CURRICULUM FOR DISOBEDIENCE:

Raising Children to Transform Adults

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The *Kinderladen* movement in 1970s West Germany, a critical forerunner of present-day alternative and free schools in Germany, began as an effort to raise children to be disobedient in all senses. Early cooperative "pedagogy groups" (*Pädagogen-Gruppen*) directly confronted German child-rearing emphases such as obedience, and also cleanliness and orderliness, prominent in the Nazi era and still earlier. Group members perceived these emphases as creating a fixation on authority and producing a deeply anxious sexuality. They believed these child-rearing practices continued to reproduce poisonous elements of family, community, and society.

Fig. 1: A present-day *Kinderladen*, Berlin-Neukölln**, 2012.**

Fig. 2: Rewriting education's past – a non-settled history.

This brief overview seeks to disrupt a seamless, linear, and Whiggish history of a "modern," "progressive" educational theory. It considers a moment in West German educational history now widely remembered as excessive and extreme, a dead-end path off the better-paved road of liberal reform in postwar education. The Kinderladen experiment--highly varied in its execution--introduced significant elements into German early pedagogy. But this is no matter of simple recuperation. The dynamic experiment's radical potential in creating space for children developing to challenge societal structures lies dormant. Opening this up as a non-"settled" history, one moreover with no simple alternative future, is one purpose of this piece.

Fig. 3: Texts in the intense discourse over anti-authoritarian childrearing.

We base our discussion of the movement primarily on the self-representations of the adults who created and ran "*Kinderläden*" (pl. of *Kinderladen*), and these adults' own critical analyses of their efforts, beginning in the late 1960s in West Berlin and West Germany. These sources include contemporary, ongoing, and retrospective interchanges among the adults and sometimes the children who created these collectives, concerning day-to-day experiences, processes of decision-making, and perceived successes and failures. They include philosophical reflections on the relationship between child-rearing and radical social change. Children's voices appear largely mediated through adults in the collective. The focus here is on what the adults thought they were doing and how well they thought they were doing it over time.

Some preliminary comments are in order here, as our photo essay strives to take seriously the editors' request for contributions to this special issue that disrupt reconceptualists' own projects of curriculum history. We try to offer at some level an alternative approach to traditional narratives. While it may appear at first that our visual artifacts place the reader into the past, as if the reader were there, our sequence and placement of images, juxtaposed with text, attempt to avoid this, and also to eschew a linear academic argument. As we present this style of curriculum scholarship to the broader community, we note some questions and concerns that are provoked by this format.

Our piece is neither purely visual nor textual, nor transformative in the sense of using history to argue for a particular ameliorative solution to curricular "problems." We instead try to problematize simplistic narratives that dismiss the *Kinderladen* experiments as merely parallel to seemingly more important theories of early childhood education. Also, there are difficulties in using visual images in academic work raised by the photo essay format. For example, the *Kinderladen* movement encouraged children and adults to accept their own and others' bodies, and to reduce anxieties the adults associated with the body. Legal restrictions on depictions of children led to censorship of such images here, highlighting how beliefs and practices of *Kinderladen* organizers would not *in toto* be simply or uncomplicatedly absorbed into current social practices and mores. The concern for making such images widely available for use out of context is legitimate. However, historical images addressing relationships with the body should be studied. This also returns us to the question of this form—an online photo essay—or any form, and what it allows, constrains, and produces, wittingly or otherwise.

What "works" in a photo essay as historical curriculum scholarship? In part, a response to this question might be framed in terms of our work here: In what senses is the curriculum of disobedience an historical notion specific to a time and place, and in what other senses could we claim the historical specificity and stories of the *Kinderladen* movement in West German history as speaking to theory? One can imagine shuffling the images in this essay, placing them adjacent to the same texts in a different sequence, or different texts in modified orders. Would such a "game" help us understand history as stories created by us, often to make sense of our own, present day action as "making history"? Might we more easily perceive historical curriculum scholarship as "a/r/tography," constituting inquiry through visual and textual understanding, rather than through visual and textual representations? (Irwin 2004) A/r/tography constructs the very materiality it attempts to represent (Springgay 2008), in this case the visual artifacts, blurring the categories of object and analysis, representation and interpretation. To take this one step further, how might we claim--or reject--these stories as rewriting history? The *Kinderladen* activists dialogued and contrasted their own efforts with those of parallel projects in Europe and North America. Our photo essay might be a dialogue with that dialogue, both in and out of historical time, a visual "living *with*" history.

Eltern bauen sich einen Kinderladen

Nach Feierabend wird gebastelt

Der Kinderladen Bottrop ist nicht tot. Der eingetragene Verein aus interessierten Elternteilen und Pädagogen hat von der Rheinstahl-Wohnungsbau die frühere Pförtnerloge von Prosper I mit dem anschließenden ehemaligen Betriebsrats- und Beratungszimmern gemietet.

Zur Zeit sind die Mitglieder des Vereins dabei, die Räume in Selbsthilfe umzugestalten und zu renovieren. Zaungäste können am Spätnachmittag und am Abend, wenn sie mal einen Blick durch eine der Scheiben riskieren, junge Ehepaare beobachten, die den Malerpinsel und die Maurerkelle schwingen.

Wann der Kinderladen bezugsfertig ist, läßt sich noch nicht genau sagen. Jedenfalls sobald die Eltern die Renovierungsarbeiten beendet haben.

nie

In diesem Gebäude renovieren Eltern die Räume, um in Eigenarbeit einen Kinderladen ein
ten. (WAZ-Bild: Kosch

Taking place originally in vacant spaces such as former shops (*Läden,* hence the movement's humorous name, "shops of children"), *Kinderläden* quickly proliferated to more than a thousand in the 1970s. They boasted curricula based in open explorations and creative expression (e.g., painting each other's bodies), designed in part to directly confront perceived societal compulsion for order and obsession with authority, which young parents and the other adults in these collectives associated above all with the Nazi period. While these schools could be highly varied, critical for most organizers was the creation of a space free of the insidious violence produced by longstanding patterns of rearing and educating children.

Fig. 4: *Kinderladen* in Bottrop, 1973: New use for an old space.

Fig. 5: Conventional early-childhood classroom in West Germany in 1950, offering a glimpse into patterns of continuity in educational policy in the post-war era, as well as the effects of structural damage and post-war social upheaval.

Generally, organizers of *Kinderläden* sought alternatives to *Kindergarten* (pl. *Kindergärten*), as well as to despised early child-rearing practices in the home. *Kindergärten*, understood in West Germany as pre-schools, shared little with their radical roots a century earlier. Parents in pedagogy groups charged contemporary *Kindergärten* with teaching only shame and obedience. Teachers often had no formal training. *Kindergarten* was unaffordable for most West Germans. (Free public education began first after kindergarten.) The number of *Kindergarten*-aged children far exceeded available spots in any case, more so than in comparable preschools elsewhere in Europe. (*Suddeutsche Zeitung* 10 June 1969; DIPF). As it was, *Kindergärten* commonly assigned 40 children to one adult. *Kinderläden* were by contrast small and "homey"—yet out of the home, and, while involving parents, they separated children from parents several hours a day. Having children away from home also had important practical "emanicipatory" effects for parents, especially mothers.

Fig. 6:Two authorities: the nuclear family, 1944 (here, of Nazi poet Will Vesper, whose son, Bernward, f.l., wrote about his authoritarian upbringing); and the police, 1960s.

Many parents who established the *Kinderläden* saw within themselves the legacy of misguided caregivers, who taught their children to interpret their world and their role in that world only in the reflection of authority. They thus understood themselves as flawed, and wished to create revolution not only through their children but also, critically, by transforming themselves *with* their children. Creators of *Kinderläden* believed that transformation of child-rearing from the earliest years was the only hope for avoiding the social reproduction of the "authoritarian personality" in the familial and broader social sphere. To accomplish this, however, they also needed to re-make themselves, not least by unearthing authoritarian tendencies within themselves, so that they could --with the help of others outside the family unit--realize non-authoritarian parenting. (cf. Kommune 2 1969, p. 308)

This element of adult self-transformation, too little recalled in popular recollection of early *Kinderläden*, was essential. Adults in the *Kinderläden* pursued visions of a broad "social revolution." Past practices, in their view, had created docile followers of authority, members of society who not only blindly followed authority, but who seemed to *need* authority, even to define themselves *for* themselves. Contemporary young adults, raised during and in the immediate aftermath of the Third Reich, were often accused of *insufficient* respect for authority. But thousands of them saw it as their responsibility to fiercely combat their own tendencies toward unquestioning obedience. They drew on thinkers from the "Frankfurt School," such as Wilhelm Reich, Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse, thinkers who had before and/or after WWII developed theories variously of the authoritarian personality and of sexual and other forms of repression, as related to the development of fascism. (Bott 1970, p. 12 passim; Kommune 2 1969, p. 98)

Fig. 7: Children in Berlin-Kreuzberg claim an alley as their classroom.

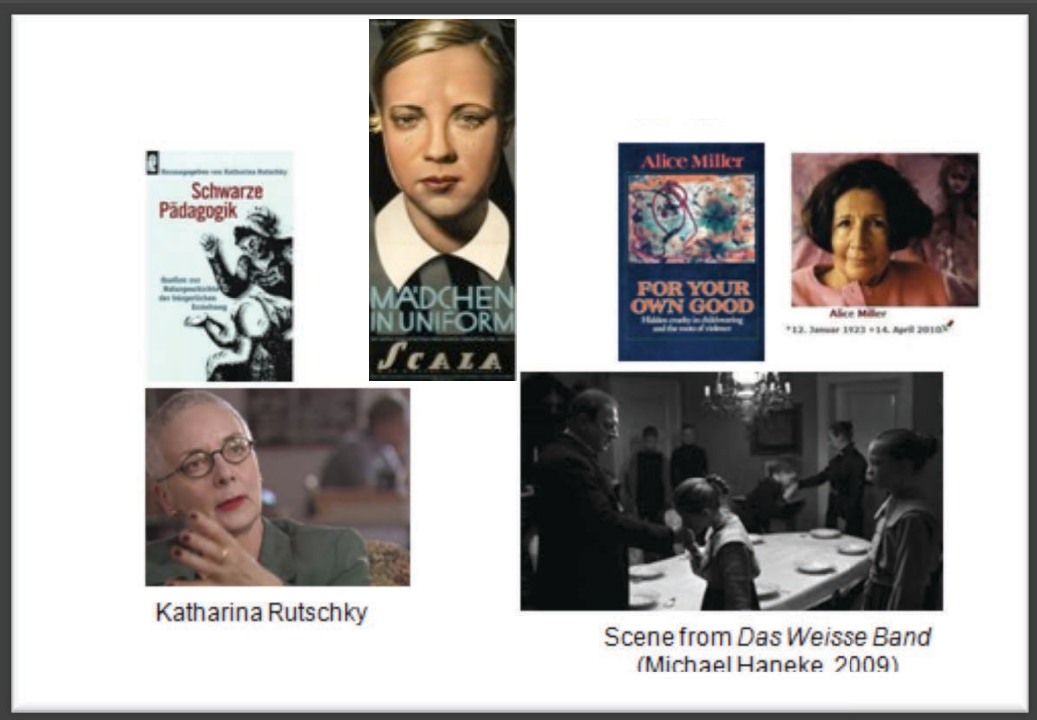

Fig. 8: Rutschky and Miller, seminal theorists of *schwarze Pädagogik*; Leontine Sagan's 1931 film on constraining pedagogical and other norms; Michael Haneke's 2009t cinematic reflection on the implications of "black-pedagogic" practices.

In organizing children's education, in turn, adults in *Kinderläden* attempted to avoid what came to be called "poisonous" or "black pedagogy" (*schwarze Pädagogik*), as described by West German activist Katharina Rutschky (1977) and Polish psychologist Alice Miller (1980/1990) (cf. also Bochmann 1998; Block 2005). These thinkers and practitioners described this destructive approach as one in which children learned to take an adult point of view against themselves, "for their own good." Black pedagogy occurs when a parent, teacher, or other caregiver works to weed out the seed of "native evil" in a young child, by either emotional manipulation or brute force. For example, an adult might beat a child for lying.

This “poisonous pedagogy” aims thus to inculcate a social superego. Those who theorized poisonous pedagogy viewed it as a rationalization of sadism, a defense ironically against parents’ own feelings of inadequacy precisely as authoritarian personalities. Katharina Rutschky (1997) offered characteristics of such pedagogy: initiation rites that pushed children to internalize a threat of death; the frequent use of pain (including psychological) to punish and the denial of basic needs; a “totalitarian” supervision of the child, including control of the body and of thought; taboos against touching; and the extreme imposition of order. Alice Miller (1980) referred more generally to any methods intended to manipulate children's characters through force, including physical punishment, but also via deceit, hypocrisy, and coercion. This was commonly practiced, in her view, by parents and teachers against children.

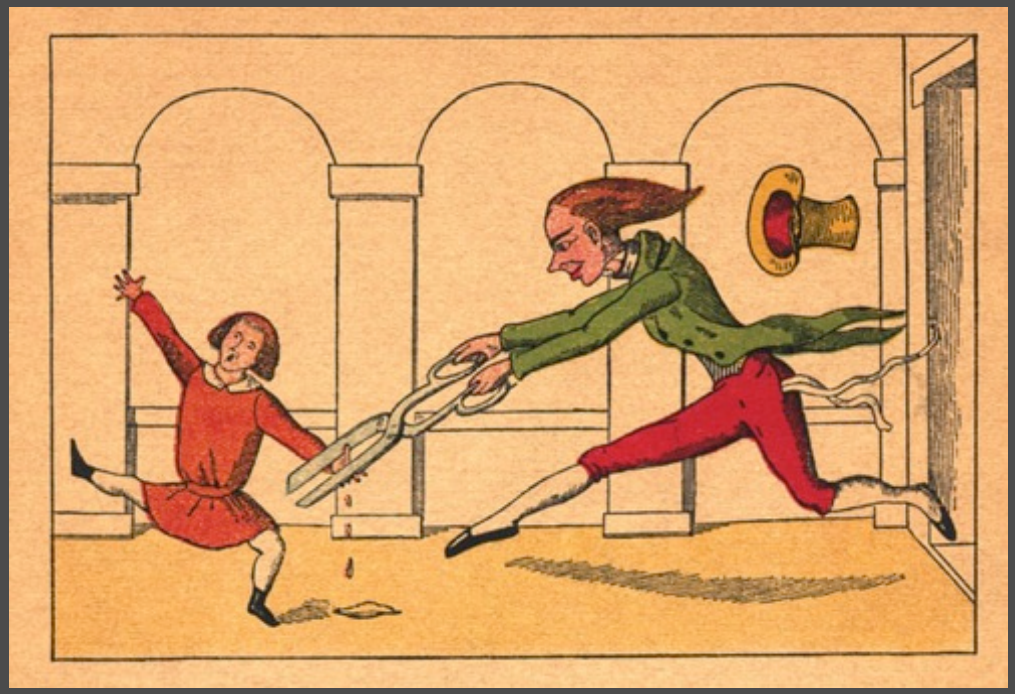

Fig. 9: *Struwwelpeter*, the long-lived German bogey used to scare children into behaving.

This scholarship drew both on the thinking and experience of early German *Kinderläden* planners to avoid such practices; in turn, this widely-read work contributed to the ongoing refinement of *Kinderladen* pedagogy, as well as other "reform" pedagogy. *Kinderladen* organizers sought to develop alternatives to these practices in part through voracious study and fierce debate of wide-ranging psychoanalytic as well as social theory, evidenced by organizers' recurring reference to the concepts of Sigmund Freud, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Erich Fromm, and others, as well as to the Frankfurt School thinkers. (Kommune 2 1969, pp. 156-213; Bott 1970, p. 124) Such theory, though diverse and often contradictory, provided an important basis for activists' strategies, as they read and reconsidered it through the lens of their own, ongoing experience.

Fig. 10: "The Anti-Struwwelpeter": Struwwelpeter regulates himself in this 1970 alternative (Waechter, 1970).

Fig. 11: Self-regulation – in groups. Play at the anti-authoritarian *Kinderladen*, Bochum.

Members of the various "pedagogy groups" generally worked to educate themselves in related educational practices as well, such as those of the well-known Summerhill school in England. Some of these West German activists also criticized these contemporary approaches, however, for example, as too *laissez-faire* and unstructured. (viz. Bott 1970, pp. 10-12) They perceived the organizers of Summerhill and similar American experiments as misreading Freud in terms of development of the ego and superego. These West German adults wanted their children to learn to be part of a group, and to develop a sense of solidarity, rather than simply to be free to do whatever they wanted as individuals. The ultimate objective was to foster the development of children who could regulate themselves, who would be independent, and who would have strong egos. (Binder 1969) In this way, they would be able to work against institutionalized authorities, and refuse authority for its own sake, while living successfully with self-respect and respect for others in their groups.

Kinderläden curricula were thus fundamentally based on the notion of "education for disobedience," and against dependence on authority. Parents and teachers hoped to prevent the desire for and even an "addiction" to authority. The adults from one *Kinderladen* described e.g. a "lesson" in which the adults and children went to a park where there was a sign saying, "keep off the grass." Group members discussed whether or not they agreed with the rationale behind such a prohibition. Determining together that they did not, they purposively strode on the grass. These adults saw such work as related to contemporary "civil disobedience": they sought to avoid for the next generation the dread and revulsion many activists fought against in themselves. in order to engage in such acts of "disobedience" in a broad political as well as intimate sphere.

Fig. 12: Confronting and grappling with public authority.

As much as for their children, adults thus set themselves the task of confronting authority and authorities, as part of the larger "anti-authoritarian" movement. Thus, when the popular weekly magazine *Stern* printed a sensationalist representation of the *Kinderladen* movement, a regular mainstream media practice, members of the West Berlin *Kinderladen* Council determined to protest at the West Berlin Press Office, standing up against the power of the press. This typical, forgettable rally failed however to garner attention to the Council's concerns. Members resolved themselves to further confrontation. They collected used diapers from the city's *Kinderläden* for three days. Then children and adults carried the diapers in garbage bags back to the Press Office, entered the newly painted chambers, and smeared the walls with the diapers' contents, to express their displeasure with those who had control of voice and opinion in the public sphere. With such an act, adults fought against their own deeply ingrained habits of authority and propriety; they sought to demonstrate the same to their children.
(Schwarzenau 2002, pp. 48-9)

Fig. 13: "Germany's Misbehavingest Children." *Stern* magazine cover photo, a characterization displeasing to *Kinderladen* adults.

Fig. 14: "Self-regulation"-- guided by adults.

The new *Kinderladen* curriculum was aimed further at creating a new kind of community, for which organizers believed there existed no models. Hence, organizers sought to combine psychoanalysis and psychological theories with social philosophy in quite new and subtle ways. Disobedience was more about being able to speak for oneself than about free expression in the sense they understood it to be used at Summerhill. The West German adults sought to help children lead themselves ultimately to *Mündigkeit* (coming in Middle German from *Mund,* or, mouth): this meant literally "majority" or adult status, but, conceptually here, the ability to express their own thoughts and act on them—cooperatively, within a larger collective. (cf. Adorno 1971) Adults would avoid playing the "strong man"—but, unlike Summerhill, as they understood it, the adults would still play a critical guiding role. (Autorenkollektiv Lankwitz 1971, Bochmann 1998) This was not always an easy or straightforward balance.

Fig. 15: Curriculum as a "learning process" — also for adults, who had to do some un-learning.

A fundamental curricular principle for many organizers was that children would learn through experience rather than by being told things. This would be achieved in the West German context by carrying out forms of disobedience and discussing the ramifications of individual actions within the larger society, and also by pursuing investigations of their own choosing. This too was very much a *Lernprozess,* a learning process, for the parents and teachers as well, as these adults discovered: they found over time that they needed to reinvent what it meant to be an "adult," in order to facilitate the curriculum. They confronted in this context again their own habits of authority and hierarchy, and their own presumptions concerning "how things were done." Parents, along with other young adults in the 1970s, struggled through the experience of changing themselves in order to change the world. In this setting, it was about struggling against exercising harmful power while offering appropriate guidance.

Negotiating such conflicts was also a source of disagreement among *Kinderladen* organizers. Adults of the Kinderladen Stuttgart thus had harsh criticisms for Maoist-influenced groups such as the Sozialistischer Kinderladen Berlin-Kreuzberg, likening their perceived political "indoctrination" to the "authoritarianism" of Catholic catechism. (in Bott 1970, p. 11) Contrasting themselves to such schools on the one hand and to Summerhill on the other, the Stuttgart *Kinderladen* organizers believed, though it may sound paradoxical, that they needed to be more involved in organizing and planning activities, to make sure that young learners directly confronted authority.

Fig. 16: An adult guides children as some choose to work *on* the table rather than in chairs.

Fig. 17: "Parent Discussion: 'Mr. [sic] Teacher, just hear me out finally!' Parent-teacher discussions frequently end up in arguments." A present-day representation. How does the parent avoid claiming or ceding total authority?

Parents believed they also needed to be regularly present and to participate themselves, in order for the processes of self-change through childrearing to take place. At the same time, it was important, according to the adults, to move children away from the *Kleinfamilie* or nuclear family, traditionally at the heart of authoritarian educational and social structures. An important reason for creating *Kinderläden* in the first place was so that children would not be confined to their families only in early years. Thus, in many *Kinderläden,* teachers with no familial connection to any of the children played a central role in the classroom. This was important also for adults, in rethinking their authority in the context of relations not only with their children, but also with other adults in a household. Likewise, parents sought to negotiate decision-making concerning their children with the classroom teachers, steering away from both holding the control over their children and blindly ceding authority to a classroom teacher. This too represented a broader "learning process" for the adults as well as the children. (Kommune 2 1969, Baader 2008)

Fig. 18: Planned by the group: a communal meal at a *Kinderladen.*

Collaborative decision-making of children and adults was one form of direct alternative to the traditional nuclear family structure, where adults made the decisions for the family; another confrontation with traditional authority was group rather than individual, self-interested decision-making. In many *Kinderläden,* children decided together themselves when and what they would eat, for example, working together with parents on planning meals. Adults guided children to plan together on all issues of significance for them. This was to be an antidote too to what many young adults perceived as patronizing and phony opportunities for self-expression and cooperative decision-making (such as powerless forms of "student government") in new West German schools and universities. (Reichwein 1967, Schneider 1988)

Fig. 19: Children's playthings – or work tools: saws, fire, garbage. Saws? – yes; knives? – no.

Parents endeavored to overcome their own assumptions and fears in other forms as well. Adults in the "Pre-School Pedagogy Action" group in Stuttgart determined that they would refrain as much as possible from telling children what was an "appropriate" plaything and what was "off limits"—which led to considerable anxiety for some of the adults, as for example the children sought to build structures together with hammers and saws.

Fig. 20: What looks like a game is work for the children: Using play to imagine different possibilities.

At the same time, many *Kinderläden* adopted standard Kindergarten curricula—in speaking, reading, writing, amounts, and computing—but attempted to rework them toward different ends. For example, adults emphasized in language exercises not only the importance of learning to speak for oneself, but also the implications of the subjunctive mode, as members of the Kinderladen Stuttgart characterized it: "*if it were this (other) way*." (in Bott 1970, p. 25) This was to permit, indeed encourage, children to imagine things differently, and to give them a verbal structure for voicing these imaginings and different alternatives.

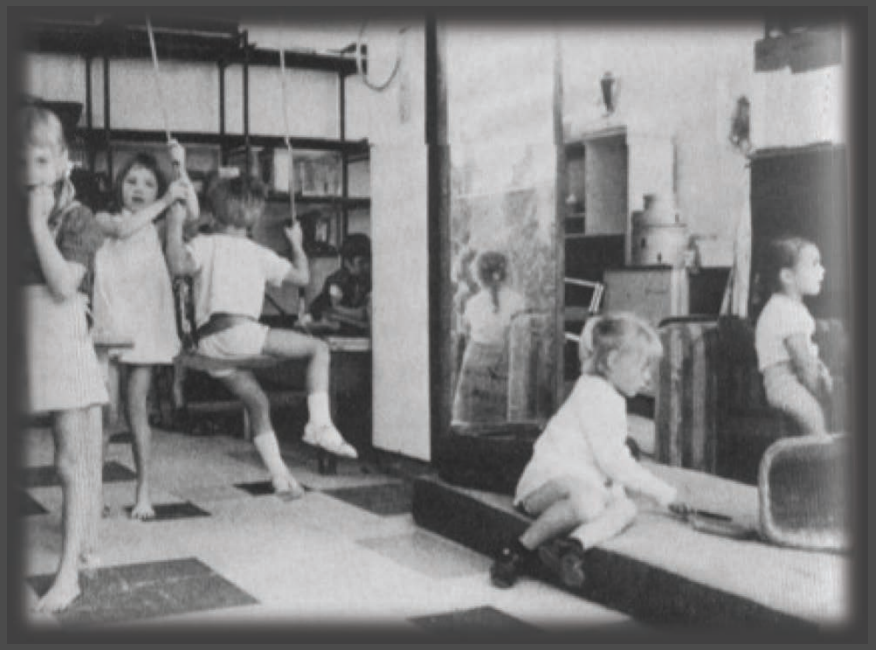

Fig. 21: A multi-use room for a non-productivist curriculum.

Thus, rooms in *Kinderläden* often had multiple rather than single functions, often of necessity, but also to signal to children the fungibility of the structures that surrounded them. A room should not unnecessarily dictate its inhabitants' activity: rather, it provided a site for creativity and change. In the same spirit, organizers of the Kinderladen Stuttgart introduced toys and other objects of a spiral shape into the school: non-utilitarian and non-standardized forms intended to promote open-ended thinking about their uses. Here once more, such strategies instigated a challenging "learning process" for the adults as much as for the children. Drawing on Marx as well as Freud, teachers and parents in many *Kinderläden* worked to avoid a "productivity principle" (*Leistungsprinzip*). These adults in Stuttgart were thus alarmed to discover that children *wanted* to build towers, farms, and factories with available Cuisinaire and other materials. Despite adults' initial attempts to guide children away from "productivist"-oriented play, they reported that children successfully defended this play to them.

Fig. 22: Superseding class-based education.

Many of these adult activists envisioned education broadly as a tool for sublating capitalist, imperialist society and its dependencies on authority, hierarchy, competition, and repression. This education was thus not to be isolated from existing society. In West Berlin, parents moved a *Kinderladen* moved from a "bourgeois" neighborhood to a "proletarian" one, in order to create a more mixed grouping in the school, and to provoke changing views in that neighborhood. School activists sought to tackle the reproduction of future docile laborers in the conventional schooling already for the youngest children and in the local families. This led to conflict in the neighborhood, however. Many working-class parents felt suspicious precisely of being told how they should raise their children and what they were doing wrong, a conundrum that seemed to mirror the paradoxes concerning authority, orthodoxy, and choice that *Kinderladen* parents often felt with their own children. In this context as others, the adult school activists subjected themselves to sustained self-criticism, to determine how changing themselves, their own thinking, and their very structures of thinking, was part of the solution.

Fig. 23: Playing doctor – often with nudity, sexuality, and unrepressed bodies (not pictured here).

This schooling was, further, about engendering new attitudes toward sexuality, as a fundamental cornerstone of building a strong ego, capable of responding to authoritative declarations with independent reasoning. Many contemporary activists understood totalitarian or fascist society to derive from practices of driving sexual desire from humans, or totally rechanneling it. In the *Kinderladen* Children's School Frankfurt, adults from the school described with satisfaction how two naked children played "doctor," as one child helped another "give birth." The two tried to bring the other children and the adults in the room into the process, which the adults found a successful exercise in allowing the children to fulfill their sexual needs and curiosity without a grown-up repressing their desire. (Kinderschule Frankfurt, in Bott 1970, p. 57) This led to broader discussion in the collective of the question of children's sexual needs, and to such issues as whether it would be good for children to be present while adults were having sex, a question they did not fully resolve.

Adults in *Kinderläden* pursued fervent introspection to question their own most fundamental assumptions and understandings, to be adequate to the task of overseeing such work. In the case of a Stuttgart *Kinderladen,* children began exploring the body of the teacher, rubbing their hands all over her, telling her to pull down her underwear, and pulling on her pubic hair. This might be interpreted as a kind of tyranny of the children over the adult, the ultimate submission of the adult's own ego—as *Stern* magazine sensationally represented it ("Kleine Linke mit grossen Rechten," in *Stern* 1969; cf. Kinderschule Frankfurt, in Bott 1970, p. 51). But the teacher who related the anecdote signaled a success story, in which she had resisted imposing her own inhibitions on the children.

Fig. 24: "Love games in the children's bedroom" – parents work to celebrate children's sexuality.

This leads to a critical if only suggestive discussion concerning the role of the adults in this whole process. The adults who sought to break the cycle of authoritarianism in German society had grown up in many respects under its overpowering shadow. These adults recognized inherent difficulties. One of the reasons for starting children in *Kinderläden* early in life was to liberate them from the control of their own parents, as well as to challenge conventional family structure, perceived as perhaps the most fundamental bastion of capitalist as well as patriarchal society. It is clear in the multiplicity of participants' self-representations that these activists were very concerned to give voice themselves to what they were trying to do. In this sense, a curriculum that placed "coming to one's own voice" at the center for the children led to experiments with voice for the adults as well. Yet the question of whose voices prevailed in the group setting and on what basis, in the end, and the ever-present issue of "authority"—including in the form of too much or too little "guidance"-- remained a constant tension. How could "guidance" not be authority? How could adults "healthily" assert their own strong egos? It is evident moreover that these adults felt very vulnerable to portrayals that cast them in the light of challenging social norms, whether as raising "dirty" children or children who were "inappropriately" sexually interested. It could be argued that some organizers ironically reproduced "black-pedagogical" anxieties, in fearing the media would characterize the *Kinderläden* as disorderly and unclean. The *Kinderladen* that had moved to working-class Berlin seemed desperate to make themselves appealing to others. Similarly, one might suggest that the movement itself reflected the problematic nature of authoritarian personalities, in the sense that the parents sought to transform themselves by seeing themselves reflected in the experiences of their children, rather than in their own activism. That is, their strategy for re-making themselves was to displace that effort in part onto their children, ironically reproducing their own parents' focus on child-raising and the manipulation of children, to overcome their own shortcomings.

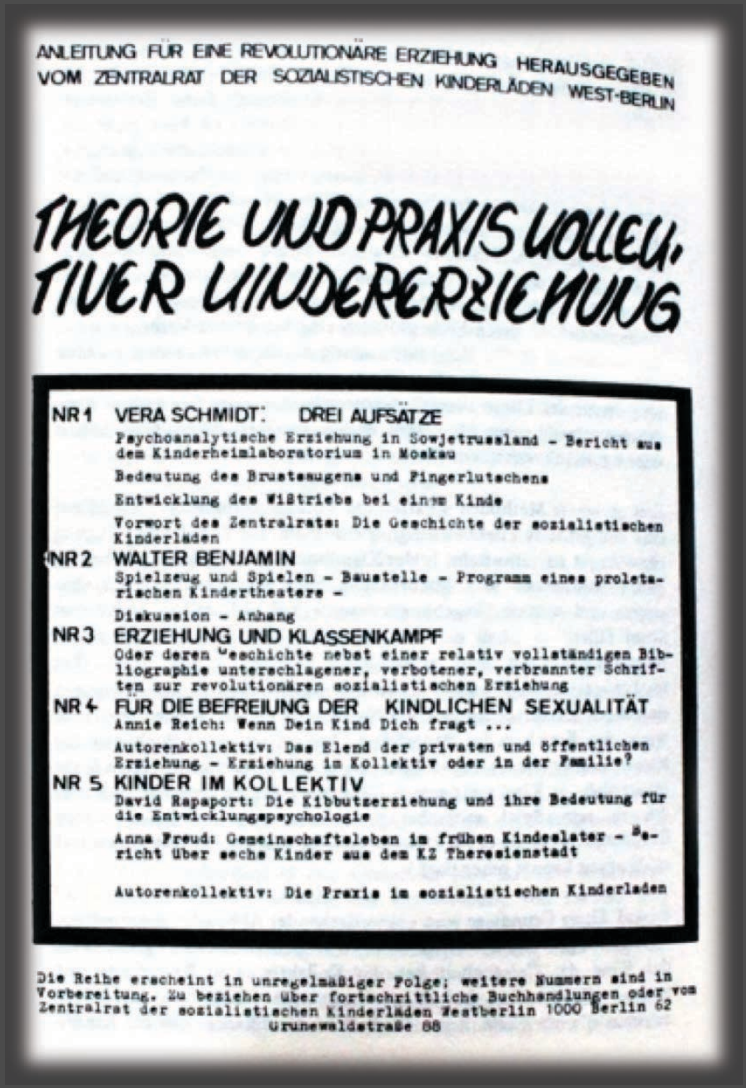

Fig. 25: **Pedagogical activists produce their own theory — and authority.**

Adults in these projects recognized many of these pitfalls themselves. Their response was often to produce self-representations of their work, making it clear that they were not embarrassed by or ashamed of their efforts, but instead insisting on their own participation in these representations. By their frequent public discussion and publications concerning their efforts, these adults educated themselves for "disobedience" as much as they did their children, by challenging the authority of the mainstream media.

Fig. 26: Parents' Meeting: Less About "the Pleasures of Discovery"…

Yet certainly there is striking evidence of the limits of adults' distancing from their authoritarian upbringing. It is visible most of all precisely in the adults' discussion of themselves. The pedagogical groups and *Kinderladen* councils set up what seem to have been grueling sessions, often once a week or more, in which parents and other adults in the community were to come to terms with and confront their own authoritarian characteristics. They expected one another to attend a host of yet further meetings on a regular basis, charged for example with explicitly making the connection between the *Kinderläden* and broader alternative political activity. These were often painful and joyless sessions, in which adults criticized themselves and one another in a fashion that often seemed from parents' descriptions to mirror black pedagogy. (Kinderschule Frankfurt, in Bott 1970, p. 52 passim)

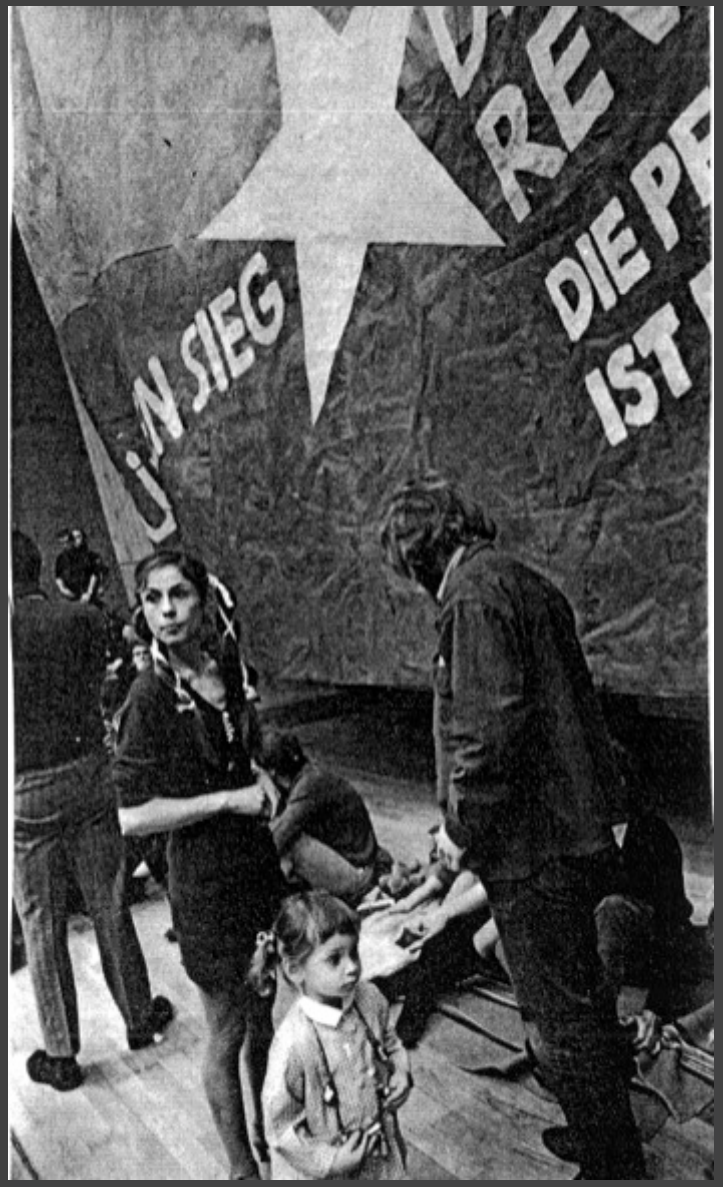

Fig. 27: Combining the work of the *Kinderläden* with broader grassroots politics (here a major anti-Vietnam war protest).

Thus, aspects of this self-transformation ironically reproduced authoritarian thinking. Parents of the Children's School Frankfurt submitted themselves "at least once or twice a week" to individual meetings with the teachers, who advised them of their missteps and limitations. But, though not a parent, and of a different perspective, what privileged these teachers with such advanced enlightenment? The parent-teacher collective wrote of the "mistakes" parents made in responding to children's' sexuality, and of what was "wrong" in their responses. A misstep, it seems, could be fatal, in terms of producing children capable of changing their own world—a characterization that indeed demonstrates some of the adults' limited success in transcending their own childhoods. In another school, when the authors described the tasks incumbent upon fellow adults, the word "must" (*müßen*) appears in nearly every sentence. (Sozialistischer Kinderladen Berlin-Kreuzberg, in Bott 1970, pp. 62-72) In these writings, moreover, the authors still seek to constantly back up their ideas through a range of "expert" opinion—not always acknowledging how the latter may also have formed for them an oppressive kind of authority.

Fig. 28: *Kinderladen Mozartstraße*, Present-day Hamburg.

Yet, for all these problems—and indeed in light of them—these early experiments are well worth carefully reexamining. *Kinderläden* still exist in some form across Germany. But the early *Kinderläden* are now frequently remembered as well-intended but ultimately failed, laughable, off-the-wall, and even dangerous products of the era's more significant—and mostly formal—"educational reform." However, the legacy of these efforts themselves, like that of the era's broader alternative politics, is well considered and studied, all the more at a moment when authorities threaten with little pretense to reduce schooling to the education of "little workers," and when global capitalism has demonstrated only growing societal power. The early movement is usefully recalled too in thinking about education and deep social change, and, as much, as a chronicle of process and a reflection on process.

Fig. 29: Moni, Jörn, Johannes, adults in *Kinderladen Kleine Fische* ("Little Fish"), Berlin

At the same time, despite the broad project's "wacky" reputation, many examples of *Kinderladen* curriculum and pedagogy share much with what might now be termed "developmentally appropriate practices." It is worth remembering that such practices, now often justified in terms of constructivist and Vygotskyian theories of learning, were pioneering in the late 1960s through the 1970s, yet grounded in very different theories, tied to adult self-transformation rather than children's growth and change. To consider this is not about giving these educator-activists their place in history. It is, rather, to think seriously ourselves about how these people saw their involvement in the education of their children as intimately tied to broader political efforts to transform relationships with authorities, and to transform the nature of authority itself, from the most fundamental levels. Comparable European initiatives, such as the post-war efforts of Loris Malaguzzi in Reggio Emilia, Italy, were fixated on the creation of a particular kind of child; this would have been seen by most *Kinderladen* adults as a form of manipulation no better than the *schwarze Pädagogik* they had themselves experienced, and to be missing the point that it is the adults who need to change. Equally worth considering are present day-efforts to combat *schwarze Pädagogik* and to maintain *Kinderläden* as viable alternatives to state-sanctioned *Kindergärten*, for social change and political reasons rather than grounded only in arguments about the individual child or preparation for formal schooling.

Fig. 30: A present-day demand for "never again!" black pedagogy in Berlin.

The common-sense history of early childhood education might be considered a received story about the merger of psychologists such as Pestalozzi and Fröbel with the love of childhood and concerns for peace education promoted by Montessori, and the cognitive developmental theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. This photo essay disrupts that progressive narrative, indicating how numerous educational practices originated in significantly different contexts. At the same time, we present this essay as a disruption of historical narrative in the sense of questioning presents and futures of educational practices. In the 1970s, *Kinderladen* practices were present practice, yet retrodictive as precursors to a new social order. In contemporary *Kinderläden*, similar practices are simultaneously, for some, nostalgic fantasies of a romanticized activist past, for others still, nostalgia from the future, and for yet others, simply good parenting "now." We should carry into our new stories of early childhood education the successes of the *Kinderladen* movement, and especially consider their potential as well for challenging the assumptions many hold for early childhood curriculum.

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