



Participatory approaches in education studies *- the way to child-centered research?*

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Prioritizing Children:
Child-Centered Approach to Research, Policymaking and Wellbeing
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Participatory research

„Participatory research is a generic term for research approaches that explore and influence social reality in partnership. The aim is to understand and change social reality. [...]

A fundamental concern of participatory research is to enable greater social participation through involvement in research. It is therefore clearly a value-based endeavour: social justice, environmental justice, human rights, the promotion of democracy and other values are driving forces.“

(von Unger 2020, p. 1; translated by Baßler & Rosen)

Participatory research with children (1/4)

Guiding principles

- Perceiving and recognising children and their perspectives (e.g. their multiliteracies – see upcoming slide)
- Research-based fundamentals
- Consideration of research field conditions

(Velten et al. 2024, p. 94-96; Nentwig-Gesemann et al. 2023, p. 12-13)

Participatory research with children (2/4)

Researcher attitudes

- Attitude of *methodological immaturity* (Gallacher & Gallagher 2008)
„If researchers were fully mature, they would know all the answers; and if they knew all the answers, there would be no need for research. It seems to us that, if research is to achieve anything, it should proceed from a position of ignorance. For us, research is fundamentally a process of muddling through, sometimes feeling lost and out of place, asking stupid questions, being corrected and having our preconceptions destroyed. In this way, we cannot deny our incompetence and vulnerabilities: our immaturity. And we do not want to.“ (p. 511)
- Attitude of *cultural humility* (Afeworki Abay & von Unger 2024, 361)

Consortium Researcher ArtEx meeting in Barcelona, 22th-23th of January 2025



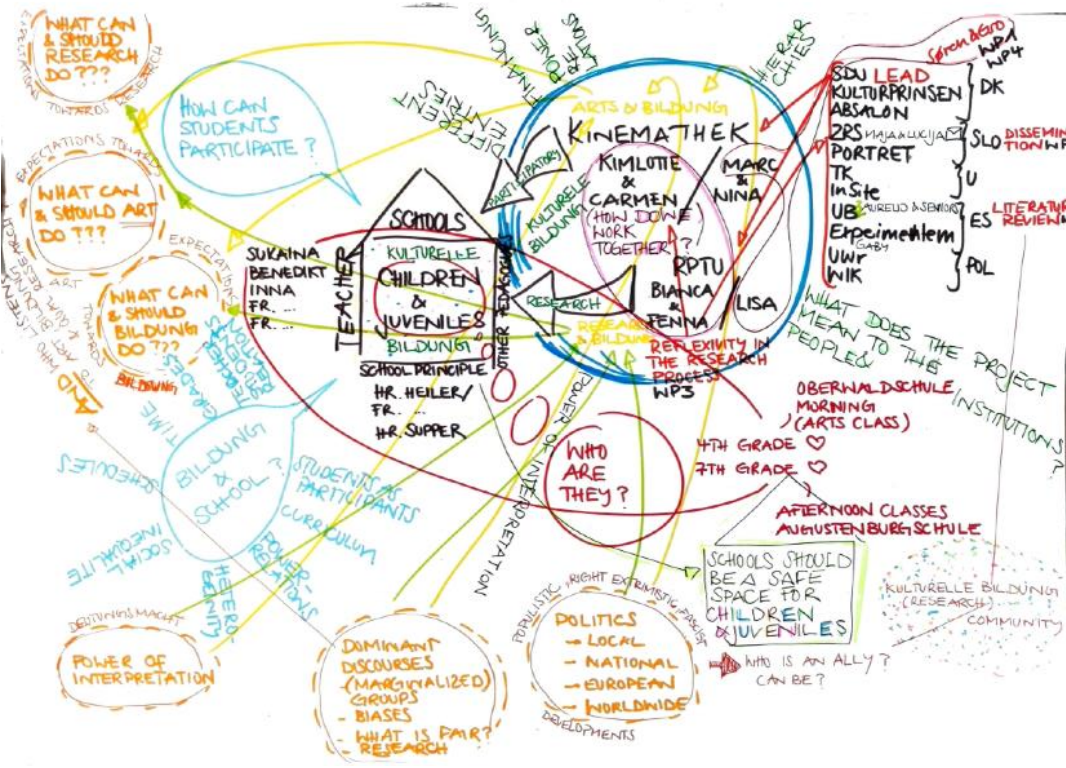
Bianca Baßler

Consortium Researcher ArtEx meeting in Landau, 18th-19th of September 2024



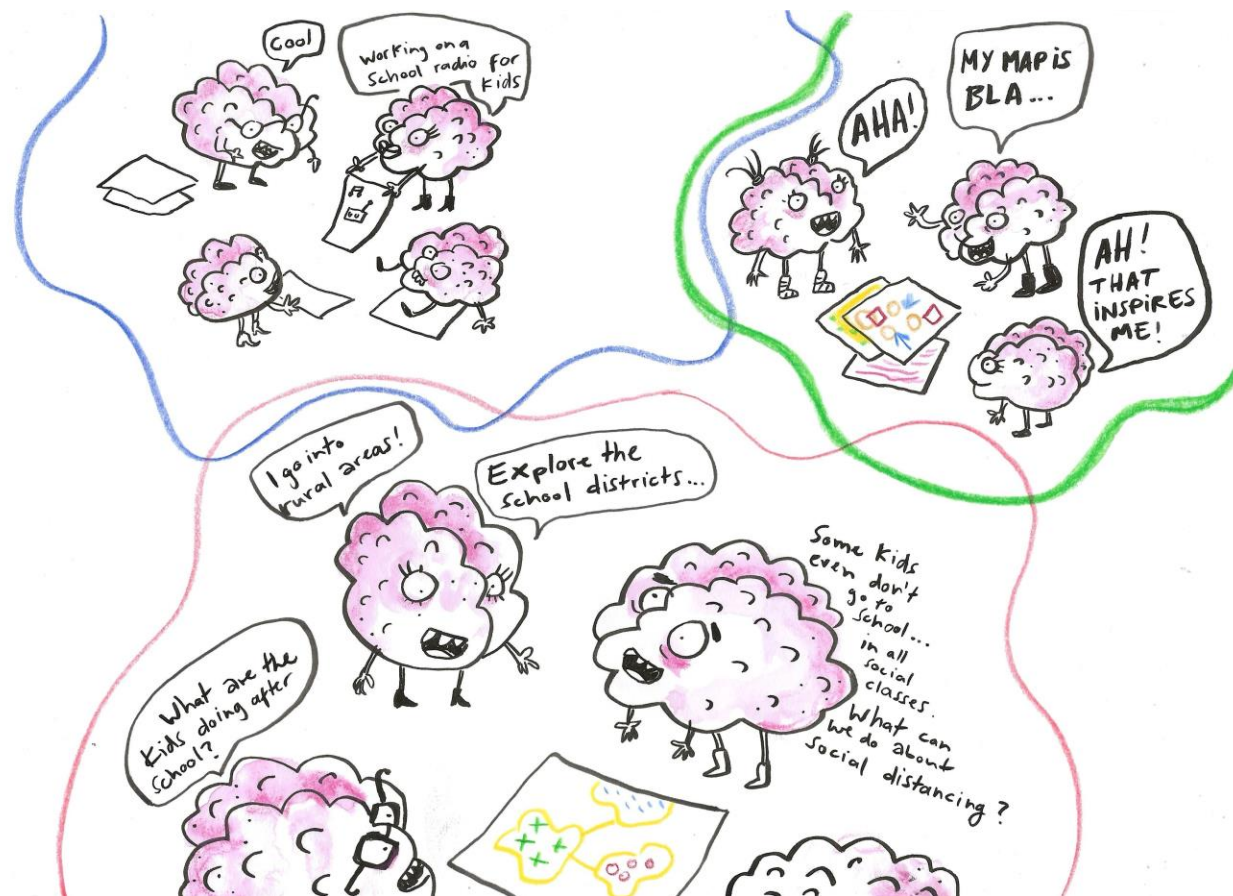
Chaos Comic Club

Consortium Researcher ArtEx meeting in Landau, 18th-19th of September 2024: Creating situational maps according to Clarke et al. (2016)



„The first maps, situational maps, lay out all the major human, nonhuman, discursive, historical, symbolic, cultural, political, and other elements in the research situation of concern. Ideally, this map is initially made during the early design phase, laying out everything about which at least some data should be gathered and gaining a tentative sense of possibly important relations among them. This is helpful in guiding data collection and can also help researchers develop stronger proposals for funding their research. Downstream in the research, situational maps are used to provoke analysis of relations among the different elements, called relational mapping. Working against the usual simplifications in particularly postmodern and potentially feminist and critical ways, these maps capture and provoke discussion of the many and heterogeneous elements, their relations to one another, and the messy complexities of the situation (Clarke 2005:83-108). Relationalities and complexities have come to the forefront of concerns across the social sciences and humanities in this century (e.g., Lather 2007; Law 1999, 2004, 2007; Law & Mol 2002; Taylor 2005), and SA explicitly addresses such issues (e.g., Clarke & Keller 2014).“ (Clarke et al., 2016,p. 13)

... again graphically captured by Chaos Comic Club



Participatory research with children (3/4)

Taking account of children's multiliteracies

The concept of multiliteracies (e.g. Cope & Kalantzis 2000), coined by the New London Group in 1996, acknowledges "the increasing importance of multiple modes of meaning - linguistic, visual, auditory, and so on" (Fairclough 2000, p. 171) and covers many types of literacy variation, including:

- school literacy versus home or local literacy
- formal language versus informal, colloquial, vernacular, and conversational language
- written communication versus graphic, projected, spoken, or enacted communication
- literacy (the school subject) versus mathematics, science, history, geography, etc.
- official national languages versus regional, aboriginal, immigrant, and foreign languages (Rowse, Kosnik & Beck 2008, p. 112).

Participatory research with children (4/4)

Critique

- What is participation? (Velten et al. 2024, 94; Gallacher & Gallagher 2008, 507)
- Use of the concepts like
 - „Participation“,
 - „Empowerment“ and
 - „Agency“ (Gallacher & Gallagher 2008, 504)
- Children do not know/ represent all other children (Gallacher & Gallagher 2008, 503)
- Value-based endeavor (Gallacher & Gallagher 2008, 504)

Research with children: participatory

Reflective questions with regard to the minimum standard of participatory research with children (Nentwig-Gesemann 2023, p. 17)

- What are the interests and aims of the research? What are the interests and aims of the research for the children? How can we be transparent about this?
- How do we create a resonant research alliance in which we do research together with the children on a topic and build our knowledge?
- How do we avoid a sham of participation and the disappointing experience of children that their perspectives are sought but in the end they have no influence?
- How do we document the results in a way that they can contribute to a public discourse (e.g. in a school or after-school centre) and that different stakeholders can discuss them?
- **constant reflection throughout the project (Velten et al. 2024, p. 93)**

THANK YOU!

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