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Chapter 11

What Is at Stake: qu'est-ce que l'enjeu? Paradoxes: Problematics: Perspectives in Artistic Research Today

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Abstract The text summarizes and analyzes thirty years of international artistic research practice by sketching its paradoxes, problematics, voids and perspectives. And it puts forward a proposal with necessary strategies and the need to develop an epistemology for the future that allows artistic research to become a crucial practice far beyond the artistic research community and the art world only—a crucial practice for the whole society and its urgent demand for a new “aesthetics of existence”.

Keywords Artistic research • Art • Epistemology • Aesthetics of existence • Sciences • Humanities • Society • Strategies • Experiment • Experience

11.1 Aesthetics of Existence

The point of departure for the reflections that follow is, in equal measure, the current situation of artistic research in Europe today¹ and the findings in current accounts of artistic research, a variety of which have been put forward recently.

A former version of this text was published under the title of “‘A certain frustration ...’. Paradoxes, Voids, Perspectives in Artistic Research Today,” in: Department of Art & Media/ ZHdK, ed.: *Practices of Experimentation. Research and Teaching in the Arts Today*, Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess 2012, pp. 96.

For the present publication the text was revised, updated and extended.

¹Because there is no agreement on terminology, and none of the terms used—artistic research, practice-based research, research in/through/about the arts, art research etc.—are unproblematic, I will use the term *artistic research* in what follows to refer to the field that tries to cover all these terms, and because it has become the most used term in the international discussion. See, e.g. *Society for Artistic Research (SAR)*, *Journal for Artistic Research (JAR)* or SHARE's – an international network of 39 institutions to foster the 3rd cycle (PhD in the arts)—*Handbook for Artistic Research Education* (Amsterdam: Valand Academy, 2013).

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My goal is to propose a set of interconnected strategies whose pursuit and distinction I consider central to any productive development of artistic research. What is at stake with artistic research today is not only, and not even in the first instance, art universities, the "Art System" or "the Arts". The unfolding of the potential of artistic research today—alongside and in differentiation to research in the natural sciences, technological sciences, and the humanities²—means an extraordinarily explosive power for society. Although a debate that broke out between Charles P. Snow and Frank R. Leavis in the 1950s concerning "the two cultures"³ has become topical and even more acute today in particular,⁴ it sorely lacks any integration of artistic research. "Sorely" because what is the stakes (l'enjeu) in the debate today—given the primacy of the life-sciences (especially neuro-science, nano-science and bio-genetics) not only scientifically, economically and politically but also mentally and in our perceiving of and dealing with every day life—is not just about interpretive authority in the sciences and research but rather much more urgently and profoundly about practices, procedures, content, forms and a renewed *discours de circonstance* (Gaston Bachelard) of a future «aesthetics of existence» (Michel Foucault) of the society as a whole.

What is at risk here is the significance and effectiveness of artistic research, which could (and should) have an impact far beyond the artistic research community or the art world, which at the moment is of interest neither to most researchers into the arts nor to politics or economics. In the case of artistic researchers, that is either because artistic research signifies a formal (and increasingly necessary) undertaking in their academic careers or because it maintains the traditional self-image prevalent in the arts that artistic research and art are "completely different"—a self-image that negates (abstractly) scientific research or, at its most extreme, always merely wishes to "subversively evade" or "interrupt" it, and which for that very reason remains bound to the primacy of the natural sciences. And in the case of politics and economics, it is because they are interested in artistic research exclusively and simplifying, since utilitarian as an increasingly necessary discipline to bring in the creative industries, which they imagine in an all too simplistic fashion.

Against this backdrop, it is urgently necessary to accelerate the development of the potential of artistic research in a socially complex, responsible, and far-reaching sense and to increase the quality of artistic research in breadth, diversity, and depth.

² As I will explain later, many artists are not aware that the research criteria, methods, and procedures of these three sciences sometimes differ considerably. In what follows, I will use the term *sciences* and *humanities* to refer to these three types of "science" (*Natur-, Technik- und Geisteswissenschaften*, in German) in order to keep in mind how they differ from each other and from artistic research.

³ Snow CP (1960) *The two cultures*, 2nd edn. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993.

⁴ On the latest status of this debate, see "Naturalisierung," special issue of *Zeitschrift für Kulturphilosophie*, no. 1, 2011. See also Halfmann J, Rohbeck J (eds) (2007) *Zwei Kulturen der Wissenschaft—revisited*. Velbrück, Weilerswist.

11.2 The Current Situation of Artistic Research in Europe

The current situation of artistic research in Europe can be sketched in broad outlines as follows:

1. For around twenty-five years—since the middle of the 1980s—there has been systematic artistic research at art schools in the United Kingdom⁵ and for about fifteen years in art schools in the Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland) and in Australia.⁶ In all these countries artistic research has been and is closely connected to the establishment and development of PhD programs. In the course of the Bologna reform of European higher education over the last seven or eight years, other European countries have followed.⁷ The upshot: Measured by the duration and quantity of artistic research thus far, the results of academically persuasive works—works that open up new horizons judged by the specificity of artistic research, and by their Eigensinn [willful obstinacy],⁸ and generate new, other, or different knowledge—are still meager.
2. In relation to the amount of money they get, this is also true, *mutatis mutandis*, of a large number of sciences (e.g. neuro-science), with the significant difference that artistic research is subject financially, politically, and culturally to completely different pressure to legitimize itself. It first has to demonstrate the “meaning” of its subject matter and to gain acceptance in society.
3. Against this backdrop, for several years now there have been an ever growing number of international conferences/workshops on the subject of artistic research. Most follow the same pattern: they are about—sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly—the debate concerning a very basic question: “What is artistic research?”—even if the topics of the conferences have been different ones. For some time now the course and results of these events have been tedious

⁵ This is true even if the Royal College of Art in London, in its comprehensive compendium on research, self-confidently claims its own research tradition of 170 years. See Kemp, Sandra, ed.: *research rca*, London: Royal College of Art, 2007, p. 12ff.

⁶ In China, there has been artistic research and artistic PhD since the beginning of the 2000s, with nearly no effect on the international discussion because of the language problem. In the US, artistic research and artistic PhD have started only recently at some art schools. A first, but still rough overview has recently been presented by Elkins, James, “Six Cultures of the PhD”, in Wilson, Nick and van Ruiten, Schelte / ELIA, eds.: *SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education*, Amsterdam: Valand Academy, 2013.

⁷ For a systematic, international overview over the formation, development and current situation of artistic PhD see, Schiesser G (2015) “3. Zyklus”, In Badura J et al (ed) *Künstlerische Forschung. Ein Handbuch*. Diaphanes, Zurich/Berlin. (Forthcoming)

⁸ On the term *Eigensinn* and its significance for the arts, see Schiesser, Giaco: “Medien | Kunst | Ausbildung: Über den Eigensinn als künstlerische Produktivkraft,” in Schade, Sigrid, Sieber, Thomas and Tholen, Georg Christoph, eds.: *SchnittStellen*, (=Basler Beiträge zur Medienwissenschaft (BBM) no. 1), Basel: Schwabe, 2005. A former version of this article in English is available at http://distributedcreativity.typepad.com/fdc_texts/2005/10/working_on_and_.html (accessed July 23, 2014).

and not particularly productive. Only within the recent two years there has been a move from disputing theoretical questions to discuss concrete examples and results of artistic research.

4. Artistic research has long been bombarded, particularly also in the German speaking countries, massively from two completely different sides: on the one hand, from sections of the human and cultural sciences, whose arguments have recently been made with uncommon clarity and acuity by Peter Geimer, a professor in the art history department of the Free University Berlin⁹; and, on the other hand, from inside the art schools themselves, including some of the scholars working there and, perhaps more surprisingly, even some of the artists teaching there. Artistic research thus moves within a complex, overdetermined field, which is characterized by acute observation, stubborn skepticism, or fundamental rejection of artistic research—both from the outside and from within.
5. At art universities themselves, it is possible to identify four respectively five main positions on artistic research. I would term and describe them as follows:
 - *Emphatic*—Artistic work is per se research: art = research.
 - *Critical*—Art should not have anything to do with research: artists should keep their hands off research, since the paradigms of the sciences—meaning the paradigms of the natural sciences—apply there. Because the dominance of the latter cannot be overcome, art as research would have to be placed under the primacy of “the” natural sciences, which would not be productive for it.¹⁰
 - *Tactical*—Art has nothing to do with research. But when it is a matter of money for research, then all art is research.¹¹
 - *Strategic*—Artistic research differs from the practice of art or from art itself in that it presupposes an explicit research question.
 - *Epistemological*—I myself take this last position, though supplemented by a second central criterion: the result of the artistic research project is an *artifact*, whose format is itself an aspect of the process of artistic research and is first generated by it—and not predetermined as in the case of the sciences and the humanities, demanding a written text. The result is not necessarily a “finished” work of art or even a work of art at all plus a “scientific” or

⁹ Geimer, Peter: “Das große Recherche-Getue in der Kunst: Sollen Hochschulen ‘Master of Arts’-Titel und Doktorhüte für Malerei verleihen?,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 93, April 20, 2011, N5.

¹⁰ Historically, the debates and battles concerning the relationship between art and philosophy are based on this fear. Art as a lower form of knowledge or art as the handmaiden of philosophy (for example, in Kant, Hegel, Lukács) or as an autonomous practice of experience and cognition (as in Nietzsche, Luhmann, Deleuze, and in the arts themselves, especially since the beginning of the twentieth century).

¹¹ At first glance this position seems simplistic because it is only tactical, but it should not be underestimated as a strategy. Given conditions such as those art universities in the United Kingdom have been working under for many years, this flexible position can make sense.

"discursive text", but rather an *arti-fact* in the emphatic sense: *arti-fact*, *art-affect*, and *art-effect* in one.¹² It is this notion of *arti-fact* that opens new perspectives on the formats of artistic research,¹³ because its flexible pluri-folded potential and form plays to practices of research and their results.

11.3 The Lack of Epistemology

An approach of this kind and its related notion of the *arti-fact* are of key strategic importance, as no epistemology of artistic research has yet been produced. At the same time it transforms a problem that still troubles us especially in the debate on PhDs in the arts.

First of all, moving in this direction would defuse the intense conflict raging at universities of the arts concerning the necessity—or alternatively the foolishness—of combining a discursive and frequently rigidly scholarly section of the practice-based PhD with an "artistic" section that is often only vaguely defined.

Secondly, and more importantly, it would seem highly productive to take as our starting point Gaston Bachelard's project of a "non-Cartesian epistemology,"¹⁴ according to which: "The concepts and methods are all a function of the domain of *experience* and *experimentation* [my own emphasis, GS]; all scientific thought must change in the light of new experience; a discourse on scientific methods will always be a discourse on circumstances—a *discours de circonstance*—and will never be able to describe the definitive constitution of the scientific spirit".¹⁵ Bachelard famously went so far as to claim: "that each problem, each experiment, even each equation would have needed its own philosophy in borderline cases".¹⁶ Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, who for many years has been director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, subsequently showed how, in what was a drawn-out process, the field of research, the applied experimental systems, the apparatus, the notational systems and methods used led to the generally accepted representational formats (and processes) within the sciences. Rheinberger attempts to break apart these forms and formats which have been fixed in stone and

¹² *Arti-fact*, something that is artificially produced, that is at once *art-affect* and *art-effect*.

¹³ Especially artistic PhD all over the world have to be done within this dispositive of a series of art works + a scientific or discursive text. But, what eg. Frédéric Chopin has done with his experiments in his *Etudes* in the nineteenth century or Jean Luc Godard with his experiments in video in the twentieth century—these are subtle examples for artistic research (*avant la lettre*). And for both the results were *arti-facts* as results of a research process—a series of artistic experiments, driven to a certain point—and not "finished" art works in a conventional sense.

¹⁴ See the seminal works by Bachelard, Gaston: *Le nouvel esprit scientifique* [1934], Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968 and *La formation de l'esprit scientifique* [1938], Paris: Vrin, 1969.

¹⁵ Bachelard, Gaston: *Le nouvel esprit scientifique*, p. 15, our translation (see note 14).

¹⁶ Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg: "Die Wissenschaft des Konkreten," in *Iterationen*, Berlin: Merve, 2005, p. 107.

advocates a "process epistemology,"¹⁷ an "epistemology of contamination and unseemliness," with which "the method eternally remains ensnared in its application".¹⁸

Compared with the development of science, artistic research is very much in the starting blocks and still awaits an appropriate, fluid, and yet authoritative epistemology. There is still a need within artistic research to examine and discover the extent to which the methods and concepts of science and/or the humanities can be made productive and in which combination this should occur, as well as the extent to which other, different concepts, methods and procedures are needed over and above this.

For an epistemology in that sense there is a second notion (besides the one of the artifact) that is of key strategic importance, the notion of *singular exploration*, this rooted in *experiment* and *experience*. "Aesthetic [i.e. artistic, GS] [...] research resembles making experiences [*Er-Fahrung*] without navigation in a pathless landscape, where 'moving' [*Fahrung*] and 'occurrences' [*Wider-Fahrnis*] mix and confront what refuses a clear-cut decipherment [my translation, GS]."¹⁹

For without an epistemology of artistic research this will not be possible, not even in the form of robust knowledge.

Like in the sciences and humanities artistic research starts with the researcher's (faint) inkling that out there in the field of interest there is something, but you do not know exactly what it is, what you do not know and what exactly you want to know. It has become very obvious that artistic research is a *singular explorative research*, a discovery of and dealing with "gaps", the "precarious", the "unstable" or the "inadequate" etc., in each single case, instead of building *hypotheses* that are verified/falsified (like in the science) or *theses* that have to be argued and made plausible (like in the humanities). And that this singular explorations are based on what Bachelard calls "experiments" and "experience", or in the case of experience, what Ludwig Fleck calls with a more precise term "experienteness" (*Erfahrenheit*)²⁰ or Michel Polanyi calls "mute knowledge"²¹ or I would call "intuition" perceived as "condensed experienteness" (*verdichtete Erfahrenheit*). What is not very clear yet is, in which way and with which qualities these experiments and especially the experienteness of artists and in artistic research differs from the ones of scientists and in the sciences and the humanities. And it has

¹⁷ Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg: "Die Wissenschaft des Konkreten," p. 112 (see note 16).

¹⁸ Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg: "Mischformen des Wissens," in *Iterationen*, p. 89 (see note 16).

¹⁹ In German: "Ästhetische Forschung [...] ähnelt der navigationslosen Er-Fahrung im Weglosen, dort, wo sich 'Fahrung' und 'Wider-Fahrnis' mischen und dem konfrontieren, was sich eindeutiger Dechiffrierung verweigert." Mersch, Dieter: "Paradoxien, Brüche, Charismen: Strategien künstlerischen Forschens," in Mersch and Ott, Michaela, eds.: *Kunst und Wissenschaft*, Munich: Fink, 2007, p. 97.

²⁰ Fleck L (1980) *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache*. Frankfurt/Main, p. 126.

²¹ Polanyi M (1969) In: Green M (ed) *Knowing and being*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, especially part III.

become obvious as well that the methods, procedures and techniques of the research have experimentally to be developed during the research process itself within an experimental setting and are not pre-given at the beginning. As it has become evident that during the research process the "old principle of limited sloppiness" (to use Max Delbrück's term)²² and a "conceptual nonchalance—attentive inattentiveness"²³ are of highest methodical relevance for artistic research, too.

The question how the formats of the findings of artistic research can be developed out of the research process itself (as artifact), what the results can consist of (in terms of material and media, beyond text), how and where the results are presented and communicated in each individual case is, in this respect, a significant aspect of developing a specific epistemology of artistic research, whilst also retaining the potential for being applied to the dispute with the sciences and the humanities.

11.4 Contemporary Accounts of Artistic Research

A number of facts strike the reader about virtually all of the specific accounts as well as the surveys (which have only recently been published) on artistic research:

They are historically oriented and (commendably) present the lines of artistic research's development in relation to a given institution²⁴ or with an eye to certain themes or aspects.²⁵

Or, and this is new, they provide a (critical) meta-analysis of the status of artistic research in three respects: first, artistic research as a *boom*, as an *economic factor* in a "knowledge society"; second, artistic research as the counterpart of the latter, as a *politic-subversive, militant practice*; and third, they discuss the implementation of artistic research at art universities and its implications, positive or negative.²⁶

Or they are overall or specific presentations of aspects, criteria, methods or procedures of artistic research in specific areas of art.²⁷

²² Quoted from Rheinberger, Hans Jörg: "Augenmerk," in *Iterationen*, p. 66, note 63 (see note 16).

²³ Rickli, Hannes, quoted from Rickli, Hannes and Schenker, Christoph: "Experimentation", in *Practices of Experimentation* (A former version of this text was published under the title of "'A certain frustration . . .'. Paradoxes, Voids, Perspectives in Artistic Research Today," in: Department of Art & Media /ZHdK, ed.: *Practices of Experimentation. Research and Teaching in the Arts Today*, Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess 2012, pp. 96. For the present publication the text was revised, updated and extended.), pp. 158.

²⁴ For example, *research rca* (see note 5).

²⁵ This has been done, for example, by Tom Holert, who was the first in the German-speaking world to offer a detailed overview of the international lines of development in artistic research since the 1950s. See Holert, Tom.: "Künstlerische Forschung: Anatomie einer Konjunktur," in "Artistic Research," special issue of *Texte zur Kunst* no. 82, 2011, p. 39ff.

²⁶ On this, see especially the various essays in "Artistic Research," special issue of *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 82, 2011, which provide a good overview of current positions in this debate.

²⁷ For a comprehensive presentation, see Michael B. Karlsson H (eds) (2011) *The Routledge companion to research in the arts*. Routledge, London. See also the following important

Texts whose explicit subject is *perspectives* of artistic research beyond the present day are usually written from the point of view of researchers (working either individually or collaboratively) in the context of their research work and focus on specific themes or aspects that result directly from their research.

This is also true, with certain qualifications, of two of the most recent attempts to offer a survey of the state of research and the discussion: the issue of *Texte zur Kunst*, which is a special issue on artistic research, and the extensive anthology *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, both published 2011. Both mark a turning point in the analysis and description of artistic research, since they attempt to examine its current condition from a meta-analytical perspective. Both can already be regarded as standard publications for future artistic research.²⁸

Summing up the developments and experiences of artistic research over the past two decades, the editors of the voluminous, in many respects significant *Routledge Companion* anthology write: "We both felt a certain frustration at the lack of progress on the fundamental nature of research in the arts following about 20 years of international discussion."²⁹

But if artistic research is to deliver the desired contribution to a future aesthetics of existence as outlined here—rather than resolving an issue of status at art universities, as Peter Geimer believes, or becoming a playground where a few artists and a few more scholars can earn their living—then it will be necessary to draw several strategic conclusions from the rich but dispersed experiences to date, conclusions that abandon the apparatus within which specific analyses have been made thus far. The proposal is to work out a strategic apparatus for future artistic research that subjects previous artistic research to a symptomatic reading and identifies its structural and programmatic gaps. The implementation of this apparatus networks the specific efforts of individuals, programs, and existing collaborations and art universities in a non-normative but nonetheless binding way that promises to increase substantially the quality of artistic research and its cultural, political, and last but not least financial effects.³⁰

publications: Borgdorff H (2012) *The conflict of the faculties. Perspectives on artistic research and academia*. Leiden University Press, Leiden; "Artistic Research," special issue of *Texte zur Kunst* no. 82, 2011; Mersch D, Ott M (eds) (2007) *Kunst und Wissenschaft*. Fink, Munich; and Borgdorff H (2006) *The debate on research in the arts*. Bergen National Academy of the Arts, Bergen.

²⁸ Meanwhile, there are two additional standard publications to indicate, which have been published only after the completion of this manuscript: Wilson, Nick and van Ruiten, Schelte / ELIA, eds.: *SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education*, Amsterdam: Valand Academy, 2013; and Hughes, Rolf: "Leap into Another Kind: International Developments in Artistic Research," in Swedish Research Council, ed.: *Artistic Research Then and Now: 2004–2013, Yearbook of AR&D 2013*, Stockholm: Swedish Research Council, 2013. Furthermore I received a copy of this book only after the completion of this manuscript: Slager H (2011) *The pleasure of research*. Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki.

²⁹ Biggs and Karlsson: *Routledge Companion* (see note 27), xiv.

³⁰ Against this backdrop, *The Routledge Companion* represents a milestone for artistic research, because it networks carefully selected authors from various countries, and because the book is the result of a well-thought-out production process that takes into account in equal measure the

For the coming years I foresee the necessity of developing strategies for this new apparatus in nine respects. These strategies are formulated here as theses:

Thesis 1

The Strategy of Developing an Epistemology of Artistic Research

If artistic research is one specific type or a set of specific types of research, and by that a set of specific practices of knowing and of generating knowledge,³¹ then we have to make clear what are the differences and similarities compared to research in the sciences and the humanities. What are the contents, the goals, the methods and techniques, the experiments and experiences of artistic research and what are the formats, the artifacts, of its results? Only by also developing an adequate epistemology—some of its aspects I tried to sketch roughly above in this text—artistic research will be able to contribute to and to gain evidence for a new social “aesthetics of existence”.³²

Thesis 2

The Strategy of Comprehensive Sustainability, of a Cycle of Sustainability

The sustainability of artistic research is still insufficiently considered even today and guaranteed only in limited fashion. It is necessary to take the *entire* cycle of *production—reception—dissemination—new productions* seriously and bring it to a conclusion. That means above all pursuing the dissemination of research results beyond established formats such as final reports, exhibitions, catalogues, and so on. Final reports eke out their meager existence among sponsors and are subject to criteria for presentation that are not necessarily interesting or productive for sustainability; exhibitions are performative events with their own quality, but that of their results is more ephemeral. And catalogues are all too often compilations of monadically composed essays with no evident overall conception. In other words, in the usual formats for publication it is often possible to convey only fragments of the findings that have been gathered; many findings remain “dead work” for those not directly involved in the research process. What helps is a detailed evaluation of the dormant potential of *completed* research projects with an eye to detailed practices and processes of experience and insight, and with the goal of making them available to other art researchers and the research community. This has not

history, the status quo, and central individual aspects of artistic research. On the structure and the process of producing the volume, see the “Editor’s Preface” in *Routledge Companion* (see note 27), xiiiiff.

³¹ There has been a vivid discussion within the artistic research community for some time whether artistic research is or should be considered as “knowledge production” or not. I try to deconstruct this discussion by using the term of artistic research as “practices of generating knowledge”. From a cultural studies or philosophical standpoint any kind of practice generates (different kinds of) knowledge.

For a radical and substantial attempt to argue for artistic research that is something different from knowledge, see: Varto J (2013) *Otherwise than knowing*. Aalto University Publication Series, Helsinki.

³² On this, see also Sect. 11.3 in this text.

really been done as yet. New formats for presenting and conveying information are required in order to do so. Only then can a cycle of sustainability be assured.

Some of the basics are still lacking today, however. For example, astonishingly, most art universities largely lack both well-thought-out documentation strategies and convincing and consistent documentation of research projects on the Internet, something that is indispensable in an age where research is internationalized, interculturalized, and networked.

Thesis 3

The Strategy of Analyzing and Discussing Excellent Examples

What we need in addition today is an international, more detailed discussion based on examples of outstanding works of artistic research. Only by conducting such an in-depth, networked analysis and discussing specific, excellent results of artistic analysis, and by taking seriously the experience gained in research processes in detail in various forms and formats can we move forward. The proposals for works to be considered excellent research and discussed in detail have to come from the universities themselves.

Thesis 4

The Strategy of Letting a Thousand Flowers Bloom *and* of Focusing

Artistic research currently finds itself in a paradoxical situation in that respect: On the one hand, if it is judged by the time it took the natural, technical, and human sciences to break free of the primacy of religion and become autonomous objects and practices, it is still in its early stages. Thus it makes sense to pursue or develop the strategy of many different approaches, especially with regards to methods and procedures, rather than establishing a normative set of rules. That includes also pursuing research outside of PhD structures.³³ On the other hand, it is necessary for individual universities to focus and establish priorities—in terms of content, form, or methodology—and research them over extended periods. That is the only way to ensure the continuity of in-depth research and to improve its quality.

Thesis 5

The Strategy of Higher-Level Objectives and Their Prioritizing

In order to make artistic research substantial, tangible, and sustainable at individual universities, in international networks, and for both specialist and general audiences, it is indispensable to reflect in greater detail on—and indeed to establish—higher-level objectives, time frames, and steps for prioritizing. What are the strategic fields of research from the perspective of a university and for what reasons, in what sequence or with what parallelism, within which time frames, and in which steps should they be worked on? At the same time, it is crucial to keep open

³³ The collected experience in Switzerland, especially at the Zurich University of the Arts and the Bern University of the Arts, demonstrates the productivity of research not oriented around a PhD. Both universities have made contributions to artistic research that are widely regarded internationally and were produced for the most part independently of PhD structures so far, since art universities in Switzerland do not yet have the right to grant PhDs.

structural spaces for quick experiments, for unpredictable, abstruse, or crazy things, and for things that should just be tried out briefly.

Thesis 6

The Strategy of Adequate Formation of Community

For several years, the international community, with its rapidly increasing number of conferences/workshops, and so on, has been marked by an activism that is rarely questioned. In clear contrast, in terms of content and in comparison to scientific research communities, it is still standing on shaky legs. If that situation does not change, it will not be enough to advocate to all and sundry—with a verve that has since become practiced—the postulates of absolute openness, individuality, and difference of artistic research. Rather, like the communities of other disciplines, it will have to develop its own criteria for pursuing and assessing its research from whatever perspective it might choose: content, theme, and or procedure. And it has to permit itself to be measured against them.

An indispensable part of appropriate community building (in addition to relevant workshops, conferences, and publications that are usually focused on a specific or one's own university) are internationally led and strategically focused discussion forums, mailing lists, and other electronic periodicals such as the peer reviewed *Journal for Artistic Research (JAR)*, founded in 2010.³⁴ *JAR* could possibly become such a hub for discussions in the future.³⁵ There is also currently a lack of networking of older discourses and their journals and mailing lists, such as *Leonardo*, *MaHKUzine*, *Art & Research*, *Rhizom*, and so on, regarding the newer approaches to artistic research and their publication formats.³⁶

Thesis 7

The Strategy of Diverse, Parallel Publicizing

At the moment, the research community is still very much occupied with itself—which is historically understandable but no longer appropriate. We should establish and develop various channels of distribution and dissemination parallel to each other, which have different objectives. The point is not only to discuss and encourage research questions and results within the narrower research community but also to disseminate them to various publics at the same time. To that end, everyone should be using existing and yet to be developed formats of dissemination for a specialist audience *and* a broader audience interested in the arts and culture—from disciplinary and transdisciplinary professional conferences to reporting in the various mass media as continuously as possible.

³⁴ See www.jar-online.net/. The process of *JAR*'s emergence thus far demonstrates how complex and arduous it can be to create such an urgently needed international space for discussion, representation, communication, and dissemination.

³⁵ Since 2010 *JAR* raised the number of issues per year from one in 2010 to three or four in 2014.

³⁶ Holert rightly criticizes this—Holert: "Künstlerische Forschung" (see note 25), p. 53—and also catalogues the most important journals and mailing lists of the older tradition (*ibid.*, p. 61, note 16).

Thesis 8

The Strategy of Differential Connectivity

For reasons of content, university policy, finances, and culture, it is essential that we make the specifics of artistic research identifiable—without making the mistake of establishing normative models—while at the same time ensuring discursive connectivity to the technical sciences, the natural sciences, and the humanities. Either the uncritical or unconscious adoption of standards from the (natural) sciences is still dominant.³⁷ Or, conversely, it becomes emphatic, as a distant historical echo of a self-image of the artist that is otherwise hardly advocated any longer, the “complete difference” of artistic research is made absolute, and its individualization, incomparability, and uniqueness are emphasized.

Differential connectivity means making the actual specifics—or, more precisely, the specifics of artistic research—known in a more discriminating way³⁸ and at the same time remaining self-confident and open to connection to research in the sciences in dialogues, controversies, and debates.

Thesis 9

The Strategy of Actually Taking into Account the Procedures and Methods of the Sciences and Humanities

Many statements about artistic research by those working in the field make it clear that the specifics of research in the sciences are not known, at least not adequately, and that there is a naive image of research methods in these areas. The clash of cultures is particularly obvious here.³⁹ Moreover, “the” natural sciences are seen as synonymous with science and the humanities itself, and the big differences between the natural sciences, the technical sciences, and the humanities—Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, speaks of “epistemically recalcitrant qualities”⁴⁰ (*epistemische Widerborstigkeiten*) between them—are left out or simply not known. For example, the specifics repeatedly claimed for artistic research, such as *nonsense*, *purposelessness*,⁴¹ the *transgressive*, *partial lawlessness*, and the *tendency to violate rules*, *work on form*,⁴² the *gap*, the *precarious*, the *unstable*, the *reckonable*, the *no-holds-barred* and the

³⁷ As is still the case in some PhD programs in the United Kingdom.

³⁸ On this, see also Thesis 9.

³⁹ In my experience, considerably more natural scientists are interested in the methods, procedures, and findings of the humanities and of artistic research than vice versa.

⁴⁰ Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg: “Nachschrift,” in Mayer, Andreas and Métraux, Alexandre, eds.: *Kunstmaschinen: Spielräume des Sehens zwischen Wissenschaft und Ästhetik*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2005, p. 204.

⁴¹ For both terms, see Holert: “Künstlerische Forschung” (see note 25), p. 49.

⁴² For all these terms, see Busch, Kathrin: “Wissensbildung in den Künsten: Eine philosophische Träumerei,” in “Artistic Research,” special issue of *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 82, 2011, pp. 73–77.

inadequate,⁴³ even *limited sloppiness*⁴⁴ and *conceptual nonchalance*,⁴⁵ as well as the important method of *epistemological defundamentalization*⁴⁶ are also known and a matter of course in the sciences, even in the natural sciences. And this has been true in some cases since their invention in the late fifteenth century (when the natural sciences formed through dissociation with religion), in some cases since the end of the nineteenth century (e.g., in philosophy, psychoanalysis, physics), and in some cases since the 1960s (e.g., political science, biology, constructivism).⁴⁷ On the other hand, it is correct to point out that not all criteria, procedures, and methods can be made equally productive in the various sciences and arts. For example, *repeatability* and *falsifiability* are two criteria and methods that make no sense (or for very specific cases only) in artistic research—and not just there but in the humanities as well, where this has been considered obvious since their invention 150 years ago.⁴⁸

For its own work and with regard to its desired effects on society, artistic research has to define its own terrain more precisely, cultivate it, and at the same time seek out and encourage friction, controversy, and collaboration with the sciences and the humanities.⁴⁹

Perhaps the stakes (*l'enjeu*) of artistic research from a societal perspective that was outlined at the beginning of the essay is now clear: making a contribution to the pressing (*not-wendigen*, need-reversing), necessary practices of a social new “aesthetics of existence”—the specific contribution that only it can make. Seeing this as an opportunity and task, this is the in fact challenge for artistic research that aims to have an effect beyond the university system, the “Art System” and “the Arts”—an effect on and within different territories of society.

⁴³ For all these terms, see Mersch, Dieter: “Paradoxien, Brüche, Charismen: Strategien künstlerischen Forschens” (see note 19), pp. 97–98.

⁴⁴ Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg, quoted in Rickli, Hannes and Schenker, Christoph: “Experimentation”, (see note 23), p. 158.

⁴⁵ Rickli, Hannes, in Schenker and Rickli, “Experimentation,” p. 158 (see note 23).

⁴⁶ Bippus, Elke: “Eine Ästhetisierung von künstlerischer Forschung,” in “Artistic Research,” special issue of *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 82, 2011, p. 103. For the natural sciences, Feyerabend P (1975) *Against method: outline of an anarchistic theory of knowledge*. NLB/Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands/London, is still relevant.

⁴⁷ That is to say, artistic research hardly takes into account the fact that the sciences do not constitute a homogeneous entity or that there is a perpetual struggle within them over procedures, approaches, and interpretations and that the relationships of dominance between the various approaches change historically.

⁴⁸ My thesis would be that the particulars of scientific and artistic research cannot be determined from their specifics but only from their selection and the way they are connected.

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's concept of “articulation” provides the necessary acuity and distinction to determine the specifics and commonalities of artistic and scientific research. For the fundamentals of the concept of “articulation” in the work of Laclau and Mouffe, see Laclau E, Mouffe C (1985) *Hegemony and socialist strategy: towards a radical democratic politics*. Verso, London, and Schiesser G (1992) *Für eine Hegemonie ohne Hegemon: Anmerkungen*. E. Laclau/Ch. Mouffe. *Widerspruch*, no. 24, p. 72ff.

A detailed discussion of this issue will have to await a future publication.

⁴⁹ On this, see also Sect. 11.3 in this text.