

## Radical Reflexivity as Key Dimension of a Critical Scientific Understanding of Social Work<sup>1</sup>

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### 1 Initial positioning

What sort of science can be practised when scientific thought and research in the context of social work<sup>2</sup> is unwilling to align with the prevailing (hegemonic) patterns of thinking? How can science open up a space that offers potentiality for the criticism of power (*Herrschaft*); a space for social imagination?

It is from these questions that we derive the following considerations on reflexivity as a central dimension of a critical scientific understanding of social work. As ‘critical science’ we define the systematic work of generating insights and analytic tools that can be used by members of society for their own and also for mutual insights. The aim of this process of enlightenment is thus the ability to make judgements and achieve positioning. The latter always means – formulated somewhat crudely – an ‘ability to oppose’ on the part of members of society, an ability to take a “counter-position”. Only with this specification does a general definition of science become one of critical science.

“Society has always been contemplated from the aspect of *order* and also from the aspect of *liberation*” (Steinert 1998, p. 22; italics in original/own translation), thus the critical social theorist Heinz Steinert, who died in 2011, differentiated two patterns of scientific activity. Accordingly, critical science makes available reflexive knowledge and tools to enable and support processes of liberation. It thus itself acts primarily in a reflexive mode, as it is not concerned with the provision of directly applicable knowledge, in contrast to an affirmative science that stabilizes the cultural hegemony. In his considerations “Zur Bestimmung des Gegenstandsbereichs der Sozialwissenschaften” (On the determination of the subject area of the social sciences), with regard to a critical sociology, Steinert (op. cit., p. 24) summarizes this as follows: “It is not that science is applied in social praxis, but rather that the praxis is analyzed and reflected on by science. This reflection defines the core of sociology as a science. That the results of this reflexivity may then (and should) have an impact on practical activity is uncontested, but not primary” (own translation).

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<sup>1</sup> In: Roland Anhorn, Frank Bettinger, Cornelis Horlacher & Kerstin Rathgeb (eds.) (2011): Kritik der Sozialen Arbeit – kritische Soziale Arbeit. Wiesbaden: VS.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Social work’ as a concept in German (Soziale Arbeit) does integrate different traditions of thinking, often parted as a more social pedagogical (Sozialpädagogik) and a more social work (Sozialarbeit) type. Therefore we do use the term ‘social work’ in this wider sense in our considerations than it is mostly used in the English debate.

To position this general definition of reflexivity semantically in the context of critical science, we refer to a ‘radical reflexivity’. This additional differentiation makes a link to the concept, widespread in the Anglo-American context, of “radical social work” (see Reisch/Andrews 2002). Radical here means a social work that regards itself as committed to a transformation of existing states ‘with the intention of liberation’.

Despite this differentiation of a power-critical project from an affirmative one, we take the view that such an alternative positioning cannot be conceived as a definitive counter-position (see Kessl/Maurer 2009).

An approach of radical reflexivity can be understood as a strategy to enable justified changes to existing social structures – and thus connects with a long tradition of critical theory. However, such a conceptual definition is inadequate as long as critical projects – in a scientific context and also in the format of political movements (Maurer 2005; 2006) – are not seen in strict historical terms, and thus always ‘contextually’. Further, critical projects are also interwoven with the prevailing power structures, and enmeshed in them.<sup>3</sup> Thus, they cannot be clearly located in a definite alternative of a “counter-position”.

Against the background of these preliminary assumptions, we make the case for a critical research perspective in this paper, in the sense of an approach of radical reflexivity. In our view, this should be applied particularly for scientific work related to social work, although research, and theoretical and systemic considerations, are more clearly based on contexts of concrete activity than, for example, in sociology in general, which is the context for Steinert’s arguments. Radical reflexivity in social work should be defined both as a *critical science* perspective, to which our considerations are mainly devoted, but also as a (professional) political perspective in the sense of providing a dynamic for, and supporting the *critical social work profession*. These perspectives must be differentiated from each other, but also remain dependent on each other. While a critical science can ‘only’ have a perspective *on* social work, it has to be explicitly involved to a social work profession *in* a critical perspective – above all, by providing insights and analytical tools for critical initiatives and practices. Such a ‘distancing in solidarity’ is a basic pattern for the radical reflexivity approach. Nevertheless this necessary distancing should not lead to a positioning in a supposed location ‘beyond everyday practices. Even more: That would be highly problematic, as shown by the everyday practice of scientific action itself, which in its institutionalized form – in universities, institutes, through research bodies and practices, or publishers – is also structured in a dominant fashion, and thus extensively enmeshes those involved in a critical scientific project in the prevailing power structures. Even those players positioned at critical-analytical distance thus find themselves enmeshed in the requirements and challenges of everyday activity, which, for instance, may support or constrain their possibilities for critical research or teaching: their concrete action within these structures simultaneously legitimates the institutionalized form of science.

For critical science within social work, then, it is clear that radical reflexivity must occur at a distance to the everyday structural logic of research (discipline) and professional actions (profession); at the same time, taking a position of a radical reflexivity requires of actors their recognizable positioning within the everyday practice in which they are enmeshed. Radical reflexivity can thus only ever be successful if it includes a self-critical perspective. A

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<sup>3</sup> This choice of words relates to analyses developed particularly in the context of feminist (self-)criticism (see Mamozai 1990; Thürmer-Rohr 2004; Treusch-Dieter 1990 and others)

corresponding approach to research necessitates a political dimension (see Smith 2005), for the interest of its insights lies in the clarification of inherent interest structures.

To make such a radical-reflexivity approach concrete, we define it as a ‘border work’ – an activity due to *the borders of*, or *set by* the given circumstances (overall social conditions, the life situations of people, of the addressees of social work, institutionally defined working conditions for socio-pedagogical professionals), and *as their “revision”* (in the perspective of expandable and expanded possibilities for action).

Accordingly, we define critical science as a location for corresponding research and theory development as “analytical border work”. Our subsequent considerations are thus focused on an analytical horizon oriented on the question of *how* a scientist *reflects*; how she includes border work processes in her vision, involves herself actively in them and (at all) enables them.

## 2 Practices of Border Work

Critical (intellectual) movements or ‘movements of criticism’ and the changes to social conditions they envisage point to more or less indeterminate border crossings, that expand the envelope of possibility, by orienting themselves on ‘human desires’ (Deleuze)<sup>4</sup>. Possible responses to these desires can be found and tested, through political experiments, but also in the practices of everyday life. Such attempts of border crossing, as ‘practices of border work’, are also found in (critical) practices of research, and require further exploration.

Taking a radical-reflexivity approach here means focusing on the borders and boundaries of the existing society and the delimitations on which social work with its – assigned or self-selected – tasks and interventions is based, but also looking critically at the limitations of social work itself and the (renewed) delimitations it makes. Further, ‘social work as border work’ would become part of a critical project if it so worked at the borders and boundaries addressed, as borders of life opportunities and chances for participation and belonging, in relation to access to material and immaterial resources (such as care, recognition, respect, representation), that greater ‘equality’, ‘solidarity’ and ‘justice’ could be achieved here.<sup>5</sup> The critical element is revealed here in its connection with normative, but also utopian aspects, in that it is involved in a concrete search for ‘other possibilities’, or at least wishes to render these ‘other possibilities’ conceivable. This ‘other’ need not necessarily be already identified or ‘known’, but may also – quasi-experimentally – be accessed through an ongoing dialogue with one’s own concepts and wishes. This would generate the ‘other possibilities’ (first) in practices of articulation and re-articulation of criticism and (new) values, in practices of defining and re-defining one’s own position in life.

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<sup>4</sup> Together with Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze set “Wishes and desires at the centre of a way of thinking that devotes itself to an ‘active Utopia’” (Chlada 2004, p. 31): “Everything is occupied by wish, everything overgrown with lines of escape” (op. cit.). “The task of Utopia is [according to Deleuze/Guattari] to make the connection between philosophy and its era. In this way, philosophy becomes political and can fully develop a critique of its time: Utopia cannot be separated from perpetual motion. Etymologically, it describes absolute deterritorialization, but always at that critical point which links it with the given relative milieu, but above all with the repressed forces therein.” [Deleuze/Guattari 1996, p. 114ff.]“ (op. cit.).

<sup>5</sup> See in this connection e.g. the articles by Nancy Fraser on the vanishing point of “equal participation” (Fraser 2000; 2003) and the acknowledgement of various areas of societal work as coequal (see also Brückner 2002).

What exactly would the relevant processes look like; how would they be revealed in everyday situations, communications and relationships; how, in the actors' approach to thinking, perception and insight? And what attentions, what practices in the context of research would enable it to reconstruct and support them?

In the context of feminist inspired research (see Tübinger Institut für frauenpolitische Sozialforschung 2000) interesting methodological approaches were developed through which the 'objects' of research and their practices could become less the 'object' and more the 'counterpart' of the research work concerned. Key aspects here appear to be the most open, interested, and at the same time appreciative attitude possible, and also the creation of a 'sheltered space' in which experiences, perceptions and one's own open questions can first be articulated. Researchers also enter this space themselves – in a certain sense they also expose themselves to this space, and occupy varying positions in it (as questioner and questioned, as expert and learner, as a co-thinking and a co-subject).<sup>6</sup>

(Attempted) change is seen here as a concrete, everyday process, and less as success or failure with regard to some 'major objective' – however formulated. The interest for critical research lies in taking concrete lifestyle practices, the development of the self and relationships, seriously; the struggle for the capacity to act under difficult conditions, and the – successful or unsuccessful – attempts to have an impact on societal relationships and future life opportunities.

### **3 Scientific Knowledge as a Structuring Regime in the Modern Era**

Scientific contributions to social work are contributions of a 'modern' science, just as the profession of social work is a 'modern' profession. The concepts of modern sciences are based on the paradigm of 'modernity' itself: the belief that society can be shaped (see Evers/Nowotny 1987). On the basis of systematic insights, according to this concept of modernity, social, cultural, economic and political inter-dependencies can be influenced in a targeted fashion (see Loo/van Reijen 1992); with the help of scientific insights, social developments can thus be regulated. A central role is played by the professions (see Oevermann 1996), who can then be described as "scientifically trained practitioners" (see Lüders 1989).

'Modernity' thus means no less than the belief in the possibility of rationalizing life conduct. Modern people hope – as Zygmunt Baumann (1990) in his thoughts on the Thinking Sociologically points out – that this will enable to break down both, everyday and major social problems, into small, soluble problems. And the modern bodies, created or regulated by the state, which include social work and which together may be seen as the expression of a concentration and materialization of the dominant power structures, apply systematically constructed mechanisms that should serve to steer change in the direction of rational design (see *ibid.*). Science is to provide the necessary structured understanding.

Thus, the concept of modernity expects scientific insights to have the possibility of influencing the social – cultural, economic and political – order. According to this idealized notion, this structured understanding is applied in both private and public authorities of the "social imprinting apparatus", as Norbert Elias puts it in his *Prozeß der Zivilisation* (Theory

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<sup>6</sup> To this extent, the question of the 'danger' of research and knowledge requires careful consideration. Research can bring to light vulnerabilities that require careful handling.

of Civilization), or in the “individual’s serially structured qualification passage” (Foucault 1975/1994, p. 205; own translation).

This clearly reveals the link between (scientific) knowledge and (political) power, which in the German speaking world was explicitly problematized in scientific theoretical thinking at the latest in older critical theory (Frankfurt School). In his famous article on the definition of the difference between *traditional* and *critical* theory, Max Horkheimer (2002, p. 194) has already indicated this in 1937, when he wrote that scientific enlightenment must always be seen as a “moment in the continuous transformation and development of the material foundations of that society”.

This emphasizes two relevant aspects for the question of reflexivity as a central dimension of a critical research perspective: firstly, the categorization of scientific interpretations in the format of enlightenment, and secondly, the distinction between a critical and an affirmative – for Horkheimer, “traditional” – science. Both dimensions are found in the concept of criticism itself. “Criticism” means both the ability to distinguish and also the taking of an oppositional position.

In our perspective, a critical scientific perspective can only arise out of the coupling of the two dimensions. In his attempt to answer the question: What is criticism?, Michel Foucault (1992, p. 47) mentions, it is a matter of “the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth”. With his reference to the subject’s claiming of rights, Foucault not only places himself, like the older critical theory, in the tradition of the enlightenment<sup>7</sup>, but also paraphrases Immanuel Kant’s famous formulation of the key principle of enlightenment. Kant defines *Mündigkeit* as the individual’s ability to apply his intellect without the help of others. If people are mature, they have judgment – in this sense, Kant’s fundamental idea of the clarification of reasoning ability is always a critical one. At the same time, Foucault concretizes Kant’s definition of criticism – and treats it from a power-analytical perspective by formulating the assessment that it is a matter of questioning truth with regard to its determinative power, and questioning of power with regard to its influence on the determination of truth. In this he takes up the second dimension of criticism, and simultaneously points implicitly to the analytical problem with Horkheimer’s dichotomy of traditional and critical theory.

With Foucault, opposition can thus be defined as “the art of insubordination, that of reflected intractability” (op. cit.). Here, Foucault also proposes a differentiation, which we may translate as the distinction between affirmative and critical reflexivity. An “investigation into the legitimacy of historical modes of knowing” is regularly highlighted as a problem of knowledge (op. cit. p. 58). The question to be answered scientifically is then whether the potential for clarification available at a given point in history is or was adequate to the present analytical indications. In contrast, Foucault’s “alternative” – in our words, the “perspective of radical reflexivity” – says: instead of testing the legitimation of the historical mode of knowing, scientific analysis should “take the question of *Aufklärung* (...) not to the problem of knowledge, but to that of power.”; that is, it would proceed as “an examination of *eventualization*.” (op. cit. p.59). What does Foucault mean by that?

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<sup>7</sup> He thus makes a certain change or shift with regard to his previous work and statements, which handled the concept of “enlightenment” with greater critical reflexivity, or “archaeologically” and “genealogically”. Generally here, see also Sarasin 2005.

It is a matter of “(taking) groups of elements where, in a totally empirical and temporary way, connections between mechanisms of coercion and contents of knowledge can be identified” (op. cit.), and viewing these contents “in the context of the effects of power they generate inasmuch as they are validated by their belonging to a system of knowledge.” (op. cit.). The knowledge-interest of such a radical-reflexive approach is then to ascertain why “a procedure of coercion acquires the very form and justifications of a rational, calculated, technically efficient element (...)”; why a given element generates effects of power and “what connections, can be identified between mechanisms of coercion and elements of knowledge” (op. cit.).

When criticism, or the approach of radical reflexivity, is defined, after Foucault, as “reflected intractability” this again points to its already mentioned enmeshing in the existing situation – to the impossibility of an unambiguous state of opposition. This is why Foucault goes on to refer to criticism’s function of de-subjection: a movement of withdrawal, circumvention, avoidance or denial: “Critique would essentially insure the desubjugation of the subject in the context of what we could call the politics of truth” (op. cit., p. 47).

Radical reflexivity thus means the taking of a critical position with regard to truth; one that is aware of its own enmeshing and accordingly cannot take a position of unambiguous and definitive critical opposition. Foucault assumes that analytical action cannot aim at the exposure of “general principles of reality”, but only at the identification of the “type of element that must be pertinent for the analysis.” (op. cit., p. 60). An approach of radical reflexivity is thus subject to the insight that historical patterns of truth – that is, the borders of knowledge regarded as valid at a particular moment – can always be understood as the expression of a legitimation of specific patterns of interpretation and dominance (see op. cit., p. 61). For critical science in the context of social work, it is thus essential that what we encounter as reality is radically made recognizable as “historically situated”.

#### **4 Radical Reflexivity as a Research Approach of Risk-Taking Engagement**

With reference to the work of Michel Foucault, research activity can be characterized as a activity of seeking and searching that sometimes, but not coincidentally changes direction. The “radical reflexivity” associated with this involves an intellectual unrest, a readiness to be unsettled (see Seitter 2001), a continual reiteration: “I endeavor to correct my [methodological] tools via the objects that I believe I have discovered with them, and then the corrected tool shows that the objects I have defined are not quite as I had thought. So I feel my way forward, and stumble from book to book” (Foucault, *Ecrits III*, p. 522; quoted in Sarasin 2005, p. 13, own translation).

For Foucault, a critical-normative discussion, that finds its expression in an orientation on social justice, on the enabling and absolute recognition of the “dignity of man” can be seen not as a setting or explicit framing, but rather in his choice of objects of analysis, and in that “certain questions” interest him, as he himself repeatedly stated, retrospectively or prospectively, in various texts and discussions over time (see *ibid.*). His attitude, strategy and style of knowledge demonstrate an engagement that puts itself at risk; one that is committed to change and the breaking-up of social conditions.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Sarasin (2005, p. 9) offers a metaphorical description of Foucault’s approach as that of a “dynamiter”, who inspects an area like a geologist, and then blows it up.

What is not at least of interest here for critical research is that the “unease with category” (as impact of power) can be worked on in this fashion. A category can – from a critical perspective – be reconstructed as a *relationship* (determinant), as an attempt at definition and differentiation, and also in its impact as (potential) ascription of “characteristics”.<sup>9</sup>

The significance of symbolic order for social conditions and powerful processes has been clearly demonstrated by many authors. However, to be able to describe or reconstruct its impact and its interaction with political and economic processes in concrete historical terms requires theoretical and empirical tools that make it possible to appreciate and identify the ambiguous effects revealed in social conditions and processes. The thinking in fields of power and power dynamics, which emphasizes the productive (generative, re-making and enabling) dimension of power, is of great importance, particularly for empirical-reconstructive research with a critical perspective.

In his writings, Foucault developed a concept of “local resistance”, and postulated the “permanent criticism of historical existence” (see Bührmann 1995, p. 213ff.; own translation). Resistance should be applied to those everyday praxes and local power dynamics that function as the basis for societal divisions. This is a matter of “resisting the certainties, truths, classifications and standards produced by the humanities” (op. cit., p. 213f.), turning to local, subjugated types of knowledge, and developing a culture or practice of knowledge “that privileges the individual and allows his or her own interests to be heard” (op. cit., p. 215).

When discourse and practice are regarded as being situated in socio-historical fields of power, and as regenerating or transforming them, this opens a perspective on local knowledge, local practices, and also local revolts, ‘breaks’, in the established order. Thus – and this aspect should not be underestimated – the hierarchy between ‘the general and the particular’ is also relativized, if not indeed broken down. As developed in feminist and post-colonial critiques of reason, reflection is needed on the dominant nature, and exercise of power, of the imagination of a ‘subject of knowledge’ and the notion of the superiority of the ‘general’ over the ‘particular’ the ‘objective’ over the ‘subjective’, the ‘universal’ over the ‘partial’.

In the context of social work this all represents a challenge to, and an aspect of knowledge for an attitude and practice of radical reflexivity.

## **5 The Scientific Order of Social Work**

If we look with such an approach of radical reflexivity at the history of the development and establishment of social work, it becomes clear that it is a child of modernity. Social work in the prevailing form has, since the 19th century, been based on the assumption that the generation of scientific knowledge is the appropriate form of progress. More scientific knowledge is seen as the admission ticket to the process of progress – a logic that can be traced exactly in the case of the process of professionalization of social work in the second half of the 20th century. This process was largely reduced to the institutional academisation of educational structures, which was undoubtedly successful with regard to the development of social work as a discipline and a profession (see for Germany Kruse 2004). At the same time, little thought was given to the impact of the belief in modernization on the necessary scientific basis for professional activity in the scientific knowledge appertaining to social work. This is also shown by the current cry for ‘more science’ in social work: on the basis of a supposed crisis of efficiency and effectiveness in socio-pedagogical and social work

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<sup>9</sup> The latter is clearly shown in the debates on a “new underclass.”

activity, for example, more so-called evidence-based knowledge is called for. This has to be provided by the requisite socio-pedagogical impact research (see Macsenaere 2007). However a critical view of the truth reveals that only a certain kind of scientific knowledge is recognized here; namely, that meta-analytical and experimental knowledge awarded the gold standard by the protagonists of evidence-based programmes (EBP) (McNeece/Thyer 2003). This alone should provide the efficiency and effectiveness required for an appropriate professional activity.

This example makes clear the danger of reductionism from this call for more scientific knowledge: neither is there so far any evidence that evidence-based social work is actually more efficient or more effective than professionalized social work, such as was typical for the zenith of the welfare state era in the 20th century (see Ziegler 2006), nor has the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of which current social work is accused been demonstrated empirically. In typically ‘modernist’ fashion, nevertheless, the protagonists in this debate suppose that more scientific knowledge would per se trigger a dynamic of progress. What remains unclear and unquestioned is what progress is intended, in whose interest it should occur, and who might participate in defining this interest.

The knowledge model associated with the programme of implementing research into the effectiveness of socio-pedagogy is thus revealed as an affirmative model in Foucault’s sense, for precisely what effectiveness research projects are not supposed to ask is why at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century such assumptions of inefficiency and ineffectiveness have become increasingly influential. With a radical-reflexivity approach, however – that is, a perspective of ‘testing its nature as an event, or ability to make eventful’ – this is exactly the question to be asked and to be worked on. In Foucault’s terms, research into effectiveness reveals itself as a ‘legitimation-testing’ project. It is thus no great surprise that the protagonists of effectiveness research prefer a (neo)positivist model of science (see Webb 2001). Ultimately, a positivist understanding of knowledge claims that its analyses are dis-engaged, so that a research on effectiveness can clothe itself in the garb of neutrality and – conversely – accuse all its critics of ideological thinking.

The radical-reflexivity approach, though, can be recognized precisely in that it raises the question of the ‘wherefore’ of knowledge, as shown here in the example of the debate over research into the effectiveness of social pedagogy.

We began by asking what type of research is required if it is not simply to be the ‘handmaid’ of the prevailing demands on social work: we asked whether and how critical science can function as an ‘space of potentiality’, and perhaps actually create such a space – a space also for ‘social phantasy’. In response to these initial questions, we now formulate the model of radical reflexivity as an approach for a critical researcher in the field of social work.

## **6 Radical Reflexivity in Relation to Ways of Perception, Orientations and the Dynamics of Knowledge – not only in Social Work**

Our understanding is that ‘critical’ in the context of (e.g. empirical) science means a specific fashion of perceiving and ‘recognizing’ social situations. With a radical-reflexivity approach, it is thus a matter of analyzing very precisely how social situations are created through social



and discursive practices, what effects these practices have, and through what practices opportunities for action change, and social situations ‘open’ or ‘close’.<sup>10</sup>

The assumption of such an approach also requires a reflexive perspective on one’s own situation as researcher. Critical science should accordingly always pose questions about the current research constellation. For one thing, concerning the current constellation of actors: who is interested in what knowledge; who allows which questions and who prevents others; who wants to go more deeply into interrelationships and why; who wants what results? For another, concerning the specific institutional context(s): where and under what conditions will the specific research project take place; who is involved and how; what will happen to the research results (possibly contrary to one’s own intentions)? Who is the supporter of this research and why, and what conditions are attached to it?

But it is necessary to reflect not only on these structural conditions for research – its ‘situationality’ and ‘positionality’ – but also on the dynamics of the concretely occurring research process. At this level, questions such as these arise: what impact do specific constellations of actors have on the day-to-day research; what interactions occur between the researchers and those ‘questioned’ (the discussion partners); what conflicts arise in the research process – and how will these be handled? What will be the impact of the available resources on the research process; what, for example, will it mean to research under time pressure, and to be obliged to deliver ‘acceptable’ (for whom?) results at a particular time and in a particular form? What role do the perceptions and feelings of those involved in the research process play, such as ‘consternation’, ‘defensiveness’, ‘aggression’, ‘discomfort’, ‘disappointment’, disorientation or uncertainty? What – in view of these – may it mean to create or wish to create ‘spaces for reflection’? Does this not presume both, a ‘relative independence’ (of whom or what?) and a ‘relative neutrality’ – or, better, ‘openness’ – vis-à-vis the ‘research object’ and their situation, and also a relative independence vis-à-vis the originator of the research?

The critical tradition of action research (see Munsch 2010), recently ‘rediscovered’<sup>11</sup> for social work, has clearly problematized the concept of the independence – and the expert status – of the researcher. In the place of that orientation, the call is for a participative, democratic (as far as possible) research: guidelines such as “research as egalitarian cooperation in solidarity” (see Fricke 2002), “knowledge as a co-production in dialogue”, as “social product and project”, particularly in view of the asymmetric positions (see Maurer 1996, p. 175ff.), conflicts and controversies (see Frauenfortbildungsgruppe Tübingen 1995), characterize the associated self-image. This represents the experimental establishment of an alternative research culture that is often diametrically opposed to the prevailing practice of research.

This raises a further series of questions for (self-)critical reflection: how important is it for researchers to think of themselves as such, and be able to project themselves (to whom?)?

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<sup>10</sup> This emphasis on practices is due not least to inspiration from cultural studies, which not only analyze how relationships of societal inequality and hegemony are (re)produced in everyday life, but also work out the more or less deliberate, ‘wilful’ and potentially subversive ‘subjective’ practices of the actors (see Winter 2001).

<sup>11</sup> In some areas of research and in several contexts of research, this tradition has remained alive and been further developed critically (see Tübinger Institut für frauenpolitische Sozialforschung 2000; Held et al. 2007; Leiprecht 2001).

How dependent on this are their room for maneuver, their financing, their social and scientific acceptance – and hence, also, the acceptance of the results of their research?

In this context, the adoption of an approach of radical reflexivity, the positioning as a critical researcher, also raises the question of whether all research results should invariably be published; of whether one's own results should not be questioned as to whether or not they should be made public – or rather be made inaccessible, so as thus to take active steps to prevent any possible instrumentalization.

If we regard critical research as 'analytical border-work', then not least because these questions – raised here – cannot be answered unambiguously or definitively in the sense of a methodological rule. Rather, they must, in every case, be posed anew and answered – with self-critical assessments and decisions.

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