is seldom set up, Eva asks me whether I – since I am anyway interested in joining the event – could be of help in connecting the arrangement of devices.

The next morning Babette is not yet present (she came in later). Nevertheless do the daycare leader, Eva and I wire up the various artifacts, co-arrange the necessary infrastructure in the former library room. Electricity: Multiple socket outlet to wall outlet, laptop and projector to multiple socket outlet. Data transfer: DVD into the laptop's DVD drive, A/V cable to connect laptop and projector. Am I forgetting something? Oh yes, steering devices: USB mouse to laptop (Eva does not feel comfortable with using the laptop's touch pad). Meanwhile, I set up my video camera, put it on a tripod in the corner of the room, direct the lens in the direction of Eva, who sits on a chair behind the laptop, in the 'operating space'. The children, who slowly wander in, look rather overwhelmed by all the technological knickknack decorating the room. The first ones realize the laptop desktop's projection on the opposing wall, and huddle at Eva's feet so as to have the best view for the screening. Janet thrones on a chair next to Eva: She is to guide the audience through the slide show, is to verbally re-relate to those experiences the displayed photo slides refer to.

The slide show starts, the first photos are shown. The audience looks as if it was completely used to this technologically supported process of showing and commenting digital travel pictures, as if it was nothing novel to them. All they ask about are the photos' contents, the experiences they re-present. Janet has a hard time verbally re-relating to these experiences. Eva keeps the communicative flow going by asking questions, and by actively involving the audience: From time to time she asks the other children what they see, what might have happened at the re-presented point in time and space, asks them to walk up to the wall-screen in order to pinpoint certain recognizable objects, tries to relate the re-presented experience to the audience's everyday visually mediated experiences. Recognizable objects like crosses are discussed, collectively re-related to individual and jointly shared experiences, for instance an excursion involving a church. That Eva is all along steering the cursor via the mouse to point to specific objects re-presented, that the control signals have to travel from the hand-finger-mouse-interface through the cable to the laptop through the A/V cable to the wall-screen, does not seem

to fascinate anyone but me. It seems natural that Eva is in control here, and that the cursor follows her commands.

After around 40 minutes, the show is over. The audience as well as Janet have increasingly grown tired of sitting around. Therefore Eva suggests to watch the rest of the slides another day. The children leave or rather jump out of the room. Eva approaches me, asks what I thought of the presentation. I answer that I was surprised by how taken-for-granted the technological set-up and functioning seemed to be to the children. She admits that she had not even considered this aspect, and decides to talk to Babette about it.

This first part of the re-situated phenomena description already interrelates a number of arguments made throughout this dissertation. First, the daycare's *Situational Approach* explicitly invites to pick up struggles and wishes from the children, which may be related to 'key situations' in their lives, so as to turn them into pedagogical projects relevant to other children. It was consequently no matter for discussion whether the digital photographs which Janet explicitly wanted to show to her fellow kindergarten companions would be presented or not. This also highlights the *transcontextuality* of this approach: Experiences the children made across contexts should be turned into topics for further *collaboration*. I.e., the pedagogical approach and the actual contextual practice in the daycare on principal reflect and promote the children's contributions to this practice. So the only aspect to now decide on was what 'form' this presentation would take, which communicative artifacts would be enacted.

Second, it may be speculated that the staff, ergo Babette, Eva and the daycare leader, would not have even considered to re-present the photos via a projector, if it had not been for the analytical focus I proposed to collectively enact through my research interest and our joint discussion at the staff meeting. Next to the children, my entire research project depended heavily on the staff members' interest to co-explore their everyday media relations in relation to the children's relations, to make me part of co-arranging activities and specifically pedagogical-educational projects. Children, staff and me were exploring each other's sense-meaning-relations so as to prototype pedagogical projects, in which we could intentionally learn from each other about each other's situated and unique sense-meaning-relations to artifacts commonly known as media. Of course, the children were positioned differently in these negotiation processes, at least by the staff: They were *not expected* to come up with pedagogical projects – for example with implementing the slide show. Therefore, some of the explicitly verbalized suggestions of the children were not accentuated at all – they were not part of the respective adult's scope of imag-

inable possibilities for acting. Meanwhile the pedagogues were expected to create pedagogical projects out of the children's suggestions, their struggles, conflicts, transcontextual experiences.

Third, the above description points to a *struggle jointly shared by children as well as adults*: Throughout the processes of contributing to a contextual practice, what is epistemologically-analytically highlighted is the 'user's' contribution to the 'content' of communication, to that which is – presumably – intended to be communicated by those primarily re-producing the 'content' or 'information'. *What is seldom accentuated is that contributing to praxis implies the transformation of 'form' as well.* Communication media are insofar unique as they are intended to mediate 'signs and symbols', they are 'tools' intended to and therefore co-arranged so as to distribute informational 'content'. But tools are signs: They are all communicative, are all material carriers of 'signs' (cf. Knoblauch, 2013; see Chapter 3). And they obtain their communicative quality through being enacted in practice, being accentuated as communicative, as grounds for collaboration. So what if we understand the entire ensemble of single artifacts (power outlets, cables, laptop, mouse, projector, in relation to the room's arrangement etc.) as communicative – as potentially and virtually accentuat-able – as well?

For instance, it seemed taken-for-granted by all slide show participants that the cursor projected onto the wall was steered by someone sitting behind a completely different artifact, the laptop, through another artifact, the mouse, so as to pinpoint specific photographically re-presented artifacts projected onto the wall. Just as it seemed taken-for-granted that all the cables were necessary so as to em-power the arrangement, and also that electricity was provided throughout the whole building. Just as it seemed taken-for-granted that a photo camera co-arranges (together with human programming, mediating environmental conditions, etc.) digital re-presentations of visual experiences in a rectangular format, stores them as files on a storage device, files which can be transferred to another device through a computer, can be read by another computer, and projected onto a wall in case the computer is 'correctly', ergo according to the human pre-arrangements built into the software-hardware-interplay, hooked up to a projector.

This non-accentuation of infrastructures were the point of departure for the further emerging collaborations constituting the Technology Project. As next step, Babette and Eva arranged a morning circle group discussion in relation to verbalizable knowledge on the technological infrastructures and media artifacts. This took place around two weeks after the initial screening of Janet's photos:

Babette turns to the children (who are supposed to sit in a circle) and asks whether someone remembers what we did that one time we were sitting – together with me – downstairs in the library looking at something at the wall. Bianca answers that we looked at Janet’s holiday. Babette re-iterates Bianca’s answer and follows up with asking what we used in order to watch the photos. Archie enthusiastically answers that it was a wall and on it a television, while drawing a big rectangle into the air with both his fully-stretched arms, and Bobby adds: with a computer. Babette acknowledges this and asks: And how did the image get to the wall? John draws on Archie’s idea and again suggests it was a television, Bobby repeats that it was a computer. The quiz show comes to a temporary halt. Babette takes another communicative turn and asks what kind of computer was used – then she hands a small stack of papers to Bobby, suggesting to find the computer.

Before this meeting, Babette and Eva obviously co-arranged a kind of *Memory* card game: They photographed the single technological devices enacted during the photo slide show, printed them, and plasticized them. Now the group possesses a stack of 5-10 plastic cards depicting the outside of gray-blackish devices.

Bobby seeks the photo re-presenting the computer which was used. Meanwhile Archie attempts to help him by loudly whispering Bobby’s name and pointing to one of the cards. Bobby finds his favorite choice, but Babette asks Archie to hand her the card he chose. The card shows the projector. While Babette holds up the card for all to see, she explains that this was the device hooked up to the computer, and that through the opening (the lens), Eva was able to project the computer’s screen image onto the wall. One of the children says: projector.

Babette then asks Bobby to find the card re-presenting the laptop with a closed lid. He hands it to her while smiling. Babette holds up both cards, now asking whether the computer is of the same kind as the one standing next to them, the desktop computer set up in the experiment room. The crowd replies: noooo. While John is supposed to say why it is different, Bobby says: because the lid is not closed. John re-iterates Bobby’s suggestion. Babette asks whether the big computer has a lid. John shakes his head. Babette points again to the photo of the opened laptop, emphasizing that there, the keyboard is integrated into the computer. Is that the same with the big computer? All children stare at the desktop computer. Noooo. Babette adds: There you can just take the keyboard away. [*fast-forward*]

The further question-answer-evaluation-sequences begin to stall when Babette puts the focus on the question of how Janet’s holiday photos ‘got to’ the wall. No child participant is clear about how the photos are either stored on the DVD or of how the data files are processed by the laptop and thereby transferred from the DVD along the A/V cable to the projected screen.

After a while, Babette leaves the room to fetch a digital photo camera. She returns, turns on the device by pushing the power button. The lens abounds, the camera emits melodious beeping noises, the circle of children turns towards the device. Together with Sofia, Babette reminds us that one needs to push the big release button to take a picture. But what then? What do we do with the pictures? Sofia suggests: we develop them. Olivia – who up to now has remained silent – tells us that one takes them away and then picks them up again later. Babette adds another possibility: when one cannot wait, one can just transfer them to a computer. Thereafter, one can burn the files onto a DVD.

Somewhat unexpectedly, Babette closes the morning circle with saying: but how it exactly works with transferring a photo onto a CD-DVD, *she herself also does not know*. We should think about who to ask about that. She suggests asking the photographer who was at the daycare the week before to take pictures, ask him to show us how those pictures are processed. She inquires what the others think about taking a stroll to the photographer's shop one of the next days to ask how the photos are developed. The majority agrees to that – including me.

This extensive re-situated description of a situation is re-constructed primarily out of re-relating to a video recording of this morning circle. It could be, for instance, analyzed with a focus on how the turn-taking in this pedagogical-educational set-up is organized – in relation to what education sociologist Hugh Mehan termed *initiation-reply-evaluation sequences* and *turn-allocation procedures* (Mehan, 1979) as classical arranging principles in classroom lessons. Holzkamp builds on and extends Mehan's concepts when writing about the *question-answer-evaluation sequence*, which “constitutes the classroom situation as special interpersonal relation (and which is not to be found outside of lesson-related constellations in the broadest sense)” (Holzkamp, 1995a, p. 462; translation NAC). The *question* as the sequence's first element thus obtains a specific power-laden relevance, also because it is the teacher who is the inquiring subject as well as the one ultimately evaluating the answer. With reference to Dillon (1990), Holzkamp writes: “The reproduction of school-classroom-specific interpersonal relations is characterized by: *The teacher asks and the student answers*” (Holzkamp, 1995a, p. 462; translation NAC). Dillon therefore argues that *students remain novices at the practice of questioning*, as students asking questions break with the norm, the taken-for-granted common sense. Holzkamp (1995a) furthermore draws on Dillon's discoveries so as to differentiate between two question-answer modes: 1. the *knowledge-seeking question – content-related answer* versus 2. the *pre-knowing question – knowledge-demonstrating answer* commonly encountered in classrooms.

This latter question-answer mode was also frequently employed by Babette throughout the above re-narrated situation, thereby enacting a school-like teaching-learning arrangement and potentially precluding an actual collaborative exploration. The tacitly co-communicated ‘pre-knowledge’ of the pedagogues was sustained by the memory cards she and Eva had prepared: Via these cards, the pedagogues demonstrated that they anyway already knew what would be relevant when it came to projecting digital photographs onto a wall, as they were able to imprint all supposedly necessary artifacts onto another artifact.

Furthermore, Babette only asked for verbalizable knowledge related to prior visual experience, while disclosing all other experiential modes. I.e., by referring to the involved technological artifacts through photo images, there was no possibility for the other participants to relate to the artifacts themselves via other communicative modes – no touching of the laptop or the cables, no smelling of the projector’s light bulb, no listening to the buzzing sounds of the operating DVD drive. Next to the verbal question-answer sequence, all we could relate to were plasticized photos, which were merely distinguishable from each other through that which they visually re-presented: the outside surfaces of a selection of technological devices. This was an *inherently alienating learning arrangement*: Learning through comparing, in this case, was reduced to comparing visual re-presentations so as to verbally answer to pre-knowing questions posed by only one participant – the pedagogue.

Nevertheless do I propose that Babette *was* being explorative: She was experimenting with novel, self-developed pedagogical-educational artifacts (the memory cards) on a topic she herself had little explored before. Two instances in the description point to this explorative approach, those in which she stopped following the classroom lesson protocol. First, she decided to fetch the photo camera for us to re-relate to one of the artifacts through additional communicative modes. Second, she admitted that she did not know how photos got transferred to a CD-DVD, and suggested to ask a professional photographer about it. Also a large part of the described question-answer-evaluation sequences can be read in an explorative light (besides the fact that she never posed her questions to me): She was exploring the children’s potential key situations – for instance what experiences they have made at home in relation to laptops (Maurice, Archie, John) or their DS (Bobby), and what possibilities for acting through the devices they would communicatively accentuate. Babette thus attempted to collaboratively negotiate a common sense about electronic artifacts so as to potentially prototype an alternative learning arrangement (fetch camera, visit photographer).

The questioning mode primarily co-enacted¹¹⁷ by Babette, hence, was a means to draw on a pre-arranged or already established common sense among pedagogical-educational practitioners as well as other adults, but for the sake of exploring that which she regarded as collaboratively transformable: She promoted a collective re-negotiation of sense-meaning-relations, relations she could later draw on so as to further this ongoing pedagogical project. The unintended consequence was that by suggesting this questioning mode – the pre-knowing question craving a knowledge-demonstrating answer, – she shunned collectively meaningful questions that the children themselves were about to pose. This fueled the increasing disinterest on behalf of some of the children, as they either did not feel-think that they were in the position to answer, or because they actively rejected this one-sided questioning mode. As a matter of fact, then, the collaboration *was* quite conflictual, as under the given premises the suggested common sense was partially and partly rejected by some of the children. But these rejections were not highlighted as conflictual potentialities by Babette, were not explicitly included into the sense-meaning negotiations – eventually because the questioning mode, the ‘form’ of the communication, seemed unquestionable to Babette herself.

Throughout the next morning circle, the communicative modes changed over time, also because both the sociomaterial arrangement and the related activities were diversified:

Two days after the last morning circle on technological devices, we meet again for the second part of the slide show. Babette holds up the plastic cards re-presenting the single devices needed for projecting photos onto a wall, and says: Today we talk about ... Photos!, the children join in. She tells us that she phoned the photo lab, and that we would be welcome to pay them a visit, could even take photos of each other there and have them developed. However, it would take at least another two weeks before an appointment can be arranged.

We return to the Memory cards. But before doing so, Babette clarifies that today, the boys should keep a low profile – while enacting the ‘zip it’ hand gesture across her mouth.¹¹⁸ She explores the cards again with the group, ask-

¹¹⁷ Co-enacted as it simultaneously needs to be co-enacted by the answering children, thereby subjecting themselves to Babette's proposed sense-meaning-relations, temporarily establishing a common sense. The children are also in a possibility relation to Babette's questioning mode, while their scope of imaginable possibilities for not subjecting oneself to the common sense proposed by adults is delimited by what they learned in relation to other adults. Usually, it seems to me, non-subjection or rejection impresses-expresses itself in disinterest among children, rather than a virtual questioning of the suggested common sense.

¹¹⁸ Gendering practices of course play an eminent role in preschool pedagogy-education (e.g., Martin, 1998; contributions in Yelland, 1998) and consequently also children's interpretations of media contents (e.g., Duvall, 2010). My focus, however, is on human commonalities across age as well as gen-

ing single girls to hand her the according visual re-presentation of a device or to label the pictured device. To give clues, she uses more gestures and facial expressions than last time. On top, she employs ‘blanks’, unfinished sentences, for the children to fill in the appropriate-expected technology-related terms. Thereafter, she sends Archie, Manuel and me to the daycare leadership’s office to fetch the laptop and the projector. After our return, the situation turns into a hands-on experience: The children are eager to see ‘the real thing’, and they are allowed to assist in setting up the arrangement of technological artifacts. The A/V cable, whose photographic image was difficult for the children to relate to the other pictured devices the last time around, is now easy to collaboratively spot and connect: Its plugs are blue, and the sockets on both the laptop and the projector are marked with the color blue as well. Both are connected by Babette in collaboration with Janet and Michael, her hand helping them in inserting the plug.

With additional help from the leader Rebecca, we get the ensemble artifacts to work. Discoveries by the children are turned into premises for exploration. For instance, Linda comments one picture by proclaiming: ‘I see another waterfall’. Babette moves the cursor around the picture to pinpoint representations which she believes may be accentuated as waterfall. After a few failed attempts to find Linda’s waterfall, she highlights the appropriate spot on the photo. It probably re-presents steam emitted by a geyser. Babette compares the steam to a cloud of hot water. Then she explains: When warm water reaches the Earth’s surface, it cools down and turns into steam, it appears as mist. Eva – the group’s other responsible pedagogue – compares it to the mother boiling water so as to cook eggs, and when it is very hot, it emits steam as well. Archie jumps in and imaginatively impresses-expresses his mother and father making fire – while engaging in an explosion-like gesture and vocally imitating roaring flames. But that is no steam, Eva comments. Maurice: When my granddad cooks, then it all goes up. Eva: Yes, sometimes when cooking, water boils over. Archie: Yes it can boil over. Then Babette suggests to return to Janet’s photos while saying: Let’s see if there is also something boiling over in Janet’s photos. And indeed, the next photo re-presents another steaming geyser, this time captured close-up.

Many more collaborative explorations followed this excerpt, ongoing transformations of the hegemonic reading of experienced-imagined sense-meaning-relations included (from waterfall to steam, from steam to cooking, from cooking to fire, from fire to steam, from steam to boiling over, from boiling over to the geyser). What I will foremost focus on, however, is a specific *common sense which was simultaneously maintained throughout these transformative re-negotiations*: the contradictory directionalities of the legislative and pedagogical-educational arrangement enacted through the practice-co-arranging textual artifacts (cf. Chapter 2) including the unquestionable ontological separation

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between the child as the receiver and the pedagogue as the sender of educational content. The various media artifacts as part of the sociomaterial interplay were here primarily enacted so as to underline this differentiation, albeit the meanings they offered potentially opened up possibility spaces for engaging in a mutual learning process beyond this ontological divide. While the children attempted to enact these possibilities, the overall meta-arrangement, the pedagogical project's infrastructure, rendered it difficult for the pedagogues to accentuate the children's attempts as meaningful for the practice.

Babette as pedagogue and adult was in charge of arranging and leading the morning circle, initiating topics and discussions – she is a legislatively assigned responsible body in this contextual practice and has the duty to assist the parents through child-rearing and educating. This duty/task/agenda impresses-expresses itself in the right to conduct and re-arrange a children's group together with Eva. Babette sought to draw on children's key situations so as to initiate pedagogical projects, as expected by the Situational Approach. In case of the Technology Project, the topic and the directionalities had been partly and partially co-arranged by some of the children, other interested pedagogues, the daycare leadership, at least Janet's parents, and me.

The preferred questioning mode enacted throughout this and many other pedagogical projects is the 'pre-knowing – knowledge-demonstrating answer' mode, which is similar to the classroom model of arranging lessons. What is thereby maintained is the preconception that the children (also) learn so as to be ready for school, a preconception whose societal relevance is substantiated by the enormous amount of studies measuring *school readiness* (e.g., Snow, 2006; Webster-Stratton, Reid & Stoolmiller, 2008; Williford, Maier, Downer, Pianta & Howes, 2013). At the same time this preconception is countered by the Berlin Educational Program (BBP), which states: "The revised version of the School Law of Berlin abdicates the appraisal of the school readiness of a child. The reform follows the insight that the primary school must live up to all children" (BBP, 2004, p. 119). Nevertheless is pit art of the Berlin daycare practice's situated common sense that children will transfer to school after kindergarten. This common sense is stabilized through the official language evaluation practices in Berlin's daycare institutions as well as individual meetings between parents, pedagogues, and leadership about an earlier or later school enrollment: These are always already related to the notion that a child could not be ready for being schooled yet. After all, children are supposed to learn "in and for life situations" (Preissing & Heller, p. 43), and the socio-material arrangement of the school will soon become part of their conduct of everyday life, one that is almost impossible to neglect or reject.

Common senses established in relation to different collectives collide, contradict each other. On the one hand, Babette and Eva and the rest of the staff as well as the parents shall *assist the child in becoming a successfully schooled child*,¹¹⁹ one that adequately subjects itself to the prevailing common sense in an imagined school practice. On the other, they are to *take the child's being in the world seriously*, assist them in the exploration of current key life situations, promote their creativity and imaginative powers. However, creativity and imaginative powers are not to discern the common sense of the school-ready child, are not to question pre-arranged sociomaterial boundaries (other than, e.g., during 'free play', but certainly not throughout a pedagogical project). *Both pedagogues struggled with exactly this basic pedagogical-educational contradiction.*

In the above described situation, the children were to learn about verbalizable labels in relation to the outside shapes or designs via the *Memory* cards. The children were furthermore to learn that in general, one can use a DVD-computer-cables-mouse-projector-arrangement to explore the content of digital photo images together. They meanwhile learned that they do not really need to learn how to set it up, because adults know how to set it up. The mouse can be used so as to pinpoint details of the photo. The one steering the mouse has more influence on the sociomaterial interplay than the others. That one is an adult. When the one in control suggests we should continue looking at the photos, we should. The rectangularity of the screen and the photo are pre-given, unquestionable. The commonly preferred modes of communicating are verbal and visual. Adults know the answer to every question they pose. Etc. What the children were foremost allowed to do here was to *observe how adults enacted this ensemble of electronic artifacts*, how adults compared different elements and pre-knowingly commented on it. Except for a few times when they were allowed to assist in connecting devices through cables, all they could touch were the plasticized cards depicting the sleek surface of the devices.

What I wish to highlight here is that even though Babette and Eva were keen on finding out about the children's current life situations and on engaging in collaborative explorations of media artifacts, they were expected to draw on a number of directionalities grounded in the common sense maintained with other adults. The teaching-learning meta-arrangement as well as the prioritization of verbal communication over other communicative modes were taken-for-granted. Meanwhile, *children are eager to learn from and about this adult common sense*, as it constitutes the foundation for meaningfully contributing to praxis

¹¹⁹ Here the *becoming* term resembles the one used in critiques of the child understood as a becoming, yet unfinished adult (e.g., James, Jenks & Prout, 1998).

through collaboration – one must partly and partially subject to that common sense so as to make one’s experiences and imaginations workable for others. But if the common sense appears non-negotiable, if one is alienated from meaning-making, learning becomes an end in and for itself. Merely learning to generate content for the already established and hegemonic communicative modes is stubbed learning – it stubs creativity and imagination.

Children invite us to follow along their experiential-imaginative paths, but they tend to impress-express their invitations less commonsensically. When Archie related steam to fire and flames through words but also sounds and gestures, why not explore this communicative action further? Why not learn about Maurice’s adventures with his cooking grandfather? Only because we beforehand arranged ourselves so as to watch a slide show? Would we have thereby neglected Janet’s wish to watch the pictures together? Was it Janet’s wish to have the slide show steered by the adults? And anyway: Who decided that this group would be one group, that there is only money for employing two pedagogues per group, that the groups are usually age-homogenized, that children collaborating with children of the same age group are happier? And who decided that children should not touch anything of higher monetary value on their own initiative, which implies that they should not touch most digital media artifacts (the laptop, the projector)? Why is this maintained common sense hardly ever up for discussion?

It seems to me that human beings who regularly interweave their conducts of everyday life with children’s conducts of everyday life, be they positioned as pedagogues or parents or child researchers, often know very well how to productively interrelate their own perspectives to the children’s perspectives. But we need to be careful not to preclude that children are facing struggles which are foreign to us, which appear somewhat exotic. We instead need to acknowledge that particularly young children merely enact communicative modes for impressing-expressing their experiences-imaginations and herewith their struggles which we seldom accentuate as relevant in our commonsensical adult communication across collectives. And this does not by any means imply that the contradictions children struggle with are any different than the contradictions we ‘adults’ struggle with – be the contradictions evidently related to media artifacts as part of our shared sociomaterial arrangements or not.

Conducting everyday life with media technologies: Maintaining-transforming as necessarily shared struggles

“Because the practical realization of many of the rights identified in this Declaration [the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights] involve the presence, structure and use of technologies of many kinds, every person on Earth has the right to a role in shaping the technical instruments, processes and institutions that affect their well-being” (Winner, 2007, p. 213).

If the sociomaterial conduct of everyday life is the site of emancipatory struggle, the struggle for living a ‘good life’, collaboration is the site for temporarily resolving this struggle. Any struggle is always already a struggle of the many, as many others relate to the same situated detail of the interplay of sociomaterial arrangements, arrangements which contradict each other due to the conflictual historical processes from which they emerged. And all struggle for the sake of living a better life, of overcoming the experienced and imagined dependency from seemingly immovable arrangements: Human beings share a same directionality whilst un-consciously acting – we never act against our own interest, as Holzkamp (1985) postulated. And I would add: We never act against our own truth, our own epistemology, as these co-constitute our uniquely situated scope of possibilities for acting.

Meanwhile, even though human living is a process and is inextricably intertwined with all the other processes of the world, numerous sociomaterially arranged sense-meaning-relations are maintained despite of their contradictoriness. This maintaining offers the possibility to communicate across the diversity of ontogenetically unique human perspectives. If maintaining is unavoidable, then the question is: maintaining for what and for whom? How come do we human beings maintain contradictory relations-to-arrangements, how come do we maintain oppression, domination, injustice – and for what purpose?

A problem is that maintaining tends to be understood as a means as well as an end. But, based on the experiences made in the daycare together with the children, I would claim that maintaining sociomaterial arrangements should exclusively serve the purpose of expanding meaningful communication, so as to purposefully transform one’s sense-meaning-relations to the world and thereby the world together through collaboration. It is essential to conceptualize this *maintaining*, which is also the presupposition for enacting change throughout one’s conduct of everyday life, as a *relational process*. It is human

beings enacting this maintenance of sociomaterially arranged sense-meaning-relations, and if the contradictions of seemingly unchangeable sense-meaning-relations hamper productive conflictual collaboration, this calls for a collective transformation of these very same sense-meaning-relations. However, the four big trends in sociomaterially arranging our relations to the world – what Krotz (2009) referred to as the meta-processes of our time, namely globalization, commercialization, mediatization, and particularly individualization – tend to contradict each other in relation to potentially furthering collaboration. Although the media artifact arrangements developed to communicate with other human beings make it possible to bridge space ever more quickly, to write, see, and talk to each other almost across the entire globe, with many at the same time, these technological possibility spaces do not automatically imply that one is able to purposefully or *virtually* (sensu Kontopodis, 2012a) transform common sense with a greater amount of collaborators.

Communicative technologies – (media) artifact arrangements generally created for communicating through ('symbolical') content – play a double role in the collaborative processes of maintaining and purposefully transforming sense-meaning-relations. On the one hand, they enable communication across time and space. It seemingly becomes easier to establish and maintain relationships with others who share similar premises-for-acting, ergo interests, wishes, needs, directionalities (as the Microsoft-owned audio-video-text-messenger provider Skype currently puts it on its welcoming website: "Wherever you are, wherever they are – Skype keeps you together"). On the other hand, this spatio-temporally augmented communication comes at the price of the reduction of communicative modes for impressing-expressing one's interests, wishes, needs, directionalities: On the phone these can be re-presented through sounds, on a social internet platform translated into texts and images, on Skype they are audio-visually re-presented, and with the latter two, one should furthermore not neglect the mediating rectangular screen. I.e., the modal quality of possibilities to meaningfully interweave one's ontogenetical becoming with another's becoming is modified, changed, arguably reduced. Consequently, imaginable modes for collaborating are also co-transformed¹²⁰ – maybe reduced, at least until a collaboration transcends the arrangement of one communicative platform, of one potential collective. Furthermore, one cannot not only relate to each other with the same diversity of communicative modes available in face-to-face situations: What might even outweigh this modal de-limitation is the fact that one lacks insight into the other's locally

¹²⁰ This is connectable to what Martín-Barbero (2006) writes about anthropology's understanding of technology: "anthropology maintains that technology is a perception organizer" (p. 289).

situated becoming and particularly into what her_his ulterior communicative actions are directed towards.

My discoveries suggest that this is all not problematic as long as communicative actions mediated through any sort of sociomaterial arrangement are regarded as means – i.e. temporary, ephemeral ends – for collaboration, not as ultimate ends. Re-relating to sociomaterial experiences-imaginings is an intersubjectively constituted, transcontextual and multimodal *process*. Contradictory sociomaterial phenomena such as consumption or competition do not necessarily shut down an inherently conflictual collaboration, but they can if not understood processually as means, but as a process' end.

Competition as shared struggle

Bobby and John translated the nudging practice from Mario Kart into their conflictual collaboration, into their struggle for maintaining their friendship. This was productive as long as they engaged in this nudging for pointing to a shared interest and basis for developing their collaboration further. However, other aspects of playing the video game were also enacted, particularly by Bobby: Suddenly, the sociomaterial arrangement of winning a competition was enacted, including accusations of always occupying the swing, and also of lying and cheating and laughing at someone for not being able to live up to the competition's demands. A succession of accusing hypostatizations followed, to which John could not meaningfully respond, which he could not challenge. Bobby turned the collaboration into a fight, a competition, which he – in this situation – wanted to win. He wanted to be right. He thereby undermined the collaborative process of negotiating and intertwining sense-meaning-relations by implicitly turning the competition about who's right into the collaboration's end – he temporarily raised his own, personal and static purpose over the collaboration's shared and negotiable purpose. Similarly did Peter's insistence on Sonic being a dog undermine the collaboration with the other insisting on Sonic being a hedgehog (cf. Chapter 3). And as Bobby's and Peter's mother half a year after my stay in the daycare confided to me in an e-mail, competition remained at the heart of the brother's conflictual collaborations, also amongst each other:

“What I wanted to tell you with regards to this topic [the article in which I draw on Peter's situation; Chimirri, 2013a] is that the children, when proceeding to more difficult levels in games like Mario or Sonic, communicate more aggressively amongst each other. Depending on the level of difficulty, they become obstreperous and quarrelsome, I find. Since Christmas we have

a Nintendo Wii. Of course Mario is around again in different versions. As both children can now play together at the same time, they often fight with each other. The small one [Bobby] cannot follow as quickly as Peter wants him too, and then Peter gets aggressive – as they cannot advance to the next level as fast as he would like them to. In my opinion is it not very helpful for children at that age to block their free engagements by making them follow certain action procedures. As layperson I do not have much experience, but as observer and mother I do not find that very positive. The only thing that is trained here is their reactivity and that they have to pay attention to a lot. However, I believe that the child also becomes stressed by that” (personal communication, January 12, 2012; translation NAC).

Competitive elements are an integral part to uncountable media narratives: contests about talents, skills, knowledge, beauty are of daily occurrence, ergo quizzes, model shows, singing competitions, sports games, etc. Furthermore, it could be argued that every narrative involving the good-fighting-evil element could be read as competitive as well: there usually is a winner. Meanwhile media artifacts can serve competitive purposes: As commodities, they can be treated and compared as assets, as measures of social status. Why should related media practices as the one described by Bobby’s and Peter’s mother, then, not unfold competitive elements?

It might be objected that following this train of thought, everything can be read in a competitive light. And I absolutely agree to that. That’s actually the whole crux of the matter. Indeed can every-thing and every human interrelation be turned into a competition, and this is neither a matter of any single one technology, nor of an ensemble of technologies, nor a matter of a single (media) practice. *It is a matter of praxis.* It is a matter of how we human beings relate to all those wonderful sociomaterial arrangements created by us and our ancestors and our ancestors’ ancestors, of what we can make and re-make out of them, and *of where we want to take this re-making.* In order to pose these questions, fellow human beings should not be understood as competitors, but as collaborators – as *fellow sense-meaning-makers who can be of help in conducting one’s everyday life*, of expanding our situated perspective and thereby the scope of imaginable possibilities for acting through those sociomaterial arrangements which possibiliterate and simultaneously de-limit our living.

Competition may not be the primary problem, as competition can by all means be a means for furthering collaboration – ergo competition as a temporary shape of a collaboration. So what is the big challenge? What is this most major of all major problems? I do not know, nobody knows, I am certain. But *contradictions on a global scale are partly and partially mirrored by contradictions on a local scale.* Our human situatedness and ensuing limitedness will never

allow for accessing the proverbial ‘big picture’ so as to find a sociomaterial world theory. Still it allows for collaborating with those other human beings we are anyway already participating in commonly shared practices with, with those other conducts of everyday life we are virtually able to accentuate, so as to work on prototyping a mutual sociomaterial self-understanding, a temporary common sense which can be shared across collectives. Most importantly, though, *all human beings, irrespective of their positioning, must be accentuated as participating in and contributing to this process – including children and all those others who are usually marginalized throughout re-negotiation processes*, – as all are able to communicate a uniquely valuable perspective on given sense-meaning-relations, accentuate different details of the relational ensemble.

Consumption as shared struggle

Contradictions and dilemmas struggled with in pedagogical-educational practices are consequently never exclusive to these practices. Instead they are contradictions and dilemmas emerging in relation to how praxis has been and is arranged across contextual practices. One of the ubiquitous appearing throughout my stay in the daycare and with my focus directed at children’s sense-meaning-relations to media artifacts was competition. Another one was *consumption*. This one, like competition, is neither exclusive to media-related arrangements nor to the pedagogical-educational practice I contribute-d to.¹²¹ As Stine Liv Johansen points out in her media anthropological study of 1 to 3 year-olds: “children, even the youngest of them, are consumers, whether we like or not, and there is a huge industry providing them with all kinds of toys, television programs, clothes, merchandise and food” (Johansen, 2007, p. 3; cf. also Buckingham, 2011; also contributions in Buckingham & Tingstad, 2010). In fact, *children are not merely positioned as consumers anymore*: According to Minna Ruckenstein (2011), creationist capitalism seriously takes into account that *children also want to be producers*, e.g. by contributing to the economic production in ‘digital worlds’ – thus the coinage *prosumption*. For instance, children’s desire for expanding their possibilities for acting across spaces, transcontextually, is co-constitutive of the design of on-line platforms such as Habbo (cf. Ruckenstein, 2013). Ruckenstein also interviewed the developers of such games and comes to the conclusion that they “have a profound understand-

¹²¹ Communication researcher Jesús Martín-Barbero even suggests that commercialization is the primary driving force of current societal development when writing: “what technology mediates today more assiduously and rapidly than ever is the transformation of society into a market place and the constitution of the latter into the main driving force of globalization (in all its various and contradictory meanings)” (Martín-Barbero, 2006, p. 285).

ing of children's sociality. They described Habbo as a social environment created by its users and emphasized that Habbo is built by children's desires to be there and participate. Children are needed in order to attract other children and, consequently, anything that inspires children is beneficial for Habbo" (Ruckenstein, 2013, p. 5). Children's involvement has economic value to the game developers.

Ruckenstein's study reminds us that "commercial agents are eager to open new spaces for children and that they support spatial extensions in childhood by creating conditions for them. The close connections between the companies developing digital technologies with the social worlds of children give rise to new kinds of generational encounters; children are invited to play spaces where their participation is integral to profit-making efforts. Technologies support and exploit children's mutual relations in real time, open opportunities for these relations, and aim to direct their course" (p. 12).

However, she underlines, children are not only acted on, are not victims to these profit-guided processes initiated by a team of developers. Children endorse this space, they enact this platform, fill it with 'life': "they appeal to children because they support children in what they want to do and what they want to become" (ibid.).

From my perspective, it is precisely this 'want to become' which needs to be taken as grounds for further discussions, as it is this directionality which serves as basis for further collaborations. Games like *Habbo* appeal to children due to its participatory possibilities, in connection to the *hope that these platforms are meaningful for expanding their scope of imaginable possibilities for future action* – for influencing their life conditions, expanding their agency. Is this any different from what 'adults' hope for when engaging in consumption practices? If, then, the consumption on the spot enacts further participatory possibilities, as in the case of *Habbo*, what more is there to ask for?

Struggling for a shared directionality

Here we return to the question of what it is we would like to participate in, what we would like to contribute to and transform – and by we I mean both adults and children. "Creationist capitalism invites people to join in and become creators of their own worlds. In practice, this means that company-created virtual worlds rely on and take advantage of user-generated content" (Ruckenstein, 2011, p. 1062). This description points to a fundamental contradiction across participatory paradigms: One has the possibility to become a creator of an own world in a world which is actually company-created, whose

directionality for becoming is more or less pre-defined. *What is user-co-generated is the content of the world, not the framework of the world*, not its platform, not its infrastructure, not its form, not its shape – not its sociomaterial matrix. The meta-arrangement of sociomaterial arrangements, so to speak, remains immune to imagined sense-meaning-relations from below, from the ‘producer’, the ‘prosumer’, the user.¹²²

One of the most terrifying visions I come to imagine when re-relating to my experiences from the daycare: children who stop to experiment with these meta-arrangements, with rules, conventions, dogmas, doctrines, the social as well as the material infrastructures – the seemingly immovable givens of a pre-arranged detail of praxis. While of course, these arrangements are all co-constituted by us human beings, constantly maintained and changed, constantly transformed, often without us even noticing, without accentuating these transformations. It is a challenge to never lose the explorative curiosity of lifting the rug, of stirring up the surface, of digging up ant eggs, a challenge adults should embrace together with children. If the hunger for novelty, for development, is always already appeasable by a commodity, both the commodity and the hunger become an end in and for itself. While if we acknowledge that our entire individual existence, existing through conducting everyday life, is always already co-constituted by others, is only maintainable through others, is only transformable together with others, we may come to realize that the commodity is just another communicative artifact, a material carrier for communicating and collaborating, just as the accentuated wiggle of a toe.

So as long as Bobby and John jointly relate to *Mario Kart* for maintaining and disputing their friendship; as long as photos and videos of pedagogical projects or of playful collaborations call for furthering the collaboration through drawing on ever more sociomaterial arrangements; as long as neither the staff decides to teach children a language by planting them in front of Microsoft’s freely available edutainment software *Schlaumäuse*, nor the children stop imagining that engaging in the *Schlaumäuse* game is merely one out of a myriad of possibilities for acting; as long as plasticized photo images of the surface of technological artifacts do not merely serve the purpose of learning by heart the verbal labeling of these devices, but also how these devices can be further enacted through collaboration; as long as Peter at least attempts to find potential collaborators interested in Sonic the dog; as long as Steven and Sebastian (whom you have not met) dance the *Jamatami* dance which they experi-

¹²² Please mind that I am not writing about Open Source communities here, which co-create, co-maintain and co-transform platforms and to some extent also infrastructures.

enced on TV so as to collaborate with me and furthermore use their one-song *McDonald's* Happy Meal radios for learning songs they sing to others and for coming up with own dance moves; as long as Amanda transforms a plastic frame into a stage and during her performance transcends the classical roles of audience and artist, of user and producer, of message recipient and bearer – as long as all this is imaginable and expressible, as long as children re-relate to their experiences-imaginings transcontextually and multimodally, do neither compartmentalize a practice nor their communicative modes, I am little worried. But I will increasingly worry if we adults do not very soon commence to learn from the children, learn to question, shake, and renegotiate all those taken-for-granted arrangements we conduct our interdependent everyday lives through – and come together to claim our right to shape “the technical instruments, processes and institutions that affect [our] well-being” (Winner, 2007, p. 213).

Conclusion:

Collaborating across ages on transforming sociomaterial arrangements

The last many hundred pages sought to specify a subject-scientific relational process ontology which would render it possible to engage in a transdisciplinary emancipatory co-research exploration of digital media artifacts with daycare children. The aim was to establish a conceptual-analytical framework which allows for meaningfully investigating the children's perspectives on media artifacts. Their perspectives on the possibilities and limitations of media artifacts for conducting everyday life were to be taken as seriously as any other's. This required conceptually specifying how various practice participants are *inextricably interrelated with each other through maintaining and transforming those very same sociomaterial arrangements they act and learn through across their transcontextually and multimodally experienced and imagined conducts of everyday life*. Such a specification was not merely needed for better understanding how children, professionals, and parents constitute a specific institutional practice through their sociomaterial interplay. It was furthermore needed so as to clarify the contribution of the research-worker, me, to this interplay.

I introduced not only a variety of data recording artifacts into the practice which co-arranged the sociomaterial interplay I came to investigate. More importantly, I introduced my own understanding of what an emancipatory co-research project with children should look like into this daycare practice. I introduced a directionality, which was itself contradictory, into a more or less established web of other contradictory directionalities, a web particularly maintained through the adults' ongoingly re-negotiated, sociomaterialized common sense. But this common sense was not only being negotiated by the adults in practice. Also the children struggled with the common sense's boundaries, its limitations, its sociomaterial arrangement, they experimented and played with it. One decisive element, however, remained seemingly im-

movable, unchangeable: The preconception that there is an ontologically given difference between children and adults.

This dissertation productively questions this ontological divide, not on an abstractly general level, but through showing how this divide in interrelation with other preconceptions runs counter to the possibility of meaningfully interrelating the children's perspectives on media artifacts to an adult's perspective: mine. Questioning this divide not only implies questioning the other adult participants' preconceptions and directionalities of action. It first and foremost questions my own contradictory preconceptions and directionalities, my own supposedly emancipatory ways of conducting research. Also a principally emancipatory directionality must be open to situated practice renegotiations, particularly because it itself is built on ambiguous, multistable understandings sociomaterialized in the literature as well as a specific academic work practice. Chapter 1 gave an impression of how subject-scientific research (Critical Psychology and Practice Research) calls for and works towards the *ideal of doing research for the sake of the other*. A research problem is never an individual's problem, but a societal problem. It must thus be designed and conducted in societal relevant ways. But an academic practice is a practice constituted out of a multiplicity of unique perspectives, so the question of which emancipatory concepts to enact, which emancipatory methods to enact, and how to specifically enact them, is answered differently. A common point of departure lies in the *shared directionality of overcoming social domination and injustice*.

While all subject-scientific concepts, particularly *participation* and the *conduct of everyday life*, are applicable to all human beings and thereby question the child/adult divide, they have never been specified and further developed in this direction. The practice in the Berlin daycare offered an optimal context for advancing the conceptual-analytical framework, as its Situational Approach acknowledged and strongly promoted the children's contributions to practice (Chapter 2): Pedagogues were to draw on children's *key situations* from across the contexts they conduct their everyday life through so as to design and conduct pedagogical learning projects. Meanwhile, children were to learn about participation, about co-creating world together. But irrespective of this potentially emancipatory directionality, much of the practice's conditions were rendered untouchable, unchangeable. The children's agency, their influence on those conditions they themselves are dependent of on a daily basis was curtailed. It was curtailed by the practice-relevant legislative and pedagogical-educational texts as well as a more broadly taken-for-granted

common sense: The children were little able to co-arrange the institution's form, its (teaching-learning) meta-arrangement.

My struggles with this inherently contradictory setup of sociomaterial arrangements led me to further ponder on the specific understandings of participation implied in the daycare practice as well as in the German and Danish traditions of Critical Psychology (Chapter 3). In the latter, participation as process is clearly understood as active partaking in co-arranging the conditions one is dependent of (as *Teilnahme* or *deltagelse*). In the former, it can be interpreted as the process of learning to have part in an already established arrangement, an arrangement whose options are largely pre-formulated, are pre-arranged by others (as *Teilhabe*). While German Critical Psychology has little elaborated the concept but certainly rejects this reading of *Teilhabe*, the texts underlying the Berlin daycare practice indeed point to such a highly delimited notion of participation. This de-limited participation term comes to the fore when analyzing the fundamental directionality of a child's development spread throughout the texts as well as the daycare practice's common sense. Primarily, the child is conceptualized in terms of what it is supposed to become and of what it is not yet: A school child and later an employed adult worker purposefully contributing to society with its labor force. The child is thus conceptualized in terms of how it is to be positioned fundamentally different than an adult, as a not-yet-fully-developed-citizen. The *process of being-becoming* as a point of departure shared across ages, a process which *interrelates a human being's past-present-future relations and therewith also a child's and an adult's ongoing development*, thence escapes the pedagogues' and the parents' scopes of imaginable possibilities for collaborating with a child.

Subject-scientific Practice Research as well as Qualitative Heuristics, meanwhile, argue that learning through practice precisely requires a variety of perspectives on jointly shared arrangements. It is *through comparing similarities and differences across multiple perspectives that participants come to learn about the arrangements' contradictoriness and possibilities for purposefully transforming them together*. And it is this process of mutually learning about and potentially transforming the pedagogical-educational practice which is foreclosed by the conceptualization of the child maintained through the Berlin daycare practice's common sense. The children's questioning and challenging perspectives on sociomaterial arrangements cannot be fully taken seriously here, as it cannot be imagined that they can valuably contribute to the arrangements' transformation.

This thereby de-limited *scope of imaginable possibilities for collaborating* with the children is furthermore maintained through a societally more broadly taken-for-granted common sense, one that is also not easily questionable from a

subject-scientific perspective. It regards the gridlocked ways of communicating with each other, or rather: of conceiving of and accentuating these communication processes. Both academic practices and pedagogical-educational practices heavily rely on modes of communication that transcend the verbal and the visual, but both do not give it much attention. It is here that *subject-scientific process methodology* should overcome the notion that it is primarily engaging in participant *observation*. Instead, *subject-scientific researchers are participating with their entire humanness, with all communicative modes available to human beings*. They are ontogenetically becoming with the other practice participants, are interweaving their entire conduct of everyday life with the conducts of the others. The media artifacts researchers enact so as to collect ‘data’, however, strongly co-arrange the scope of imaginable possibilities for a posteriori analyzing the multimodal virtuality of the experienced relational ensemble: It is either through writing down or through watching and listening to recordings that a researcher re-relates to the sociomaterial interplay. Similarly, the pedagogical-educational practice values verbalized or otherwise document-able communication higher than other modes of communication, albeit the children clearly attempt to contribute to practice also through the latter. However, often non-verbalizable communicative artifacts go unnoticed, are not accentuated as meaningful – both in the research and the pedagogical-educational practice.

In order to conceptually account for participation engaging one’s entire humanness, I argued that the conduct of everyday life concept should serve as subject science’s primary analytical unity. However, it demanded an empirically grounded conceptual clarification of what role the material plays in the co-arrangement of human social being-becoming. Once understanding the *conduct of everyday life as ineluctably and inextricably sociomaterial*, it obtains the potential to unify and thus analytically accentuate the processual interrelatedness of past-present-future experiences-imaginings, of sense-meaning-making, across contextually situated common senses, with the entire communicative arsenal available to a human being. And it decisively interrelates the processes of maintaining and transforming a sociomaterially arranged common sense, which points to the *two-sidedness of any artifact as part of a sociomaterial relational ensemble, as both emancipatory and alienating*. On the one hand, artifacts as communicative artifacts are necessary impressions-expressions of conducting everyday life and are the only means to interweave one’s past-present-future sense-meaning-relations with an other’s. Due to a human being’s historical situatedness and ensuing limited perspectivity, some of these artifacts as sociomaterial arrangements need to temporarily be taken-for-granted, so as to be

able to accentuate other arrangements one collaboratively seeks to transform. On the other hand, once this taken-for-grantedness is naturalized, essentialized, and human relations to an arrangement are hypostatized, human beings may become alienated from the dual possibility, i.e. the possibility of being able to potentially transform any given sociomaterial arrangement, including social positionings such as 'child' and 'adult'. This possibility of collaboratively transforming an artifact-arrangement may thereby remain non-accentuated throughout one's scope of imaginable possibilities for acting. And this non-accentuation may in turn become part of a collective's common sense, one that the upcoming generation is born into and increasingly takes for granted itself.

Contradictions stabilized throughout an unfathomable multitude of sociomaterial arrangements and related struggles may therefore appear irresolvable, particularly to a generation which has not experienced-imagined the processes which led to the arrangement's specific arrangement. They first stand opposed to the artifact-arrangement in terms of its outcome, as objectification-product. The *artifact's processuality* needs to be re-discovered, or rather *enacted in situated novel ways*. Learning about an artifact's processual-relational history is pivotal for meaningfully creating an alternative history, for meaningfully integrating it into one's own situatedly negotiated collaborative processes.

The children I collaborated with attempted to do exactly this, with media artifacts as well as any other sociomaterial arrangement: They drew on the available intended meanings and directionalities, the adult-maintained sociomaterial common sense the artifact is embedded in, so as to meaningfully co-transform the artifact's meanings and directionalities and integrate them into their purposeful collaborative explorations across contextual practices. The *children experimented* with commonsensical understandings of sociomaterial arrangements, *learning through the common sense so as to play with the common sense*, with its broadly taken-for-granted boundaries and limitations. At the same time, however, not all elements of the sociomaterial common sense can at once be meaningfully integrated and purposefully transformed. Some need to be maintained in all their contradictoriness, as children do not merely collaborate and negotiate with explorative peers, but also with experienced adults who take these contradictions as givens. *Contradictory societal phenomena* such as competition and consumption thus *become part of the children's sense-meaning-explorations*. Children struggle with understanding and overcoming these phenomena and simultaneously maintain them in specific situated ways for the sake of collaborating with the other practice participants.

As shown, the children's struggles with these societally taken-for-granted often appear irresolvable, and co-create feelings of helplessness, fear, and rage. And my discoveries emphasize that these struggles may never be resolved, the respective sense-meaning-relations will never be purposefully transformed across practices, if the ontological child/adult divide is unquestionably upheld. The *struggles the children faced* when enacting media-artifact-related and other experiences-imaginings were never of the children alone, were not foreign to adult struggles. They were instead *deeply interwoven with and interdependent of broader societal struggles*. Children may accentuate these struggles differently, in unconventional ways, from an exoticized positioning, through other communicative modes. But this is precisely why adult should take the children's perspectives and actions seriously, in particular when working on situated emancipatory joint ventures: Because the children's communicative actions point to alternative ways of understanding contradictory societal phenomena and struggles, of exploring the arrangements through which these contradictions sociomaterialize so as to productively experiment and play with them. *Collaborative and necessarily conflictual explorations, experimentations and playful re-negotiations of each other's sociomaterial sense-meaning-relations presuppose questioning the maintained common sense*. They presuppose conceiving of any communicative artifact as both product and process, conceiving of the common sense as a merely temporarily stabilized foundation for furthering collaborations across age divides and for thereby mutually expanding each other's scope of imaginable possibilities for acting together across contextual practices, as praxis.

Throughout the upcoming last pages, I will focus on a few key implications of this project. Conceptualizing *epistemological diversity as ontological commonality* across human beings' sociomaterial conducts of everyday life as fundamental starting point of any subject-centered investigation has a number of particularly political-ethical implications for working with human beings in general and specifically with children. Most centrally, a conflictual collaborative approach to situatedly exploring contradictory sociomaterial arrangements across contextual practices, i.e. the playful re-arrangement of humankind's co-creations, calls for further specifying the concepts of learning and of democratic participation. I propose to draw on these re-imagined understandings in order to investigate human-human-technology relationships across age thresholds, a venture which demands building stronger ties between educational-developmental Practice Research and human-social research which focuses on media and other technological practices.

Political-ethical implications: The project's emancipatory relevance

At the beginning of Chapter 2, I drew on Holzkamp (1972a) and Tolman (1994) to expand on their proposition that psychology should bury its fetish of opting for technical relevance over emancipatory relevance. Implied was a normative shift away from understanding psychology as a control science towards understanding psychology as a subject science, a science *for* the subject and not about the subject. I re-iterate Tolman (1994): “An important corollary is that the problem investigated must also be a problem *for* the other person. This does not necessarily mean that the other person must come to the researcher with a complaint, but that the problem be understood by the person as a problem, the understanding of which is in his or her interest” (p. 141).

Throughout this dissertation, I have struggled with clarifying what this proposition implies for engaging in an emancipatory co-research with very young human beings. Many older human beings, who have a relatively broad repertoire of language artifacts at their disposal and commonly make use of these language artifacts in order to exchange perspectives and sense-meaning-relations, have trouble understanding a young human beings' problems and interests. How can researchers, then, make sure that the problem they investigate together with their young co-researchers actually *is* a problem to them? How can they make sure that it is in the interest of the co-researcher to explore this problem? This is not merely a problem to a research-worker, but to anyone positioned as ‘adult’ who would like to collaborate with ‘children’ without paternalizing them. For instance, it emerged as problem also for the daycare’s staff when attempting to identify children’s key life situations for initiating pedagogical projects. How could they make sure that the situations children brought forward really were key to them? How could they make sure that the situation a child brought forward and the ensuing project would be relevant for any of the other children in the group? And how could they make sure that they did not miss out on any important key situations or struggles?

The ontologically given diversity and uniqueness of perspectives precisely suggests that *one can never be sure* not to miss out on important elements of another’s conduct of everyday life – even when it appears as if the other is perfectly able to verbalize his/her problems, her/his premises-reasons-relations. *One can merely approximate the other’s understandings, the other’s scope of imaginable possibilities for acting, the other’s state of being-feeling, the other’s perspective,*

problems, key situations – and this craves joint and conflictual sense-meaning-negotiations. There are always facets to conducting everyday life, to imagining and experiencing, to feeling and thinking, which are and never will be fully verbalizable – or in any other way communicable. Furthermore, human living through maintaining-transforming is one of the world’s many animate processes: The verbalization of a premise-reason-relation always already trails behind praxis, can be nothing more than a *future-oriented rear-view mirror analysis*, to partly and partially borrow from Nissen (2012, pp. 46ff). But irrespective of these limitations can human beings be highly sensitive to one another’s challenges and struggles, also because one partly and partially accentuates the same sociomaterial arrangements, the same conditions-as-meanings, struggles with them as well. And albeit these accentuations are always already different, human beings constantly attempt to bridge these differences through communicative artifacts for the sake of fostering collaboration.

This ongoing bridging process, communication, relies on many more communicative modes than the verbal or the textual. Throughout the process of sociomaterial becoming, many other communicative modes are engaged, but *not necessarily accentuated as relevant-for-action*. The pedagogues and many others spending a considerable amount of time communicating with young human beings communicate with them through a multiplicity of modes. They build on this multimodally acquired knowledge so as to, for example, identify children’s key life situations. However, when asked about how they came to identify a specific situation, problem or struggle as key for the child, the pedagogues struggle themselves with verbalizing it. After all, “[s]ocieties have modal preferences” (Kress, 2009, p. 57), and my impression-expression is that the non-verbalizable, the unspeakable and unwritable (and increasingly the unquantifiable), have been granted too little attention. Non-verbalizable experiences and particularly judgments are consequently not as highly valued or even dismissed as irrelevant for collaboration (also Holzkamp insinuates that when referring to the *tacit knowledge* term; cf. Holzkamp, 2013g, p. 330). Here we return to a fundamental dilemma, namely that at least throughout ‘Western’ academic practices and other educational practices, we encounter a communicative age threshold which evidently obstructs a situated emancipatory collaboration. Yet, it is not solely a communicative *age* threshold, but a threshold re-produced between those who supposedly dispose of societally adequate language skills and those who do not, those who can and those who cannot appropriately formulate their problems and interests. There is a *pater-nalizing or even hypostatizing edge to this threshold*, to this divide, which is also maintained throughout much of subject-scientific research.

Still, one of the strengths of Critical Psychological subject science lies precisely in its proposition to collaboratively *explore* premises-reasons-relations, and herewith problems and struggles faced in relation to potentially transformable sociomaterial arrangements. It is this communicative process which can be conceptualized as emancipatory in the sense of collectively *overcoming the fallacy that agency could be expanded solely on one's own terms*, that even problems require to be re-negotiated and both impressed and expressed as a co-created sense-meaning-relation, a transformed and further transformable sociomaterial arrangement. Meanwhile, it needs to be considered that these problem negotiations do not exclusively take place on the verbalizable level. On the contrary: most do most certainly not. Therefore, the apparent dilemma that we cannot appropriately communicate with children about their problems and interests so as to engage in an emancipatory collaborative research project is either no dilemma or a dilemma that we face with every other human being as well, as we can never make sure to virtually understand the other's problems and interests – or *at least we cannot put this understanding into words*. Charlotte Højholt's proposition that we need to look in front of the child so as to understand its engagements (Højholt, 2011, p. 75), that the *directionalities of its actions are themselves communicative*, must be explicitly extended towards needing to look in front of adults as well. Only because the non-verbal communications are seldom accentuated among adults does not mean they are inexistent, and all human beings might gain from more deftly focusing on the non-verbal communication processes they are involved and involving in.

Pivotal throughout these explorative communication processes is that they remain explorative, tentative, sensitive, sensuous – all they can be are productive approximations of each other's perspective. Conflict is inherent to these approximation processes. Hypostatizing conflictual sense-meaning-relations as seemingly immovable ontological givens, however, is what truly endangers further collaboration and learning – as it implicates the domination of one perspective over another.

Transcending 'the child'

“Among [or beneath] us lives a big number of humans

- who have no free disposal over when and how to go out, and who to go out with,
- who have no disposal over the type and the amount of meals as well as over mealtimes,

- whose bedtimes are prescribed,
- whose clothing is prescribed, depending on what others like,
- who are not allowed to dispose over money, at the most over smallest amounts – which they furthermore have to balance in a painstaking manner,
- to whom it is prescribed which information they are allowed to receive from where,
- that do not obtain sufficient protection from mental and physical abuse,
- who are laughed at when being angry,
- to whom it is even prescribed when to do what on the toilet’ (Ulmann, 2010, p. 237; cf. also Ulmann, 1987; translation NAC).

In the interlude on play, I drew on Ulmann (2010) to hypothetically ask whether it was helpful or functional for engaging in mutual sociomaterial self-understanding to preemptively label children’s explorative actions as *play*. Considering the list of action constraints children are confronted with on a daily basis presented by Ulmann here, declaring their doings as play might in comparison appear little problematic. It becomes problematic, however, when the children’s manifest struggles with the above constraints, which are sociomaterially co-arranged and taken-for-granted across a wide range of child-rearing practices, can exclusively be analyzed on the premise that what they strive for is playing. For instance, rejecting a meal which they do not like by hurling it across the table may not be analyzed as meal rejection, but as their wish to play with food. Undoubtedly, such an interpretation would hamper rather than foster mutual self-understanding. It would not call for collaboratively exploring the struggle the child has in relation to the food in relation to the struggles its parents face (who eventually cannot provide any other food in that situation due to monetary limitations etc.). Without engaging in such a collaboration, much more toe-curling interpretations of children’s actions can be stabilized. For instance, claiming that a child has *conduct problems* (e.g., Webster-Stratton, Reid & Stoolmiller, 2008) rather than understanding the child as facing problems throughout its conduct of everyday life not only individualizes the problem, it cuts off every alternative possibility for relating to the child’s problems so as to collaboratively overcome them. Such concepts have negative consequences for a whole anyway marginalized group, and the interpretations such a concept allows for “represent *epistemological vio-*

lence” (p. 247), as psychology historian Thomas Teo (2011) coined it with reference to psychological studies underpinning racialized differences. Concepts such as children having conduct problems, I fear, make it too easy to interpret data “to the detriment of the *Other*” (ibid.) – in our case to the detriment of the generalized non-adult, the child, who is anyway already positioned as “something that is *radically and irreducibly Other*” (Kontopodis, Wulf & Fichtner, 2011, p. 9).

Also seen from a legislative point of view, children are “incomparable to any other group of persons in need of protection; as children or minors respectively are the only group of persons, over which other persons, ergo the parents, are granted a constitutionally given power to decide, [a power] which [in turn] is always in danger of being abused (Steindorff-Classen, 2010, p. 90; translation NAC). This is not to say that everyone who could actually *does* abuse this power. But in many places around the globe, it is an institutionally granted and thus widely taken-for-granted power which is seldom up for discussion. And it is precisely this discussion children need to contribute to so as to find out that *also adults can never do what they want to, that their conducts of life are similarly dependent of other’s conducts of everyday life*, and that also adults need to constantly re-negotiate sense-meaning-relations across collectives. It is necessary to analytically focus on commonalities across conducts of everyday life instead of differences, as the differences are always already inherent to the process of human development through praxis.

Altogether, hence, my contribution does not solely want to question the concept of the ‘child’. This would be one-sided and may trigger assumptions that I seek to bereave children of their hard-earned special political status and herewith of those rights protecting them from the abuse of power, e.g. the rights granted to them through the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989) and related documents. The latter is absolutely not the case. The point is instead to more broadly question those contradictory socio-material arrangements that make it necessary to protect the child via legislative arrangements which cater exclusively to children, and who thereby further stabilize the child/adult divide. Why is it (still) necessary to set up *extra* documents for children only? Why is it necessary to legislatively discriminate them from other human beings on a universal scale? Why is the current version of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN General Assembly, 1948) obviously *insufficient to protect human beings in general from being abused, from being dominated by other human beings*? Looking at current events throughout the world humankind has sociomaterially co-arranged, these are of course highly naive questions to pose. But without such naive curiosity and the questions it

allows for, what imaginable future remains to purposefully and collaboratively work towards?

The challenge is to translate this rather abstract utopia into jointly shared directionalities for re-arranging the practices we are involved-involving in. To me, one directionality I can actually formulate is to *transcend the conceptual separation of 'children' and 'adults' for the sake of fostering collaboration across humanly arranged age thresholds*. In order to invite for collaboration, I propose to not merely question what a 'child' is, but simultaneously question what an 'adult' is. These concepts are inseparably interconnected, and can only be worked on as an ensemble. If we put the focus on what a 'normal' adult is, what an adult is expected to achieve in life, how an adult is supposed to contribute to praxis, we also come to investigate what we expect pedagogy and education to achieve, what their roles in society are. It is necessary to collaborate on formulating these expectations, to re-negotiate a common sense, so as to be able to question and improve it in emancipatory ways by situatedly investigating jointly shared contradictions in practice. This investigation is not solely an academic task, but calls for collaborations that unite research-workers with all those other who are just as much researching possibilities for conducting everyday life in the pursuit of expanding their agency. Such an investigation focuses on commonalities throughout always already future-oriented human processes and on the ways these are sociomaterially co-arranged, focuses on the questions of what it is we are jointly participating in, how we would like to contribute to it, what contradictory arrangement we believe is meaningful to temporarily maintain in order to collaboratively transform another.

Thereby, I hope, can we come to question notions of work as mere wage labor, of participation as mere having-a-part in something seemingly unchangeable, of play as something exclusive to the children. It is the inherently conflictual collaborative re-negotiations of commonly shared directionalities/hopes participants all across manifold practices may need to work on, so as to concretize their further actions and develop a productive directionality across seemingly fixated thresholds. Otherwise, as developmental psychologist Lara Beaty points out in her studies of youth's video production practices, 'children' may see no other alternative route for meaningfully developing their agency than to as soon as possible become (a transfigured and somewhat idealized version of) an 'adult', without questioning the sociomaterially arranged contradictions which also adults face on a daily basis:

“The actions taken by youth in video production programs were as varied as the contexts in which they happened, yet all the youth were in positions with little power and removed from the ‘real’ activity of the world, which capital-

ism establishes as the creation of exchange value. Youth are in a similar position as the worker, except that they are not even a meaningful part of the system that dominates the working class; youth are thus doubly alienated. Youth are approaching adulthood and will soon be expected to assume roles as workers, but youth typically find few legitimate affordances for influencing events in their lives. [...] As workers, for the most part they will devote themselves to activity that is more valued, but they are not likely to find more opportunities for agency apart from personal decisions such as selecting a particular job, home, and spouse, which matter but do not influence the structure of communities. Few workers find affordances to influence the *way things are done*, yet their activities are valued as long as they are producing or reproducing. Given this, it is no surprise that youth seek out adult relationships and jobs prematurely” (Beaty, 2013, pp. 21-22).

Democratic participatory research: A collaborative exploration of transforming-maintaining processes

“Rather than accepting explicit, general, and abstract rules, they [kindergartners] seem more concerned to create rules that fit their worldview and the local understandings of themselves and others. [...] They demonstrate the degree of their influence by their ability to define their place in the social order and make the rules governing their shared play” (Winther-Lindqvist, 2009, pp. 73-74).

I return to this quote from Winther-Lindqvist to add a clarification which emerges from my own study: The children I encountered and worked with did not only re-negotiate and co-create the *rules* of their commonly shared activities or engagements (here: soccer), they furthermore re-negotiated and co-created the ‘social order’ in the daycare – at least they constantly attempted to do so. Participation in a contextual practice, as for instance proposed by Ole Dreier (1999, 2008), implies *taking* part in the practice, contributing to it, so as to change it. The children’s participations underlined this *general directionality of action* towards developing agency, *towards gaining influence over those life conditions their conducts of everyday life are dependent of*. As argued, however, this directionality of action is not exclusive to children, and it furthermore emerges as contradictory situated premises-for-action. Conflicts and struggles in relation to the question of how to collaborate on maintaining-transforming contextual practices are inevitable (cf. Axel, 2011). The productivity of such conflictual collaborations is endangered once other potential collaborators are understood as part of the life conditions that need to be transformed solely according to one’s own premises, once their process of conducting everyday life is objectified as immovable condition for one’s own conduct of everyday life. I

have outlined that the contradictoriness of both the competitive and the consumerist directionalities sociomaterialized through arrangements may promote such hypostatizations. Struggles emerging out of seemingly irreconcilable participation processes of potential collaborators are thus not only related to how a singular contextual practice is sociomaterially arranged, but of how the ensemble of contextual practices is arranged.

Once turning away from singularized practices and conceptualizing them through the relational ensemble of a conduct of everyday life, ergo across the manifold contexts and collectives one participates to praxis through, it falls into place that *possibilities for fostering collaboration must be discussed transcontextually in terms of re-negotiating a temporarily jointly shared directionality/hope*. Such a re-negotiation is an inherently democratic joint venture, as on principal, democracy allows for freedom of participation across practices and is simultaneously constituted by the demos' participation. The questions formulated at the beginning of Chapter 4 to participation and democracy, however, i.e. 'who participates in what how?' and 'what democratic ideal is implied?' have only been partly answered. Or rather: While the first one has hopefully found some preliminary answers throughout this dissertation's analysis of different approaches to subject-scientific Practice Research, the second one has been merely scratched.

The question about the democratic ideal is crucial not merely for participatory research, as suggested by Götsch, Klinger & Thiesen (2012), but for any practice that takes place in a sociomaterial arrangement which the participants already deem to be or would like to be democratic. Throughout the legislative and pedagogical texts analyzed in Chapter 2, the democratic model implicitly promoted is one where the 'social order' was largely (pre-)arranged by representative bodies, so that citizens and future citizens would merely need to learn about sensibly choosing among options offered by politics (and economics and all those other spheres or fields playing into politics).¹²³ The promoted ideal resembled that of claiming one's part in the seemingly immovable given.¹²⁴ Partly and partially, this ideal was adopted by the children. Much of the time, however, it was also questioned throughout the process of taking one's part. Drawing on media theorist Nico Carpentier's (2011) distinction between maximalist and minimalist versions of democracy, I would claim that the children I collaborated with always sought to fight for the max-

¹²³ In Germany, it is currently widely discussed whether society should be striving towards a *market-compliant democracy* – as insinuated by chancellor Angela Merkel – or a *democracy-compliant market* (e.g., von Altenbockum, 2012; Brost & Niejahr, 2013).

¹²⁴ Albeit we find passages in the BBP which point beyond this notion of participation as having part, ergo participation as taking part through contributing to society (cf. Chapter 2).

imalist version, where the “political is considered a dimension of the social” (p. 25).

Meanwhile, it must be highlighted that *taking one's part under currently given conditions is always already connected to claiming one's part in the given arrangement*. For instance, competition is inherent to those sociomaterial arrangements we have to draw on so as to establish common sense for the sake of virtually transforming these arrangements together. Transforming ideology always already comes with maintaining ideology, as Nissen (2012) underlines. Following Tolman (1994), this has been also formulated by Marx (1971), though with an emphasis on thinking and consciousness:

“From the point of view of living and acting (practising) in these [particular economic] formations, thinking is *necessarily* subject to the logic of the particular formation. It must be thus subjected if the individual is to practise successfully in it. This subjection of consciousness, therefore, is not a starting point, but an end result. Through it the economic formation shapes the objective forms of thought. Being subject in this way to immediate economic practice, thought in this form is always ‘appropriate’. It is consequently not inappropriate from the standpoint of the everyday practice of exchange to understand value as something reified or as a relation between things; that is precisely how it works” (Tolman, 1994, p. 48).

While this subjection to the ‘logic’ of particular arrangements – whose description lacks just a tad of situatedness – is necessary for living and acting in and through contextual practices, it becomes problematic when its relational processuality and directionality are lost: “The consciousness that is functional *in* a particular economic form becomes false when it generalizes to a supposed consciousness *about* things and relations. When this happens consciousness remains not only shaped by the economic form; it remains unaware that it is thus shaped” (ibid.; cf. also Hall, 1996, p. 37). In my words: *As soon as one's necessarily ideological sense-meaning-relations are not put up for re-negotiation*, for interweaving one's own sense-meaning-processes to another's sense-meaning-processes – as this possibility is not even accentuated, for instance because the other is hypostatized as unfit for collaboration, – *one forfeit's the possibility to even question the logic or ideal one necessarily subjects to*. Keeping alive the notion that human beings engage in collaborative processes of meaningfully interweaving ontogenetical becomings through communication is therefore crucial. It is crucial to *understand both transforming and maintaining as processes, as inextricably intertwined. Both are negotiable*, and this common sense must be re-negotiated with each and every collective one participates in as

well as across all those collectives one participates through throughout one's conduct of everyday life.

If participatory research truly seeks to be participatory and thus democratic, it must engage in collaborative re-negotiations of common sense with other practice participants. Most centrally, the intended directionality of the collaboration is to be initially negotiated and re-currently re-prototyped as collectively transformed-maintained practice, impressed-expressed in the process of establishing jointly shared sense-meaning-relations. The aim is to approximate mutual sociomaterial self-understanding through a contextual practice in order to learn for one's transcontextual conduct of everyday life – and not merely for one contextual practice, e.g. academia. By engaging in such a democratic approach, the question of what democratic ideal to strive for might just be answered along the way. However, it can never be finally answered and should instead be open to democratic re-negotiation, so as to not end up as pseudo-citizens, as German writer Ingo Schulze warns in a debate with politician Wolfgang Kubicki: “If the citizens' contribution [*Mitsprache*] is delimited to voting, and freedom and social justice do not go together anymore, then we live in a pseudo-democracy. But that is due to all of us. Then Mr. Kubicki is a pseudo-politician, and I am a pseudo-citizen” (Schulze, as cited in Brost & Niejahr, 2013, p. 4; translation NAC).

For the sake of not ending up living in pseudo-democracies as pseudo-citizens, adults should further explore how children attempt to being taken seriously so as to learn how all of us (citizens) are often not taken seriously. We should *re-set our analytical focus to how children participate and contribute to socio-materially arranged practices* – and we should account for these contributions, from all participating human beings, throughout the process of re-arranging the sociomaterial relations and collaboratively developing them in ongoing, humble, emancipatory ways, ways that furthermore account for the interdependencies of human and non-human processes.

Propositions for prototyping a collaborative developmental sociomaterial science

My analyses of situations experienced-imagined through the daycare practice as well as the legislative and pedagogical-educational texts co-arranging the practice's largely maintained common sense foreground the questions of why the participants-contributors engage in the processes of maintaining-transforming and what means-ends-relations they accentuate for doing so.

Differently asked: What sociomaterial arrangements do participants-contributors in and across practices preferably draw on in order to communicate and engage in collaborations, and why do we find them useful or subjectively functional for expanding their own and (at times) one another's agency? Once we engage in conflictual collaborations, how do we negotiate the intended directionality of this joint venture, of this fellow enterprise? How can our interrelated struggles, conflicts and discoveries assist each other in conducting everyday life, in expanding our scopes of imaginable possibilities for acting across collective practices? Research itself is conflictual collaboration, is learning, and every conflictual collaboration requires co-research, i.e., it requires an investigation of contradictions via multiple perspectives and scopes of imaginable possibilities to re-relate to these contradictions for the sake of tackling and transforming them.

We are in this together, academics and non-academics, children and adults. We partly and partially strive for maintaining and transforming the same sociomaterial arrangements, strive for overcoming the same contradictory sense-meaning-relations. The diversity of situated perspectives, of sense-meaning-relations, are both boon and bane of such a conflictual collaboration: It suggests the irreconcilability of unique premises-reasons-relations, triggering conflict and developmental crisis. Meanwhile, it is conflicts and crises which are necessary for transforming and thereby maintaining the process of living through praxis. It is therefore crucial to further clarify what it is we human beings have in common across unique perspectives, across ontogenetical becomings, across conducts of everyday life, across epistemologies and methodologies, across ideologies or directionalities of acting – and to further clarify how we can communicate about these commonalities.

I argued that the first step is to understand the process of living as intersubjectively constituted and interdependent of other animate processes. Such a relational-processual understanding counters conceptualizations which hypostatize a relation to a human or non-human process. Instead of hypostatizing a relation as ontological given, certain sense-meaning-relations require to be temporarily maintained through communicative sociomaterial arrangements so as to be able to foster further development through conflictual collaboration. A *collaborative developmental sociomaterial science* therefore *always works on questioning the taken-for-granted* – not in order to merely deconstruct and discard the given, but to negotiate and transform it in explicitly emancipatory, domination-countering and henceforth democratic ways. It is this, I believe, what Morten Nissen pointed to when proposing a reconstructionist critique engaging in a *democratic social engineering* (Nissen, 2012, p. 18; cf. also Nissen, 2009,

2013). A collaborative developmental sociomaterial science must be a democratizing science: it is always already political and ideological, partisan in the sense of always already challenging domination and injustice.

On a philosophical-epistemological level, then, the collaborative developmental sociomaterial science I wish to propose here always understands maintaining and transforming as humanly co-arranged processes that require ongoing re-negotiations. On the one hand, it “presupposes understanding that social institutions are malleable, historically contingent, and fluid and therefore require a historically based understanding. And vice versa, understanding that the world and human development are socially and historically contingent grounds the belief that change is possible and therefore that the world with its social institutions is amenable to intervention through a purposefully organized social transformation” (Stetsenko, 2008, p. 486). On the other hand, while it may be transformation we particularly strive for, the transformation requires processes of sedimentation or maintenance of sociomaterial arrangements so as to not constantly re-negotiate how one communicates. The *generalized being-made-for* of artifacts (Nissen, 2012, p. 117), its *generalized usefulness* (Holzkamp, 1985, pp. 446ff), should remain *questionable*, not be constantly questioned. Situated re-negotiations of commonly shared directionalities/hopes for a collaboration are therefore pivotal.

Questioning possibilitates learning through playing with seemingly given sense-meaning-relations, and this I experienced in the daycare in relation to the staff (e.g., the Technology Project or the computer screen’s plastic frame) and particularly in relation to those participants the staff was to rear and educate: the ‘children’. *Children played and experimented with the given and its supposed usefulness so as to influence it*,¹²⁵ impress-express alternative sense-meaning-relations to it – in terms of both its inextricably interrelated social and material qualities.¹²⁶ The pedagogical-educational arrangement, however, tended to insinuate that one should learn for the sake of learning. With such an understanding, learning appears as end in and for itself (*Selbstzweck* in German), and not as a temporary end which serves as means for furthering one’s collaborative influence, for expanding one’s intersubjectively constituted agency through conducting one’s everyday life together. Even when engaging with a seemingly solitary play, like picking up sand and letting it run through one’s hands – at times modeling something out of the sand, at times not – the dis-

¹²⁵ I consequently refrain from claiming that the play with artifacts’ usefulnesses is a totally *arbitrary* process, as Holzkamp insinuates when writing about the “arbitrary usability” of means children enact (cf. Holzkamp, 1985, p. 447).

¹²⁶ Explicitly also including its *aesthetic* qualities (cf. Bang, 2012).

coveries made in relation to this experiment were later communicated to someone else, a potential collaborator. Most often, it was communicated as an invitation to engage in a similar activity, so that the other did not only come to experience-imagine the modal translation of the situation, but instead as a multimodal approximation of what the first child experienced-imagined. The daycare children, hence, attempted to re-enact the entirety of the sensory experience, its relational ensemble. Other than adults, their analytical focus seemed not to have succumbed yet to the “compartmentalization of the sensorium” (Howes, 2009, p. 225).

Methodologically, a collaborative developmental sociomaterial science remains *playful*. Its approaches and interpretations are re-situated according to the common sense found in the investigated practice, so as to be able to collaboratively re-negotiate this common sense and *turn the project of a few into a project of the many*, preferably of all involved. These re-negotiations of sense-meaning-relations require establishing a frame of intersubjective understanding, in which contradictory premises-reasons-relations are communicatively exchanged. As suggested throughout this dissertation, this communicative exchange must be conceptualized as an *ongoing multimodal exchange*. I.e., the collaboration neither compartmentalizes the dialogic situation from other situations and contexts, thus separating it from all the other ongoing exchanges, nor does it unquestioningly subject itself to the presumption that a verbal dialog is the most useful method for communicating premises-reasons-relations. *Multimodal process methodologies* are key. This also implies that participation in a commonly shared practice for the sake of collaborating cannot be reduced to *observing* what others do. As a participant, no matter whether academic researcher or not, one un-consciously contributes to the discoveries made, not only retrospectively throughout the analysis, but also throughout ‘collecting’ discoveries. The *transformation of other conducts of everyday life is unavoidable* – as well as the *transformation of one’s own conduct of everyday life is unavoidable*. These entanglements or *interweavements of ontogenetical becomings must be considered and understood as productive rather than as discomforting or unscientific*.

Meanwhile, these productive transformation processes may go wholly unnoticed or non-accentuated when focusing on either verbal or observational ‘data’. Much of one’s own intersubjectively constituted transformation process is *felt*. One’s experiences-imaginings constitute a relational ensemble, which is ongoingly re-constituted in relation to one’s current state of feeling-being and one’s scope of imaginable possibilities for future actions. This calls for both discussions of how we can account for this relational ensemble while engaging in research, and of how we can meaningfully re-present such processes

through the ensembles of artifacts we co-create without merely re-producing those communicative modes taken for granted throughout academic practice as well as other contextual practices. A suggestion is to promote transdisciplinary collaborations with a variety of diverse, yet not so apart approaches, like *sensory anthropology* (e.g., Pink, 2009; Howes, 2009; similar yet very different: Ingold, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013), *multimodal (semiotic) approaches* (e.g., Kress, 2009, 2010; for an overview, cf. Jewitt, 2009b), *cultural (post-)phenomenology* (e.g., Csordas, 2008; Rosenberger, 2011; Hasse, 2008, 2013), and *agential realism* (e.g., Barad, 2003, 2007; Søndergaard, 2013). Albeit philosophically diverging, they have in common that they all seek to overcome static and instrumentalist understandings of human-human and human-non-human relationships, thereby offering perspectives on how to question and re-work methodological arrangements.

Last but not least, it is implied that a *collaborative developmental sociomaterial science* must be situated or practice-based, in the sense that it meets the collaborators on ontological eye-level wherever they are located. Meanwhile, it should explicitly advocate being a *Praxis Research* rather than a Practice Research: If it seriously wants to foster the approximation of mutual self-understanding across perspectives in relation to jointly shared contradictory sociomaterial arrangements so as to overcome these contradictions, it necessarily *needs to investigate conflicts and struggles across contextually compartmentalized practices*. In putting the analytical focus on how conducts of everyday life intertwine, it surfaces how the collaborators' sense-meaning-relations need to be juggled and re-arranged across their various contextual participations, thereby initiating sense-meaning-negotiations in another contextual practice. When seeking to seriously collaborate with someone in overcoming contradictions, one necessarily has to collaborate across practices, through praxis.

Propositions for prototyping a collaborative critical study of communicative artifacts as situated technology literacies

I return from my more general conceptual deliberations about human beings living through sociomaterial arrangements, which essentially possibilite communication across ontogenetically unique perspectives, via a proposition for developing developmental research, to the case of media artifacts. It is no coincidence that I have laid that subject matter aside for a while, have gener-

ally only skimmed it throughout this dissertation. I first had to dig deeper into the ant mountain, ergo into the ways children and thereby human beings connect to each other, impress-express their sense-meaning-relations through communicative artifacts, before jumping to the specificities of the relating-to media technologies as part of the relating-to sociomaterial arrangements in the daycare I contributed to. I have laid out a number of considerations about the human-media and thereby the child-media relationship throughout Chapter 4, and I follow up on these issues here so as to prototype propositions for conceptualizing future research on media literacy from a subject-scientific relational-processual, age-independent learning perspective.

Livingstone (2005) once more lays out the groundwork for my propositions:

“New media artefacts, activities and arrangements are recombinant in character, socially shaped by what already exists, what goes before. So, this invites a focus on people’s creativity in moulding technological innovations to their needs and contexts, creativity being a little understood but key feature of everyday life. We struggle even to judge creativity when it occurs. The flip side is people’s desire for predictability, familiarity, routine, an equally strong motivator. In the design of information and communication technologies and contents at present, neither issue is adequately addressed. Faced with the internet, people are erratically creative but mostly flummoxed. Many are becoming reassured by the predictability of branded environments online, and take up of expressive or non-normative opportunities is tentative or low, beyond a self-appointed elite subgroup.

Responding to the new media environment demands new literacies, especially critical literacies, and also productive literacies. Literacy is a product of the interface between people, with their skills or otherwise, and mediations, with their codes and preferences. In balancing skills and design in the production of new media literacies, the question is one of interest – in whose interest is it that certain online opportunities are taken up over others? Whose responsibility is it that people engage with new media in their own interest? How do we balance the public interest against the commercial agenda? Could and should people’s activities shape the emergence and diffusion of innovations in different or better ways?” (p. 3).

In my reading, Livingstone here points to the processes of transforming (through creativity) and maintaining (as predictability, familiarity, routine) the seemingly given. It furthermore points to difficulties in imaginatively accentuating the artifact arrangements’ possibilities for engaging in creative processes, particularly those who are not necessarily experienced with questioning infrastructural arrangements (ergo those who do not belong to the ‘self-appointed elite subgroup’). When she moves on to prototyping solutions, her concept of *critical-productive literacy* appears to point *beyond media artifacts*: The

political questions posed in relation to new media could be posed in relation to any other sociomaterial arrangement – at least if we understand, as I have suggested, every sociomaterial arrangement as inherently communicative.

The breadth of Livingstone's take on literacy also shows in an earlier article which specifically focuses on media literacy and related discussions.¹²⁷ Here she draws on Aufderheide (1993) to define literacy in general as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of forms” (Livingstone, 2004, p. 5). Meanwhile, she dismisses such a “skill-based approach”, as it “neglects the textuality and technology that mediates communication. In consequence, it unwittingly supports a universalist, cognitive framework, thereby neglecting in turn the historical and cultural contingency of both media and the social knowledge processes that interpret them” (p. 8). As a consequence, Livingstone proposes to opt for thinking of multiple literacies which are required: “I suggest that, as people engage with a diversity of ICTs, we must consider the possibility of literacies in the plural, defined through their relations with different media rather than defined independently of them” (ibid.). Also in order to de-individualize the concept of literacy, she relates the question of what literacies are needed to the question of what citizenship is, i.e. what literacies are needed so as to participate in society: “As we move into an information society, is media literacy increasingly part of citizenship, a key means, a right even, by which citizens participate in society? Or is literacy primarily a means of realizing ideals of self-actualization, cultural expression, and aesthetic creativity? Will these goals be subordinated to the use of media literacy to support the competitive cultural and economic advantages vital in a globalized, information society?” (p. 11).

While I agree that the question of “what literacy?” cannot be separated from the question of “what society?” (see above), I regret that, in contrast to her 2005 paper, she insinuates here that the ‘soft ideal’ of aesthetic creativity is to be separated from the ‘hard ideal’ of citizenship. As argued, *playful creativity* (including aesthetic creativity) is essential for thinking the process of maintaining as inseparable from the process of transforming or creatively and playfully re-arranging arrangements – and *thereby participating in democracy*. My impression-expression is that Livingstone primarily relates aesthetic creativity to content generation, rather than a re-arrangement of the material stuff, the forms and infrastructures of a technology (cf. the conclusion of Chapter 4). Albeit the term *literacy* is strongly associated to reading and writing practices, I contend that it can be re-written and re-arranged so as be linked to the entire-

¹²⁷ For a relevant overview over discussions particularly regarding digital media literacies, cf. also Buckingham (2007).

ty of a technological artifact as part of a relational ensemble, a sociomaterial arrangement. However, it must be critical insofar as literacy cannot merely be about comprehending the intended usefulness, the generalized being-made-for, but to *collaboratively and creatively transgress the conventional boundaries of an artifact's usefulness for the sake of communicatively fostering age-independent collaboration across collectives*.

Literacy indeed gains further meaningfulness when understood in plural, in the sense that there cannot be a generalized (media) literacy: On the one hand, even when confronted with a sole media artifact or device, not only does it combine manifold intended and contradictory directionalities, functionalities or usefulnesses, as expressed in the *media convergence* term (cf. Meikle & Young, 2012). It also aggregates an enormous amount of other potentially accentuat-able possibilities for acting, the unintended ones. On the other hand is the usefulness of whatever 'reading', of whatever sense-meaning-relation for the artifact, re-situated in relation to one's past-present-future relations, ergo in relation to one's scope of imaginable possibilities for acting and collaborating in a given situation. This calls for *situated investigations of literacies*, for instance on how the perceived usefulnesses of specific technological artifacts vary when enacted by different collectives. It also calls for interrelating media literacies with the 'reading' of the usefulness of all those other sociomaterial arrangements they are a part of, more generally in terms of how when what sociomaterial arrangement is accentuated *for what purpose* – and *through which communicative mode*.

One's relation to the concrete other one wishes to communicate and consequently collaborate with, one's hopes, expectations, wishes, and struggles in relation to the potential collaboration, are particularly decisive to investigate when studying the situated enactment of technologies which are generally-made-for communicating. It could be for instance studied how specific 'communication technologies' hamper collaboration, as their in-built *modal affordances* (Kress, 2010) do not allow for collaborating through those communicative modes hoped for – thus changing the entire quality of the collaboration. We could take a long-distance 'love relationship' as illustrative example: As one of the partners feels-thinks that the collaboration s_he seeks with the other requires the communicative mode of touching, s_he reduces communication via 'communication technologies' to a minimum degree. The other partner may know and understand this, however s_he feels-thinks that a modally reduced communication is better than no communication whatsoever. Meanwhile, the conflictual aspect of this collaboration cannot be unfolded as productive, as the communicative modes the technology allows for im-

pedes a constructive debate across all necessary modes – as the first partner feels-thinks that collaboration is only constructive when the mode of touching is involved. Eventually, if the conflictual aspect of the collaboration cannot be unfolded over a longer period of time, the ‘love relationship’ may be put on hold as its productive potential was not accentuat-able for both involved-involving collaborators.

This example may seem a bit far-fetched, as indeed, a myriad of other contradictory sense-meaning-relations play into this relationship, this collaboration both partners worked on maintaining but eventually ended up transforming (presuming that one can only be ‘in’ or ‘out’ of such a love relationship) – partly and partially because this technology-mediated exchange of perspectives over distance could not take place throughout all wished-for communicative modes. Investigating situated literacies would require studying the ensemble of communicative sociomaterial arrangements in the broadest sense, ergo all those communicative aspects of collaboration which are unconsciously accentuat-able and thus re-negotiable – for instance also dreams (cf. Søndergaard, 2013). This affords a practice-based and non-media-centric approach to investigating technologies intended to be used for communication, one that puts not a single subject, but *those conflictual collaborative interrelations these technologies are intended to promote into focus*. It thereby rejects putting its focus on the technology alone, also because “[m]istaking communication for technologies or media is as distorting as thinking that media are mere external accessories to (the truth of) communication” (Martín-Barbero, 2006, p. 289). With reference to Oskar Negt (1978), David Morley even warns that “a critical theory of communications cannot have the media at its center without falling into technological determinism” (Morley, 2012, p. 80).

Both Martín-Barbero and Morley propose to engage in situated, anthropologically-inspired studies of communication technologies. The latter calls for a materialist-contextualist approach to media or rather communication, which also encompasses the study of transport as communication (cf. Morley, 2009). The significance of geography and mobility in studying communication – which I attempted to point to in my short illustrative example – is also emphasized in André Jansson’s take on *mediatization as sociospatial regimes*, as well as an explicitly non-media-centric approach (Jansson, 2013). Practice-based psychological investigations into communication might both learn from as well as enrich a wide range of media anthropological work (e.g., Bräuchler & Postill, 2010). At the same time, various communication-interested ecological approaches in the humanistic social sciences, which for example draw on James Gibson’s (1966, 1979) concept of *affordances* and consequently *always already*

imply the two-sidedness of the human-technology relationship, should be understood as productive for a critical study of communicative artifacts (e.g., Bang, 2012; as well as the *modal affordances* studied in Kress, 2010).

The main point, however, is to focus on how contradictory communicative artifacts possibilitate and de-limit how one seeks to conduct one's everyday life through maintaining and transforming, through collaborating across collectives. The intended directionality implied for such studies is the collaborative development of agency through age-independent mutual learning processes, so that both younger and older human beings can draw on a diversity of perspectives for the sake of democratically emancipating their sense-meaning-relations from the seemingly immovable givens of life. *Critical studies of technology literacies* are consequently also *critical studies of collaboration literacies*, of learning how to learn so as to communicatively transform the jointly shared together in purposeful ways (cf. also Dakers, 2006; Hasse & Dupret Søndergaard, 2012). One needs to meaningfully learn how to learn through other human beings, and how these other human beings can learn from oneself, one's own perspective, mutually, with many, not left to figure sense-meaning-relations out on one's own. Such literacies can thus never be understood as skills, as belonging to one human being alone. Instead, they emerge in the multimodally communicated, situated interweaving of ontogenetical becomings, of conducts of everyday life, as contradictory communicative arrangements, and require to be re-negotiated in relation to the directionality intended in such an entangled conflictual collaboration.

Rounding up, looking ahead: Conducting everyday life for the sake of playfully transforming the seemingly given through collaboration

Putting the focus on intertwined conducts of everyday life of human beings as done in this dissertation allows for thinking their lives as always already constituted by and simultaneously constituting their life conditions, both through the process of maintaining and of transforming sense-meaning-relations across practices, transcontextually, as praxis. Meanwhile it clarifies that these processes are necessarily intersubjective: Human beings are interdependently entangled, their actions always interrelated with others' actions. *Conflictual collaboration is thus the key element of conducting everyday life*. All socio-material arrangements have basically been created in order to communicate

across the limitedness of one's own perspective, one's own situated scope of imaginable possibilities for acting, together.

This calls for a transdisciplinary humanistic investigation of how and why human beings struggle with engaging in conflictual collaboration, and how sociomaterial arrangements both possibilitate and hamper such collaborations by offering contradictory imaginable possibilities for acting through them. For instance, we need to collaboratively investigate how human beings come to multimodally accentuate certain premises-for-acting and not others. Why does it appear subjectively meaningful to hypostatize others and to compete, why does it appear meaningful to consume? Why does it appear necessary to engage in these practices, to un-consciously subject to this common sense? And how does this common sense come to be taken for granted, as seemingly unchangeable, rather than as means for collaborating? Questioning the generalized usefulness of artifacts, the generalized being-made-for, through collaboratively experimenting with their virtual usabilities/directionalities, may more generally question the contradictoriness of maintaining seemingly immovable givens. After all, these givens have been created precisely to promote communicative processes for purposefully co-creating the world.

Every other perspective on these struggles is valuable, and I have argued that to me and for my conduct of everyday life, the perspectives of the 'children' have been highly relevant and meaningful for investigating the sociomaterial intricacy of the contextual practice of a daycare in relation to other practices it is co-constituted by. I am certain that this meaningfulness is not exclusive to me. But that requires that 'adults' – due to the power granted to them over children – *allow for accentuating the mutuality of learning processes, in which the diversity of perspectives and necessarily resulting conflicts are understood as productive*, calling for a democratic re-negotiation of sociomaterial arrangements. If communication is furthermore understood multimodally, without granting language the primary rule over other modes of communication, diverse accentuations of shared processes of maintaining and transforming may point to a broad range of possibilities for purposefully re-negotiating past-present-future relations and for further questioning contradictorily sociomaterialized directionalities and expectations that affect all age groups. For instance, while it seems to me that children are primarily expected to learn about the adult social arrangements (conventions, rules, common sense, etc.) through the material arrangements (playgrounds, educational software, etc.), adults are expected to learn about the material arrangements (work software, designing a home, etc.) through social arrangements (re-negotiations of common sense with friends, colleagues, family). But *all arrangements are sociomaterial*: They are both tools and

signs, and these qualities are inseparably interrelated. A collaboration between children and adults bears potentialities for thinking both entangled qualities further, for developing praxis across its various sociomaterial specifications. In order to do so, *all perspectives on commonly shared sociomaterial arrangements must be taken seriously, and all communicative modes humankind has co-created must be taken equally seriously*, which includes gesturing, drawing, building, modeling, dancing, singing, digging, swinging, etc.

Generally speaking, then, the first step towards developing a situated and temporary common sense in and across contextual practices implies acknowledging that all human beings conduct their everyday lives in interdependence of how all other human beings conduct their everyday lives. All participate and contribute to praxis, through their engagements in maintaining and transforming those practices which they actually can accentuate as premise-for-action and consequently take their part in (at least depending on locality, positioning, scope of imaginable possibilities for acting). For the sake of furthering collaboration with those one is anyway dependent of, possibilities for accentuating further collaborations need to be expanded. Such an expansion implicates that other human beings are not seen as competitors, as an Other who – due to a hypostatized positioning, a classification, for example as child, adult, rich, poor, dumb-ass, star, whatever – is unapproachable, who's perspective is irreconcilable with one's own perspective, who will thus never become a meaningful collaboration partner. It is here that *humanity must emancipate itself from stipulating those very same sociomaterially stabilized positionings it itself has historically created through compartmentalizing practices*, thus establishing and maintaining the domination of a few over the other. These positionings may be valuable for negotiating a common sense upon which a collaboration can build, but only if understood as temporary prototypes enacted for collective re-negotiation and development. *Human collective becoming through collaboration is a process, is praxis*. Sociomaterial arrangements are prototypical objectifications of humanly co-arranged processes. Their historicity has to be acknowledged, has to be taken into account when re-negotiating sense-meaning-relations – and of course, this may lead to deciding that a temporary continuation of an arrangement is purposeful (let's take, for instance, the Human Rights Declaration). Still, accepting certain sociomaterial arrangements for establishing common sense does never entail that this common sense may never be questioned and re-negotiated.

This, to me, is *democracy*: An ongoing collaboration through the re-negotiation of common sense which aims at involving all anyway involved human beings. This presupposes acknowledging that each and every one is always already

dependent on the conducts of everyday life of all other human beings, as well as of all other world processes we ourselves are part of. But that which human beings can and have to primarily act through are other human beings, who – even though they are all unique and diverse – share a common ontological foundation. It is through the others’ perspectives we come to virtually transform living for the better, but only if we understand human life as process which is always already interrelated with other processes. We need to collaboratively relate to other processes with all senses, all communicative modes available to us, so as to approximate a mutual sociomaterial self-understanding of commonly shared problems and struggles, of what is to maintain and what is to transform, *from our diverse perspectives for all perspectives*. We human beings need to experiment or play not only with the ‘outer world’. Then we neglect that the outer world only exists through our inner world and vice versa. We are not merely in this world, but *of* this world, as both Karen Barad (2003, 2007) and Tim Ingold (2013) remind us. Humility is therefore a cornerstone of human collaboration, as it is implied that *no one can live without an-other, no one can know what is best for an-other, and neither oneself nor humankind altogether will ever be able to anticipate and control all those animate processes of which human praxis is but one*. Nevertheless is conducting everyday life, our relating-to this world we are ourselves part of, our becoming accentuations, limited by our historically, ontogenetically situated perspective, our being human through becoming together. What *we need to play with* then are *our situated sense-meaning-relations to the world*, our ongoingly changing states of being-feeling, our re-relating-to past experiences-imaginings in relation to jointly shared future directionalities/hopes across those collectives we take part through – so as to collaboratively re-negotiate what is of emancipatory relevance both for oneself and for the other participants. It is essential that throughout this process, we also come to question our own situated epistemologies and methodologies, our own analytical foci and concepts, through which we come to accentuate and prioritize certain sense-meaning-relations including specific communicative methods as subjectively relevant for meaningful communication, for the co-constitution of sociomaterial knowledge. I believe that here lies the biggest danger for a project which may be termed a *playful democracy*: That the diversity of experiencing and imagining human living and other animate processes it is interrelated with is modally stubbed by stipulating dominant-hegemonic models of understanding and knowledge – a seemingly non-negotiable, immovable, rather uniform ideologizing which devalues and neglects the productivity and meaningfulness of *all* human perspectives, of all human action.

If striving for a playful democracy is our jointly shared directionality, both our concrete and abstract utopia, why do we sociomaterial humanists, we development and child researchers, not start by taking the *collaborative actions* of the young seriously? From what I discovered throughout our joint explorations of media artifacts, they know how to play even with what seems non-negotiable, immovable, given. So let us not learn about them, not either from them, but explicitly *together with them* – with ‘them’ not as Others, but as the same unified through the diversity of our sociomaterially interrelated conducts of everyday life.

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Abstract

The dissertation's aim is to explore the everyday relevance media artifacts have for young children and thereby counter one-sided interpretations which either understand media to determine children's behavior and actions or vice versa. Its epistemic interest lies in offering analytical concepts that account for the societal relevance of children's perspectives on and struggles with such artifacts. For this purpose, the author spent four months participating in a daycare practice in Berlin, Germany. The daycare's pedagogical approach precisely attempted to draw on the children's everyday life experiences and struggles so as to engage in purposeful learning projects, on media artifacts and beyond.

Subject-scientific co-research as theoretical-methodological starting point and challenge

The design of the empirical study, as well as the analyses of the empirical material, take their theoretical-methodological point of departure in the inherently transdisciplinary tradition of German Scandinavian Critical Psychology as a science from the standpoint of the subject. This tradition argues that subject-scientific research works on tackling problems which are (also) relevant for the researched, i.e., problems of shared concern. It consequently proposes to explicitly engage in an emancipatory co-research together with the researched. The dissertation discusses how to put this emancipatory co-research into practice, facing the challenge that the project's decisive participants do not primarily rely on verbal language so as to communicate the problems or struggles they encounter in everyday life. An adult's analysis of a problem may therefore easily overshadow a young co-researcher's perspective, as the child's non-verbal communicative efforts appear largely unintelligible. Subject-scientific Practice Research therefore relies on participant observation when co-researching together with children. This dissertation goes a methodological step further by arguing that observation and conversation are merely two of many communicative possibilities for learning from each other whilst collaborating on problems of shared concern. It shows how everyday communicative complexity can be conceptually accounted for throughout the exemplary analyses of empirical material produced together with the children.

Questioning and specifying analytical concepts so as to foster practical change

Based on the proposition that research is to co-research problems of shared concern, the dissertation is directed at answering the following questions:

What possibilities and limitations as well as problems do children identify and encounter when acting in relation to media artifacts (digital photo cameras, hand-held consoles, other mobile and less mobile computers, etc.), and how can these be meaningfully explored by adults so as to collaboratively improve the arrangement of learning practices together with children?

- How can academics and other practitioners purposefully draw on and learn from the children's experiences with media artifacts in order to arrange learning practices in ways that take the children's everyday actions seriously?
- What subject-scientific conceptual advancements are needed so as to investigate the sociomaterial entangledness of children's everyday situations with digital and other media artifacts?
- What political-ethical implications follow from these advancements, and how can these be taken into account and implemented throughout the process of arranging future learning practices?

Shared struggles in the conduct of everyday life as analytical focus

The dissertation argues that irrespective of whether child or adult, human beings conduct everyday life through actively maintaining some artifact-arrangements while transforming others. Conducting everyday life consists of constant conscious and unconscious re-negotiations with others on what to maintain-transform, and on what directionality to enact. These potentially collaborative processes are conflictual, as human beings need one another's historically unique and therefore challenging perspective so as to learn about how problems are shared and how struggles can be overcome together.

When analyzing the struggles the children experienced in relation both to the pedagogical-educational arrangement of the daycare and to subjectively relevant media artifacts, it quickly emerges that their personal struggles are interrelated with broader societal contradictions and problems. The children's struggles are therefore not analyzed in isolation, but as part of sociomaterial interplay. Their struggles with specific artifact-arrangements are interrelated with the staff's, the parents', and the researcher's struggles.

Media artifacts as two-sided sociomaterial arrangements

The exemplary analyses of children's interrelated struggles throughout their conducts of everyday life underline the two-sidedness of anything humanly co-arranged. Artifacts are simultaneously social and material: They mediate between unique human perspectives, are thus essentially communicative and a necessary means for collaboration. Once a sociomaterially arranged artifact's underlying historical process is taken for granted, however, it may come to appear as unquestionable and unchangeable.

Albeit the daycare explicitly promoted mutual learning processes with the children, did its practice maintain sociomaterial arrangements which inhibited mutual learning. One such arrangement was the children's positioning as 'children', which limited the adults' possibilities for imagining them as mutual learning partners and co-researchers. Related to that, the media experiences accentuated by the children were at times regarded as something unnecessary to learn about, or as largely incomprehensible and herewith something impossible to learn about. Hence, many invitations for collaboration formulated by the children were not apprehended as such by the adults, which in turn resulted in seemingly irresolvable struggles that affected all participants.

Collaboratively arranging sociomaterial learning practices

The dissertation explores and analyzes the interrelated struggles the children, the staff, the parents and hereby the researcher encountered so as to conclude that sociomaterial arrangements must be understood as inextricable from the process of conducting everyday life. They are both maintainable and transformable. All participants contribute in unique ways to upholding or changing shared arrangements, irrespective of age. Future emancipatory collaborative explorations of media artifacts should systematically consider this age-transcending intersubjective interdependency, and work on purposefully co-arranging sociomaterial learning practices such that they account for the situatedness, the mutuality, the transcontextuality, and the multimodality of experiencing, imagining, and learning together.

Resumé¹²⁸

Afhandlingens formål er at udforske, hvilken relevans primært digitale medieartefakter har for små børn i deres hverdagsliv. Afhandlingen udfordrer ensidige forståelser af forholdet mellem børn og medieartefakter som kendetegnet ved, at det ene påvirker det andet. Erkendelsesinteressen er at tilbyde analytiske begreber, der udpeger børneperspektivet som relevant i forhold til at udforske medieartefaktens betydning. Afhandlingens analyser bygger på forfatterens deltagelse i hverdagen i en børnehave i Berlin (Tyskland) gennem fire måneder. Børnehavens pædagogiske tilgang tager udgangspunkt i, at pædagogerne, for at kunne initiere nogle for børnene meningsfulde pædagogiske aktiviteter, må inddrage og lære af børnenes erfaringer fra deres forskellige hverdagslivskontekster.

Subjektvidenskabelig medforskning som teoretisk-metodologisk udgangspunkt og udfordring

Undersøgelsens design såvel som analyserne af det empiriske materiale bygger teoretisk og metodologisk på en kritisk-psykologisk praksisforskningstradition, hvor forskningen tager udgangspunkt i et førstepersons subjektstandpunkt. Denne subjektvidenskabelige tilgang har tradition for at udforske problemer af relevans for alle de deltagende medforskere, således at forskningen bidrager til at overkomme fælles problemstillinger. Forskningen kan dermed siges at have et emancipatorisk sigte, hvor forsker og medforskere arbejder sammen om forskningsprocessen.

Afhandlingen diskuterer, hvordan man kan gennemføre emancipatorisk medforskning sammen med små børn, som ikke nødvendigvis giver udtryk for de problemer, de oplever i deres hverdagsliv, gennem verbalt sprog. Voksnes analyser af problemer kan let overskygge og dominere børns perspektiver i både forskningsprocesser og i børnenes hverdagsliv, idet børns ikke-sproglige måde at udtrykke sig på ofte tillægges mindre værdi end verbalt sprog. Subjektvidenskabelig praksisforskning anvender af blandt andet denne grund ofte deltagerobservationer, når de medforskende er børn. Denne afhandling går metodologisk et skridt videre ved at argumentere for, at observation og konversation blot er to af mange kommunikative muligheder for at lære af hinanden og samtidig samarbejde om at overkomme fælles problemstillinger. Af-

¹²⁸ I am grateful to Pernille Juhl for commenting on and largely translating the abstract on very short notice.

handlingens analyser viser, hvordan hverdagslivets kommunikative kompleksitet kan begrebsættes på baggrund af empirisk materiale produceret sammen med børnene.

At udfordre, udvikle og præcisere analytiske begreber, der kan transformere praksis

Baseret på en præmis om, at forskning er at med-udforske problemer af fælles interesse, søger afhandlingen at svare på følgende spørgsmål:

Hvilke muligheder, begrænsninger og problemer møder børn, når de handler i forhold til medieartefakter (som for eksempel digitale kameraer, håndholdte konsoller, bærbare og stationære computer osv.), og hvordan kan muligheder, begrænsninger og problemer meningsfuldt udforskes af voksne sådan, at børn og voksne i fællesskab kan forbedre fælles læringsituationer?

- Hvordan kan akademikere og andre praktikere målrettet trække på og lære af børns erfaringer med medieartefakter i forbindelse med organisering af lærepraksisser på en sådan måde, at børns handlinger i deres hverdagsliv tages alvorligt og inddrages?
- Hvilke begrebslige videreudviklinger indenfor en subjektvidenskabelig ramme er nødvendige for at kunne udforske sociomaterielle aspekter af børns hverdagssituationer med digitale og andre medieartefakter?
- Hvilke politiske og etiske implikationer følger af sådanne teoretiske og begrebmæssige videreudviklinger, og hvordan kan de fremover inddrages i organiseringen af læringsituationer?

Fælles konflikter i den daglige livsførelse som analytisk fokus

Afhandlingen argumenterer for, at mennesker, uanset om der er tale om børn eller voksne, fører deres liv ved aktivt at opretholde nogle artefakter og ændre andre. Livsførelse består af kontinuerlige, bevidste såvel som ubevidste (gen)forhandlinger med andre om, hvad der skal opretholdes, og hvad der skal forandres. Disse potentielt fælles processer er konflikтуelle, idet mennesker har brug for hinandens unikke og historiske og samtidigt modstridende perspektiver for at kunne lære om, hvordan problemer er fælles, og hvordan sådanne problemer kan overskrides i samarbejde.

Gennem analyser af de problemer børnene oplevede i relation til både børnehaven som pædagogisk arrangement og i relation til subjektivt relevante me-

die artefakter, stod det klart, at de problemer, børnene oplevede og kæmpede med, er forbundet til bredere samfundsmæssige modsætninger og problemer. Børnenes problemer er derfor ikke analyseret isoleret men som del af sociomaterielle forhold. Børnenes problemer og konflikter er del af sociomaterielle samspil og dynamikker og må derfor ses i sammenhæng med både personalets, forældrenes og forskerens konflikter og problemer.

Medieartefakter som tosidede sociomaterielle arrangementer

De eksemplariske analyser af børnenes forbundne konflikter i relation til deres livsførelse understreger, at alt, der er menneskeligt med-arrangeret, har en tosidighed indlejret. Artefakter er på én og samme tid sociale og materielle: De medierer mellem unikke menneskelige perspektiver og er derfor essentielt kommunikative og dermed nødvendige midler til samarbejde. Når en sociomaterielt arrangeret artefakts underliggende historiske processer tages for givet, kan artefakten komme til at fremstå uimodsagt og uforanderlig. Selvom børnehavens personale gav udtryk for, at de støttede gensidige læreprocesser med børnene, bidrog børnehavens praksis til at opretholde sociomaterielle arrangementer, som hæmmede gensidig læring. Ét eksempel på dette var børnenes positionering som 'børn', hvilket begrænsede de voksnes muligheder for at se børnene som ligeværdige og gensidige læringspartnere og medforskere. I relation hertil blev nogle af de oplevelser med medieartefakter, som børnene lagde vægt på, somme tider af de voksne opfattet som unødvendige at inddrage i læreprocesser eller umulige at lære af. På den måde blev opfordringer og invitationer fra børnene til de voksne om samarbejde og fælles udforskning ikke altid opfattet som sådan af de voksne. På den måde kunne konflikter komme til at fremstå som uløselige, hvilket påvirkede alle de involverede.

Samarbejde om organisering af sociomaterielle læreprocesser

Afhandlingen konkluderer, at sociomaterielle arrangementer må forstås som uløseligt forbundet til menneskers daglige livsførelse. Sådanne arrangementer kan både opretholdes og forandres. Alle deltagere bidrager på unikke måder til at opretholde og ændre fælles arrangementer – uanset deres alder. Fremtidige emancipatoriske og fælles forskningsprocesser bør gennemføres på måder, der systematisk overskrider alder og tager højde for indbyrdes afhængig-

hed mellem mennesker. Sociomaterielle læreprocesser må arrangeres som et samarbejde mellem mennesker, der tager udgangspunkt i situerede, gensidige, transkontekstuelle og multimodale tilgange til det at opleve, erfare, forestille og lære.