Combatting Inequality, Transforming Academic Structures and Implementing Global Sociology

Towards a Rehbeinian Pedagogy

Farah Hasan

The tragic and untimely passing of Boike Rehbein has left a void that can never be filled. A generation of scholars across the globe have his imprint on them. Boike's loss is hard to digest. The manner, the timing, the suddenness. During the first months after his passing, I asked myself these questions: What had made Boike so exceptional? What had made him my go-to person? Why did his passing hurt so much? To answer these questions, I had to reflect on my subjective experiences with Boike, and the shaping of my subjectivity during my time with him. This is a process that continues even today as I am writing this essay. My reflections relate to how he conducted his interpersonal engagements, research interests and contributions, and playing with structures to address inequality in and beyond the field of academia.

These reflections prompted me to examine his pedagogical programme further, identifying three key elements relevant to Boike's pedagogy: his conceptual principle of *Verstehen*, his scholarly contribution through habitus hermeneutic, and his structural contribution through the specific design of the Global Studies Programme (GSP). Assessing these three elements and seeing how they are linked, I propose the move towards a more Rehbeinian pedagogy. I argue that his pedagogy is instrumental in levelling out the academic playing field and allows critical sociology to gain a more global orientation.

First, I will give a brief description of the concept of *Verstehen* following a theoretical approach and then provide a discursive example of how it unfolded practically. Second, I will elaborate on the Bourdieu legacy that permeated Boike's work, focusing on his methodological innovation of habitus hermeneutic which emerged from his inequality research. Third, I will outline the implementation of his pedagogy using the example of GSP, focusing on specific design elements such as curriculum, selection process and composition of the study programme. Analysing these elements, I will discuss the paradox of encouraging elitism in the fight against inequality. Finally, I will explain how a Rehbeinian pedagogy can contribute to shaping a new paradigm shift and enable a critical global sociology.

Understanding the Concept of *Verstehen*

Verstehen as a Heuristic Tool

In the following section, I will provide a brief explanation of understanding. Understanding has been a central concept in Boike's work. His dissertation was entitled *Was heißt es, einen anderen Menschen zu verstehen?* or in my English translation *What it entails to understand another human being?* Understanding was typically expressed within the doctrine of interpretation (which has been called "hermeneutics" since the seventeenth century, cf. Rehbein 1997, p. 16). By the end of the nineteenth century, Dilthey proposed a new angle on the concept of understanding. He considered understanding, along with "expression" and "experience", the basic phenomenon of the human world in contrast to nature (ibid, p. 18). Understanding as the reproduction of a foreign experience and the establishment of the connection between human beings was for him thus, a method and a thing to be investigated simultaneously. It distinguished the area of the humanities in comparison to the natural sciences. He observed, "Nature is alien to us. For it is only an outside for us, not an inside. The society is our world" (Dilthey 1922, p. 36; Rehbein 1997, p. 18).

Dilthey's work secured the role of understanding a central place in the methodology of the humanities because he was the first to recognise it as an independent problem in the philosophy of science (Rehbein 1997, p. 19). With the dominance of positivism and the emergence of phenomenology and logical empiricism, the debate about understanding as a method as opposed to explanation reached a higher degree of theoretical definiteness and precision (ibid.). As Boike elucidates concerning the debate on understanding as a method in the social sciences, "its preliminary result is that the humanities and the social sciences are not sciences cannot do without an understanding approach to their subject matter" (ibid.).

Boike realised the importance of the concept of understanding, especially when observing the latest research themes, and illuminated an interesting paradox. As he puts it, "In the recent past, the other human being has increasingly become an object of scientific interest. From an almost mystical entity invoked in meta-physical criticism, 'the other' has developed into an empirically accessible, but also a philosophically relevant problem" (ibid, p. 23). Boike recognised various phenomena that were taking place in the world, such as the end of the colonial age, the expansion of a worldwide market economy and widespread communication, the subjective isolation of Indians in Western societies, the increase in mobility and emigration, had increased the necessity of dealing with 'other people as other people' and 'people as other people'. In his perspective, the confrontation with such phenomena demands to understand the others as well. (ibid, p. 23).

Thus, understanding as a philosophical concept provides the basis for the social sciences which are about understanding and explaining the world. However, this can only be achieved through understanding. But how does one understand? What happens to us as individuals when talking with other people or 'the other'? At this juncture, I would like to provide a practical example of how understanding emerged in our engagements.

Expressing Verstehen – What's up?

Following the theoretical input on understanding, I will demonstrate how Boike would apply understanding discursively. I remember one of the typical lines he used to address me over the years. Most notably, during the COVID-19 pandemic, our telephone conversations often began with the following line: "Hey, Farah, so what's up?" At the time, I felt a bit taken aback by Boike's informal tone and directness. Then I assumed that his lack of time and busy schedule might be the reason for his straight-to-the-point formulation. In retrospect, however, I believe this to be only partially true, as others had made other discursive experiences with him in which he did not articulate himself in such a pronounced way. Observing his exchanges with other students during our seminars, I noticed that he liked to mimic the style of his interlocutors. Therefore, his curt and casual choice of words may have been his reflection of my own communication style, at least to some extent. More importantly, his curt "what's up?" forced me to come up with a quick response on my side, cut to the chase, and make my point. I was forced to become precise with my choice of words so that we could understand and communicate about the real issue at stake. Boike could have answered my call by asking, "What can I do for?" or "How can I help you?" but these were too limiting formulations that would not give sufficient space for precise expression. His adaption to understanding his other counterpart was an example of understanding at work. The concept of understanding was discursively articulated in this case through a simple utterance, which (in this case, "What's up") allowed the interlocutor (myself in this case) to give an immediate, straightforward response and be understood, despite our obvious differences.

Bourdieu Legacy

A quick skim of Boike's bibliography will reveal the profound influence of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu on Boike's intellectual output. Boike's approach was deeply influenced by Bourdieu, under whom he had studied in Paris in the 1980s. Boike sought to operationalise Bourdieu's concept of habitus in his research on social structures and inequality. He did this by developing the

methodological approach of habitus hermeneutic as a tool to understand the various dimensions of inequality, particularly in Global South contexts. (Rehbein 2017, p. 83–84)

Bourdieu established the idea of habitus described as "a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class" (Bourdieu 1977, p. 86). These 'internalised structures' and 'schemes of perception' structure the subject's (shared) worldview and their 'apperception' of the world in which they suppose they exist (ibid.). Boike gave it his own spin by attempting to empirically operationalise the abstract concept of habitus, notably through his research on social structures, social classes and inequality in Germany, Laos, South Africa, India, Brazil and Argentina. He wanted to deeply understand under what conditions society is structured, coming up with the notion of socio-cultures to explain the conditions by which certain groups in a particular society are governed. He and his colleagues employed habitus hermeneutic as a methodology as part of their inequality research. A central aspect of this methodology is the qualitative life-course interview since the researcher needs to observe people's practices and gain information about the emergence of the habitus in the interviewees' childhood and later life. In the interaction, the social relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee plays out since categories of age, gender, education, and respect influence the way the interview partners talk to each other (Thongsawang et al., 2020, p. 505). The habitus hermeneutic methodology incorporates the double function of the interview as practice and as a source of information (ibid.) and is underpinned by Mannheim's understanding of interviews. Mannheim distinguished between 'what-meaning' and 'how-meaning' (Mannheim 1964; Thongsawang et al. 2020, p. 504). The 'what-meaning' refers to the information given in the discourse and its intentionality; the 'how-meaning' refers to the practice of interacting or the habitus (Thongsawang et al. 2020, p. 504). Here, Boike aimed not only to operationalise habitus but also to differentiate between different habitus types empirically through the life course interviews and the proceeding statistical multiple correspondence analysis.

The Global Studies Programme: Uniting Theory & Practice

It is evident that Boike utilised Bourdieu's intellectual legacy throughout his teaching practice in Freiburg and then in Berlin. However, in my view, Boike went further and took Bourdieu's intellectual legacy to a new level. Boike did this through the Global Studies Programme (GSP), first in Freiburg and then even more so in Berlin. He was one of the masterminds behind this programme in which he was deeply invested, as it was a suitable space where he could implement his ideas most effectively. As common with Boike, many elements of the

programme appeared to be random and informally composed, while in fact, they followed a clear-cut and fully developed concept that he could implement in its entirety.

Thus, I would like to reflect on GSP's main structural contributions. The programme incorporates many unconventional elements in its design and implementation. However, the mixing of these unconventional elements leads to certain paradoxes.

I will provide an overview of the programme, elucidating several key elements. I will explain how its implementation allows unconventional elements to interact, resulting in certain paradoxes. I argue that GSP is a practical implementation of the theoretical concept of *Verstehen* that actively embeds elitism and dominance into education structures, thus creating an egalitarian global elite to combat social inequality.

Curriculum

GSP is a two-year postgraduate programme that was founded in 2001 and commenced in 2002. It began as an endeavour by the Universität Freiburg (Germany), the University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi, India). (Rehbein 2021, p. 5) Other universities such as FLACSO (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok, Thailand), University of Cape Town (South Africa), Humboldt Universität zu Berlin (Germany), and the University of Pretoria (South Africa) later joined the network (ibid.). Each cohort consisted of twenty to thirty students with sufficient intercultural experience, excellent English skills, and willingness to study at the partner universities in the designated period stipulated by the programme's entry requirements.

At this point, I wish to highlight several structural aspects of GSP and examine them in more detail. I will also base this on my experiences, having been part of the programme at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in the 2017 cohort.

The GSP curriculum comprises two obligatory modules, two elective seminars and a research design seminar. These seminars were outsourced to other staff; however, the core lectures were delivered by Boike himself. His two lectures on modern social theories and theories of globalisation complemented each other. In these modules taken in the first semester, students were introduced to the classic thinkers of the social sciences, such as Smith, Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Foucault, and Bourdieu, as well as contemporary theories related to globalisation. Later, the curriculum was revised: The classics were 'provincialised', and the canon was interpreted as a European tradition, as regional knowledge, and not as universal (Rehbein 2021, p. 5). Eventually, scholars from other traditions, such as Mignolo and Spivak from postcolonial studies, were included in the curriculum.

These theoretical inputs provided students with a theoretical basis to examine sociological phenomena of their interest. Armed with these theoretical inputs, students would conduct their semesters abroad at the partner universities. During their two semesters abroad at Global South partner universities, students could assess whether their sociological theories from the previous semester corresponded with the countries' social reality and the partner universities' academic spaces.

During my time at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, the affiliated partner universities were FLACSO, University of Pretoria, Chulalongkorn University and Jawaharlal Nehru University. The dates for the semesters at the partner universities were fixed and non-negotiable. Students were required to be present at the start of the new term, with no exception or excuse. Such rigidity, embedded in GSP's curriculum from the outset, resulted in heightened responsibility on the students to organise themselves administratively and financially for the abroad semesters. If students, for example, did not allocate sufficient time for student visas to be processed, they could not fully participate in the programme with fellow peers and "miss out" on specific experiences and encounters.

The participating students have to make two specific choices for their semesters abroad. They have to decide whether to spend their second semester at FLACSO or the University of Pretoria. Later, the students had to decide whether to spend the third semester at Jawaharlal Nehru University or Chula University. Both times, students had to choose and write a short essay explaining their choice to spend the second and third semesters at the respective universities.

I attended the University of Pretoria in the second semester and Jawaharlal Nehru University in the third semester. From the empirical reality in South Africa, I observed that class and race intersected and structured society. Such a structuring of society along class and racial lines manifested spatially in certain districts (which were casually referred to as a 'fluffy white world), primarily black poor quarters and informal settlements (so-called townships), but also a 'black bougie world' ('bougie' being a colloquial abbreviation of 'bourgeoisie') occupied by the emerging black middle-class. Beyond such spatial configurations, other contained spaces such as Rosebank and Santon experienced racial mixing but segregated along class lines. In India, however, ethnicity did not play such an acute role. Instead, inequality manifested along class lines, which were guided by the social mechanism of caste. Those individuals of lower caste could be identified by their profession and surname as well as through the treatment they received from members of so-called higher castes.

We can evaluate this specific selection process concerning the semesters abroad. My first observation would be the relative limitation of choice. Students could only make two binary choices; however, they had neither control of the study dates nor the length of the stay. On the other hand, considering the programme outline, I believe such limitation was also a benefit as less is sometimes more. The

binary limitations reduced the complexity of the choice and allowed the students to engage in their decisions. By writing a summary, students were not only required to justify their choice and create a justification for towards their future learning institutions but could also gain ownership of their choice. As students had to explain concretely why they found their specific institutions beneficial for them on various levels —intellectually, academically, and personally —they were able to form an emotional attachment with the institution.

This process of deciding, articulating, and justifying one's personal choices acquires a hermeneutical character as all of the students do this task at the same time. The students share this experience simultaneously, involving collective discussions and expressions of diverging interests based on individual preferences. Discussions with peers may have informed each person's final choices and justification to outsiders, yet no dominance is exerted. Students act relatively freely and autonomously as they actively shape their individual MA study programmes.

Student Selection

Considering the taxing curriculum of two to three semesters abroad (including Berlin for non-German students), the programme needs suitable candidates for such an ambitious curriculum.

Each year in the summer semester, approximately twenty-five to thirty applicants succeed in obtaining admission to the MA programme. The selection process plays a highly relevant role in GSP. However, the requirements not only involve stress resistance to travelling but also other personality traits that enable and create a particular group dynamic and dynamic within the receiving institutions. So, what are the features of the student selection process?

Firstly, one can assume that Boike was aware of the relevance of the selection process as the design of the entry requirements were his responsibility. It is, therefore, not surprising that these requirements are unique compared to other MA programmes in Germany. For example, most MA programmes accept candidates based on grade merit, whereas GSP considers further elements that require more than fulfilling technical steps. Here, I wish to point out the importance of the essay that all applicants must submit as part of the application process. The applicants must write an essay about the future of globalisation and provide proof of acquired international experience. In addition, a suitable bachelor's degree and English language skills (and potentially Spanish language for FLACSO) must be proved.

These robust entry requirements are there to ensure that the applicants meet the high threshold. Applicants have to demonstrate suitable internationality and intercultural competence. Each application must include a cover letter describing the student's motivation, provide references from previous professors and

employers, and a complete essay. The nature of the essay is broad, and the same question was posed to applicants of each cohort. It also involved students selecting a specific topic; for example, I remember answering the question, "How does twenty-first-century globalisation differ from twentieth-century globalisation?"

From the mere limitation on the word count, we can deduce that an essay of a thousand words was about something other than coming up with any verifiable conclusion. An essay of this nature aims to see what ideas applicants would bring to the table. It served as a prognosis for the future to assess how far and wide they can think. It is a quality control mechanism that identifies applicants who are able to have innovative ideas and put them down on a piece of paper. In comparison to other master programmes at the *Institut für Afrika- und Asienwissenschaften*, which only required technical steps, the GSP applicants have already been inducted into a system of selectiveness through the more vigorous, competitive selection process (which is part of a process of forming an elite, but I will come to this later).

Additionally, the essay components are suitable to limit a potential bias exercised by the typical external merit-based assessment procedure. As in this procedure, the international ranking of the university of the bachelor's degree will also be also factored in, which sometimes causes applicants from Anglo-Saxon universities to be unjustifiably preferred.

Secondly, GSP offers more places for each cohort than similar programmes and has a more diverse student population. Due to international marketing, the students admitted to GSP come from many geographic locations and diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. As a result, no cultural group is predominant, and no cultural groups are relegated to minority status.

Thirdly, although coming from diverse backgrounds, classes, and countries of origin, GSP students possess certain characteristics that set them apart from the rest: they are sociable and can mix and interact well with others. They are extraverted and have the desire and the ability to speak up and voice their opinion. They are mentally resilient and also fearless, which is required to move to new countries continuously. Lastly, they are extremely socially engaged *in* the world they live in and socially critical *about* the world they live in. All these characteristics can be identified in the application process. After being admitted into GSP, the students are allowed to make their own unique experiences and adapt to changing external circumstances such as geographic location.

Boike believed in the strength of the individual, especially in those he had selected. They were equipped with sufficient skills and talent, which he identified during the selection process. The GSP students were expected to mingle and get to know each other.

During my first GSP semester in Berlin, I remember we were a group of thirty students, and we only had one semester to get to know one another and prepare for the first joint move to a new country. It also meant that there was only limited time to explore the local university scene and the city of Berlin, and thus,

it had to be done with more impetus to avoid missing out. Different sub-groups with new group dynamics formed in the following two abroad semesters in each country. When confronted with the social reality of the new country, each student responded differently. Some enjoyed the exciting new experiences, while others were struck by the overwhelming differences and harsh realities of the host countries.

Special Programme for Special Students

In my view, Boike was forming a special programme for special students and was aware that GSP would create a special and elite group. He also knew that this group, through their exposure and experiences, would develop a deeper understanding of global phenomena and a higher level of skill in assessing various problems. If we look at the concept of *Verstehen*, the more we encounter and speak to different people, the more we can understand. GSP embodies this concept and implements it by bringing together a highly diverse group of individuals who all participate in the same programme. Also, meeting and getting to know thirty people intensely in a short space of time is a lot for German university standards. GSP students meet more people, and they experience more countries during their studies.

In my assessment, Boike used psychological coding to form a specific group and motivate the students to seek new challenges and step out of their comfort zone. All the features of GSP provide a psychological coding that pushes the students to expand their horizon and improve their skills. Simply put, they *feel* they are better and thus *become* better. Therefore, a self-fulfilling prophecy emerges and becomes entrenched. For example, in the selection process, motivation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The selection process does have tangible effects, with those on the course becoming infused with a particular disposition. Or rather, a specific character trace is identified and sharpened by the programme.

For example, at the *Institut für Afrika- und Asienwissenschaften (IAAW)* in Berlin, GSP has led to the formation of a binary, a clear distinction between non-GSP students and GSP students. Competition emerges among these two groups, which created paradoxical sentiments and perceptions by non-GSP students about the GSP students. The non-GSP students experienced a perceived marginalisation with the introduction of the international group of verbose, active, and socially engaged GSP students. Being confronted with this select group, they develop a growing sense of competition. Non-GSP students recognise that they are being compared and assessed in relation to the GSP students. With their candid manner stemming from different traditions, the GSP students do not follow implicit rules on how to behave and formulate their opinions according to expectations. The non-GSP students questioned this behaviour and recognised it as a deviation from the expectation. As a result, the non-GSP students tended to evaluate the

GSP students negatively. To me, non-GSP students expressed sentiments of jealousy, envy and resentment. Some stated opinions even went as far as diminishing the character of GSP students. For example, I was told that my GSP classmate was a "nice and normal GSP student", while the others were "arrogant". Some non-GSP students diminished the programme itself, saying, "It was not that good". Others displayed appreciation and admiration, stating how much real-world experience we all had by already studying, living or working in other countries and wished they could also be on such a programme with two mandatory abroad semesters.

This dynamic embedded in the selection process allowed for this binary division into non-GSP and GSP to emerge, which is another paradox produced by the programme's design. The fact that the GSP students were handpicked by the 'smartest professor' at the institute and the GSP students intermingled with the other non-GSP students at the institute led to differing perspectives amongst the non-GSP students concerning the GSP students. The non-GSP students, who are on the same educational level, through their basic knowledge of the selection process for these GSP students even before engaging with them deeply, the non-GSP students have incorporated the understanding that their classmates, i. e. the GSP students, are an educational elite before even engaging with them. Incorporating this knowledge creates tension in which the non-GSP students form and articulate polarising perspectives on the GSP students, either intelligent and worldly or narrow-minded and know-it-all but stupid.

Elitism to Fight Inequality

Whether intended or not, elitism is embedded into GSP, even though its aim is to counterbalance the systemic inequality of academic structures. I have identified three factors contributing to the formation of this elite group: the selection process (especially the essay writing component), being hand-selected by Boike, and the students' similar personality traits.

But how can such a process – of which Boike must have been aware – serve as a tool to fight inequality on a global scale? How can a select group that caused social division among university students be suitable to reduce inequality? Is such a process unjust and wrong?

Whether this is suitable or unsuitable, right or wrong, just or unjust, is a "matter of perspective", Boike would say. Some may argue that these students were unfairly favoured by offering them specialised classes and seminars. Other people may argue that this division is acceptable because these students have fulfilled certain quality control markers. Another group may argue that these students are deficient for German university (most of them did not speak German and would not be able to follow regular classes), and these separate classes served as a form

of addressing them and making them capable of participating in the academic activities of the IAAW.

Who knows what the correct answer is? Maybe the answer is not as important after all. What is important is recognising that all these perspectives are valid in their own way. This is an example of bringing a multicentric perspective to the same issue. Interpretation or hermeneutics can be applied in multiple ways, and there is no correct way to see an issue (Rehbein 2010).

Moreover, looking at the inequality within the university system (GSP vs. non-GSP students) limits the perspective. The university's purpose lies not in fulfilling its own targets but in supporting the development of society, in Boike's case a global society. Knowledge is the key towards change, and the creation of better knowledge and better scholars is the way to achieve this. In this case, the purpose of the GSP would be to conglomerate good people from around the world, put them on a super-tough programme, accelerate their learning and skill acquisition, and produce well-rounded people with a high *Verständnis* (understanding). When considering the selection process of the GSP students, I assume this was the model Boike followed when choosing his global studies candidates.

During the selection process, individuals from different backgrounds but with similar attributes were grouped together. The GSP structure provided a set of exterior facts (two semesters abroad and fixed modules), which enabled the group to become self-reflexive and increase the quality of their learning experience. However, it is at this juncture within the group dynamics that another paradox emerges. Although the group is highly self-reflexive and constantly questioning the mechanisms that dominate and produce inequality, the group also displays extremely hierarchical tendencies, with different individuals trying to establish dominance at different times. Subsequently, another group dynamic emerged as other members resisted these attempts to establish dominance, leading to conflicts and the reconfiguration of positions and relations between individuals.

Enabling a Rehbeinian Pedagogy for Critical Global Sociology

GSP at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin under Boike was not a project solely designed to increase the internationalisation of the higher education sector in Germany. It was (and still is) a project that embodies the core educational philosophy of the Humboldt brothers who espoused an understanding of education that was linked to building worldwide citizens. Practically speaking, this means experiencing the world in its plurality and multiplicities. GSP allows these ideals to manifest in a two-staged process that unites theory and practice. First, students understand theory through the intellectual study of classical sociological theories, postcolonial critiques of classical sociological theories, and theories related to globalisation. In the second stage, students are confronted with the empirical reality

during their semesters abroad, where specific sociological theories that seem self-evident do not necessarily manifest.

Boike gave a thought-provoking example of Thai rice farmers from his research in Southeast Asia. He told us that Thai rice farmers sow rice according to the amount that satisfies their needs in an average harvest. This means that after a good harvest, they have a surplus; however, sometimes, they decide not to sell their surplus and instead leave it unharvested. We were slightly puzzled because most of us had assumed that if farmers produced a surplus, they would attempt to sell the surplus to gain additional revenue. Boike wanted us to recognise that we had been unconsciously limiting our view. And, by examining other contexts, particularly non-Eurocentric contexts, he wanted us to see that such an assumption is a product of a westernised modernity. For instance, from a Western perspective, not harvesting the surplus, may be deemed wasteful and unentrepreneurial, but such a perspective was based on Eurocentrically informed ideas. Other societies in other parts of the world possess different social ontologies that guide individuals embedded in those societies in some domains of their lives.

Thus, by experiencing other contexts and understanding the different potential outcomes that can occur in such contexts, we bring ourselves into a space – a sort of liminal space or interstitial space – where we experience a double confrontation or a double break of consciousness with reality. This double confrontation takes place in two ways. Firstly, we are confronted with the idea that theories that explain the world may not manifest ultimately in reality as reality can significantly deviate from what the theory proposes. Secondly, we are confronted on an individual level, and our taken-for-granted assumptions begin to disintegrate before our own eyes, leading to intense reflection and questioning. We question the norms and assumptions that we thought were guiding our lives, and we seek to understand who or what has shaped and moulded us to have incorporated such assumptions in the first place.

In the seminar, Boike asked us to consider what would happen to the surplus harvest. We discussed all the possible options, came up with numerous creative ideas, and evaluated their feasibility for at least an hour, including the concept of subsistence farming in Thailand.

After racking our brains and coming up with all kinds of ideas, one student made an important observation: the reality involved letting it be and doing nothing. We were all left speechless, knowing that after exhausting ourselves with all possibilities, this idea may make some sense in this context. Boike was waiting for this answer; he never told us the answer but allowed us the space to discuss, hermeneutically, bouncing from one person to another. He himself stayed out of the discussion and allowed us students to follow many lines of thought and arrive at our own conclusions. His input was deliberately minimal and precise because

he wanted his students to think first, think hard, and be creative. In retrospect, he acted in a way that allowed the process to unfold and trusted in the outcome.

The Rehbeinian pedagogy involves the inversion, blurring and removal of hierarchies. It also involves changes in the context in which the different structures holding together different societies are revealed and empirically experienced. It involves confronting reality and questioning everything we hold as 'true' as we edge towards embodying a multicentric epistemology (Rehbein et al. 2020, p. 68).

The Rehbeinian pedagogy promotes creativity and encourages students to find their own way. Students are not forced or disciplined into specific subject areas but encouraged to follow their own interests and passions. Exploration is a key component of this pedagogy where students are encouraged to try as many things as possible. The attitude to be fearless and change paths is perceived as necessary, not something wrong or shameful, as the experience itself stimulates learning. Another aspect of this pedagogy is the conviction that 'less is more' and teachers take a hands-off approach towards students' learning. Students are assumed to be autonomous beings who use their own reasoning to decide what actions to engage in. Also, there is a free-for-all mentality coupled with a no-rules approach. Anything goes as students experience a sense of freedom that allows them to say and do what they see fit. Finally, the Rehbeinian pedagogy instils a confrontation with reality in which students are forced to reflect on their positions in various hierarchies and structures.

Conclusion

In my opinion, Boike's most important contribution has been his specific programme to combat inequality in three realms: epistemologically and conceptually via *Verstehen*, his research on inequality and social structures using Bourdieu as a springboard, and his creative working with academic structures to implement GSP. This has given scholars from all over the world the opportunity to participate in global knowledge production. This programme has a multiplier effect on generations of scholars invested in change across the globe in their respective fields of expertise. Understanding how Boike himself combatted inequality in different domains is necessary for the success of his pedagogical programme.

The Rehbeinian pedagogy has shaped a generation of scholars all over the world. From my own perspective, his theoretical and methodological input and implementation allowed for a specific embodiment of a sensibility that moves into a transcendental level. This pedagogical programme pushes students not only to think but also to think differently, working with their own subjectivities as a resource for knowledge production, as the rest of the academy lags behind in trying to keep up. This pedagogical programme dissolves structural differences between individuals, and that is how scholarship should be. In my view, his

most significant contribution is establishing a pedagogy where differences and structural inequalities melt away. Everyone is understood cognitively through the concept of understanding, and we are all playing on an equal playing field.

References

Bourdieu P. (1977): Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge: University Press.

Dilthey, W. (1922): Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften: Versuch einer Grundlegung für das Studium der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.

Mannheim, K. (1964): Wissenssoziologie. München: Luchterhand.

Rehbein, B. (1997): Was heißt es, einen anderen Menschen zu verstehen? Stuttgart: Metzler.

Rehbein, B. (2010): Critical Theory after the Rise of the Global South. In: transcience 1(2). pp. 9–17.

Rehbein, B. (2017): Society in Contemporary Laos: Capitalism, Habitus and Belief. London / New York: Routledge.

Rehbein, B. (2021): The emancipatory potential of the Global Studies Programme. In: Journal of Contemporary African Studies 41(3). pp. 282–290.

Rehbein, B. / Kamal, A. / Asif, M. (2020): New Area Studies, Scientific Communities and Knowledge Production. In: International Quarterly for Asian Studies 51(3/4). pp. 65–78.

Thongsawang, S. / Rehbein, B. / Chantavanich, S. (2020): Inequality, Sociocultures and Habitus in Thailand. In: Sojourn 35(3). pp. 493–524.