

CHAPTER 3

Theatre as Inclusive Arts-based Research: A Key to Political Art in the Post-democracy?

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Abstract: In this chapter we investigate different approaches to art as research (arts-based) in relation to applied theatre practice and research from a cultural democratic perspective. In particular, we discuss theatre as “inclusive” practice and research and how this relates to different traditions of arts-based research. Based on literature analyses and experiences from Centres of Applied Theatre Research in South Africa and Norway, we unveil some different and dominant traditions of arts-based research that are currently voiced and familiar in Norway and South Africa. We explore four notions of exclusiveness within European notions of “artistic research”: The alternative epistemology, Knowing for the sake of the arts only, The limited artistic context, and Only qualified artists do artistic research. Seen from a different cultural angle, the South African, we find that tendencies of exclusiveness are challenged by different notions of inclusiveness: The role of the arts and its embeddedness in social life, Inter disciplinarity, The extended political and historical context, Embracing intersectionality. As answers to potential accusations of applied theatre art running errands for the liberalist post-democracy, this chapter discusses inclusive arts-based research as a form of cultural praxis that may negotiate paradoxes of post-democracy

Keywords: artistic research, cultural democracy, applied theatre, arts-based research

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Introduction

One major purpose of the south-north collaboration that has produced this anthology is to build postgraduate teaching that establishes and further develops arts-based approaches to research. Although arts-based or performance as research methodology is not established as an agreed or dominant approach to research in applied theatre¹, its status is increasing (O'Connor & Anderson, 2015) and it is a commonly defined area of concentration for the project partners involved.

The context of the post-democracy in which the project also unfolds is understood as political climates where the external systems of democracy (e.g. elections and freedom of speech) still appear, but where their influence is increasingly diminished (see also chapter 1). In such a situation a political and economic elite makes the decisions, co-opting democratic systems for their agenda (Crouch, 2004). Furthermore, our project is sensitive to ways in which conditions of the post-democracy affect human life, cultural activities included. In both Norway and South Africa elements of the post-democracy are present, though created by very different political and historical influences.

Anyone who is interested in “arts-based” research as a field of research is met by a vast conceptual disparity and a great variety of contemporary global traditions such as performance as research (PAR), performance ethnography, practice-led research, a/r/tography, artistic research, creative research, arts research or even, lately, “research-creation” (Stévanice & Lacasse, 2018). Our postgraduate teaching and research in applied theatre have been particularly influenced by performance ethnography (Denzin 2003), practice-led research (Haseman & Mafé, 2009) and, not least, practice/performance as research (PaR) (Kershaw, 2009; Riley & Hunter, 2009; Nelson, 2013; Arlander et al., 2017). In South Africa, PaR has been introduced particularly by Mark Fleishman (2012; 2015), and by exploring the epistemological value of performative repetitions within

¹ For example by the major journals of *Applied theatre research* or *RIDE: The journal of applied theatre and performance*.

his own longstanding Clanwilliam Arts Project, he makes an important contribution to understanding performance as research.

Our intention is, however, not to relate theatre research to a specific tradition or label of “arts-based” research, but rather to inquire about inherent tensions concerning different cultural and artistic approaches that can be detected within many of the current traditions or labels.

While most of the labels of arts-based research reveal local (both geographically and disciplinary) innovation and discourse, they often share common traits and philosophical underpinnings. However, they also sometimes denote quite profound differences in understanding and methodological approach. Even to find an umbrella term for this scope of research variety is hard. “Arts-based research” is one such attempt here, but it may confuse those who identify this term with the American approach to social sciences and education (Barone & Eisner, 2011).

We start from an interest in looking into the possible democratic dimension of arts-based research, including notions of cultural agency and participant-driven research. Such notions are well developed within applied theatre research (O’Connor & Anderson, 2015). We believe that a shared ambition of building democracy through cultural praxis should take in both arts practice and research practice, or, to put it differently, should approach research as the cultural and political praxis. However, the attempt to realise this ambition reveals dilemmas, and is also met by critique. In particular, we meet notable differences in discourse and practice between applied theatre and the arts institutional theatre industry (Rasmussen, 2017). Without any intention of defending a certain normative view on the “nature” of applied theatre, we still think it is important to explore some of the influential arts-based research traditions from a cultural democratic vantage point. The inquiry leads us to a concept of “inclusive” theatre practice and research and its appurtenant dilemmas.

Our study has been conducted mainly by analysing the growing literature base on the topic of “arts-based research”, as well as by references to selected and familiar examples of applied theatre research in the north-south perspective. We will start by unveiling the different and dominant

notions of arts-based research (still the umbrella concept we use) that are currently voiced and familiar in Norway and South Africa.

The exclusiveness of artistic research

In Norway, a dominant notion of “artistic research” is linked mainly to the European university reforms carried out since the nineties and the physical merging and co-administrative arrangements of arts institutions within universities. This is again part of the harmonisation of higher education and research within the European Union, often named the “Bologna process” (Piro, 2016). Many centuries of institutional separation between theatre and dance schools, conservatories, art academies, on the one hand, and the arts sciences on the other have in a relatively short time span been replaced by shared privileges and shared obligations towards research and research-based education. From a cultural perspective one could expect at least two consequences when the university houses new members: first, that newcomers adapt to the “rules of the house”, and, secondly, that the house adapts to the newcomers by welcoming a new excitant to renew its established culture. “Rules of the house” implies that a cultural entity has an interest in protecting certain values and identity markers achieved and nurtured over time. By cultural exchange and excitant, we have in mind an unchallenged and rigid research concept, not least within the humanities. This is a research concept well grounded in Western modernity, that resists multi-modal approaches to knowledge production beyond the written and spoken word. To start with, the traditionally strong focus on the written thesis and on research based on reading has been challenged by recent changes in attitudes to research, and by an upgrading of the value of practical research, with the implementation of “practice turns” in many disciplines, such as health and engineering (see, for example, Kara, 2015). Furthermore, this development includes an “affective turn” that came a bit later, linked to the notion that feelings and bodily expression should be considered in the gathering of data (Athanasidou, Hantzaroula & Yannakopoulos, 2008).

Notwithstanding recent noteworthy development in research, the expected or potential cultural consequences of Art meeting Science

are yet to happen in the Norwegian university context. The dominant impact has rather been to maintain and protect separate parallel cultures, including discourses of knowledge development, even to the extent of producing different and parallel PhD training or regulations within the humanities, insisting on the difference between “research” and “developmental work” within the same research institution².

If we look beyond the economic rationality and urge for positions, titles and privileges that are linked to the harmonisation of higher education, we see a determination to build a platform for artistic research through networks³, years of conferences and a growing literature base (Hannula et al., 2005; Wilson & Ruiten, 2013; Borgdorff, 2012, 2018). During this development, diverse initiatives are taken by arts schools in the effort to adapt to given standards of qualitative and even quantitative research, or else to reject scientific standards altogether, in order to maintain and defend a set of professional interests – a virtual sub-culture – at the expense of working towards the new ideals of integration and new forms of research.

Artistic research as a term does not frame common principles and thinking at all, but some characteristics are frequently addressed, all seemingly and closely linked to the identity, exclusiveness and liberalism associated with the modern arts institution. We suggest four traits of exclusiveness belonging to artistic research.

Exclusiveness 1: The alternative epistemology

One sense of artistic research identity is linked to a notion of applied knowledge (Mode 2) which is different from the knowledge (Mode 1) which is governed by academic interests (Gibbons et al., 1994). In the discourse of artistic research, Mode 2 knowledge offers a different knowledge production culture from that of traditional social science and humanities, and it hence denotes artistic knowing in the ways that the knowledge production is carried out in the presence of practical goals, applied to

² <http://artistic-research.no/>

³ Such as ELIA, the European League of Institutes of the Arts

local needs, including the interests of the partners/actors involved. It is furthermore often cross- or transdisciplinary and develops its own theoretical structures, research methods and modes of practice. The research results are communicated to those who have participated and they are accomplished in the process of the art production rather than being generated after the practice (Borgdorff, 2009).

What becomes a challenge to artistic research is that Mode 2 knowledge identifies a new knowledge culture in neoliberalist societies. This also links artistic research to a business corporative discourse. Here, applied knowledge meets the needs of business and society involving research that can take place in institutions outside universities, and is managed by stakeholders and other organisations outside academia. The understanding of “application” as adaptation to relevance, needs and commissioned work means that universities share research with counties, NGOs, non-university institutes, other research centres, government agencies, industrial laboratories, think-tanks, consultancies. In other words, liberalist societies harmonise all higher education in research institutions with one hand, while with the other hand decomposing those institutions by “democratising” research and research funds to any societal stakeholder and “concerned groups” with “research needs”.

By accommodating this discourse, artistic research can be accused of paying naive lip-service to the market, producing knowledge and goods for use without questioning the contexts and their prerequisites. This may be a reason why researchers, such as Borgdorff, do not include Mode 2 knowledge in later writings on epistemology (Borgdorff, 2018), or why the difference in “academic” and artistic knowledge is presented in somewhat less dichotomic ways in later contributions (Dunin-Woyseth, 2018).

By leaning to Mode 2 knowledge, the discourse of artistic research aims at justifying a professional and applied knowledge culture being outside and inside the university privileged culture at the same time. In the act of resistance to a knowledge culture at the university, comprehended as Mode 1, artistic research comes out against university conventions or even prejudices of university culture, then acts exclusively, even if the neoliberalist management of research is seemingly inclusive.

Applied theatre research may also seem like a liberalist phenomenon in the way participants are offered voices in the setting of the research agenda as well as in the subsequent decision-making process of research. However, the urge for democratic empowerment in the wake of the political avant-garde is very different from European liberal politics where values and demands are often measured by market competitiveness and cost effectiveness.

Exclusiveness 2: Knowing for the sake of the arts only

In literature on artistic research, such as the SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education (2013), the discipline focus of artistic research is predominant. Art may produce some explicit humanistic knowledge, but this is not the main focus of artistic research. It seeks not so much to make explicit the knowledge that art is said to produce, but rather to develop the art or provide a specific articulation of the pre-reflective, non-conceptual content of art. In order to delineate the identity of artistic research, an article from 1993 entitled “Research in Art and Design” has proved instrumental (Frayling, 1993; Borgdorff, 2006). Frayling differentiates between “research into art”, “research for art” and “research through art”. This builds on early distinctions from another British philosopher, the arts education pioneer Herbert Read, who much earlier made a distinction between “teaching through art” and “teaching to art” (Read, 1948 (1943)). In the current discourse of artistic research, teaching or research “through” is exactly the notion that is rejected, accepting only research “on” and “for” arts, preferring “in” arts. Research in the arts seeks to articulate the embodied knowledge throughout the creative process and in the art work/object. The artistic practice itself is an essential component of both the research process and the research results. This is knowledge in, for and of art, not any other knowledge through the means of art. In other words, the progressivist notion of “play as a way of knowing” beyond the art, which associates with Read’s modernist heritage, is omitted in the arts’ institutional context. This is an exclusive standpoint, seemingly due to the

Western institution of Art. It somehow neglects art and the aesthetic as social platform for communication and neglects artistic research as a political and educational operation beyond itself. In the context of applied arts, this is where applied theatre may lose ground as a legitimate form of artistic research because of its use of the arts as means to research other fields outside of the arts such as health and education, political issues and community development.

Exclusiveness 3: The limited artistic context

All sub-categories of arts-based research attempt to establish criteria of validity that both meet scientific standards or suggest alternative standards. Contextual attendance, relevance and reflexivity are three common criteria, working against the artist-researcher who might get lost in her sensuous, sometimes private, creative approach without relating to valuable input that may improve quality or public value. For example, in practice-led research, two out of six basic conditions concern contextual awareness. Deploying critical contexts aims at bringing in perspectives that extend horizons and counteract self-confirmative and circular practice. Engaging with “professional” frames within which practice is pursued, is another contextual concern. This is crucial not least to see how selected techniques and traditions dictate work or whether the work challenges its traditional frames (Haseman & Mafé, 2009; Mafé, 2010).

In the dominant discourse of artistic research, only the last understanding of context is seemingly pursued. Context here stands for the “art world” – the artistic universe. This means considerations that are delimited to the arts institutional sphere: the public reception, the technical, cultural and historical environment (of the art), art philosophies, the state of the industry, economy, etc. (Borgdorff, 2012; Wilson & Ruiten, 2013).

This marks another exclusive position when “context” in artistic research does not include the wider political, educational, therapeutic contexts of arts practice, as is the case of applied theatre. One could again assert that this delimited understanding of context proves that artistic

research mimics the conditions and hegemony of the Western European autonomous Art institution, dwelling on the secluded arts environment provided by this societal institution.

Exclusiveness 4: Only qualified artists do artistic research

The tendency to act exclusively and hence protect a professional culture is visible also in other parts of the artistic research discourse. It is repeatedly argued that only artists are capable of conducting practice-based research where arts are activated (Arlander, 2011; Borgdorff, 2012). Claiming professional training or merits as an admission requirement to artistic research at doctoral level studies is one way of selective control. The saying is that artistic research should be undertaken by artists, who should try to benefit the field of art in question. It is a logical consequence of a goal of artistic development, but it is nevertheless another exclusive trait that will exclude non-certified or less pronounced artists from artistic research. This research is limited to the professional, “proper” or renowned artists who are educated in the different professions of art.

Applied theatre researchers or makers do not argue against professionalism or the important relation between aesthetic-political potential and craft. However, by sometimes empowering participants as co-producers and co-researchers, applied theatre will value people’s aesthetic contribution notwithstanding artistic licences or certificates. From the perspective of Norwegian and South African applied drama and theatre research, which is historically grounded in a broader global, performative base, creative or practice-led research is less true to institutional borders of art. “Artistic research” and its exclusive tendency do not fully satisfy a democratic and broader cultural approach which is evident in applied theatre research. This is research that involves cultural agents both from the inside and outside of the artistic profession, often aiming at knowledge production beyond theatre itself. Our next approach is, then, to examine arts-based research and applied theatre from a different cultural angle, the South African.

Decolonial thinking and urge for inclusiveness

In South Africa too, “arts research” is being promoted as an alternative to the more traditional academic research paradigms prominent in the West. This is a term coined at Wits University to denote the collection of research endeavours that has been termed arts-based research above. However, the thrust of this arts-based or performative research paradigm, also referred to as the “third research paradigm” (Haseman, 2015), is less based on a move towards exclusivity, as argued above, but more towards a rediscovery of and inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems and modes of expression found in African traditions and cultural expression (De Lange et al., 2018). Here the motivation towards forging a path for arts research has become part of what can be broadly termed the decolonial project attempting to reintroduce, revalue and research indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices unique to the African continent (Owuso-Ansah & Mji, 2013). This is more than “Mode 2” knowledge production. Here, there is a strong motivation not to follow the separation of the arts from other disciplines, or even from daily life, as is evident in Western thinking and culture. The motivation is to view the arts as an integral part of an integrated indigenous knowledge system that permeates all human endeavour including spiritual practice, social science, politics and natural science (Osman, 2009; Owuso-Ansah & Mji, 2013). In tandem with this move is the reintegration of theory and practice, another western split that is challenged by an acknowledgment of the integration between thinking, doing and context in indigenous knowledge systems, including arts practice and its role in social life (Osman, 2009).

Even so, given the strong influence of the academy as imported from Western cultures, the move towards this inclusion of the arts as research endeavour is plagued by the legacies of this background. Here too the merging and co-administrative arrangements of arts institutions within universities have made their mark. Moreover, the previously mentioned practice turn and affective turn have penetrated thinking and supported the move towards the “third research paradigm”. Yet, in contrast to Norway where the “artistic research” tendency may seem to separate, distinguish, categorise and demarcate in its move towards exclusion, the

thrust in South Africa contains strands of inclusion, boundary crossing, intersectionality, interdisciplinarity and integration, thanks to the influence of decolonial thinking. We argue therefore that, in the face of the exclusivities visible in the Norwegian/European landscape, there is a move toward inclusivity in the South African landscape. We also argue that this move aligns with the principles and theoretical perspectives of applied theatre, while at the same time acknowledging the influence and ongoing complexity of this move in the midst of the tensions that characterise the decolonial project.

Finally, we argue that both Drama for Life at Wits University and Drama/Theatre at NTNU, as departments within academia and in particular in their association with the Building Democracy through Theatre project (see editorial chapter), are dedicated to aligning themselves with this inclusive thrust.

Inclusiveness 1: The role of the arts and its embeddedness in social life

Anthropologist Victor Turner (1974) was one of the first scholars to distinguish between what he called liminal and liminoid cultural practices – “liminal” practices being those associated with rituals, social drama and religious activities embedded in the workings of a society, and “liminoid” activities being those related to secular arts and non-religious activities that nonetheless function to bring about critical interrogation of values and change such as the Western concepts of art like “theatre” or “visual art” (Turner, 1974; Turner et al., 2017). Liminal activities are collective and communal, undertaken with feelings of belonging and commitment; while liminoid activities are not so fully embedded in societal values and belief systems, but are undertaken by individuals through choice, including subversive playfulness. Both kinds of activities make use of the arts for their meaning-making through symbolism, for example movement, song and performance. In liminal activities the arts are embedded in the values and daily social practices of community. In liminoid activity they are consigned to spaces like theatres and galleries reserved for the exclusive practice and exhibition of specific art forms. Furthermore, through

liminal activity the arts are not separated into multiple disciplines, as might be the case in limonoid activities, but are drawn on, as and how they are needed, for the collective purpose of the community. This notion of liminality and the embeddedness of the arts in social life resonates with the character of indigenous knowledge systems as holistic, integrated and systemic (Osman, 2009; Owuso-Ansah & Mji, 2013).

The apparent move towards inclusivity of the arts as basic human endeavour fundamental to relationship and community and social and spiritual health has become somewhat tainted in South Africa by a move to increased materialism and commercialisation of the arts. This means that, rather than working towards reclaiming community life and social interaction for the arts, some moves have been towards working harder to make the arts economically viable as industrial endeavours, embracing a neoliberalist manifestation of the “desire to be included among those who are at present feeding at the table of capitalist wealth, opportunity and privilege” (Cloete, 2014, n.p.a). There are even those scholars who would characterise some versions of the decolonial project as entrenching these very values – on the one hand criticising colonial capitalist notions, and on the other keeping them in place by seeking not to upset the status quo put in place by capitalist economic structures (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014).

Instead of reserving the arts for exclusive privileged spaces like theatres and galleries, the decolonial move aims to break down the boundaries of such spaces. Because so much theatre is made in communities quite removed from central cities where the theatres and galleries are usually built, site specific work has become a strong theme of the decolonial project. Collaborators of the Phakama interactive theatre project (2017) write about such a struggle to create and perform a play in a traditional theatre space. The Phakama theatre group were used to being able to light fires or make it rain when working in warehouses and open spaces. Working in London and New York in formal theatre spaces, these options were not available to them and they found it difficult to adapt. Not being able to own the space had, for them, colonial undertones (Calburn, in McAvinchey, Santos & Richardson, 2017, pp. 223–236).

At the same time, in the recent South African Department of Higher Education and Training’s “Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Output

and Innovations” (2017), attention is given only to work that has been presented in recognised art spaces, revealed as such by tell-tale phrases like “venue of recognised standing” – those very venues that are not accessible by communities far from central cities. Community arts productions and performances for schools seem to be neglected in this document. These are the same spaces to be reclaimed by the decolonial project and they are the spaces where most of Drama for Life’s work happens. An example is the Mvuso project where selected secondary school teachers and community artists are trained over the course of one week in introductory applied drama and theatre methodologies and reflective practice strategies – in order to go back into their communities to run drama process-based workshops, creating performances with groups of adolescents around contemporary social issues (Drama for Life, 2019b). It is in acknowledgment of this non-categorical inclusion of the arts as being in the service of social goals that Drama for Life in South Africa endeavours to build the field of the applied arts as an integral part of social transformation and healing (Nebe, 2018).

In the Norwegian applied theatre context, the embeddedness in social life is, to some extent, also present, perhaps driven by other forces than liminality, such as a late consequence of the avantgarde, and what is identified as a performative or social-ethical turn (Bishop, 2012). The inclusiveness is here visible in, for example, site-specific or participatory theatre, engaging groups of people where they live and act – children, the disabled, the elderly, inmates. In such approaches, there are perhaps fewer artistic goals monitored by the expert for measures of objective art quality, but rather a criterion of the “good enough” drama being sufficient (Rasmussen, 2010). The argument is made that when a participant, who is not certified as either artist or researcher, makes artworks, for example draws pictures or writes poems, this is understood to be part of creative research. In this way, art generated by “untrained” artists is also included in the research as data (O’Connor et al., 2015).⁴

The next three “inclusivenesses” were first identified during a final reflective conversation on Day 3 of the ArtSearch Symposium held at

4 See also next section of interdisciplinarity.

Wits University School of Arts at the start of 2017. Here 60–100 scholars from across the African continent came together to discuss what should be understood by the phrase “creative research” – also called arts-based research above. Here are the three requirements, taken from conference notes:

Is the work interdisciplinary in the sense that it serves other fields too beyond the field of its own creative medium?

Does the artist-researcher understand the historical and political context and significance of his/her work?

Does the work invite engagement from a diverse group of people and not only other artists and academics on the same level as the creative researcher and in the same field? (Janse van Vuuren, 2017)

Inclusiveness 2: Interdisciplinarity

At another South African conference in 2017, this time on Decoloniality at the University of South Africa, Ramon Grosfoguel spoke for a reframing of the discipline-centred ways of academia when he said:

We need to think beyond disciplines in relation to the problem of humanity. We need to transform social sciences from discipline problem centred to humanity problem centred. (Quoted by Naidu-Hoffmeester, 2017)

This is more than what might be understood as “inter-disciplinarity”, yet it still denotes a new way of thinking about disciplines that is less exclusive and more inclusive, looking towards a way of transcending and not just crossing the boundaries laid down by the dictates of the inherited academic disciplines – especially when working with the larger problems of humanity. Again, there is a sense that the arts might be of greater use if they were brought to bear on problems not only related to themselves, but those related to social life more generally.

This inclusiveness relates to Exclusiveness 2, identified above, speaking to the idea that preference is given to research “on,” “for” and “in” arts.

Instead there is a move in the decolonial conversation in South Africa towards looking for applications of the arts beyond themselves.

Once again, however, this strand is countered by equally powerful moves reinforced by more traditional thinking from within the academy. The policy works with overtly Western ideas of the arts, where each art form is seen as a separate and categorised discipline relating to entertainment and public spectacle. From this perspective a requirement of interdisciplinarity will sound exclusive. It will still be a long process to renegotiate the inclusion of boundary-crossing artworks that do not fit into one discipline and that are showcased in other places and contexts than recognised conventional performance or exhibition spaces.

Drama for Life, with a focus on the applied arts, often works in interdisciplinary spaces, especially between such areas as public health services or water resource management, and theatre. An example is the Blood Sugars project, a collaboration between Wits's Health Communication Research Unit, Drama for Life, and the diabetes and endocrinology clinic at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital. The project used a variety of drama techniques to work with people living with types 1 and 2 diabetes, at-risk groups, health professionals and researchers – to create a healthier, more nuanced and better-informed dialogue around physiology, treatments and cultural context (Hume, 2016). Another example is the Wakkerstroom water project that uses drama and other arts processes to teach environmental conservation to primary school children, working with stakeholders to ensure culture-appropriate and context-informed action in communities (Preston, 2021).

In Norway, a discipline defence has so far often overruled interdisciplinary research at the university level. However, interdisciplinarity has been enacted in the field of drama education, where theatre aiming beyond itself has been accorded some respect, although without receiving satisfactory acceptance in schools (Sæbø, 2009). Interdisciplinarity is also seen in the burgeoning encounter in the West of arts and research. This approach to research is aligned with the epistemology of historical action research (Lewin, 1946; Adelman, 1993) and current performance ethnography (Conquergood, 2002; Lincoln, 1995). Here one finds the attitude

that all participants are not only actors and audience but may also be both researchers and the researched by ways of symbolic media. Here the participant inquires by applying and enacting current communication skills, notwithstanding objective measures of artistic skills.

Inclusiveness 3: The extended political and historical context

In his article “Performing the archive and re-archiving memory”, Samuel Ravengai (2015) criticises the above-mentioned work of Mark Fleishman and his company Magnet Theatre in and with the community of Clanwilliam in the Western Cape, South Africa, for choosing to “de-historicise its performances and in that process clos[ing] out other issues that have the potential to raise the consciousness of Clanwilliam subalterns” (Ravengai, 2015, p. 218). While Fleishman does, according to Ravengai, challenge the traditions of the academy, he does not adequately challenge the political environment and historical systems in which his work is performed. The requirement that the South African artist should, in fact, do this, and thereby transform the community, is a theme of the decolonial project. This notion challenges the idea of the limited artistic context referred to in our delineation of Exclusiveness 3 above.

Apart from the numerous productions of Drama for Life that challenge and engage current social and political issues, its Reflective Practice and Critical Reflexive Praxis Curriculum overtly aims to satisfy the requirements of a decolonial arts pedagogy to engage the broader socio-political context. Fook & Askeland (2006) define reflexivity as “an ability to recognise our own influence – and the influence of our social and cultural contexts on research, the type of knowledge we create and the way we create it”. In this sense, then, it is about factoring ourselves into the situations we practise in. For postgraduate students in Drama for Life, namely Applied Theatre Facilitators and Drama Therapists, the ability to be conscious of what they bring into a situation, and how this relates to the broader context, is of vital importance.

Norwegian applied theatre also, perhaps to a lesser degree than in South Africa, connects to the extended political context outside the arts

institution by interfering and relating to child and health care, immigration and marginality as well as to the contemporary situation of the post-democracy (Crouch, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2011). The historical context has often been downgraded or neglected in contemporary Western applied theatre research, but interesting exceptions occur (Hughes & Nicholson, 2016; Kershaw, 2016).

Inclusiveness 4: Embracing intersectionality

Whether or not it is true, as we assert, that in (European) artistic research the tendency is towards arguing that only artists can conduct creative research (Exclusiveness 4 above), there is a certainly a tendency in South Africa to question this notion, a challenge based on theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). These theories assert that, because of the intersection between race, gender, disability, sexual orientation and other identity markers, some people face systemic injustices that may exclude them from the privileges of white male-dominated societies. It is argued that, thanks to the impact of intersectionality, the arts, too, have begun to offer a way to exclude and shut out certain groups of people – mostly those dispossessed and dehumanised by colonial endeavours – from the mainstream art world. It is, therefore, the work of the applied arts to counteract the effects of intersectionality.

Drama for Life, South Africa, chooses to strongly align with inclusive tendencies and values greatly its community partnerships where work is being done in and with communities aimed at strengthening the role of the arts in giving voice to those disadvantaged by the effects of intersectionality. An example here is the AfriQueer project, an evocative, dreamscaped site-specific ritual performance that celebrates LGBTIQ human rights. Based on an ancient creation myth of how the stars were made, it is written by Tlotlego Gaogakwe and directed by Warren Nebe (Drama for Life, 2019a).

In Norway, cultural intersectionality occurs in the way arts institutions exclude certain citizens from the stage. For example, criticism has been raised against the dominance of white, ethnically Norwegian actors. They do not reflect today's expanding multicultural society well (Halilovic, 2019). However, applied theatre projects seek to include new

agents on the stage, such as the disabled or the “extraordinary” (Gürgens & Rasmussen, 2010) or the homeless (Aune, 2017).

Reconsiderations of resistance

The very conversation about finding just the right term for “art as research” is an indication of the fact that both exclusive and inclusive tendencies are ever present in the landscape of applied drama and theatre research. Even if we have pointed at cultural differences in a north-south perspective, we do not aim to create new dichotomies in arts-based research, and we realise that there are arguments for both exclusive and inclusive approaches within a political context of applied theatre. What is more important to underline is the resistance and marginalisation with which both exclusive and inclusive approaches in applied theatre are still met both in the north and in the south.

In Norway, institutional compartmentalisation is predominant, including exclusive discourses and practices. In this landscape, applied theatre holds a marginal position, rendered suspect from the point of view of social anti-theatrical prejudice as well as from current European aesthetics. From the latter, applied theatre is met with hostility towards an “ethical turn” affecting aesthetics or politics today (Bishop, 2012). This hostility reflects the view that exclusive approaches are necessary, approaches that are often depoliticised and that consequently may impede transformative or ethical ambitions of applied theatre.

Within the South African decolonial context, inclusive tendencies are heard and often heeded in resonance with the promotion of indigenous knowledge systems. Yet, in the face of the resilience and entrenched nature of Western thinking and epistemologies, the applied arts continue to struggle against the exclusive tendencies present in the academy and in commercial contexts.

At the same time, increasing political polarisation can swing in the opposite direction, excluding and vilifying attempts to host democratising theatre interventions, calling it neo-liberal, or aligning them uncritically with colonial traditions, before allowing artists and facilitators the opportunity to set the frame and create the context for the interaction.

The north-south project collaboration which is reflected in this chapter consciously relates to our post-democracies by considering, realising and opposing applied theatre as a liberalist phenomenon. As answers to potential accusations of running errands for liberalist post-democracy and the accompanying denigration of art therapy, social collaborative art and arts education, we aim to enact research as the cultural praxis that negotiates paradoxes of post-democracy.

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