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Urban Culture and Youth in Berlin and Beyond
or How To Do Things With Art

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Introduction

Several years ago the choreographer Royston Maldoom worked with 239 adolescents in Berlin, all with different levels of education and representing twenty-five nationalities. As part of the Berlin Philharmonic’s education project they rehearsed Igor Strawinsky’s “Le Sacre du Printemps” (The Rites of Spring). The film “Rhythm is it” documents the making of the production in all its phases. It was shown in cinemas all over Germany and helped the country open its heart to community art projects. Since then, celebrated projects like “a music instrument for every child” (realized in the state of North Rhine Westphalia) contributed to a downright boom of cultural education in Germany. In 2008, the Federal Government of Germany launched an official inquiry, “On the state of culture in Germany”, to encourage the states and local municipal districts (which in the German federal system still have the final say in educational and cultural matters) to initiate wide-ranging programmes for cultural education. In addition, in 2009, Minister of State for Culture Bernd Neumann awarded a prize for best-practice in cultural education and founded a “Federal Centre for Cultural Education in Europe” in Genshagen. It will be active in the field of art and cultural communication and facilitate cross-border meetings not only for those who shape culture, but also for protagonists in cultural communication, introducing new target groups to culture. Since 2008, the Berlin municipal government's (Senat) budget provides 3.5 million euros for partnership endeavours between kindergartens/schools and institutions dealing with art, theatre, music etc. Artists are sent into schools and school classes in turn visit art venues and cultural centres. One motive is surely audience development and the hope that future patrons will thus be recruited. There is hardly a cultural institution today - be it a museum, theatre, dance group, publisher or concert house - which can do without an education department. It is hard to imagine cultural life without art, where artists work with non-professionals. More and more projects are offered for under-represented target groups – young people who live in dysfunctional circumstances, so-called lower-class youngsters, immigrants, or juvenile delinquents, i.e. ‘youth at risk’. Hurdles are put aside to facilitate access to both popular and ‘classical’ cultural events. It is considered almost fashionable to feature cultural education programmes in which established and pop culture intermingle. One project for aesthetic education follows the next. Berlin has established the so-called “Offensive for Cultural Education”, and even dramaturges call their meetings “radically social”. Last but not least: After its start in Lisbon in 2006, UNESCO will hold its second world conference on “cultural education” 2010 in Seoul.

All this excitement is almost dizzying. In all the euphoria it almost seems as if aesthetic education has only just been discovered. But even in the eighteenth century, the poet Friedrich Schiller asserted in his “Letters on Aesthetic Education” that art and theatre are not just food for the senses, but that the only way for sensuous human beings to arrive at reason was by aesthetic means. One is also reminded of West Germany in the 1970s, when artists went into schools, when cultural education emerged from a more comprehensive definition of culture, popular culture’s status was elevated and social-cultural centres were founded. According to the motto “culture for everyone” (Hilmar Hoffmann), culture - especially the arts - should be made accessible to all age groups and to people from different social backgrounds. So this is not the first time that hope has been placed in the “promise of the aesthetic” (Yvonne Ehrenspeck). And it seems as though in times of economic and social crisis (such as we are currently experiencing), the arts are sorely needed. For Schiller it was the French Revolution, in the 1970s it was perhaps the student revolution and today it is the deplorable state of education, a decline of values and the economic crisis, and let us not forget the shock of 9/11. On the social level, we expect art to change social policy and create designs for a different world. On a personal level, we rely on art’s ability to nurture personal growth and
the development of greater competence. It seems that the challenge of art’s complexity can generate respect and tolerance for the differently-minded and a sensitivity about oppression in society and in the world.

For our research project, we chose the “International Youth Art & Culture Centre - Schlesische 27” as a partner, a flagship for the development of cultural education in Germany. Located in Kreuzberg, a melting pot of cultural diversity in Berlin, the centre was founded in 1982 and has been faced with increasing challenges since then. The district has a high proportion of residents who are educationally underprivileged, unemployed, or come from immigrant backgrounds. The Schlesische 27 has received many awards and much recognition. It is well known as a venue for artistic productions and as an educational facility. ‘Young art’, as designed at the Schlesische 27, brings together professional artists from various sectors to work with young amateurs and children from different social and cultural backgrounds – especially with young people from precarious social situations.

Our best-practice project, inVolve, was financed by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research and conducted at the Schlesische 27. It was one of the first projects nationwide to offer qualification programmes for youth with a need for special assistance during the transition between school and job training. InVolve shows how adolescents with precarious school and educational biographies can be helped by means of artistic-aesthetic work.1 With inVolve as a pilot project, we can illustrate how ‘youth at risk’ can find back their way back to being active participants of society. Considering all available options, it seems to us that the aesthetic method appears to be most appropriate for this goal – it can stimulate sensuous perception, encourage reflection, and inspire action.

In the following pages, we will summarize the various sectors of inVolve, demonstrate structural examples (theatre, digital art, studio, music, etc.) and condensed models, in order to illustrate the adaptability of the pilot project to other practice areas. We have evaluated inVolve in terms of its artistic-aesthetic accessibility and its impact and results. Since the inVolve-team went through their evaluations, we benefited from extensive documentation: articles on the project, unpublished manuscripts, and lots of interviews. For this report, we will narrow our focus to the artistic-aesthetic processes. The adolescents2 will get a voice – either in statements and interviews (participant’s remarks) or by their own documentation (participant-documentation). Visual material - photos and films - was also available. In addition, some of us have been able to see the theatre productions and attend several meetings at the Schlesische 27.

Our best practice project inVolve will be discussed in the course of the following four paragraphs: the first paragraph depicts the social context of the best-practice project, briefly describes the situation of ‘youth at risk’ in Kreuzberg, and presents the various cultural education programmes offered in Berlin. The second paragraph deals with the “transfer-project” inVolve-on-Stage. In paragraph three we will present a research method, performance research, which we feel could be useful for any form of evaluation on the impact of the arts or of artistic-aesthetic work. This is followed by a description of the research workshop we conducted with former inVolve-participants and our final evaluation of the pilot project. The fourth paragraph deals with the problem theatre directors face when confronted with the conflict area between art and education. We will compare inVolve with another theatre-project realized in a juvenile penal institution, which emerged out of one of the transfer-workshops.

1 For this report, we agreed on the term “artistic-aesthetic” when reference is made to art or artistic practice.
2 For simplicity's sake only the masculine form is used throughout the text.
In our closing paragraph we will share our most important insights with the reader and disclose some prospects for the future. Throughout the text, ‘we’ refers to the research-team at the University of Applied Sciences Potsdam under the direction of Prof. Dr. Hanne Seitz and the academic assistants Christine Vogt and Martina Pfeil. We had intense discussions in our team and lively talks with the participating youngsters who were a great source of inspiration for this investigation. Our thanks go to the general manager and artistic director, Christel Hartmann-Fritsch. Thanks also go to our colleague Prof. Dr. Hermann Voesgen (also part of the UCAY-team), to Melitta Schönberg who transcribed our discussions and interviews and to Scotch Maier and other friends on the inside and outside of Schlesische 27, who provided us with ideas and posed incisive questions, thus keeping our motivation alive and offering their support. We especially wish to thank Michael Kreutzer, programme director of inVolve, whose precise and critical inquiries inspired us to rethink our positions more than once. Special thanks also to Ulrich Hardt, the theatre director of inVolve, for his great support for our endeavour.

1. Context

1.1 Berlin, Kreuzberg and cultural education

Berlin is a historically interesting, vibrant city. It boasts scores of museums and lush green parks; rivers and lakes abound. Berlin is also host to an expanse of in part decrepit housing estates which do not offer the best living conditions. The city attracts both artists and tourists, as well as people hoping to find work. Berlin is not just the capital of Germany. It is the capital of endangered employment. The chasm between rich and poor is widening; the current unemployment rate is fifteen percent. In the less densely settled area surrounding Berlin (e.g. in the Uckermark) it is much higher. Extensive disruption here and elsewhere followed the fall of the Wall in 1989 and the collapse of industrial areas. A ‘brain drain’ ensued. The more privileged, better qualified and educated part of the population – and many young women – moved away to the industrial areas near big cities such as Berlin, or better yet, to western Germany or to another European country, leaving behind the elderly and less educated and an ever dwindling number of young people. If demographic trends proceed as expected, there will hardly be any young people left in some regions.

By contrast Berlin’s population has increased slightly. It currently numbers about 3.4 million people. But in the near future, Berlin must reckon with a decline in residents, with an increase in the age of its elderly population and in poverty. One out of every five citizens in Berlin is dependent on some sort of social welfare assistance – and one can further assume that one in every five needy persons does not even (attempt to) file a claim because they feel too ashamed to do so. Changes in policies regulating health, social welfare and migration are urgently needed. Currently over thirty-five percent of children and juveniles living in Berlin receive of welfare benefits. Many of them have been labelled ‘at risk’ because more and more of them fall through the gaps in the economic and the education systems. Many drop out of school, have no job training or are unemployed. Others have run-ins with the law or live a lifestyle involving mental, physical and psychological problems. The Schlesische 27, our focus for this handbook, is situated in Kreuzberg, a ‘problematic district’ which grew infamous well beyond its borders in the 1980s with its non-establishment, back courtyard culture, the house-squatting scene and the budding

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3 Christine Vogt is the author of this report, with the exception of paragraph four, which was written by Martina Pfeil (both in co-authorship with Hanne Seitz). The English translation was done by Joan Murphy – with the assistance of Monica Suder and Hanne Seitz.
multicultural flair, considered quaint at the time. In GDR times, Kreuzberg was situated in the east of West Berlin, bordering directly on East Berlin. The Schlesische Street used to be right next to the former border. After the Wall came down, Kreuzberg belonged once again to the urban centre. It was incorporated in the former East Berlin district of Friedrichshain, on the opposite side of the River Spree. Some parts of Kreuzberg seem downright romantic, especially along the Landwehr Canal. But others, such as the area near the Kottbusser Tor, are derogatorily referred to as ‘Little Istanbul’ by local residents. Parallel society at its best. Foreigners comprise twenty-five percent of the population in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district. Given the fact that hardly any foreigners live in Friedrichshain (or in any other district in the east), the percentage is much higher for Kreuzberg: about one in three has an immigration background. There is an unemployment rate of twenty percent. Half of the children aged eighteen or less living in this district are recipients of social welfare benefits. The unemployment rate amongst young adults is twenty-five percent Berlin wide. Half of foreign youngsters are without a job. An increasing number of younger homeless can be seen around the city. Juvenile crime has been increasing at an alarming rate, right along with the rising poverty levels. Things start off with mean tricks, then go on to stealing air force jackets from sports club locker rooms, extorting mobile phones from fellow schoolmates, games like ‘slug-the-bus-driver’ and end with life-threatening knife fights. The number of juveniles with repeat offences on their criminal record is increasing, their crimes are becoming ever more brutal. In the year 2007, twenty-five percent of all crimes committed in Berlin were committed by juveniles. The share of young delinquents from immigrant families (especially Turkish and Arab) was disproportionately high – eighty percent (with eighty-five percent in Kreuzberg alone). Crime and violence amongst teens is linked to poverty, yet this is not the cause. Rather, it is the result of the experience of having been rejected because of it. Many immigrant families have been in Germany now for three generations. This third generation, in contrast to their parents, no longer feels at home in their country of origin. And it is quite evident that they do not feel part of Germany either, the country they were admitted to. The world they live in is characterised by discrimination, failed integration, special segregation. Their housing is amidst other immigrants. Ethnic isolation, when coupled with a decline in social status, threatens to result not just in ghettoization, but an increase in aggression as well. This split identity leads to a continuous struggle for recognition. Torn between the feeling of resignation and a powerless anger, violence can suddenly produce a sense of power that gives them a sense of freedom and a new, positive feeling about themselves. Incidents of brutality and bodily harm are on the increase. There was a rise of seventy-five percent in Berlin schools in the school year 2005-2006. In the same year teachers of the Rütli School in the problematic district of Neukölln bordering on Kreuzberg proclaimed a state of emergency. They demanded the school be shut down. Things had gotten completely out of control. Students frequently involved in crime became role models, and violence was part of every day life at school. Eighty-six percent of the students here come from immigrant families. This situation shows how integration policies have failed and that segregation cannot be stopped. More than twenty percent of the non-German pupils in Berlin drop out of school without having formally completed a certificate programme. Whoever attends a type of school like the Rütli (years 7-9 or 10) is aware of their status: they are the dregs of society, sure of being disadvantaged and robbed of any perspectives whatsoever. Hostility toward foreigners is escalating. They are almost always blamed for getting themselves into this miserable situation: they are too lazy, just leech off the system and steal jobs from German workers. The voices of those who demand more severe sanctions are growing: Pupils not in possession of a German passport or a final school certificate should be made to leave the country. Harsher sentences should be given to juvenile delinquents and the age at which children are liable for crime should be lowered to twelve years. If these people had their way, they would deport all
children of immigrants back to the countries they came from – regardless of whether they were born in Germany and are German citizens. The figures speak for themselves and point to the increasing poverty, precarious situations and brutality which are affecting young people. There are hidden figures and massaged statistics (as a result of short term integration programmes). In addition there are the consequences of the current economic crisis still to come. Popular opinion refers to this phenomenon as ‘youth at risk’. It assumes these economic and social deficiencies belong to the status quo. But a society whose standards and economy have become unstable will have to start re-thinking its policies on a wider scale.

Thus, the Berlin Senate launched the project “Bildung von Anfang an” (education right from the start), aimed at early childhood education and language training. The final year of kindergarten is already tuition free. From 2010 on, the first two years will also be free of charge. Lunch and breakfast programmes in schools and kindergartens receive public funding. Children from especially disadvantaged families receive meals at no cost and there are social workers at school to help them. For those older children needing support there is of course the established (totally inadequate) institutional assistance. Counselling is available from the youth services department on livelihood maintenance, and there are courses for job training and qualification skills. Whether this helps or not is another matter. In addition, there are many diverse activities offered for after school/leisure time in youth centres and socio-cultural centres. At present, there are many groups working with theatre, art and culture with the aim of building stronger individuals who can re-assume responsibility for themselves and rediscover meaning in life.

“From behind the curtains onto the stage!”, so to speak. People have come to realize that it is not enough to merely offer social or economic assistance. Problem-solving must also deal with religious questions, cultural differences and poor education. One must promote cultural involvement, work on the “cultural capital” (Pierre Bourdien). The Rüti School showed that this approach can succeed - more or less. Incidentally, this school and all other Hauptschulen (years 7-10, leaving certificate of little value) in Berlin are due to be closed in 2010 and then fused with the Realschulen (years 7-10, leaving certificate, eligible to begin further education). Right after the teachers’ cry for help at the Rüti School, the police were sent in. Later on more social workers were assigned to the school and security guards were posted on the grounds to protect the students and deter potentially violent outsiders (these measures have been adopted by other so-called schools for ‘leftovers.’). Different approaches were taken: after school programmes were offered in boxing and arts, there was co-operation with the Maxim Gorki Theater Berlin. The biggest success, however, was “Rüti-Wear”. Pupils created T-shirts bearing their own designs. Their first collection was presented in the autumn of 2007 by members of a break dance group in a trendy shop called “ausberlin”. The “Rüti” label is being sold worldwide by pupils online. They are proud of themselves, of their school, partly as a result of the outstanding coverage they have received in the media.

There is an interesting phenomenon, “paradoxical intervention” (Paul Watzlawik), according to which outsiders (in this case people from the theatre, the arts and designers) have more success breaking through and breaking old habits, helping us to re-think the things we think and do –without reflection, merely out of habit, without thinking. They can give a sense of accomplishment, steer potential energy into areas away from violence. The Rüti School provides proof of how important cultural participation is. It is a decisive factor in determining the position one assumes in society.

Various programmes for cultural education were naturally started in Kreuzberg as well. Obviously there are still not enough. They are quite popular – whether they are projects such as the circus for young and older children, Cabuwazi, or the StreetUnverCityBerlin or the qualification project inVolve in the Schlesische 27.
Getting acquainted with the arts, acquiring practical experience - it offers young people opportunities in completely new areas and insight into other possibilities. They receive tools for life. This shall be discussed at greater length further on.

Before we continue, we would like to mention Quartiersmanagement – launched especially by “Soziale Stadt” (a commission operating on a national and state level) which supports an increasing number of artistic and cultural programmes and events to rejuvenate and revitalize certain city districts. One example is the big soup festival (“fête de la soupe”) initiated by the Schlesische 27. Neighbourhood residents made all kinds of soups representing numerous countries. They were served on a nicely laid out table 170 metres in length – set up right in the middle of the street. The music started up, young and old enjoyed soup and conversation and they drank and danced until late. A jury pronounced its verdict on the best and most interesting soups. Winners received golden soup ladles. Approximately ten thousand Berliners attended this event. What they witnessed was a Kreuzberg radiantly alive – on this one day – thanks to this integration project. Some guests donated a poem or a drawing in exchange for a bowl of soup. Cultural integration at its best: made in Kreuzberg. Sometimes it works, especially when done by Schlesische 27.

1.2 The International Youth Art & Culture Centre – Schlesische 27

The Schlesische 27, an international art and cultural centre for adolescents in Berlin’s district of Kreuzberg, fondly named after the street on which the building is located, was founded in 1982 by Christel Hartmann-Fritsch. The information in the following paragraph is based on conversations with her in her capacity as artistic director and administrative manager, as well as on written material on the project and publications by Schlesische 27. Prior to 1982, the building was a centre for German and Turkish youth. Its focus was mainly on that particular neighbourhood in Kreuzberg. Christel Hartmann-Fritsch had been managing director of the “International Building Exhibition” (IBA) in 1982, which had renovated and restored many apartment buildings and socio-cultural centres. She could draw on her experience with the IBA, and together with urban planners, artists, teachers and neighbours, she brought new life to a rundown, former workshop-building in a back courtyard in Kreuzberg, where she laid the first stone for the “International Youth Art & Culture Centre Schlesische 27”. From the very beginning, its purpose was to be a place for artistic production and education. Children and adolescents were introduced to the arts in countless courses offered during and after school. Its emphasis on the arts back in the early 1980s presented a stark contrast to the political education movement at the time. Since the 1970s, this had been a focus in post-war Germany. The focus was on the explanation of German history. Political education was a political-social mandate taken quite seriously in Berlin. Shielded by the Wall, its significance lasted for a long time. But art was considered to be provocative and innovative. During the cold war, before the Wall fell in 1989, the Schlesische 27 just puttered along with its important task, nestled in a niche by the German-German border.

With the slogan, “whoever creates, gains identity”, Schlesische 27 has been organizing arts-related projects for disadvantaged children, teenagers and young people. The majority of the 120 projects running each year take place in conjunction with Berlin schools. Working together with artists, teachers and social workers or pedagogues, the young participants are introduced to different artistic genres, such as theatre, dance, painting, sculpture, photography and video. In addition to giving children and young people a step up the world of art, the Schlesische 27 concept also offers pedagogical guidance. “None of the kids expect an artist who will paint or put on plays with them, much less sit down with them and write a story”, explains Christel Hartmann-Fritsch. “Our goal is to unlock this creative treasure trove for them. We’re convinced that artistic endeavour helps shape identity and cultivate a sense of
self-esteem. Here young people have a chance to experience a new world that would otherwise be off-limits to them as a result of their background."

Financing for the cultural centre comes from the Berlin Senate as well as from a consortium of sponsors formed in 1987 by the Berlin business scene. As part of its commitment to this public sector/private partnership, the consortium supports such projects as the publication of a calendar and the sale of selected works of art produced in the course of projects taking place during the year.

The artistic-aesthetic works of the young people go on public display and are sold at an annual auction. This sort of fund-raising was (and still is) quite unique for Berlin’s cultural projects and institutions, as it has been known, on occasion, to raise more than 60,000 Euros. A picture might sell for the huge sum of 4,000 euros. Thanks to the support of a sponsor, the works from Schlesische 27 were used, for example, to decorate the site of the major Berlin construction project underway on the banks of the Spree River. “Without the support of the numerous members of the consortium, private individuals, businesses and public personalities, our wide range of projects could not get off the ground”, emphasizes Christel Hartmann-Fritsch. “Dialogue between the business world, the political sphere, the art scene and young people is a dynamic force instrumental in preserving the fabric of our society well into the future.”

Since its foundation, Schlesische 27 has always been open towards the rest of Europe, especially since the founding of the German-French Youth Organization in 1983. This helped to make different exchange programmes possible between youth in France and Germany. Between 1983 and 1987, a European pilot project was conducted for young people in a transition period from school to further training. Over the years, many project partnerships were established. They received financial assistance from the German government and European funds. Even today, through so-called “Creative Cooperations”, a network of more than twenty-one partners, Schlesische 27 concentrates on coordinating and organising youth cultural projects across Europe. Launched in 1996, “Creative Cooperations” allows young people between the ages of 18 and 25 to take part in the European Voluntary Service programme. This initiative, sponsored by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Education, Training and Youth, allows participants to spend six to twelve months each year working on projects at other European cultural centres. Included in the network are such organisations as a circus school in Portugal, a film studio for young people in Moscow and a day care centre for young disabled people in Sweden.

Despite its emphasis on the arts, Schlesische 27 is also open to projects not exclusively based on the arts. For example, it worked together with the neighbourhood management of Kreuzberg to produce such neighbourhood events as the previously mentioned “fête de la soupe”. The involve project for job qualification is another example of an atypical venture. It was a successful, yet risky and challenging undertaking for all.

2. Best-practice Project involve

2.1 The beginnings

involve is a project for education and qualification, based on artistic work with young people. It arose from the youth theatre project Diskoteater Metropolis located in the Schlesische 27, as a collaboration of the Theater der Milchstraße e. V. (today: Expedition Metropolis e. V.).

Diskoteater Metropolis is a theatre group which has performed and toured internationally and done research since 1997. Its core group has a low turnover rate. This group and participants

\footnote{www.expedition-metroplis.de}
(young people aged 15 and older) go on theatrical expeditions all around Germany and abroad.

*InVolve02* was realized from January 2004 to April 2006 in cooperation with *Schlesische 27*. Before that (in 2001), the Diskoteater-Team had completed a project (called *inVolve01*), which received funding from Fonds Soziokultur, and operated on a much smaller scale with a duration of only four and a half months. It turned out to be a prelude to the pilot project conducted three years later. The object of the initial phase, according to the application, was “to introduce adolescents and young adults to the basics behind the theory and practice of intercultural work with arts and education, involving young people in projects and thus to develop key competences to qualify them for orientation in preparation for working life.”

We will not emphasize *inVolve01*, since it was not able to get together the desired target group, which was supposed to be heterogeneous, with young people of mixed backgrounds: i.e. young people with or without an immigrant background, possibly living in precarious circumstances, whose job opportunities might or might not be endangered. This programme, however, did receive positive feedback from both the participants and the team, and therefore served as a practice run for the pilot project, officially called *inVolve02*. Where we say *inVolve*, we really mean *inVolve02*, our best practice project.5

The pilot project was part of a programme funded by the federal ministry for education and research: “Encourage competencies – job qualification for target groups with special needs” (BQF-Programme).6 Approximately one hundred and thirty such programmes received funding. Besides *Schlesische 27*, only one other project - called *!STAGE* - had anything to do with the arts or with artistic-aesthetic media. As already indicated, *inVolve* – focussing on qualification and education in a broader sense – posed a huge challenge for *Schlesische 27*, which promotes long-term assistance through artistic means and places the arts in the foreground. In accordance with our assignment for this handbook, we shall discuss and evaluate matters primarily based on artistic-aesthetic aspects, without pretending to report on the whole of the project.7

### 2.2 Implementation of the pilot project

The pilot project *inVolve* consisted of two cycles. The first cycle, in 2004, lasted twelve months and had seventeen participants; the second cycle was realized in 2005/2006, over a period of sixteen months, with fifteen participants. The programme was designed as an

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5 The following people belonged to the core of *inVolve*’s team: Michael Kreutzer (project director), Ulrich Hardt (artistic director, theatre), Kirsten Möller (education social worker) and Regina Mansow (office, coaching). Also part of the project were Franz Joseph Hödl (theatre), Kai Iljef (studio), Abuze Güler (studio), Thurit Kremer (digital art, film), Said Oumousssa (digital art, film), Zarko Jovasevic (music). They were followed by Ali Ucar, Frank Hubert, Katrin Bosshard, Jens Petersen and Karen Nitschke (education social worker). Several teachers were hired to assist with particular school leaving certificate programmes (two per cycle). There were also five interns. When we make any further reference to the *inVolve*-team, we mean those who were in the core group.  

6 Fifty percent of the funding for the BQF-programme was provided by the European Social Foundation (ESF, compare [www.ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/discover/esf_de](http://www.ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/discover/esf_de)). For programme details, compare BQF-Programme under [http://www.kompetenzen-foerdern.de](http://www.kompetenzen-foerdern.de).  

7 For more information see the references in our bibliography. In addition to conferences that were held with specialists and the final report, that was sent to the federal ministry, several articles were published and numerous internal papers were written – usually by Michael Kreutzer, author, sociologist and project-director of *inVolve*. The documents we were able to read not only reflect on the artistic work, but also proclaim a scientific interest in the whole of the project. All together seventeen unpublished biographical interviews with young people indicate an engagement in biographical and reconstructive social research.
“action research project”\(^8\) and held evaluations on a regular basis (formative on-going evaluation). At the end of the individual cycles and at the end of the entire project, reports were compiled (summative evaluation). Each cycle consisted of two phases: A) through to the summer holidays, B) until the end of the year. In phase A, there were theatre rehearsals, work in artistic-aesthetic areas and in the so-called academy, as well as in-house internships with *Schlesische 27*, the so-called assistantships. During phase B there were internships elsewhere during which time participants also attended the academy and the artistic-aesthetic classes. Approximately sixty percent of the participants gained job-related experience with companies and institutions in Berlin. There was a small monetary compensation for both internships, so as to make the participants feel they were really working, not just taking part in some remedial action programme. This was not an insignificant aspect of the pilot project. *InVolve* received 300,000 Euros all together. The cost of each participant, including reimbursement for the internship, amounted to approximately 750 Euros per month.

### 2.2.1 Recruitment and profile of participants

Participants had to be between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five, in a difficult job situation, have a problematic school history or not know quite what to do with their lives. The decision-making process was unique. As a pilot project under the auspices of a federal ministry, it was not bound by any directives from the employment office or youth career assistance. Therefore, the project team could make decisions together with interested candidates about their participation. Comparable qualification programmes usually employ different methods.\(^9\) The personal assessment of the current individual situation, as expressed in the words from a rap of one of the adolescents, was the most important criterion. This comprised the basis for the extensive interviews with the applicants. “Create some clarity, ‘cause easy-going days lie ahead, follow your heart. You don’t have the time to fuck around. Use your time wisely.”

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\(^8\) Action research has emerged in recent years as a specific strategy for intervention, development and change within communities and groups.

\(^9\) Typically, German procedures would include aptitude tests and clarification with employment officials, etc.
It was part of inVolve’s concept that the group be heterogeneous and diverse. Members ranged from those who had dropped out of school with out any certificate\footnote{In Germany, the basic types of school are the Gymnasium (12-13 years), Real- und Hauptschule (9-10 years).} to those who were eligible for university. Some had immigration backgrounds, others not. Recruitment was carried out in various ways. The most important route was the pre-existing contacts to youth centres for leisure time activities. A leaflet was distributed to advertise for the project. It was designed as a questionnaire with attractive, small pictures taken from a self-made photo novel and was the most important form of advertising. The brochure depicted the project as being a “mixture of artistic projects, theoretical instruction and practical internships”. According to the text, inVolve would “be fun” for the participant and the expected audience. This made it clear that the artistic projects were also aimed at the general public. In addition, “artistic projects” would help people to recognise personal strengths and weaknesses. The advertisement was mostly personally distributed to people who seemed interested – in schools, youth centres, courses in the Schlesische 27 and in job agencies. Working with others on an artistic project was emphasized as being the most important element. Whoever dropped in did so on a voluntary basis. There was no pressure, job centres did not force anyone to come. At least seventy-five percent of the applicants had had no previous contact with Schlesische 27.

The selection process finally produced a group of twenty-one males and eleven females between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four; most, however, were between eighteen and twenty.

Out of the thirty-two participants, a total of seventeen came from immigrant families (first and second generation). Ten had not completed any level of school by the start of the programme. Six had a certificate from a ‘Hauptschule’, fifteen had completed the ‘Realschule’ (definition: see paragraph 1.1). One person had a ‘Fachabitur’, allowing him to be admitted to higher education in selected subject areas. At the beginning of the programme most participants shared about the same degree of education, whether they came from immigrant families or not. The number of participants without a school leaving certificate was relatively high amongst the women (compare Kreutzer, 2007: 18). InVolve’s hours were flexible and individually tailored to the participants.

2.2.2 Aims of the programme

If participants had not completed their schooling, they should do so and/or get placement in a job training programme or continuing education. A contract was made with each participant in terms of the individual goals each wished to achieve. At the end of the cycle, i.e. after a year, certificates were distributed. These were discussed with the participants and reflected their progress. Michael Kreutzer, member of the directing board of Metropolis and also director of inVolve, distinguishes between “educational goals” and “autonomous artistic goals”. He describes the former:

As a model educational project, inVolve imports more specifically described ‘formal’ goals into the work of Schlesische 27, in order to: (a) activate and provide young people with orientation up until (b) their concrete preparation for a job and/or their readiness to (re)enter school and (c) their transition to a continuing training/education programme or qualifying occupation....
But the ‘formal’ goals are not everything. Achieving these formal goals constitutes the demanding criterion for success by which inVolve shall be judged. By no means does inVolve ‘just’ prepare participants for the workforce, but rather for ‘life in its entirety’: they should be able to deal with work and leisure time as they themselves determine how they deal with employment and unemployment, with being a private person or in the public spotlight and with ‘existential’ questions of life (love, death, questions about the existence of a god included). (Kreutzer, 2007: 6)

The autonomous goals were regarded as quite important – also in their effect. It goes without saying that they constitute a considerable part of the artistic-aesthetic areas. As Kreutzer says: “the artistic projects which are a part of inVolve also follow autonomous, independent artistic production goals. This goes without saying and is especially true regarding educational goals” (ibid). One goal both approaches had in common was defined by inVolve as a central goal for the participants, corresponding to the artistic-aesthetic practice: target autonomy. Participants were to make discoveries in this area, amongst them the development of their own will, self and the ability to create a relationship to the things and people around them. Thus autonomy was prioritised as the learning goal of “teaching through the artistic medium”, an “expression closely linked to the modern understanding of art”. (Kreutzer, 2007: 8)

By its very experimental nature, inVolve had to deal with diverse forms of art and their potential to arrange and design, but also with situations applying to school, the working world and other practical things. A constant state of tension was, therefore, to be inherent to the project.

2.2.3 Activity areas

The different areas are to be seen as building blocks which are part of an ‘entire work of art’. They will help shed light on the perception of art of the inVolve-team. In addition to theatre, further artistic-aesthetic areas were added: digital art (photography, digital processing, layout, video), studio (painting, sculpture) and music. Participants could choose from the different activity areas. Changes could be made with the approval of the team. Most activities were centred on the preparation of the production of a theatre play. Because of the specific interest we have in the context of this handbook, we will concentrate on the aesthetic practice of theatre and performance.

The outcome of both cycles was two plays, each lasting one and a half hours. The sets were produced by participants. There were also performative short presentations, six short films, a fifty-two minute feature film, countless paintings, drawings, masks and other objects, photographs, computer graphics, posters, leaflets and a hip hop CD. There were also artistic exchange programmes, the so-called theatre expeditions to other parts of Germany and abroad. Yet there were other not quite ‘artsy’ areas which nevertheless were part of the ‘entire work of art’, e.g. the academy and a small newspaper which appeared in two editions.

Documentation on the project was made by the participants themselves. Other important parts of the year long programme were the internships with Schlesische 27 and with other employers.

Theatre

Theatre, which the majority of participants chose in both cycles, formed the core area of the pilot project. Everything else was centred around it.

*When I’m in a play, I sometimes play parts I never thought I’d ever play that way. Completely different. You leave yourself and become someone else. No one tells us how to do anything. You can’t tell whether they’ll look at you funny or make fun of*
you. You’re forever learning something new when you’re in a play. Last time you played it one way, next time you’ll do a better job. Every day you learn something new. When I’m on stage, it’s easier for me to speak about my grandmother who died. (…) In a play it doesn’t matter (where you come from, ed.), we’re just playing a part (Participant’s remark).

Setting: Participation on a regular basis, three hours of rehearsal a week. Strict separation between rehearsals and private matters (e.g., as empty, as neutral a room as possible for rehearsals). Theatre training for everyone on a regular basis. Rehearsals were held even when assistantships and external internships were going on. The theatre group included mostly inVolvies but also at times got support from performers not part of inVolve.

Support: Extensive talks about dramaturgy, content and significance of the play.

Rules: Punctuality, no use of mobile phones during rehearsals.

Procedure: Active participation in work, e.g. by incorporating biographical material into the plays, composition of own scripts and having the participants develop their own dramaturgical ideas.

Products: At the end of each cycle there was an evening performance before the summer break (e.g. “Leonce and Lena”). There were presentations on a smaller scale in between. Even though there were several larger scale theatre productions, we will now focus on the play “Leonce and Lena”.

“Leonce and Lena”
The play, written by Georg Büchner (1813-1837), is full of irony and humour, and depicts the conflict and arranged marriage between the descendents of two royal families who do not even know one another. The play is a biting satire on the feudal aristocracy and portrays the emptiness of their lifestyles. It is a must-read for German pupils enrolled in pre-university schools. Most of those enrolled in inVolve had never heard of it before. The actors had to play ‘real’ parts, learn lines, which were to some extent long and unfamiliar, wear theatre costumes and adhere to the agreement about the ‘fourth wall’.

Büchner’s dialogues were supplemented by the actors own self-composed songs, choral arrangements and texts. The work was received by the youngsters, the so-called inVolvies, as follows: “There were different opinions concerning the play. Some thought it was good just to get away from things for a while … ‘Leonce and Lena’ was controversial (got negative ratings from seven participants). The inVolvies were more enthused by the group feeling. Most of them couldn’t agree with Franz and Ulrich (the two directors, author’s remark) about the play and the script” (participant-documentation). According to their own accounts, several participants had difficulty learning the vast amounts of text.

11 Participants were called inVolvies.
12 We chose “Leonce and Lena” to demonstrate the work done in the theatre section because we did not have any direct experience or the necessary film material for the other productions. In the production “Flieder und Flagge” (= lilac and flag) (according to John Berger) other forms of producing and acting were employed. For example, the ‘fourth wall’ was broken up. The actors’ performance was not confined to a stage. They were in the audience, behind the audience etc. The play made use of the entire space. There were no entries or exits. The play was, in contrast to the production of “Leonce and Lena”, very close to real life. It was about survival problems in a big city. Despite this, the adolescents had problems accepting the production. This production did not “set off any sparks”. (Kreutzer, 2007: 14)
13 Eleven participants of the second cycle were asked questions about their theatrical experience in “Leonce and Lena” by other inVolvies.
One aspect of a theatrical approach can be illustrated using the following example: Numerous pieces of string were hanging down from the ‘stage ceiling’ over part of the stage. The actors were not allowed to come into contact with them during the play. This method of establishing boundaries challenged them to come up with unusual body positions, suitable for the play situation but not normal life (e.g. puppet-like expression). Some developed a more expressive acting style. According to the directors, the instructions they were given to use their bodies as much as possible and avoid contact with the strings (external boundary) in a productive way were quite unfamiliar for some of the performers. Nevertheless, they got into it and thus had some experience with ‘difference’. This kind of estrangement effect was a basic work principle during rehearsals and performances.

Photo 2: **Rehearsal of “Leonce and Lena”** (Photo: Monique Wüstenhagen)

**Digital Art**

According to participants, this was one of the most popular areas. “In ‘digi’ we shot photos and processed them, did layouts, made films and did the editing. ‘Digi’ was a big success. … The working atmosphere couldn’t have been better” (Participant-documentation).

**Setting:** Three hours per week for the entire year.

**Support:** Individual guidance was provided for the work on short films. *InVolve*-team members assumed the production work on the feature film.

**Products:** Experimental short films produced by the adolescents and the feature film “The Party”.
“The Party” is a fifty-two minute feature film with hip hop music, rap dialogues and improvised scenes. It was a co-operative effort of eleven inVolvies and fifteen other adolescents and young adults. Film locations were mostly in the vicinity of Schlesische 27 and in the clubroom there. The plot is about preparing for and actually hosting a music party. A real hip hop party was indeed held in the Schlesische 27 – a blend of a real party and invisible theatre according to Augusto Boal. Thus, the film portrays a combination of fiction and real life. The movie was based on form through improvisation at the scene of the (film) shootings. “Of the ten inVolvies interviewed all liked the film or liked it very much. Just one wasn’t too enthusiastic about it. They said, clearly and repeatedly, how much they had laughed. Actually everything was a lot of fun (shooting the film, acting, planning, music, the club, production). Participants really appreciated the fact that they could create the film themselves”(participant-documentation). This project was the reaction of the inVolve-team to a lack of integrative drive in the theatre work and in the digital section. By integrating hip hop from the music section (see below), “The Party” was able to re-integrate those adolescents who had lost direct access back into the common artistic-aesthetic work.

Photo 3: Filmstill “The Party” (Photo: Archive expedition metropolis)
**Studio**

In the studio it was possible to participate in a number of activities. A highlight was the so-called paint clinic, which helped participants design building facades and walls in the neighbourhood (e.g. the kindergarten next door, the inVolve office).

**Setting:** Three hours per week for the whole year.

**Details:** Art and sculpture, photography, decoration, e.g. for the occasion “fête de la soupe” held in the district, stage models and stage design for the theatre productions, paint clinic.

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“fête de la soupe”

Not far from Schlesische 27, a long table was set up. It was festively laid out and the variety of different kinds of soups reflected the multicultural nature of this district section (see also paragraph 1.1). “InVolvies also participated in the fête de la soupe …They built props and table decorations, helped out with the cleaning-up, took pictures, slurped soup, were security crew, put up canvas stalls, carried crates of water through the Wrangelstraße, distributed drinks, kept cars from driving in and ladled out oodles of soup”. (Participant-documentation)

There were also writing workshops and more intensive workshops (on certain artistic-aesthetic topics). All were part of the year’s programme, yet were not independent areas.

**Music project**

Music was not originally included in the programme. Neither was it a significant part of the evaluation. Yet the inVolve-team obliged the participants who suggested making their own music. The music project spontaneously came into existence in the second cycle and, as previously mentioned, constituted a major part of the feature film “The Party”. Participants received support for their musical ideas from a young musician from Serbia, Zarko Jovasević, who also helped implement these ideas in the film.

“Let’s think a bit, music and more music…” (Participant-documentation).

**Academy**

The academy was the main place where everyone gathered to talk. The space was also used for reflection and education and as a ‘chat room’. It was a place where topics on different events were discussed and where exercises were held. People could exchange opinions about the numerous interconnected project sessions and about all sorts of problems which arose, such as problems during internship stints with outside companies. The academy was a so-called annex space for learning and gaining experience.

**Setting:** Two hours per week during the whole year. Talks amongst all involved (participants and inVolve-team members) at a large table (furnished with drinks, fruit and jelly bears).

**Details:** Teaching of theoretical knowledge about project management, e.g. based on concrete events (spring festival, “fête de la soupe”), job orientation (representatives from various occupational fields were invited to come), communication training (attempts at intercultural communication).
Theatre expeditions
The groups went on one to two week trips to places they had likely never been to. The trips took them to cities and towns within travelling distance from Berlin as well as to other countries such as Poland, Wales, Bosnia, Macedonia and Spain. Some destinations meant bus journeys of 40 or 50 hours.\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Theatre expeditions}

The purpose of the trips was to give participants the opportunity to practice intercultural understanding on a practical basis. They had rehearsals together with a foreign amateur theatre group and performed the play in front of a local, a foreign audience. Artistic-aesthetic goals were linked to the theatre expeditions. The method, with which they worked on short and longer plays (also on short films), was referred to with a metaphor by the theatre directors of the inVolve-team, namely as “cinematic overlapping” (compare Kreutzer, 2002). The production also involved travelling to foreign places, experiencing different theatrical traditions, dealing with the unfamiliarity of the play yet to be performed and the familiarity of its biographical contents.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} The following should be mentioned so as not to give a false impression of the possibilities of the project. None of the inVolve trips abroad could be financed with money from the BMBF. For formal reasons they could not approve funds for trips to foreign countries. In the proposal, one trip per cycle had been planned. Instead there was a small German-Polish “inVolve foreign workshop” in the eastern part of Germany. Several inVolvies took part in various international workshops or exchange programmes. These were not events run by inVolve. They were, therefore, not events undertaken by inVolvies as an entire group. Because these theatre expeditions were of such importance for those adolescents who did participate, we shall discuss these trips in greater length.
Despite fever, chills and stomach cramps: “Work went on well nevertheless and, almost without exception, everyone stuck together.” - “Many inVolvies thought the vibe and the feeling in Bröllin (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) was really cool. According to one participant, everyone felt like they were brothers and sisters. The special thing about the trip was that it moulded everyone into a close community, everyone was happy, if only for the duration of this trip…” (Participant documentation).

Photo 5: **Workshop in Bröllin** (Photo: Anna Hoffmann)

**Internships**
The internships which took place in Schlesische 27 during the first six months, referred to as assistantships, were in different areas such as: organization management (planning and public relations for events), office work (helping out with the organization of the theatre expeditions), theatre (rehearsal preparation, rehearsal minutes), studio (tasks in design or artisan work), garden (outdoor work on the grounds of Schlesische 27), writing reports (work on newspapers and the adolescents’ own documentation of the inVolve programme). It was possible to switch internship areas.

**Setting:** Six hours per week

**Payment:** 6.25 Euros per hour

The internships during the second half of the year were with companies in Berlin.

**Setting:** Twenty-thirty hours per week on average

**Payment:** 150 Euros per month, the same wage people receiving welfare benefits are allowed to earn.
All internships were considered to be opportunities for learning and gaining new experiences.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Documentation of the participants</th>
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<td>Its aim was to teach the participants the basics of reporting and by doing so draw public attention to them. Among other things, participants in the second cycle made fictitious arrest warrants for everyone (inVolvies and inVolve-team) and learned photography. They developed questionnaires and used these to investigate various areas, such as the artistic-aesthetic area, assistantships, trips, the general evaluation, etc.</td>
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There were additional spaces for learning and gaining new experiences, where participants received tutoring, preparation for final school exams and mediation for those seeking a way to pay off their debts. Other activities were tailored to the particular needs of the participants, to promote self-improvement. Since our focus in this report is more on the artistic-aesthetic areas, we will not go into these learning spaces further.

2.2.4 Results of inVolve

None of the thirty-two participants who signed up for the programme dropped out. The duration of participation was between four and twenty months. The average time spent in the project amounted to 12.8 months.

As previously mentioned, extensive evaluation was performed by inVolve-team members. The results of the pilot project were divided into ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ criteria for measuring success. The hard criteria were more or less formal, measured by whether or not participants actually attained a school leaving certificate or found temporary or even regular employment. But inVolve did not solely intend to prepare participants for an occupation, rather for their entire life as well – measured by the soft criteria. Seen within this context, being ‘successful’ meant two different things: Being re-admitted to school and/or transferred to qualifying employment, but also personal success in terms of managing their own lives, stabilizing their personality, subjective satisfaction etc.

At the end of the second cycle in August 2006, sixty-nine percent of the thirty-two participants had, according to the valuation of the inVolve-team members, reached their formal goal. The situation of another thirteen percent was open (they had sure access to fluctuating jobs and were actively applying for employment). Nineteen percent reported no success (neither with qualification programmes nor with job prospects). The difference between participants from immigrant families and others is negligible in this respect.

2.2.5 Working principles and methods

Two fundamental working principles characterized the running of the organisation and work relations at inVolve. As Michael Kreutzer puts it:

*Due to previous socialization processes (most recently at school), inVolve employed a ‘method of interruption’ (author’s emphasis) … The ‘interruption’ stems from the character of the place of learning. Artistic work does not confine itself …to the well-trodden paths of routine and convention. Everything at the participant’s disposal - experiences, competences, memories - becomes part of the ‘material’ …which the participant may question, utilise, discard/reject, analyze and re-assemble. (Kreutzer, 2007: 9)*
Kreutzer elaborates the second working principle, using the admissions policy and forms of active participation as examples:

*InVolve employs the ‘method of inclusion’, (Author’s emphasis) ... Inclusion - especially the coming together of participants from different cultures, different social milieus and displaying varying prerequisites for any further education – is not just part of, but the foundation of educational work that revolves ... around the artistic work (ibid).*

A central building block of inVolve, seen as an ‘entire work of art’, were the theatre expeditions.¹⁵ For us they are at the core of inVolve. What occurred at rehearsals in unfamiliar places has already been reported, described using the metaphor of ‘cinematic overlapping’: players circulate in three fields at the same time: in the play they are working on, the unfamiliar place they have travelled to and their own biography. They travel back and forth between these different ‘landscapes’, gain experience from having to distinguish between the unfamiliar play and the unknown place versus the familiarity of their own life history. This characterised the concrete theatre rehearsals, the experience on the expedition and eventually the entire exploratory nature of inVolve. The interaction between familiarity and strangeness/unfamiliarity turned into something artistic. Art and life were intertwined and the participants could realize the various facets of this medley in the different artistic-aesthetic media. After all, experiences with art should have a foothold in everyday life.

### 2.2.6 Function of the instructors

The guidance can be characterized as being moderating and supportive.¹⁶ Accompanying participants to social services, providing helpful talks about where they were going in life, what they wanted to do job-wise. These tasks were just as much a part of the work and the understanding of their roles for the inVolve-team members as directing a play or organizing a trip abroad. The quite diverse aspects of this work – artistic as opposed to socio-pedagogical – were combined in just one person. Work as a director at inVolve included the research of material that was used later on. An integral part of gathering material was, therefore, the guidance given to the adolescents in terms of their lives and their education. This was made possible by having access to the world they lived in and to their biographies. As Michael Kreutzer concludes: “Both sides can easily be combined. I see no contradiction between accompanying participants to town hall and artistic work.” (Kreutzer, 2008 a)

Altogether, inVolve demanded a great deal of flexibility and improvisation skills from the project team. One of the problems was the narrow time allotments – especially for the artistic-aesthetic areas. This stems from the fact that at the time the proposal was made inVolve (at least in the first cycle) was largely conceived as a project that would run alongside a school schedule. Seen in this context, eleven hours a week is quite a lot of time, but for unemployed adolescents decidedly not enough. In addition the project had no preliminary phase in which an infrastructure could have first been established. This was planned for in the proposal. Immediately after the proposal was approved the practical work had to get under way.

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¹⁵ This is true in theory. In reality though, financial problems made it difficult to realise.

¹⁶ We are indebted to Michael Kreutzer and Ulrich Hardt, who took time out to talk to us and help us understand the function of the instructors.
2. 3 Transfer

As previously mentioned, approximately 130 pilot projects were funded by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF). The programme was titled: “Encourage competencies – job qualification for target groups with special needs” – in short BQF. Two of the participating projects in the BQF experiment put the medium art and theatre at the centre of their work with young people with special needs: inVolve implemented artistic resources, especially for educational and qualification objectives. As part of its concrete vocational preparation, it offered a wide spectrum of occupations through its external job internships.

The second BQF-project, !STAGE, was realized at the same time, under the direction of André Wülfing and Ulrike Brockerhoff at the Consol Theater in Gelsenkirchen.17 Their vocational preparation leaned heavily on occupations directly involved with theatre such as acting, stage design and set construction, costume tailoring etc. In comparison with inVolve, the concept of !STAGE was a more rigorous one, similar to that of an art school, oriented to the professional world of theatre. Participants received thirty hours of instruction per week.

Michael Kreutzer describes the common conceptual basis of this and similar future projects.

Both of our projects represent...a type of artistic educational work within the BQF programme which has been implemented and developed by a whole range of educational programme organisations, some operating within schools, others externally, also outside this programme. Some of the success has been quite remarkable. The work of these organisations bears witness to the fact that pedagogical concepts based more on art and artistic and cultural education can be successfully integrated with both the ‘hard’ and (measured according to these projects’ educational aspirations) too narrow aims for qualification and job mediation in the labour market. (Kreutzer/Wülfing, 2007a:12)

After the pilot projects were completed, the Consol Theater and the Schlesische 27 (together with Diskoteater Metropolis) were amongst the nine organisations which the BMBF requested to collectively transfer their experiences (this was within the scope of the supplementary transfer phase of the BQF programme). The transfer that had been worked out by the inVolve-team and the !STAGE-team was called inVolve-on-Stage18. It ran for the duration of one year (September 2006 - August 2007) and was supposed to involve various educational organisations as well as venues for artistic productions such as theatres. The proposal was intended to demonstrate how the means of art can contribute to activation, vocational orientation and preparation for later employment for young people in precarious situations.

The experiences gained through the pilot projects were to be discussed in meetings and conferences with other specialists. Furthermore, it was to be investigated whether they could be adapted and transposed to fit the particular situations of other providers of social and cultural facilities. For this purpose, the transfer planning project organized meetings with numerous institutions for cultural education in various cities in Germany. At the core of the transfer were three five-day workshops at very different institutions. They were dedicated to the topic “dream”. The selected venues were: the technological and vocational education centre in Leipzig, an organisation which trains young people more off the job; a learning workshop, Frankfurt/Oder, a project for school drop-outs19; and the juvenile prison (JVA) in

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17 Compare http://www.consoltheater.de
18 InVolve-on-stage was directed by Michael Kreutzer, Ulrich Hardt (Diskoteater Metropolis) and André Wülfing (Consol Theater, Gelsenkirchen). Franz Joseph Hödl (Diskoteater Metropolis) was artistic director of the transfer-workshops.
19 The transfer-workshop in Frankfurt (Oder) was conducted together with and received funding from „Der Kunst-Code“ – “The art-code. Art schools for young people in intercultural dialogue”, a federal research and
Wiesbaden. The directors of Diskoteater Metropolis (basically the inVolve-team) developed methods and a structure for the workshops about experimental theatre work. All workshops employed methodical essentials for educational work with the medium art, especially theatre. They were summarized in the Berlin section of the final project report (excerpts):

*The rehearsal room is a protected area... Acting, training, improvisation and work on the play flow gently together... All material, whether it comes from the participants or from literature, is brought together with the experiences of the (other) participants... The team working with the programme reflects a combined mixture of cultures and generations: Experienced and young artists as well as – most important! – young assistants the same age as the participants all work together (the oldest: 57, the youngest: 21)... Despite the fact that the matter is taken seriously - right from the beginning (on Monday) it is clear that things will culminate in a performance (on Friday) - work retains a playful and light character. The production reduces the risks of a performance with so little preparation time with dramaturgical support (especially: music and lighting) (Kreutzer, 2007b:18)*

The incorporation of the theatre work at the JVA Wiesbaden is the most important example of the long-term effect the impulses from the transfer project inVolve-on-Stage had on the various partners. The transfer-project made a positive impression on the young prisoners. It was such a success, that the institution’s management decided to integrate theatre work into the programme of the prison. The follow-up project, initiated three months after the workshop at the JVA Wiesbaden, will be discussed later on in paragraph four.

During the transfer phase, co-operation with the University of Applied Sciences Fulda (faculty of social and cultural sciences) began to take shape. It led to the formation of a concept for further education for persons in charge of the transition between school and employment in Fulda in the following year (2007/2008). An additional important result of the transfer phase was the publication of a handbook. It affords project directors insight into a combined faculty of art, education and qualification, called KUBIQ for short (compare Kreutzer/Wülfling, 2007a). Three different perspectives on artistic-aesthetic projects in the transition between school and employment are proposed and clearly documented in the handbook: In terms of art this would mean the aesthetic aspect; in regard to education the aspect of personality and competence development; as far as qualification is concerned, it would mean concrete possibilities for entering into job training and employment.

To sum up: the personal growth of the participants from the various partner institutions - which in part resulted from the BQF transfer - was highly praised. The impulses continued to be passed on to further projects. Those responsible for the transfer projects point out, however, that one year is much too short a time for long-term implementation of KUBIQ goals.

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development project, financed by the BMBF (2005-2008). The project was part of the federal association of art schools for young people and cultural-educational organisations (bjke e.V.).
3. Evaluation of inVolve

3.1 Establishing competence

The project directors of the inVolve-team conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the project. (See footnote 7) Among other things, it considered the increase of key competencies acquired by the participants in terms of their goals - completing school, job orientation and conducting their lives autonomously. Based on the discussion initiated by the Bundesvereinigung Kulturelle Jugendbildung (a federal organisation for cultural education for young people) and a critical examination done by Michael Kreutzer, the team distinguished between creative and artistic competence, social competence, methodical competence and self-competence:

- **creative or artistic competence:** the ability to let one’s associations flow freely, to arrive at new solutions beyond conventional paradigms, etc.; being constructive
- **social competence:** the ability to slip into the role structure of a situation (recognize expectations and meet them); the basic conditions for social role playing (assuming the role, distance to the role, dealing with unclear situations) etc.; dealing with basic moral questions (reciprocation)
- **methodical competence:** the entire scope of structure in space and time; being able to make abstractions, to focus on one thing, to open up, to concentrate; dealing with inner time: recollection and anticipation etc.
- **self-competence:** the whole range of reflective attitudes towards oneself; self-assessment; behavioural and reaction controls etc.

(Kreutzer, 2006: 14)

These competences were not only helpful for talks with participants about their certificates20, they also made it easier to review the developmental processes with the adolescents or to relate them to third parties, e.g. heads of internship or vocational training programmes, using terms familiar to all.

In the context of this handbook, our evaluation will focus specifically on the autonomous artistic-aesthetic-experience. It therefore needs additional criteria. Key competencies as mentioned above are useful, but they do not quite answer our specific questions. The artistic processes we are interested in are neither arbitrary nor can they evaluated in a normative way. Art creates its own somewhat unconventional set of rules that is not very compatible with the general social order. Often enough the practice of cultural education presents us with the conflicts both ‘systems of order’ have with one another.

Michael Kreutzer has a more abstract understanding of key competencies:

*Art is interested in the factual as well as in the frowned upon, catastrophic results on an individual and social level as well as the ‘desirable’ ones. It is able to praise evil as well as goodness. And it’s interested in the peripheral, neglected, forgotten areas of life at least as much as in the ‘central’ ones. (Kreutzer, 2008: 13)*

In this context, he refers to John Erpenbeck, who emphasizes the “development of the ability to give meaning and to reflect through artistic education” (Erpenbeck, quoted in Kreutzer 2008b: 15). Kreutzer refers to this as meta-competence. Such areas of competence are

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20 At the conclusion of the programme, participants and team worked out a “certificate” together. It contained reflections on goal agreements which had been established at the beginning of the programme (see paragraph two).
important for our evaluation. They are concerned with developing an attitude towards the world, training respect, learning to appreciate something or someone, finding and giving meaning, looking beyond one’s self and one’s surroundings. We were especially interested in the impact of the art process and wanted to find out, which canon of concepts pertaining to competence is more suitable for the artistic-aesthetic aspect of _inVolve_ (or some comparable project). We think artistic work deserves a broadening of the classical evaluation procedure (e.g. the reconstructive social research). To answer our questions and to sample research methods that might be better suited to art issues, we decided to run a research workshop at _Schlesische 27_ with _ex-inVolvies_. But before we document and evaluate this workshop, we would like to present a research technique we call **performative research**, which is able to examine artistic-aesthetic processes from different perspectives. The artistic expression highlights not only the work itself, but can also offer answers to pedagogical or sociological questions. Depending on the researcher’s point of view, the participants therefore may disclose information and meaning that cannot be articulated verbally. However, evaluative procedures such as **performative research** should, if at all possible, be conducted while a project is going on and should use performances, scenes, pictures, drawings, films, narrations etc., parallel to the process.

### 3.2 Performative Research

Aesthetics do not have all that much to do with beauty (as often thought), nor with art in the narrow sense of the word. The word comes from the Greek _aisthesis_ and describes perception of the senses. In comparison with other sectors of society (such as politics or religion), it seems that the arts are particularly able to stimulate sensual perception. Whether it is to everyone’s taste is another matter. However, there can be no doubt about the fact that aesthetics do have an impact on our lives (compare Jauß, 1991/Seel, 1991). It is said, that art can spark initiative or a dormant social consciousness, or give meaning to one’s life – but in the end this is more or less just an assertion. Dance, theatre, music (even performance or video work) all make the body perspire, induce creativity and stir passions. But football can achieve all this as well. We should, therefore, not just ask about the specific potential to change, educate, influence and activate people. We must also ask ourselves what is unique about the practice of art in comparison to sports.

*Exploratory youth theatre does not exclude questions about education, society or involvement; instead it takes them to a different place. It does not ask: What can theatre do, for example, to prevent violence, to prevent hostility to foreigners or racism? Neither does it ask: What must theatre be like in order to be as effective as possible? Instead it asks: How is youth theatre, which is all about searching and exploring, able to interfere with ‘life’…* (Kreutzer, 2002: 28)

Two and a half years after the end of the _inVolve_ project we wanted to find out what _ex-inVolvies_ think about the project today, and if the experience has had an enduring impact or repercussions for their life. According to the _inVolve_-team’s own evaluation, working with art and discussing the subject had clearly been of little importance for most of them. Evidently, many of them did not identify too much with artistic work. We wanted to find out why. Some possible explanations are: Participants chosen for the programme did not display enough explicit interest in aesthetic processes or the acquisition of artistic competence. They could, therefore, not make any great strides in this direction. Maybe the question about the arts was not formulated explicitly enough in their own documentation. We thought of yet another possibility: It might have been impossible to ‘measure’ the effect of artistic-aesthetic endeavours during or shortly after the end of the
programme. It could be that this is only possible after some time has passed. The fact that in
their own documentation, only a few participants wrote anything about the artistic realm does
not necessarily indicate a lack of interest, a slight or no effect at all since:

...how would anyone be able to report on something he is doing and living, but of which he is
not yet conscious? The assumption of such “embodied knowledge” (Thomas Cordas) would
lead one to doubt whether doing some thing necessarily must serve two purposes and whether
aesthetics can be utilized. Art is manifested especially through implied knowledge and
subconscious actions. According to the “art of actions” (Michel de Certeau), the body
demonstrates awareness of its actions without possessing knowledge of it. ...The agent is thus
(whether or not they are aware of it) both the performer and the producer of meaning. For
this reason it is necessary to apply different methods of observing, describing and analyzing,
not just in conjunction with aesthetics, but with society in general. (Seitz, 2008: 38f).

Quantitative research can be an important tool for diagnosis. And statistical data (as laid
down in the first paragraph, for instance) are an irreplaceable tool for making prognoses and
analyses. However, statistics can only reveal that which has initially been defined and
recognized as a problem.
Knowing how many young immigrants are taking part in a project is not enough, since we
still have no information if and for whom this could be a problem. The researcher may find
out how many young people are willing to go back to school again (after having taken part in
a qualification programme), but the reasons for this remain hidden. There is obviously a
difference between whether someone acts out of shame, consideration, intolerance, obedience,
or whether someone despises someone or is afraid. The researcher must not just ask questions
but needs to put his own assumptions aside. Otherwise he might miss particular information:
School drop-outs usually resist the system. If youngsters are willing to attend school again,
they might therefore perceive themselves as nothing more than failures. Researchers, who do
not allow themselves to include such a thought, would hardly be able to see this perspective –
considering the fact that the interviewed person might not be conscious of it. Nowadays even
our own culture is beginning to seem foreign to us. Therefore many problems are surfacing. It
is difficult to comprehend how and why the various youth cultures behave the way they do
and what they think or even know of the exact meaning of “at risk”.

Therefore ethnologic field research inspired qualitative research with its narrative interviews,
participating observations and “dense description”. (See Geertz, 1983/Flick, 2005) And
biographical research in particular (compare Bude, 1984) – as carried out by the inVolve-team
– puts things into context, tries to decipher levels of significance and perception.

The problem is, however, that all methods are language-based. Personal experiences are
almost exclusively contemplated on a cognitive, logical and factual level. But the
environment from which they emerge is most vague, ambiguous and pre-reflexive. It is the
fertile soil in which the aesthetic experience, even experience itself, prospers. Language meets
its limits here, especially when (as in the aesthetic process) the body is involved. It goes
without saying that we need language to communicate our experiences. But not everything
can be put into words – a phenomenon being considered more and more in qualitative social
research (compare Forum 2008).

Given inVolve’s artistic-aesthetic emphasis and considering the fact that young people’s
vocabulary and feeling for language are not particularly good, we searched for a type of
evaluation other than the established qualitative methods like observation, description and
interviews. With the technique of performative research we are trying out a new approach to
research. We feel this kind of approach is better suited to aesthetic processes and their
“presentative symbols” (Susane Langer) than the discursive logic of language:
In this case, while findings are expressed in non-numerical data, they present symbolic forms other than the words of discursive text. Instead, research reporting in this paradigm occurs as rich, presentational forms ... they deploy symbolic data in the material forms of practice; forms of still and moving images; forms of music and sound; forms of live action and digital code. (Haseman 2006)

The creative process is in itself a type of research. Knowledge that has been articulated in pictures/art/sound/music or movement can help make people aware of a situation they were not (yet) aware of, they have no idea of, no words to describe. Up until now, things were invisible, unknown, imperceptible. This is the core of genuine artistic experience. It can illuminate blind spots. Aesthetic practise becomes uno actu a field of research in and of itself and the performer himself becomes the researcher on the topic of ‘one’s own life’. This is what Diane Conrad also describes in her “participatory research”. It bridges the gap between researcher and research material, is carried out more on an eye-to-eye level with the participants and not merely applied to them. The processes and results of formation are illustrated in two ways: on the one hand as an aesthetic experience, on the other as research which generates learning and meaning.

As such, it offers an alternative performative way of knowing – a unique and powerful way of accessing knowledge, drawing out responses that are spontaneous, intuitive, tacit, experiential, embodied or affective, rather than simply cognitive. (Conrad, 2004:11)

Performative research is not so much a discursive (narrative, analytic, interpretive) approach to practice, but more a self-fulfilling practice which makes inquiries with its own instruments. Aesthetic processes and products can thus become the object of research, interest focusing on performance as well as the objectification and visibility in every day life, even ‘muttering’ or people’s behaviour and practices. The following paragraph will present the first steps in performative research, which seems to be a promising approach to evaluate artistic-aesthetic processes.

### 3.3 Presentation of the Research Workshop

As a research group we were not directly involved in involve – some of us attended the theatrical performances, the “fête de la soupe” and the conference. We were interested in the long-term effects an artistic-aesthetic experience of twelve to sixteen months would have on young people. We wanted to see what traces it had left on body and soul. We wanted to find out what their life was like now, two and a half years down the road. We wondered if the activities in the artistic-aesthetic area had had any influence on their lives. In our ‘search for clues’ we employed the instruments of performative research. We assumed and hoped that we would also be able to catch a glimpse in the unconscious ‘storage spaces’ of their behaviour. A two day workshop in the Schlesische 27 was organized together with several members of the involve-team. They had sent a letter out to twenty-five of the thirty-two former involvies in the hope that they would like to get together after two and a half years. This letter mentioned that two women from the University of Applied Sciences of Potsdam would also be attending the reunion. In addition, it promised that they would be making a film about themselves. Each participant would be able to take a copy home with them.21

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21 Participants were familiar with filming short sequences, with playing live in front of the camera from their days at involve. The eleven minute short film made in 2005 by Said Oumoussa (together with involvies) was called “involvies and other Volvies”. Most participants loved presenting themselves in this fashion. The film
Based on the theme “My, how time flies or – will we still recognize one another?”, invitations were sent out to former participants for a reunion to take place some weekend in October 2008 in the Schlesische 27. Not all former participants received an invitation, because their whereabouts were unknown. Seven declined; two received the letter too late. A total number of eleven persons took part in the workshop, i.e. about one third of all former participants. About half of the workshop participants had had experience with theatre with inVolve; the other half had taken part in studio and digital art courses. As outsiders, we were interested in investigating to what extent the adolescents, with an increase in meta-competence (see paragraph three), were now capable of assigning value to people and things, finding meaning, thinking about incidents that had taken place, about themselves.

We had a lot of questions: Did the pilot project have any long-term effects? Did they notice any improvement in their lives? Were they more capable to show, not just express in words, how they felt? Had the artistic-aesthetic experience ‘taken root’ anywhere and if so, how? Were they able to transfer any of these skills to every day life? Had they developed any further interest in art? Finally, we wanted to know if the performative research method would be more suitable to discover new and other things than the inVolve evaluation.

The workshop was arranged by theme: BACK THEN - BACK THEN AND NOW - INTERMISSION - THE PRESENT.
Six members of the inVolve-team were present the first evening. On the following day, the ex-inVolvies worked exclusively with us plus the cameraman, whom they all knew. He did the filming on both days. The following report on the workshop includes examples and quotes which serve to illustrate the particular steps viewed from an artistic-aesthetic and meta-competence perspective. We generally focused on the following observation goals during the workshop:

- Are the participants able to work with symbols?
- Are they able to find any subjective meaning in picture material?
- Are they able to deal with complex situations, with irritations or with instructions they are not accustomed to and transpose them in a constructive manner?
- How do they present themselves?

The agenda for both days
The meeting on the first evening lasted about five hours. Its objective was to get the former participants together at a big table, just like ‘old times’. Drawing on the old rituals of the academy (chomping away on jelly bears, sipping soda beverages, drinking coffee), the former inVolve-team members posed the question: “What have you been up to?” Participants were invited to share something about themselves. The two members of the Potsdam-team were introduced to the group and explained their interest in doing a special kind of research. Then, one by one, the cameraman directed them to the studio. They were encouraged to perform in front of the camera as they had several years before, for the film “inVolvies and other Volvies”. Participants were asked to present themselves without any further directions whatsoever. They could make use of any of the props in the studio. The following passages from our observation notes give some insight into the workshop.

created in October 2008 was called “inVolve-reloaded” – it resulted from the workshop and the documentation on it. It was produced by Said Oumoussa together with the University of Applied Sciences Potsdam.

23 The quotations are from interviews with several of the eleven participants. The comments are from observations documented by Christine Vogt.
After the break, we explain our research goals. Özgül24 is opposed. He feels like a guinea pig in an experiment. Suddenly the others begin a lively discussion. Before that, when communication was strongly directed towards the inVolve-team members, there had not been all that much discussion. Most of them are vehement in their support of our goals: to write a research report using the arts as a basis which would be part of a European project called UCAY. They think it would be great if information about a pilot project such as inVolve could reach other young people. Sarah thinks theatre has helped tremendously. “People became more self-confident.” The self-presentations in front of the camera are taking up much more time than we originally planned. When they return from the studio, the kids seem more alive. The atmosphere is like during an audition, a sort of competition, but without any noticeable rivalry. Out in the stairwell two people are singing away. Once in a while loud noises (percussion) can be heard from the studio.

The second day lasted about seven hours and began with a playful, invigorating warm-up. It was followed by the artistic-aesthetic part BACK THEN. Quickly and without much thought, each participant spontaneously selected one postcard from a large amount of postcards (with motives from the art-world) which they associated with a particular mood or feeling from the artistic-aesthetic areas they were acquainted with from inVolve. In the first discussion round, participants described what their associations were.

They go about their task quite easily and without having to ask questions. Most of them are quite concrete. One card is a picture of an installation with a long table. There are black figures on either side. It is described as follows:

“My picture simply shows an entire row of black men sitting at a table. It reminds me of the time we had those theatre workshops. They always sat together at the same table, eating or going over scripts together. I think it’s really funny that such a picture happens to turn up because the table downstairs in the reading room is so much like this one. You can pull out the extension leaves. Then we’d all sit around together, it reminds me a lot of the time we did theatre.” (Sara)

A young man described his associations with the postcard bearing red faces.

“Well, I chose this picture, lots of faces. Many nationalities. That’s what I think of when I remember inVolve. We had people from many different nationalities, different religions.” (James)

For the next part they divided up into groups of two or three and chose another postcard that reminded everyone of a shared atmosphere. They spontaneously thought up a game or activity which would best express this feeling. Then they rehearsed a brief scene. For the performance they could help themselves to ‘memorabilia’, things they remembered and had used in the past for the artistic-aesthetic areas: costumes, scripts, spotlights, a CD-player, electric cable, paper, paintbrushes, paint from the studio, musical instruments, a digital camera, a regular camera, parts of old stage sets etc. These were all set up in a separate room where they were free to choose what they needed. Participants were also able to choose the location for their presentation in the premises of Schlesische 27.

Paul and Kevin are improvising a row using the model of a stage-design and spotlights. Toward the end of the improvisation there is an exciting turning point. Up until then it has been a purely verbal dispute. Then the performers take it to a different level and start fighting one another with props. An otherwise tiring verbal ballet is transformed into a theatrical situation and creates a lot of suspense. Later on they recall certain challenges they had met while at inVolve:

24 All the names included are fictional.
...when I first came here they more or less just tossed something over to me and we were supposed to do something with it...The stage set, for example. That wasn’t any different. They just told us we’d be going through the script and any reference made to the play’s surroundings. And then we were supposed to build something. (Paul)

Both young men showed a certain degree of liberty with their improvisations. The others reverted to verbal role playing to imitate concrete situations from inVolve.

After the participants were finished with the re-calling exercise with the postcard, they were asked to watch the self-presentations in the old video (2005) and the video made the evening before. Afterwards, talks were held with individuals and in the group. The topic was BACK THEN AND NOW.

The young people are crowding around the two laptops and laughing a lot. There is a group discussion about whether or not individuals have gone through any changes and, if so, how is this apparent. It is remarkable how good they are at observing and reflecting about themselves: “I think that you can take the hurdles that are placed on our paths and build something nice with them. And there were indeed several stones between one laptop and the next.”(Mariam)

One can sense mutual respect. There is no making fun of anyone, not even those in absentia who appeared in the film made in 2005.

Afterwards, we asked the participants to take the time which had elapsed since inVolve INTERMISSION and try to visualize it in chronological order by marking a chalk line, a sort of life line, on the floor. They were to use symbols to indicate significant incidents. We requested that they narrate their experiences whilst walking along the chalk line but without their feet leaving it.

Things get quiet for the first time when they start to make the drawings. Some participants copy some ideas from others (such as hatching, putting a question mark at the end of the chalk line). We can see and feel the intensity and the expression while they are sketching. They display great empathy when listening to one another’s stories. It appears that they enjoy talking about themselves. Several times they mention how much they would love to get the old group back together again. Many cannot talk and balance on the line at the same time. Many have to stop and think. This double attention creates a certain tension and an interesting awareness of the physical body. The white lines sketched on the floor are after all differentiated graphic conversions of an abstract task. The various and very individually created life lines are like the signatures of very unique personalities.

Photo 6: “Life line” (Photo: Said Oumoussa)
The part called THE PRESENT was interested in the feelings, the atmosphere at the end of the day – with respect to the artistic-aesthetic activities during the workshop. Again the postcards were laid out. Each participant chose an appropriate one and told the others about the associations he had with it.

As opposed to the first time the participants are now able to give the cards a more symbolic value. Some start free associating. The short reports are quite intense. Participants can rely on one another and long to have the group back together again. These are the main points they touch on. It also becomes obvious how stable their relationships with one another still are:

I chose this particular still life because a still life never loses its validity. It stays the way it is, no matter how old it is. And I can still remember each and every one of you. Somehow I can remember doing something with each one of you. It also has a lot of pretty colours. Red for warmth. Seeing so many of you again was like old times. (Mariam)

There is frequent reference made to “family”:

I don’t want to mention it again for the third or maybe even the fourth time, but somehow this family thing that just developed over the course of time, even though we don’t know one another that well, I mean it’s just brilliant. (Detlef)
Of course I feel a link ... between all the things we did together back then and what I experienced now... We grew to be a family. It’s almost like a family reunion. (James)

Feelings of belonging but also of inferiority appear in the following quote from the performer who had improvised the ‘battle’ with his partner with the stage set:

This card shows various penguins arranged in different levels. I’m the penguin here in the front, way at the bottom. You guys and all the other ones who might have come are the other penguins. Just the fact that we all got together again. Every one of us is at different stations, levels in life and is facing the other penguins and telling them what they’ve been going through and what concerns they have.” (Kevin)

Photo 7: Wooden penguins (Photo: Said Oumoussa)
In the evening, the inVolve-team prepared a festive dinner to celebrate the end of the workshop. After the meal, something unforeseen occurred, which turned out to be significant. Hanne Seitz, professor and leader of the research group in Potsdam, came in for a visit after work. She had not participated in the workshop and was received in a very open manner by those who had. When she asked how things had been developing, the young participants were enthusiastic in their extensive response – especially the ones based on the self-presentations in the new film. Their stories reflected how profoundly moved they were.

3.4 Evaluation of the research workshop

First of all we would like to discuss the participation in the workshop. Out of the eleven workshop participants, thirty percent were active and were there for the entire weekend. An additional thirty percent was very motivated and committed, but could not attend all the time because of their part-time jobs. Forty percent were there on the sidelines, i.e. they showed up at a later point or only came by for a few hours. Significantly, the eleven workshop participants (four of them from immigrant families) are from the better-off social classes. Almost everyone already had a school leaving certificate at the start of the inVolve project and is currently in a job training programme or has a part-time job already. Of the twenty-one adolescents who either declined to come, did not respond until later or not at all, about sixty percent came from immigrant families. About forty percent of them had not completed their schooling at the start of inVolve. The correlation between participation in the workshop and a (relatively) well-situated social class is evident, but will not be further pursued in this study. After all, a weekend can only give limited insight. Our questions about the increase in meta-competence, in artistic-aesthetic competence and finally the suitability of our research methods can not be answered in depth. But to begin with, of the thirty-two ex-inVolvies, a majority stated an interest in the workshop. This was an amazing result given the fact that it is rather unusual for this group of people to take an invitation to a reunion so seriously that they would even bother to e.g. either decline the invitation or reply at a later date.

During the workshop most of the participants outright defended the inVolve project. Our presence had made Özgül feel like a ‘guinea pig’ in an experiment. The others argued that our research intentions might give other adolescents the same opportunity. Other interesting points made about the workshop were: strong feelings of community spirit, of family, of solidarity stemmed from inVolve. A collective feeling was created: To be an inVolvie meant being a part of and taking part in a community, something they greatly appreciated. In the group discussions before both films, they showed their ability to reflect upon things in a differentiated manner and a high degree of social competence. Some mentioned that they could now deal much better with obstacles in their lives. In general, most participants were very positive about themselves and they very much enjoyed telling their stories.

Based on the first artistic-aesthetic activities during the workshop (associations with postcard motifs, short presentations with recollection pieces from the artistic-aesthetic areas at inVolve), we concluded that the work done in these particular areas was not very important

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25 Given the fact that such strong group feelings came up after such a long time, we were quite surprised to hear that the ex-inVolvies had hardly had any contact with one another, nor with the team. We were also astonished to hear that there were no plans for the Schlesische 27 to continue with the project (or even get new funding for a follow-up), and that the inVolve-team had not bothered to meet with the participants unless there was an official work plan.
compared to the entire process. The participants did not really approach the tasks we had set them during the workshop in a very creative way. This was probably because not all of them were that familiar with theatre, therefore most of them were not able to fall back on such an experience. Yet the assignments we had given them, particularly in the beginning, lay more in the realm of the performing arts. We did, however, discover that the participants were very open to and positive about the activities during the workshop. Within a short time, we noticed an increase in their ability to work with tools such as symbolism and association. All of them were quite willing to get involved in an open-ended situation and try out something new. Some chose to perform the tasks by doing verbal role-playing. For those who had had no theatre experience at *inVolve*, this was the very first time they dared to appear before an ‘audience’. The participants opened up to strangers (the director of the workshop, the participant-observers and the guests of the evening) and treated them with respect. It was amazing how much empathy was displayed toward us as ‘newcomers’ at the end of the workshop. We attribute these observations to a growth in *meta-competence* (see paragraph three).

Concerning the methods we chose for our workshop, we would like to touch on the so-called life lines. Whilst participants were narrating, they were feeling for the line with their feet, almost dancing. The participants were asked not to leave the line. This caused irritation and an interruption in the constant loop of self-observation. We got the impression that some of the participants were quite skilled in talking about themselves. They were reflective, yet behaved somewhat out of routine. Possibly, this is the result of the intensive self-reflection at academy sessions or of the biographical interviews conducted with them. The two-fold activity during the INTERMISSION (the narration and people’s movements on the chalk lines) made access to deeper layers of experience possible. The combination of the visualized tracks on the floor, the audible structure of the narrative and the moving shape of the dance allowed for a most lively vitality as well as a remarkable aesthetic quality.

It was like tracing the memory of the body and finding a life-dance. This type of aesthetic practice demonstrates that our mental activities alone cannot fathom the deep sensibility of human experience. It shows that I am ‘here’, and reveals where I am and how I am doing. An observer might also perceive this: one can hear it, see it, feel it. On a different level (namely the aesthetic one) they could display what mattered to them and what they did not know yet. A qualitative difference was visible in their narrations at the end of the workshop. Hanne Seitz had not been there to follow the day’s events, but was quite impressed by the visuals on the floor, which seemed to express a strong sense of life.

### 3.5 Evaluation of *inVolve*

The project comprised various artistic-aesthetic approaches. They will be illustrated by two examples: The feature film “The Party” was based on the adolescents’ real life situation. It adopted forms of expressions from youth culture (hip hop, slang, role playing, etc.). It also used their ability to easily get into things and act in front of the camera. Participants behaved the way they did in everyday life, or they tried out different variations of themselves and were at times quite amused with these other identities. They contributed their own texts, hip hop and rap talents to the loosely sketched out scenes. Filming took place at familiar locations (the neighbourhood in Kreuzberg, in *Schlesische 27* etc.) According to their own comments, the work was a lot of fun. They emphasised frequently and clearly how much they had all laughed. With this approach, basic needs were fulfilled: self-presentation, light self-typification, being part of the action, and having fun – for some players this was coupled with a high degree of self-irony. We would like to call this *popular aesthetics*. 
The second approach can be illustrated with the example of the theatre production of “Leonce and Lena”. The script provided a contrast to the world the actors lived in, it took place in another time and in an unfamiliar place; it challenged the performers to come to grips with a strange role, with a different self. The directors worked on the plot so that the contents had something to do with the modern world the youngsters live in. They examined similarities and contrasts. The script provided an aesthetic form which gave participants a structure in which they could articulate their own experiences and fantasies. In the conflict area between the script and the participants’ daily lives, there emerged a new interpretation of the play tailored to the players. As already mentioned, most participants did not enjoy working on “Leonce and Lena”. This may be due to the fact that they were not able to relate the play and the roles to their own lives, which would have allowed them to act their parts more authentically. At least this was not evident in this production. The performances seemed stiff at times. We shall refer to this briefly outlined second approach as art-related aesthetics.

InVolve wanted to use forms with which adolescents are familiar and at the same time allow for a more radical artistic expectation. In our opinion, not enough confidence was placed in art or art’s ‘capacity’ and in the resulting experience of difference (e.g. unfamiliar role). The search for the great ideas of life, for meaning and intersubjectivity – thus the expression, reflection and understanding of a problem by interacting with art was in the evaluation of the inVolve-team not one of the more prominent aspirations of the project. Which is odd, since art was always emphasised in the conversations and interviews we had with the team and in numerous texts on the project. “I myself see the artistic process as a form of reflection actually, e.g. when two people engage in a theatrical improvisation” (Hardt, 2008). A first problem area in the work with the target group becomes apparent, which may have made it more difficult for inVolve to pursue more of an art-related aesthetics. It literally presents a dilemma:

- Adolescents living in precarious situations are usually not familiar with reflection or pointing out difference, at least they are not used to it. A problem with motivation can ensue if the hurdles are too high. This could endanger the continuation of a project.

By contrast popular aesthetic methods produce results much sooner. They satisfy the need to have fun, but perhaps might not give consideration to the possibilities of art and its opportunities to develop that which lies dormant within, e.g. in the experience with the unknown. How can one keep adolescents interested and involved and still cope with the demands of art?

Regarding the distinction made between popular and art-related aesthetics, a reference to Martin Seel might be helpful. He distinguishes between an “aesthetic practice in general” and an “aesthetic practice in the arts” (compare Seitz, 1996: 64 ff.). The former is characterised by a “certain state from within” which appears in real life (from fashion to architecture) and the taking care of everyday tasks. The latter, according to Seel, signifies the complex, compact and intensive interrelationship amongst “correspondence”, “contemplation” and “imagination”. He sees this triad uno acto active only in the arts (and not in the aesthetic practices of everyday life). The reflective and, therefore, distance-promoting potential of the imaginative attitude assumes a special significance. The experience of closeness and familiarity in correspondence and that of distance and removal (from oneself) in contemplation gives way to sensual reflections which, according to Seel, are intertwined with a “multiple aesthetic thoughtfulness”. Such an aesthetic practice of art is “an experiment on the condition of the world, which in turn reflects fundamental, involved, distanced, reflective positions towards the world in general” (Seel, quoted ibid. 66).
Despite the fact that Seel’s distinction between the aesthetic practice of art and the aesthetic practice in general seems quite useful for our purposes, it is, of course, a model. Everyday life obviously enters into art just as art influences everyday life. Nowadays one can hardly go without considering contexts, relationships, work strategies or commonplace gestures – especially considering the performative and scenario-based practice of art.

Set against this backdrop, *inVolve* is geared towards life in general and daily practice. And yet it adopted aesthetic views beyond any sort of narrow application of the aesthetic ideas, limited to such views and habits of everyday life. Theatre (and also other artistic areas, like the ‘studio’) opened up new perspectives and spaces. As one member of the *inVolve*-team put it:

*It’s all about fathoming a skill or material, getting involved in it, knowing there are somehow many, many more different ways to use it or observe it than usual. That implies looking at things from a completely different perspective. That’s what the arts and theatre are all about. (...) Is art just these three hours of rehearsals a week? Don’t our actions have an effect, e.g. on how one deals with subjects at the academy? Doesn’t it affect how we talk to the adolescents on a one-on-one basis and how we asses things or how we deal with, for example, the external social assessment?* (Hardt, 2008)

The adolescents were encouraged to alter their perspectives (e.g. in terms of the internalised, one-sided opinions society had of them). This happened during long sessions in the academy and the other artistic-activities. They were asked to voice their opinions about setting goals and school leaving certificates. They got over their stage fright, performed for an audience, practiced tolerance in theatrical expeditions during fifty hours of bus rides in Germany and abroad, and learned the meaning of intercultural living on a very practical basis. They celebrated, talked, had a great deal of fun together, helped one another master everyday life, chomped away at huge quantities of jelly bears at the large table… In other words art was directly related to life and vice versa.

In addition to the concept of *popular aesthetics* and *art-related aesthetics*, a third concept seems helpful: *life-oriented aesthetics* (in accordance with Michel Foucault’s concept of the “aesthetic of existence”). Such a view, which is oriented to everyday life, has nothing to do with classical aesthetic sensations in terms of an artistic experience, or with attributes such as beauty, style or taste. The willingness and the actual doing are what matters here. To put it in the words of the adolescents: “What mattered most was working together with the other *inVolvies*, gathering experience, the patience of the team members, gaining and implementing practical knowledge and the career orientation” (participant documentation). It was this combination of real-life orientation and corresponding occupation with artistic-aesthetic formulations of questions that gave us the impression that *inVolve* was quite a successful project.

The concept *correspondence* takes us a step further in the evaluation of *inVolve*. Seel refers to *correspondence* as one of three perceptions of aesthetic practice related to one another, which after all characterize “the aesthetic practice of the arts”. Then there is the concept of *communication*. As we understand it, correspondence primarily occurs without language. It can be found where there is agreement amongst the various actors regarding association, self-perception in the unfamiliar other or in art work, i.e. where differences are accepted. By comparison, communication has a tendency to negotiate, wanting to inform, understand and give meaning; it is discursive and is often based on identification with the other. In
communication people like to get affirmation themselves by projecting their own ideas and thoughts on to the other. This distinction can be of help when it comes to describing the different levels of interaction within an artistic-aesthetic process.

Seen against this backdrop, an additional problem area manifests itself, and consequently, several central questions for the work with the target group arise. As one member of the inVolve team puts it:

*In the office we were mainly concerned with their questions and problems. So we undertook many different things with them; ... lots of individual counselling and things like accompanying them to town hall appointments, going to school-related problem-solving counselling services, literacy programmes etc., ... and we tried to deal with certain problems by applying artistic methods.* (Hardt, 2008)

The participants in inVolve had a strong need to communicate and this occupied a large space within the project. For example, the academy which was held on a weekly basis was referred to as the „chat room“. Their longing for contact and understanding was met on the communication level. A second problem area arising from that can be formulated as follows

- How can the particular needs of adolescents be met without abandoning the artistic-aesthetic orientation?
- Does such an endeavour require two protagonists (an artist and someone with transferring skills) for the different demands (artistic-aesthetic as opposed to socio-pedagogical) placed upon it? Or can these two skills be combined in one and the same person?

The tension-filled competence triangle: “socio-pedagogical competence – artistic-aesthetic competence – participant with his personal history competence” demands a special approach. Two different models might be proposed in which strengths and weakness could be discussed. The debate in our research group ran along the following lines:

1. Artists are outsiders who leave the context once the project has ended. Artistic competence, not so much empathy with the clientele, is the primary focus. Participants are supported by pedagogues during and after the project. The triangle is composed of three protagonists (artist – social pedagogue – participant).
2. Artistic as well as socio-pedagogical abilities are combined in a single person. The competence triangle is spread out between two persons (artist with competences of a pedagogue/artistically talented social pedagogue – participant).

Positions on the first model:
Artists make it possible to discover the “intermediate space” (Donald W. Winnicott), the area between the inner and the outer world, in which dreams and fantasies as well as creativity and correspondence-capacity are rooted. This space is regarded as the domain of art. The artist approaches the participants with a new ‘language’. He places art, its symbols and metaphors between him and the participants and thus works on correspondence and tries to avoid too much talking and communicating. Feelings of frustration and emptiness can be experienced as a result of the unaccustomed interaction, e.g. after being instructed that there

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26 Different professions, such as social workers, social pedagogues and community workers, could deal with communicating and assisting with life problems – in the following we will refer to them as social pedagogues.
should be no talking about personal matters during rehearsal; should any problems arise they may not be discussed verbally. Instead, an aesthetic form will be found. If all goes well, this experience with the unfamiliar may, at some later point, generate questions which can lead to reflection: “I have come to the realisation that the hurdle is in me. I can’t blame others for everything” (participant’s remark). Everyone needs to have a high tolerance for frustration to endure this. But art is meant to take one to the limits. By its very nature it crosses borders. Art means taking risks. This is the position of the first model. The artist dares to take that risk (often lives in precarious circumstances, is used to having to improvise his life) and can, therefore, develop a sense of empathy for the target group ‘adolescents at risk’. They want to achieve the artistic product, allow for no detours (even though these are sometimes an integral part) and function in and of themselves.

Conflicts arising from the division of competences between the two protagonists in this setting are almost sure to occur. Social pedagogues feel taken advantage of and take a backseat. They often have years of experience working with youth without receiving sufficient recognition. The artist, by contrast, reaps (should the media be present) public praise (or criticism). He is adored and admired by the participants due to a short term stint, i.e. profits from being well liked by his protégés.

The first model leaves us with mostly ethical questions. How much can the artist expect of the participants? How are their psycho-social problems dealt with in the project? Who provides them with a reliable, lasting relationship?

The second model searches for the answer in a different setting: There are no clearly defined people to be held accountable from either of the two professions (social pedagogue/artist). Most artists (especially those who are engaged in socio-cultural situations or community work) usually display a high degree of social competence in this setting (at least, this is assumed to be desirable in this second model).

Artists are capable of reacting appropriately enough to complex, challenging (also crisis) situations. Moreover, content and topics of artistic-aesthetic productions have undergone change. They feed on the real life world of the participants, include biographical material so that for the artist not just corresponsive, but especially communicative abilities and social empathy are important, i.e. where biographical material is incorporated into a play. Apart from the fact that the ‘autonomous’ artist working in silence is a myth, there are also social pedagogues, community workers, teachers, men and women who are masters of their trades, etc. who lead others to discover themselves through their own personalities, their own methods or artistic capabilities. It is, therefore, possibly not even necessary to split up both competence areas in two people. This is the idea behind the second model.

Here aesthetic questions remain to be answered. Doesn’t an artistic-aesthetically relevant result need a clear aesthetic position? Is this compatible with a more norm-oriented (socio-) pedagogical concern? And is it conceivable that these different goals or the abilities to reach them be united in one person?

The conclusion for the discussion of both models: On the one hand it is important to have a qualified artistic manager of the artistic-aesthetic process, on the other hand there must be the socio-pedagogical competence to guide the participants and guarantee them the necessary assistance. Because according to the attachment theory of the British child psychiatrist John Bowlby, only when long-term emotional ties can be established, are young people potentially capable of exposing themselves to the sometimes risky situation of a theatre rehearsal without anxieties. As one of the artistic members of the inVolve team observed: “Both positions can easily be combined with one another. I don’t see any contradiction between accompanying participants to municipal authorities and artistic work.” (Kreutzer, 2008a). Should both areas of competence happen to be combined in one and the same person then it is important to
clearly keep the artistic and the socio-pedagogical views separate from one another. It would seem not just easier but more effective (albeit more expensive) to divide each area of competence between two people and give each its own respective profile. In any case, both areas of competence are indispensable. The search for artistic quality, for an art-related aesthetics, i.e. the creation of qualitatively good art work and its public presentation – e.g. in the areas of theatre and film – was, in our opinion, not so important in inVolve’s case in terms of the entire process and its orientation to real-life situations. Strictly speaking, in our opinion art did not have much space. Out of a total of eleven hours per week, the artistic-aesthetic realm was allotted a mere three hours, even though the unemployment agency made no stipulations about this at all. Maybe this has something to do with a much discussed controversial issue amongst the inVolve team members, art vs. education. It could also result from the concern that too much art would not have provided the participants with enough educational and social preparation. Michael Kreutzer describes the discord as follows:

*Nothing can guarantee that artistic education (as participation in artistic processes and as practice for required handicraft skills) will produce people who are interested, for example, in a society that functions well – just have a look at many artists’ biographies.* (Kreutzer, 2008b:14)

The adolescents, through their participation in inVolve, grew in self-assurance, found meaning in life and learned how to reflect. They practiced tolerance and, above all, they experienced an intense group feeling. This last point is mentioned most frequently in their self-documentation and in the interviews for our research workshop. One participant, representative of many others, expressed his longing to regain the bonds of the past once again and how he profited from his experience of being a member of the group. He complains that not all of the original thirty-two inVolvies attended the reunion after two and a half years; „Only a few people would take action on their own. If we had, let’s say, gone round and collected everyone, that probably would have been the most fabulous day any one of us would have had.” (Detlef)

The complex interrelationship of the individual building blocks and activity areas (see paragraph 2.2.3) made it possible for several of them to accomplish the goals they had indicated at the beginning of the programme. These included attaining a school leaving certificate and more maturity in managing their lives. This correlates, according to our theory, with the third part of life-oriented aesthetics.

*All these stereotypes here. Each of us got stereotyped (in one way or another) all the time. It was either, 'you can't straighten out your life' or 'you're broke', things like that. And yet somehow we all accomplished something. Each one of us made some progress. I don't know if this development has, let's say, reached its peak or not but at least it's a start.*

(Kai)

To sum up, we can note the following: In terms of our best practice project inVolve, we separated the various levels and areas of action. For systematic purposes we have termed some popular aesthetics, others art-related aesthetics and the third, which unites the first two, life-oriented aesthetics. All three approaches are justified in terms of their social and educational purpose. Yet they do require clarification. The methods of popular aesthetics lean more towards popular youth culture. They are useful in overcoming certain inhibitions and obstructions, not unusual in the initial stages of a project. The target group enjoys 'karaoke'-like methods; participants usually are not very used
to dealing with the unknown. Too many strange things can lead to unwanted reactions, such as arriving late, playing truant, not feeling like doing any thing. Popular aesthetic methods are, therefore, justified when it is a matter of motivation, widening of forms of expression, of experimentation with the self and with the unknown. One responds to the need for communication with communication.

Art-related aesthetics is, by contrast, less willing to make compromises. It is more radical. It relies on correspondence for things to happen and responds to the need for communication with the obstinacy of the aesthetic forms of art. When the imagination is put into action, it creates a space for experimentation, thereby rearranging habits, disrupting the familiar.

As a third path between popular and art-related aesthetics, life-oriented aesthetics arises from a broader understanding of art. This integrates building blocks - some of which are and some of which are not related to art (but to one’s own life) - and it declares the whole process an ‘entire work of art’ (see paragraph 2.2.3). In our opinion the inVolve-team clearly chose this third option. This allowed them to be accepted by the target group in their struggle to come to terms with their lives. They also developed strategies for dealing with previously mentioned problem areas and dilemmas. Their programme made a concerted effort to cater to the needs of the adolescents and made them familiar with several features of art. Considering all the other building blocks, it could be said that they took part in a complex experience. Nevertheless, we feel that the potential of the arts could have been better used than it actually was. The following digression presents a project which worked according to the guidelines of the second path – in our opinion even more so than inVolve.

4. A short digression: Theatre Work in conflict between art and education

The following digression will examine forms and intentions of theatre direction in relation to the questions of the autonomy of art. Supposing that the degree of artistic radicalism can be a decisive indicator for the long-term effect of aesthetic educational processes, then it follows that the moment of the risk would assume a central significance within artistic processes. Because an increased readiness on the part of the director to take risks might not just trigger the highest degree of radicalism during the rehearsals, it could also have an effect on the aesthetic process. The resulting experience of difference and the necessity of opening oneself up to the unfamiliar and to other possibilities will cause presumably unknown spheres of reflection and development to emerge. Yet there is the danger that adolescents, on being confronted with the unknown, become so confused about their usual ways of thinking and behaving and about their prior identity construction that the rug gets pulled out from under their feet. This can occur if no new, pragmatically useful alternatives are readily available. There is a further danger that they simply refuse to get involved in this process and will therefore not experience anything new. The question arises – as it did in the previous paragraph – whether artistic work with non-professionals always needs professional educational accompaniment, especially when dealing with adolescents coming from precarious and even perilous situations. Or can one depend on the strength of art? Do we need a balanced alternation between art and education, between art work and social work?

To answer this question, in early 2009 we conducted interviews with Ulrich Hardt, one of the two directors of inVolve, and with Arne Dechow, who worked as director in a theatre project with adolescents in the JVA Wiesbaden, a juvenile justice centre. One of the previously mentioned transfer-workshops was conducted in the prison by the transfer-project inVolve-on-
Stage (compare paragraph 2.3). Below, we will first describe Arne Dechow’s project, and afterwards – based on the experience and perception of two theatre-makers – we will discuss different approaches to art work – also considering possible conflicts between art and educational goals.

4.1 „Merlin’s Camp“ in the Wiesbaden juvenile justice centre

Inspired by the transfer projects which emerged from inVolve and !Stage, one of the transfer partners, the sponsor organisation for the JVA Wiesbaden, invited artists to work with the prisoners and announced a new project shortly after the transfer: “Prisoners perform – against right-wing extremism“. The driving idea was to combat the increasing tendencies of right-wing extremism, hostility to foreigners and chauvinism with artistic work. Thus, in September 2007, Arne Dechow - director, actor and cultural interventionist - began the project Merlin’s Camp along with his team members. Over a three month period in the following year, he and seven prisoners worked on and rehearsed their own adaptation of the Legend of King Arthur, based on Tankred Dorst’s play “Merlin or The Waste Land“. It was first performed in June 2008 in the JVA before an audience not solely comprised of people from the outside. The starting point and basis for the theatre work was the Celtic legend about the famous King who, with his knights of the Round Table, performed various heroic deeds. In Tankred Dorst’s adaptation, much attention is paid to the founding of the Round Table – as an attempt to establish a just and peaceful social order. Themes in the text - such as male rituals, hierarchy and unattainable visions – were basic issues the prisoners had to deal with. At the same time, the current situation of the participants, i.e. being in a re-socialization programme, was integrated in the rehearsals, and a new version was written, Merlin’s Camp. The plot concerns a sort of assessment-centre where ‘globalisation-competence’ can be ‘measured’, as the following excerpt from Dechow’s script shows:

We are pleased that you have all followed our orders to come and present yourselves. It is in your own interest. Please take a seat at the place assigned to you. In the next three days we shall be testing your basic capabilities, which are a prerequisite for successful participation in the global competition. We’ll be testing your ability to work well with others, to assert yourself, your creativity, your political convictions.

Intensive marketing from January until mid-March 2008 – within the prison as well as on the outside – marked the beginning of the project. By stirring up as much interest as possible on the outside, the prisoners were supposed to realize how important and meaningful such work was. The goal was to present a production which could stand the test of public criticism. Outside the JVA, partnerships with the media were sought and established. Inside the walls of the JVA, pamphlets advertising the project were distributed, employees spoke to prisoners to recruit participants for the project. It was especially important that the project be presented in such a way that it properly reflected the prisoners’ personal lives and stirred some interest in theatre - an unusual, unknown medium. Arne Dechow describes this in the interview:

... so in the beginning we started a postcard campaign which employed elements of a martial, Leni Riefenstahl aesthetic. This was to get them curious, to make it clear to them that this was not a kind of: here comes the laughing mask or the crying mask – this won’t be theatre with silk scarves or anything like that. We chose to come

27 Arne Dechow runs an agency in Wiesbaden, “Dechow, Freie Partner-Interventionen”. It develops communication strategies and ideas for processes of change and organizational development. They offer impulse-films, live performances, play productions and cultural interventions (compare www.df-partner.de).
across as very, very tough and were thus able to win some of the so-called alpha guys. (Dechow, 2009)

The rehearsals for Merlin’s Camp lasted three months. Within this time period, there were five weeks of intense rehearsals (a maximum of four hours on five days), for the rest it was four hours on a weekly basis. A director, a drama coach and an assistant-director were present. Being of a similar age as the prisoners the latter was instrumental in providing impulses and acted along with the prisoners for the improvisations. The project team also consisted of a stage-set builder and a documentary filmmaker.

From the very beginning, participants were asked to be professional. In this respect, working in the jail bore many similarities to working on the production of a play in a theatre. At the beginning, a dramaturgical concept was developed. Then there were improvisations and reading rehearsals to familiarize everyone with the text. Out of that, they developed their own version. During the whole process, no exercises at all were done to promote any educational purpose or group dynamics. Instead, the development and the content of the play alone were to be the driving force. So in the first rehearsal sessions participants were urged to work out a dramaturgical concept for the Arthur-legend which, in turn, became the basis for further rehearsals. „We rolled out ten metres of paper and said: OK, now we need a dramaturgical concept. Start drawing, painting, making associations. We want to have a rough concept by the time we go home this evening” (Dechow, 2009). Committing themselves to this task posed a huge challenge and coming to terms with it increased their self-confidence and ultimately the intensity of work. Having a drama coach work with them proved quite effective. As an expert in his field, he was able to make clear to them that the art of acting lies in being able to present oneself on the stage in many different ways, and thus being able to develop a wide spectrum of interpretation possibilities. It is not just about presenting well-known behaviour patterns on the stage.
That means that in the beginning they all found it incredibly difficult to play parts of high status and low status. The first few weeks were totally uneventful because everyone played, or tried to play, a high status role. This is where the concept of risk came in. We really had to work on them to make them understand that the hero in the theatrical sense or a good actor is the one who can (permanently) perform both the high status and the low status. But the hero also falls and suffers in his sorrows. However, he always has the option of recovering and can use this just as he needs. (Dechow, 2009)

The interpretation of unfamiliar and unusual passages from the text was not necessarily taught. Instead it was provoked in a given situation, so that an individual statement could emerge through this state of friction in the distance between the speaker and the text. The process can be described as having been a permanent challenge and confrontation for all involved. It finally culminated and came together as presented in the stage version.

So the method is to have no method at all. We said we’d just have to try it out. We could only approach it with lots and lots of curiosity. We always had to be prepared to question ourselves as well. And that’s what we did. Many times we abandoned our concept because we realized it was a dead end. We tried to keep learning and we demanded the others do so as well. (Dechow, 2009)

Rolls of paper were laid out in the gymnasium of the prison to create a large white surface area, similar to that in a photographer’s studio. There were empty cans and breadboxes lying around with suggested computer monitors and keyboards on top of them. In the background there were various projections. Merlin’s Camp – the title speaks for itself, the play follows two dramaturgical paths: one is the legendary saga of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. The other is the assessment centre or training camp where „basic abilities for the successful participation in global competition” would be tested, as was announced at the beginning of the play. Thus, a close link was made to the prison’s ambitions for re-socialization and the prisoners’ daily routine. In the course of the play the actors kept changing between these levels and made the link between fiction and their own biography. In this performative play, the artistic strength and the intensity of the performance grew out of the personal biography and the character played. On stage they fought, asked questions, told stories, sang, paused – using everything available. Nothing was held back, neither the longing for love nor the brutality, neither fear nor self-confidence. They played heroes, even warriors. But they also showed what happens when heroism fails, when one can not go on any more.

The following passage from the Dechow’s script illustrates this point:

*I can handle a knife like no other. In five minutes I can carve you an angel that looks like it’s about ready to fly away. I can take a live pigeon and remove its heart. I can do it so quickly that the pigeon doesn’t even notice and we can watch how it flaps its wings... Then they looked at me again for a second, just a glance, and then they began to write. Carve nicely, kill quickly. Whatever, they say, we don’t need that. No one needs that. Go to the camp and take a computer course. I’m here now and am doing what my parents always warned me about.*

4.2 Theatre direction in conflict between artistic work and educational/social work

The working methods and the significance of the theatre director shall be outlined in more detail in the context of this short project description. We will compare them with the concepts
of *life-oriented aesthetics* and *art-related aesthetics* which were mentioned in the evaluation of *inVolve* (see paragraph 3.4). We will outline the significance of risk-taking during the rehearsal process based on the different workings styles of the two directors in terms of description, contrast and culmination.

It should be stressed that both projects cannot really be compared to one another – in terms of content, structure and organisational and institutional background. But despite fundamental differences, both directors seem to bring something to light which we feel is quite important: Professional actors and project managers should question their own aesthetic-artistic position in order to clarify their position in the aesthetic-artistic field.

In terms of the artistic results of *inVolve* there is a concern that no matter how suitable its mediation might be (whether by educational or social means), it could deflate the ‘anti-establishment’ message. We shall not discuss here the issue which is always a subject of public debate, namely the incompatibility of art and education, of autonomy and implementation. We shall, however, state the difference briefly and somewhat bluntly. By definition, an educational issue is more ‘democratically’ oriented. It aims to embrace the weakest and gets everyone on board. And it seeks to profit from everything. Its attention is more on the process and less on the outcome according to the motto “the path is the process but the goal is still important”. Artistic issues are, in contrast, somewhat ‘undemocratic’ by nature. When it comes to making a decision, the performers often loose out in favour of the play. Right from the beginning it is selective and mostly exclusive as well. It is often unjust to those involved and will even risk failure because the pressure to succeed is usually big.

In our *inVolve*-evaluation, we questioned who could meet the adolescents’ need to communicate without abandoning the artistic-aesthetic direction or even misusing art. This question cannot be answered to our satisfaction with regards to the JVA project. Whether an art worker as well as a social worker (or pedagogue) is needed, or whether the competence each one embodies can be combined into one, is tied up with the structural conditions of a project. For the juveniles in a prison, compulsory instruction and counselling are part of their everyday schedule – socio-pedagogical counselling for the prisoners is already guaranteed by the institution. But the *inVolve*-team had to organize their own solutions for their needs and necessities. Regular participation was, to a certain extent, regulated by prison authorities, whereas the *inVolve* participants always had to be ‘collected’ again.

... the system here is so totally rigid that they have no chance at all, no freedom at all, to show up too late or wear the wrong clothes. It was no problem getting them to accept the conventional theatre rules – e.g. don’t wear any personal clothes on stage and don’t eat anything on stage, even if they’re stage props. But that was the least of our problems. It’s amazing the way they’re used to obeying rules. (Dechow, 2009)

Yet within those structural conditions, the participants from the JVA also took part in the project of their own free will. They could choose to remain locked up or drop out of the project and some were even asked to leave. But a basic question must be asked: To what extent, from the adolescents’ point of view, should the artists serve as a conversation partner as a pedagogue or in a completely different function.

*Later on, after a good relationship of trust had been established, I had to say, in a sort of amicable way: if you want to talk to someone who is not a prisoner you can always come to us. Not that many took advantage of that because for them we had a certain function. Those are those crazy artists, they get us away from our prison routine. But I really believe the guys knew where the psychologists were better.*

(Dechow, 2009)
During our evaluation of inVolve, the concept of risk in the artistic process grew in significance. Time and again the question arose whether a more radical understanding of art could encourage what in our opinion was desirable: ‘making things unfamiliar’ and thus allow for access to levels of action and reflection not otherwise attainable. Theatre that focuses more on performance might make possible another step: not just creating fiction, in the sense of “acting as if” (Probehandeln), but testing life-limits (Handlungsprobe) – more risky and therefore with more impact on the performers.

Both projects have diverse approaches to the perception of difference through artistic-aesthetic experience, a factor frequently brought up in our evaluation of inVolve. Merlin’s Camp got along without warm-ups or other preparatory measures such as practice in falling or trust-building exercises. Instead the performers were confronted with situations and experiments they immediately had to deal and perform with. By contrast, the directors at inVolve chose strategies of a more ‘controllable’ risk management. The rehearsals included certain rituals, such as physical and vocal warm-ups, trust-building exercises which enabled the performers to expose themselves to the risk – gradually and only up to a certain point. According to Ulrich Hardt the adolescents, by exposing themselves to an unfamiliar situation, are able to develop authentic forms of expression,

... but the way this is done, what intensity can be expected, that is a different professional realm than ours. We had to reach out to them in a different way and take more factors into account, to see how this connection could possibly be established. (Hardt, 2009)

Arne Dechow is against ‘building bridges’ – any mediation offering guidance in the experience of art. Instead his confrontational approach lures the performers into areas of uncertainty and allows for a change of perspective. He feels that overwhelming challenges can be a source of inspiration and creativity.

I had the impression that they felt that too many demands were being made on them. But sometimes in these situations they felt they were being taken seriously. We didn’t say anything like: OK, you people are difficult characters anyway, now we’ll just try and do a little theatre with you. Instead we relayed the message: we’re here to produce something together and when things get critical we’re here to support you, because we’ve got the experience. That’s what it’s all about. There’s no getting around it. So if you decide to do it then we’ve got to do it. (Dechow, 2009)

As a result, only one quarter of the original twenty-five prisoners ended up on the stage for the opening. The risk of breaking new ground might indeed have been too great. In addition prisoners were afraid of being ridiculed by other inmates and losing their status. A prison presents a special situation. It is a hierarchically organized system, where admitting uncertainty or instability can expose people to real danger. This underscores a fundamental risk, which paradoxically offers potential energy – a risk inherent to aesthetic educational processes, especially for adolescents who live in precarious conditions: If, in the course of the artistic process, they totally open themselves up to risky situations it can lead to their questioning of, or (in the worst case) even to a dissolution of a personality structure which was not stable enough to begin with.
Because of the difficult personal situation of most of the *inVolvies*, the *inVolve*-team employed strategies such as ‘confrontation’ or ‘alienation’ only to a certain degree, in order not to fundamentally jeopardize the already fragile identity structure of the participants.

*The other thing is that these guys encourage the adolescents to embark on too great a journey, namely to relinquish the little security they have and take great risks. There might not be enough time or opportunity to bring everything together again into an expanded identity. They exact too much from them because some think they absolutely have to create some fabulous artistic product now. That means that one ends up having to close something up very early, actually much too early, that one has painstakingly just opened.* (Hardt, 2009)

When working with non-professional performers, the following question arises: to what extent can or must one radically take the artistic process to the limit in order to achieve an authentic and genuine art work; or to what extent is one willing to compromise in order to protect the performers (in relation to the product)?

At this point it should be mentioned that this juxtaposition merely presents an outside view of the risks and potentials of artistic work. This brief digression can hardly take into account what goes on within the young performers. Because the individual perception of what an adolescent sees as risky and what consequences it has or of what he would rank as being radically different from his prior life style is, of course, dependent on biography and context, and is not necessarily obvious at a particular moment. A friendly gesture might lead to a radically different experience if encounters in everyday life are characterized by violence. Yet the question of radicalism should, in the end, be considered in close connection with the fundamental conflict of interest – that between the autonomy of art and pre-defined educational goals. If it is assumed that artistic processes develop through a (sensual) confrontation with the unknown and the unexpected, then hardly any predictions pertaining to educational growth can be made in advance. But the experience of art – undefined, risky and experimental as it is – offers a potential that we think should be implemented in work with so-called ‘youth at risk’. No one knows where this process will lead. It is, therefore, not possible to yield to pre-defined expectations or witness shortcomings. This holds true not just for the young people but also for the artists.

*I met people there who have such potential, who shouldn’t be working as warehouse packers. The doors to completely different realms should be open to them – culture or something entirely different. All these projects we’re doing, they can’t really have any effect or reach their potential unless a society is behind them which says: OK, we’ll also try to become more transparent, we’re permeable. I believe that the more permeable a society is – and this permeability comes back through the internet and the knowledge society – the greater the chances are that such projects have. If afterwards they all go on to become warehouse packers and mechatronics workers – at most – or even social welfare recipients, than maybe the whole thing amounts to no more than a humanitarian effort. They’ll have had a good experience, but I don’t believe it will have an effect on society.* (Dechow, 2009)

The balancing act between artistic interest and educational tasks remains exciting. On the one hand, the question of how much radicalism in the arts should be expected is justified and in many circumstances necessary – especially when considering unstable identity structures and difficult situations in life. On the other hand, one must assume that in real life these adolescents are confronted with risks all the time – the risk of not succeeding at school, not...
getting into a job training programme, not finding employment, not having enough money to enjoy a decent life, the risk of getting addicted to drugs and alcohol, etc. To them risk is anything but unfamiliar. So it is the theatre which could serve as a place to help them find a productive way of dealing with anxieties about the future, identity crises and loss of meaning by development of their own forms of expression. Finally, with this digression, we hope to encourage the recognition of the arts as a possible ally of educational and/or social work. Even if most of the participants from the JVA Wiesbaden dropped out of the theatre production and could not or did not want to get themselves involved with the artistic process, for those who took that risk it nevertheless clearly opened up new experiences. This is also reflected in the intense forms of expression in the theatre production which will not leave fellow prisoners in the audience untouched. And we can assume that some of them will get involved in further projects. We would argue that the impression made by the artistic-aesthetic experience can have an enduring relevance for the future lives of these young people – or at least a powerful resonance.

**Conclusion**

The previous paragraph presented artistic-aesthetic approaches in a condensed way. It was based on two projects especially geared to young people with dysfunctional social backgrounds. Considering the creative materials offered at the outset of the production, two directions emerge: In the one case, German literary works (the plays, “Leonce and Lena” and “Merlin or the waste land”) served as the dramaturgical guideline into which material from the performers was incorporated. In the other case (the film “The Party”), the initial material was a loosely sketched idea whose aesthetic shape evolved in the course of the integration of popular aesthetic formats and improvised acting with variations on one’s own identity. Whatever the initial material might have been, the determining factor in artistic-aesthetic work with adolescents, intended to develop their potential, seems to be their being able to include their own ‘raw material’ – either from what we referred to as popular aesthetics or life-oriented aesthetics. It is important that this more or less familiar material be challenged, that it is sparked by the unfamiliar and that people’s own personality be challenged, or at least be questioned by examining its matter-of-factness from a different angle. For the artistic-aesthetic work in the area of the performing and performative arts, it must be kept in mind that such a contrast is necessary, so that the work with raw material does not get ‘stuck’ with the character of self-experience. While it is essential to stick to familiar ground, it appears necessary to embrace unfamiliar, disorderly or even irritating material – such as Arne Dechow’s assessment centre for the determination of globalisation competence. The biographical basis which the inVolve-team pursued in pages of transcribed interviews would thus constitute raw material and a starting point for a kind of art which would burst into life using such narratives.

Based on our own practical experiences in which the aesthetic practice of theatre and performance play an important role, and given the previously mentioned statements, we prefer art-related aesthetics, including both elements of popular aesthetics (and of everyday life) as well as the challenge of art – experienced as a “thorn in your side” (Stachel des Fremden). The decision to use materials that touch both on the centre of life and confront the complexity of art, gives the participants a new appreciation.

Previous passages may have given the impression of polarisation, based on the condensed, model-like amplification of Merlin’s Camp and the inVolve-theatre projects. It is evident that this is not about some either-or perception between process and product, education and art,
and the social impact on the individual vs. general society. Each project moves along in the conflict area of both poles. And it is the obligation of those in charge of the project to assert a clear position in terms of the specific groups, i.e. to choose one or the other of the aesthetic approaches we have briefly outlined: or to seriously contemplate the two conceivable models for the ‘competence triangle’. From this, they can derive ideas which can be implemented in practice.

According to the involve-team, the project pursued a method of inclusion (see Paragraph 2.2.5). This does not merely denote the high priority given to the integration of participants from all the various social and cultural backgrounds. It also indicates a certain attitude toward artistic-aesthetic work. Each and every one should be involved. The film project (“The Party”) compensated for the phases when there was a lack of integrative energy, with the positive result that the adolescents were motivated once again and stuck it out. It was a democratic approach. The involve-team was more concerned with the process and the success of the entire project and less with the emerging product, e.g. the theatre performance in front of an audience composed of familiar and unfamiliar faces. The artistic-aesthetic work should strengthen each individual and promote a group feeling. It did not need any (huge) publicity for its social efficacy. Arne Dechow, on the contrary, caught up in the conflict of interest between educational goals and artistic autonomy, chose more of the latter approach for his work in the juvenile penal institution. He was not discouraged by the fact that most of the young people dropped out of the project; his work clearly focused on the production and not on the process. Operations were more exclusive and selective – a characteristic which received severe criticism in the 1970’s in Germany, in campaigns calling for “art and culture for everyone”. The enthusiastic reception of the performance by other prisoners, the audience and the press demonstrates that not only those who were standing on stage at the end received applause. The project earned the target group as a whole social recognition, since people from the outside were also able to attend the performance. The outcome of the artistic-aesthetic work was not just felt long afterwards by the performers; it also had a snowball effect on the production thereafter. It attracted more prisoners who remained in the programme.

The round-about route does not have as many detours as is usually assumed in cultural educational projects. Considering the production and working methods of Dechow, one might presume that art, once the threshold has been crossed, has a stimulating effect. And of course it depends on how passionate the artist himself is about his work. It is our view that the impact of art depends on the amount of risk taken and the autonomy maintained.

Risk-taking was inherent to both projects. It is something which adolescents enjoy being exposed to in their daily lives. The adolescents referred to here very frequently find themselves involuntarily exposed to risk. However, risk is relative. One adolescent might perceive physical contact as risky, another performing in front of peers or an unfamiliar audience. The experience of risk depends on the context and is tied to one’s own experiences. Yet it is our belief that it is precisely the confrontation with art which makes it possible for the target group to deal with their own risks either more consciously or in a different way. And who knows how to come to terms with such a lifestyle (no material security, insufficient recognition, existential anxieties, etc.), if not artists? And what, if not art (even a piece like “Leonce and Lena”) can show us what such a life is about? A decisive factor is the context and responsibility displayed, i.e. that someone takes care that the participants are ensured guidance during the project and for a period thereafter. Seen in this context, responsible project work entails a collaborative effort between those working in the arts and in the social field. This is even more important when artists (as the ‘third person’) are engaged for only a short period of time and depart from the scene once things are over. One thing both projects
had in common is that they provided ‘reliable’ structures (youth culture centre, juvenile penal institution). This made it possible for the adolescents to have access to people they could confide in and to an environment they were familiar with even after the programme ended – any experiences leading to insecurity could be taken care of.

Finally we would like to briefly touch on a further aspect that was discussed previously and which we consider central: With regard to earlier socialisation processes and habitual behaviours the inVolve-team pursued a method of interruption (see paragraph 2.2.5). The project did not so much aim to get adolescents back into school or into a job training programme (although in most cases they were successful in doing so), but to break up habits and change negative attributions. Part of the solution was choosing different locations – i.e. the so called theatre expeditions. Merlin’s Camp had a similar impact, implementing such interruptions. The rehearsals, in many respects similar to work on the stage, constituted a big contrast to the daily routine of prison life. Moreover the play was able to achieve public acceptance and understanding even to the point of diluting prejudices against ‘youth at risk’.

We suppose that all these interruptions comprise a healthy ‘derailment’ of life, a life with hardly any future or alternatives. This is a radically different model for young adults whose thinking at fourteen is as resigned as if they are retired, but without ever having worked or experienced their own productivity. Given the lack of orientation, the constant search for new options, the frequent feeling of being determined not by oneself but by external factors many young people (and others) perceive themselves as if they were “in the middle of someone else’s big mess” (Tim Etchels). It is necessary to stop and look around.

Seen in this context it is noteworthy that court dances like the pavane - which emerged in the early modern era - were such that the strictly controlled succession of steps was suddenly interrupted by a pause. According to Rudolf zur Lippe this is an example of how the inner-space (and thus subjectivity) can be experienced – even produced. It does not merely combine the inner and outer world, it also anticipates the next step (as something still coming) by imagining it. In a certain sense, it permits a ‘test run’ (compare Seitz, 2004: 53 ff.). We were able to observe something similar in working with the “life-lines” in our little research-workshop. Participants had to tell their story and at the same time walk along the chalk line. Some of them found this difficult. It disturbed their ‘prefabricated’ narratives – the already-known. For a few moments (clearly visible to the outsider), the movement was in touch with and opened an inner-space – a reflective sphere in search of imagination and articulation. This type of experience enables distance, separation from oneself as well as from the outer world. It allows understanding and insight: one can shape one’s own path in life. In this sense, the practice of art is the recognition that one can determine how one will lead one’s own life – for many young people not self-evident at all.

Considering contemporary cultural life, with its superficiality in the popular media, programmes such as Super Nanny and Super Star, and events, where young people listen to droning rhythms and consume drugs for days on end – we are most certainly approaching a new era, maybe even a change in paradigm, such as occurred in the above-mentioned 15th century. That paradigm shift helped to produce an inner-space, which nowadays is often sadly absent – no depth, only surface. One can speculate whether such a negative prognosis may indeed come true. Until then, we suggest the practice of art and art-related aesthetics – successful best-practice projects such as inVolve in the Schlesische 27.
Bibliography


**Interviews and conversations**


Interview with the workshop-participants conducted by Christine Vogt on 19 October 2008 at Schlesische 27.

**DVD**


**Website**

Further information about *inVolve* is available at: [www.expedition-metropolis.de/archiv/inVolve](http://www.expedition-metropolis.de/archiv/inVolve)
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