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# A methodological proposal for emancipatory social sciences knowledge production

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A METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL  
FOR EMANCIPATORY SOCIAL SCIENCES  
KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

A Research Thesis for the Masters Degree

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES: SUSTAINABILITY, PARTICIPATION, INNOVATION

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1. FOR AN EMANCIPATORY KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1. Epistemic violence in the Western knowledge production system	10
1.2. Emancipatory knowledge production	15
1.2.1 Contributions from a Marxist approach	16
1.2.2. Contributions from an Anarchist approach	17
1.2.3. Putting the body at the center: The body as the space from which to produce emancipatory knowledge	19
<b>CHAPTER 2. LOOKING AT THE MEANS: WHAT METHODOLOGIES IN ACCORDANCE TO THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES?</b>	<b>24</b>
2.1. <i>Recherche-cr�ation</i>	24
2.1.2. Art(s) from this methodological proposal	29
2.1.3. An (auto/embodyed) ethnography of two <i>recherche-cr�ation</i> experiences	30
Street Tree Twinning Project at PerformanceLab	30
Violent Paix	39
2.2. Research-action	50
2.2.1. Modus Operandi	53
2.3. INTERACTIONS BETWEEN RECHERCHE-CR�ATION AND RESEARCH-ACTION	57
2.3.1. Urban Aboriginal Diabetes Research Project	58
<b>CHAPTER 3. FORUM THEATER AS A TOOL FOR EMANCIPATORY KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION</b>	<b>61</b>
3.1. Theatre	61
3.2. Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum Theatre	62
3.3. An (auto/embodyed) ethnography of Forum Theatre	64
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>82</b>

It is about reversing the equation,  
It is about making Western systems of knowledge  
the object of inquiry.

(Denzin 2005)

## INTRODUCTION

This Master Thesis is built around the fact that social sciences knowledge production, even critical social sciences or knowledge produced to fight power relations, is reproducing epistemic violence and, in so doing, paradoxically replicates social inequalities too. The hypothesis is that epistemic violence is in part reproduced by the ways knowledge is generated: the means used do not correspond to the ends that are pursued or the methodology implemented is not in accordance to the aim(s) of the research.

This is why I direct this thesis towards answering the following research question:

-How to produce emancipatory knowledge?

From this main question derive two blocks of research questions, on one hand:

-In knowledge production, what emancipatory "possibles" open up from, critical, radical, feminist and post/anticolonial epistemologies?

-Why should the body(ies) be re-situated as the main space from which to produce knowledge?

-According to these epistemologies, what emancipatory potential emerges from a political interaction between *recherche-cr ation* and research-action?

And on the other hand:

-Can the Theater of the Oppressed, besides being a social research tool, also be articulated for fighting epistemic violence and encouraging emancipatory knowledge production?

-To what extent can this tool materialize radical, critical, feminist post/anticolonial epistemologies and allow a more coherent methodology?

In order to answer these research questions, the present writing is structured in an introduction and a methodological section, followed by three central chapters: the first chapter focuses on epistemic violence and emancipation; the second one on *recherche-cr ation* and research-action as potential methodologies; and the third one is dedicated to

Forum Theatre, a participatory technique of Theatre of the Oppressed, as a tool in this methodological proposal. The paper ends up by a briefly conclusion and a bibliography.

In the attempt of answering these questions cannot do without specifying what brought me to be interested in this research topic. The questionings in this Master Thesis result of two personal processes, on one hand my refusal of university as an institution because of a personal frustration towards its (hierarchical) and apparently unchangeable functioning, and its role in reproducing epistemic violence. This goes with the uncomfortable position in which I found myself while experiencing social research in an ethnography on educational inequalities, where I formulated ethical and moral questionings, while I kept questioning my usefulness. On the other hand, they are the result of my dance background, which triggered a questioning of how body and arts can constitute the means for social research.

After many years of -almost exclusively- theoretical sociology and political studies, I felt very far from the society I was studying, and I was not very interested in the subjects about methodology, conventional social methodologies which we learned more from the books and less from the action. I came to be interested in research because to finish my undergraduate curriculum, I could freely choose a theme, and thanks to my tutor who let me go, I had a very exciting period of reading and **thinking** in which I investigated how dance – Contact Improvisation– could become a tool for socio-anthropological research.

But, if this Master Thesis is about coherence between the means and the ends, and the ways in which to produce emancipatory knowledge, it is because this year I have experienced university in another way. Many teachers have shown me that Academia can be practiced different. In terms of pedagogy, they have shown me other ways of teaching, and I learnt that they have more "room for moving"- than what I thought, something that needs a lot of effort from them, which I am grateful for. Thus, I could state that this experience has in part reconciled me with the university and that this Master Thesis is in part meant to promote what critical social sciences' goal could be: fighting inequalities and facilitating **people's emancipation.**

The artistic dimension of my research comes from my experience in dance, as well as, inspired by an Uruguayan dancer and philosopher, a friend with whom I started to think society from the body and from dance. But, if my work is based on *recherche-cr ation* it is because Lise Landrin, who is currently working on this field, agreed to have a coffee with

me almost two years ago and told me that the –unorganized– ideas I had in my mind, were actually a field called *recherche-cr ation*, welcoming me to enter.

Thus, personal experiences and encounters with these persons, who have shown me that it is possible to practice university and research differently, have inspired me to ask myself how, by using a more coherent methodology, critical social sciences could foster: **peoples' emancipation.**

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this paper combines primary and secondary sources, coming on one hand from deskwork, principally literature review, and on the other hand, fieldwork mainly based on three (auto/embodied) ethnographies and two interviews.

The deskwork has been based on the reading of scientific papers, as articles and books, especially for the theoretical framework, but also authors, thinkers and projects who are not linked to Academia who have also nourished the theoretical framework and illustrated it from field examples.

The fieldwork has been developed by ethnographies, a research methodology based on a "fieldwork that allows registering culturally significant behaviors of a society" (personal translation from (Giner et al., 1998), but in which I incorporated the researcher self from a body experience (auto/embodied ethnography). Two interviews have been done to complete the third ethnography. The first fieldwork was done in the frame of this Master, in which for a class entitled *When diversity becomes a problem: processes of 'othering' and building bridges*, we did a residence of *recherche-cr ation* in the Presqu'île neighborhood, in Grenoble, France. During this week I did an ethnography and autoethnography for analyzing the potentials of this methodology for social research. I was part of the residency, as student, and during the week I worked on a field notebook. This notebook and the booklet later presented as a trace of this residency has been the material from which I have worked.

The second fieldwork was still in the frame of my Master programme, and it took the form of an internship of *recherche-cr ation* for five months a half in the research laboratory Pacte, within the *Performance Lab* project. My material comes from my experience working in support to the invited artist and researcher Rachel Gomme, and her project *Street Tree-Twinning*. I focused specially in the two weeks we worked, the most experimental part of *recherche-cr ation*, in which I participated as intern and as a dancer, for analyzing the potential of this methodology.

The third fieldwork has been in the frame of a theater company called *La Pagaille*, which works with the Theatre of the Oppressed, and I have specially focused on two workshops in which I participated as member of the company and co-organizer. For the ethnography and



autoethnography I mainly used a fieldnote notebook I wrote at the end of each day, describing the work done and the questions I was starting to ask to myself.

These (auto/embodied) ethnographies have been complemented with two interviews with three of the participants of the workshops in order to dig in some specific elements for data collection. The first one was done in English because the participant was a native English-speaker and the second one was done in French with two participants, and afterwards translated into English by myself. They were recorded, transcribed and translated (the second one). The two interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

### Some comments on the methodology

The first remark to be done is that the fieldwork –except the interviews– of this Master Thesis, was not designed for answering a previous defined research question, but rather the three experiences have been used as a field of study and reflection of how some experienced tools can be mobilized in a research process. Thus, they are briefly described for contextualizing, but the focus has been put on studying what are the potential features of these methodologies and how the tools experimented can be articulated in an emancipatory research process.

Secondly it is important to note that this Master Thesis has been produced in English because of this Master's criteria, however its process has been thought, spoke, and written in English, French and Spanish. Then, it is nourished from texts -literature review, my own notes from empirical experiences- and people -interviews, my tutor, my family, my friends, videos- in these three languages, and while using it as material, it has been translated into English by myself supported by dictionaries and translators. It is noteworthy that some texts which have been official translations were not used because of time and access limitations, as it is of Foucault, which I had already worked in Spanish, or Sousa de Santos's *Descolonizar el saber, reinventar el poder*, which English version I did not find. Thus, there are many excerpts which were translated in English by myself, however I hope the sense or the main ideas of the authors, thinkers, interviewed are well reproduced. Finally, when I appreciated as needed, I added the citation in the original language in a footnote.

"In a performance of possibilities, moral responsibilities  
and artistic excellence culminate in an active  
intervention to break through unfair closures, remake  
the possibility for new openings, and bring the margins  
to the shared center . . .

[It] does not arrogantly  
assume that we are giving voice to the silenced, for  
we understand that they speak and have been speaking  
in spaces and places often foreign to us."

(Madison, 2005: 178)

## CHAPTER 1. For an emancipatory knowledge production

### 1.1. Epistemic violence in the Western knowledge production system

#### Power and knowledge

The articulation of knowledge and power has generated and still generates controversy for its impacts in the representation and production of the world. The knowledge production system and its functioning has occupied a major part of the thinkers' work who have promoted the post-modern turn. Foucault, Said, Spivak, hook, among many others, have analyzed "power as constituted through dominant ways of knowledge, which in turn gain their influence through their association with powerful position within networks" Sharp (2009: 110). For them, the relation and permanent interaction between knowledge and power, is considered to be inseparable.

On the one hand, power, as a concept, has multiple definitions depending on the field of application and the approach; for this thesis, we will depart from the relational approach of power developed by Foucault. This author understands power not as a structure or as an institution, nor even as something to be acquired and conserved –mostly tackled from a political sciences' tradition–but instead, power as intrinsic to all relationships that occur. As Foucault illustrates, in a doctor-patient or teacher-student situation, power is not owned by the doctor/teacher, because if the patient/student leaves, the doctor/teacher does not have power anymore, it needed the two individuals, it is needed a relation, for power to be. And what is important from this analysis is that what determines how these relations will occur, and that power circulates in one specific direction, are the contextual or enabling conditions derived from the institutional apparatus for their functioning; they are relations of force immanent and proper of the domain in which they are exercised, and that are constitutive of their organization (Foucault, 2002) (Foucault, 1979).

From this relational dimension of power, the Freirean analysis –although from a different theoretical current– is of great relevance for understanding that “any situation in which the objective relations between A and B, A exploits B, A obstructs B in its search of affirmation as a person, as a subject: is oppressive. Such situation, implying the obstruction of this search is, in itself, violent” (personal translation from Freire, 1984: 54). Over this basis, this

paper studies how an unequal relation generates oppression, and violence as the way in which an oppressive relation is produced and reproduced.

On the other hand, knowledge, as a concept, means understanding, intelligence or reason (personal translation from Real Academia Española, RAE). Episteme, means knowledge, complex or compilation of knowledge. Knowledge, moreover, conditions the ways of understanding and interpreting the world at certain time periods (personal translation from RAE). From these definitions it can be argued that knowledge cannot be separated from the historic context in which it was produced, then it has permanent changing character over time; and that knowledge production impacts in the ways in which the world is understood and built, then looking at how knowledge is being produced seems an imperative task.

### Epistemic violence

When crossing knowledge with the Freirean schema of relations – in which oppression and violence are put forward as the effect of unequal power relations– a specific type of violence is produced: epistemic violence.

The notion of epistemic violence comes from a "colonial reading of power relations, created and perpetuated by the stakes (*enjeux*) of knowledge production" (personal translation from Gatelier, 2020). Some postcolonial authors, as Spivak, uses epistemic violence to refer to violence which is "done to the ways of knowing and understanding of non-western, indigenous people" (Spivak 1994 as cited in Sharp, 2009: 111). Then, the West is positioned as a "globalizing center" which exerts its hegemony by monopolizing knowledge production (Spivak, 1999), imposing one view of knowing and acquiring knowledge, which will be presented as universal over the others.

However as Gatelier points out, epistemic violence "is articulated and complemented by other relations as those based on class, gender, race, religion etc." (Gatelier, 2020). For this paper epistemic violence will be tackled from this large perspective, including violence coming from all these variables that articulate an unequal social system.

Focusing on knowledge production system and its functioning in western countries, it is embodied in institutions as universities. These are composed of research centers, with scholars and researchers who form the *Academia* complex system of knowledge production, intertwined by different power relationships with all kind of actors from the public and

private sphere. Importantly, the *Academia*, and the ways of knowing of those who are or have been in power – which are part of *Academia* or influence it – have been held up as universal, objective and/or neutral, and other forms of knowledge have been rendered as “less valid, or even downright wrong” (Sharp, 2009: 111).

However, as Standpoint theorists<sup>1</sup> claim:

Even if there is an important effort to make scientific knowledge appear as universal, neutral and therefore devoid of direct relations with certain political, cultural and social factors; knowledge is always produced in specific historical and social situations (Piazzini, 2014).

### The impact of epistemic violence

The consequences of this unequal knowledge production system are: the deprivation of the oppressed of their power to speak, or more exactly to be heard; and the obstruction of their agency as knowledge producer subjects. Not surprisingly, both elements in turn, means that make possible this system to reproduce.

Spivak's essay *Can the subaltern speak?* evidences the impact of epistemic violence, as already poses the problem of “speaking for the cultural others” (Sharp, 2009). The others, marginalized people, or in terms of Spivak, the subalterns, are the least powerful, as the poorest classes, women and tribal groups<sup>2</sup>, who have been silenced and deprived from the power to speak for themselves. Moreover, this author defends that, even when they are apparently expressing themselves, they are not able to express their real self because if they want to be taken seriously – meaning as having knowledge and not opinion or folklore – they have to use the codes and reasoning of the “westerners”. Thus, “the *lifeworld* of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Standpoint Theory was mainly incorporated into academic and political discourses via feminist and post-colonial theories. It is a theory based on "three principal claims: (1) Knowledge is socially situated. (2) Marginalized groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions than it is for the non-marginalized. (3) Research, particularly that focused on power relations, should begin with the lives of the marginalized" (Bowell n.d.)

<sup>2</sup> Besides the categories Spivak notes –class, gender and ethnicity- I add people oppressed because of reasons of disability, age or nationality. From an intersectional approach (cf. Crenshaw 1991), the more oppressions intertwine, the more oppressed one person will be.

subalterns is translated into the language of science, development or philosophy, dominated by western concepts and languages” (Sharp, 2009).

The last important contribution of this author on the matter lies in denouncing, rather than claiming, that these voices have not been raised: she argues that these voices speak and have been speaking from spaces and in forms, which are not heard from the *Academia*.

In this line, hooks also does an open critique towards western academics’, for not opening knowledge production process to “others” knowledge(s), theories and explanations and just seeking in them, their experiences. The author stands: “Re-writing you (...) I am still the author, authority. I am still colonizer, the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk”. (hooks in Ferguson, 1990). In an autobiographical way, the author explains how her experience has been re-told from a western point of view and her voice has been treated as data, testimony or experience, which only an “expert” can interpret.

From Said and his concept of *orientalism*, we learn that this epistemic violence has made the West-self, the subject of history and Orient-other as its object. Moreover, this author argues that the content and shape of the Orient, as a result of power relationships, has been built by the West and for the westerners, in specific and intentional ways in order to justify the “West” domination of the “East” (Said, 1978).

From Gramsci and his notion of *cultural hegemony*, this statement is of special relevance: for knowledge to be powerful it has to be hegemonic, it must be accepted to some degree as legitimate, by the ruled and the rulers (Gramsci and Sacristán, 2018); thus, it is not just how “we” know “them”, but also how “they” are persuaded to know themselves (Sharp, 2009). Then, from this author it is crucial for this paper two elements: the active participation of the oppressed for reproducing domination –which will be tackled in 1.3. section on the body–; and that the legitimation of the domination by the oppressed is possible because of an alienation process –which will be tackled in 1.2. section on emancipation from a Marxist approach–.

Thus, epistemic violence allows the rulers to become the subjects, to express their word, and then, to build and represent the world, in intentional ways to legitimate their domination. And at the same time, this knowledge production system is possible, both by depriving the

oppressed to speak, to be heard and act, turning them into the object, and on the other hand by their own legitimation of the system, resulted from alienation.

Besides the critique done by postcolonial and critical studies, from feminist<sup>3</sup> epistemologies it is also denounced the frameworks of interpretation from which social sciences knowledge is produced. According to Blazquez Graf (et al. 2010), there are two main problems with respect to these frameworks of interpretation, on the one hand, "the dependence on the logical dichotomy" and on the other, "the tendency to conceptualize people by abstracting them from their social context".

By dichotomous logic, the author understands the process by which the meaning of one phenomenon is given by opposing it to another, in a construction in which they are represented as mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Some of the main built dichotomies are mind/body, self/other, culture/nature, reason/emotion, masculine/feminine, and the importance of these dichotomies generating epistemic violence is that:

"Generally, dichotomies hide social relationships that allow members of one social category to benefit at the expense of those in the other category. The point is that dichotomies are ways of building social relations that facilitate social domination, so critical attention must be paid to how they are used to organize understanding and knowledge" (personal translation from Blazquez Graf et al., 2010: 24).

The second element or problem identified in these frameworks from which social sciences interpret its observations, is the abstraction done by isolating and disconnecting the individual from its interpersonal, historical or physical context. The consequence of this abstraction is that, it makes possible to conceive social phenomena as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual preference or limitation of abilities, isolated from each other, although "in fact they are complex social relations that are interrelated" (Blazquez Graf et al., 2010).

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<sup>3</sup> The following part is based on authors collected in a book named *Feminist Research: epistemology, methodology and social representations*, then their critique towards social sciences frameworks come from feminist epistemologies. However, feminist, critical, postcolonial or feminist studies and epistemologies should not be taken as exclusive, because the authors can be identified in one or many of these currents, as it is the case of hook who can be placed in all these epistemological currents.

Feminists, in line with post/anticolonialism – or the other way round – then, problematize this phenomenon and argue that it contributes to a process of dehumanization, turning individuals into data, without subjectivity, and not as agents who develop analyses of their situation and work to resolve it, then their agency is being obstructed.

Thus, epistemic violence resulted from Western knowledge production system, makes the oppressed incapable to speak for themselves, to be heard, and impedes their agency as knowledge producer subjects. This epistemic violence is the triggering for fighting for an emancipatory knowledge production.

## 1.2. Emancipatory knowledge production

Knowledge production is crossed by power relationships generating what has been called epistemic violence. In this part we will study how emancipatory knowledge production can be a way to reduce, eliminate or at least fight this violence. For doing so we will be looking at the contributions of critical thinkers and/or researchers.

First of all, it is important to claim that for knowledge production to be emancipatory, it necessarily has to be critical. Critical epistemologies cover a large variety of approaches, perspectives and understandings of how knowledge should be produced, and this is because, “there is no comprehensive ontological position that underpins all critical social sciences” (Wigger, 2016).

However, instead of – once more – looking for differences among critical thinkers, we will look at their common denominator: “an ontological primacy to the negative by problematizing existing conditions of inequality, exploitation and oppression, (...) (and) a positive ontology, in the form of emancipatory and transformative agency” (Wigger, 2016). Negative ontology in this sense, is understood as putting into question, explaining and criticizing the existing social order and prevailing ideas; and positive ontology as the formulation of “coherent visions of alternatives that allow the transcendence of this order” (Cox 1996: 90 in (Wigger, 2016). Critical scholarship, as stated by Cox implies both.

To be critical then, implies:

“Unification of theory and practice, in which critical scholars contribute actively to the politicization and the resilience of social struggles. It implies leaving the ivory towers of



academia that safely distance scholars from activist struggles on the ground” (Wigger, 2016).

From this critical knowledge production frame, the following sections it will be analyzed how and why including an emancipatory dimension in knowledge production is necessary for fighting epistemic violence.

### 1.2.1 Contributions from a Marxist approach

The concept emancipation was mainly introduced in the *Academia* by Marxist researchers inspired by the Marxist theory of emancipation. Marx and Engels with regards to emancipation argued that "every emancipation is a *restoration* of the human world and of human relationships to man himself". Marx in his work lead the discussion of emancipation to "to the conditions of people themselves" in order to make individuals aware of their social practice and thus to make it available for them. (Marx/Engels 1956, 1,p, 370, Marx/Engels 1978, p.46 in Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik, n.d.).

There is a large Marxist literature on the notion of emancipation, but having extension limitations we will just note from the Marxist class conflict schema the importance given to, first, consciousness awareness (of workers) of their oppression, for afterwards, to organize themselves and act to tackle their problems.

Inspired by the Marxist theory of emancipation and Hegel’s philosophy, the pedagogue Freire, developed the so-called *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*<sup>4</sup> which I argue can serve as a bases for an emancipatory knowledge production. One of Freire's cornerstones is to understand education as inseparable of politics. While describing his work as educator, he pointed out his role of conscientization and politization of the oppressed and defended education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1984: 21).

According to this author, societies in which structural dynamics lead to the domination of consciences "the dominant pedagogy is the pedagogy of the dominant classes” (personal translation from Freire, 1984: 9). Thus, and resonating with Gramsci’s concept of *cultural hegemony* – mentioned in the first section – the author claims:

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<sup>4</sup> Original term: *Pedagogia do Oprimido*

“In a regime of domination of consciences, in which those who work more can say their word less, and in which immense multitudes do not even have conditions to work, the dominators maintain the monopoly of the word, with which they mystify, massify and dominate. In this situation, the dominated, in order to say their word, have to fight to take it. Learning to take it from those who hold it back and deny it to others is a difficult, but essential learning process; it is the pedagogy of the oppressed" (personal translation from Freire, 1984: 22)<sup>5</sup>.

Understanding the importance of the oppressed to speak out, the author devoted a major part of his work to communication, and how the oppressed can conquer their own word. By putting forward the relational dimension of dialogue, Freire focused on its importance as the “constitutive process of conscience” needed for the subject’s emancipation, as well as, for phenomenizing and historicizing the essential human inter-subjectivity (personal translation from Freire, 1984: 19).

Moreover, the word, as the origin of communication (and not as an instrument), according to Freire, needs to be conquered by the oppressed, for expressing and constructing the world, for consciously, assuming the role of the subject of their own history (Freire, 1984).

Thus, and applying these tenets to knowledge production, I consider emancipatory knowledge production should be based on the oppressed becoming actors, subjects, and authors of their own story. But for restoring this dialogue and fight against the, so far, monologue of Western knowledge production, it is needed a reconfiguration of the means and ways for producing knowledge. Moreover, Freire influenced research-action researchers –chapter 2– and the principles of the Theater of the Oppressed –chapter 3–, then this author will resonate all along this paper.

### 1.2.2. Contributions from an Anarchist approach

Emancipation appears also as central in some anarchist scholars’ work, and the importance for this paper comes from the relevance anarchism gives to the relation between the means

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<sup>5</sup> Original citation: "En un régimen de dominación de conciencias, en que los que más trabajan menos pueden decir su palabra, y en que inmensas multitudes ni siquiera tienen condiciones para trabajar, los dominadores mantienen el monopolio de la palabra, con el que mistifican, masifican y dominan. En esta situación, los dominados, para decir su palabra, tienen que luchar para tomarla. Aprender a tomarla de los que la retienen y niegan a los demás, es un difícil, pero imprescindible aprendizaje; es "la pedagogía del oprimido"

and the ends in one hand, and to agency on the other. For doing so we will pay special attention to Wigger's paper *Anarchism as emancipatory theory and praxis*.

Anarchism defends the idea that strategies and tactics ought to reflect the ends, this coherent relation –between means and ends– is somehow what is sought in this paper, which is translated into the following premise: methodologies in which knowledge is produced should reflect the ends of the research.

This attention paid to the way things are done intertwines in anarchism with the importance given to agency and the capacity to act. Anarchists frequently emphasize the fact that anarchism is something you do, not something you are, giving then an intentional and consequential dimension of agency. Moreover, agency "is predominantly understood as overcoming and acting against social structures, rather than reproducing such structures" (Wigger, 2016: 134).

The primacy given to agency is reflected in anarchism's methods of *transformative praxis*, such as prefigurative politics, direct action and propaganda by the deed (Wigger, 2016). In the following part prefigurative politics will be analyzed for what it can contribute for an emancipatory dimension of knowledge production.

According to Daily (2005: 34 in Wigger, 2016), prefiguration implies that "the way in which ongoing transformative praxis is organized already entails a presentiment of the envisaged future society". For anarchists then prefiguration contains an "embryonic representation of the anticipated anarchist future", although prefigurative politics only contain "an incomplete glance of the anticipated future, and that present-tense experiments and practices are always unfinished and imperfect, and thus in process"(Wigger, 2016: 135).

When applying this proposal to knowledge production, the result is *prefigurative research* and what I claim is that this can be a powerful emancipatory methodology because "it reflects the wished-for future in which critical scholars align their ontology, epistemology and methodology and map it onto movement practices" (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014: 22 in Wigger, 2016). An example of *prefigurative research* will be illustrated in chapter 2.

### 1.2.3. Putting the body at the center:

#### The body as the space from which to produce emancipatory knowledge

In the last section it has been argued that critical social sciences imply negative and positive ontology; negative ontology by problematizing and criticizing the unequal social order, and positive ontology by the formulation of alternatives through emancipatory and transformative agency to transcendence this order.

From this ontological premise, in this section we are going to look at the potential of the dual character of the body for knowledge production. In one hand, the body is the space where power relationships traverse, then it can be considered as the mirror of society from which critical research should depart. Nevertheless, since the body is also the center of individual action, consequently it is the vehicle which allows –and actively produces and reproduces – power relationships, as well as, the space from which to resist and transform them. This dual character of the body shows the necessity, for an emancipatory knowledge production to be possible, of putting the body at the center of research.

#### The body as the mirror of society

For looking at the body as the reflect of society, we come back to Foucault's notion of power, and specifically on what the author has defined as *biopower*, for evidencing how power has invaded life and how "it is in life and throughout its development where power establishes its force" (Own translation from Foucault, 1979: 167).

In his book, *History of Sexuality, Volume I: The Will to Knowledge*<sup>6</sup>, the author makes a typology of the power over life and how it has been organized and developed, since the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries, in two main forms: *biopower* and *anatomy-politics*. Both are based on control through surveillance and discipline; however, while *biopower* focuses on the control of the population (*body-species*) through the regulation of its biological processes –as birth rate, mortality, health, longevity etc.–; *anatomy-politics* puts the focus on the control of the bodies, which understood as machines, it is pretended their productivity maximization, the hoarding of their forces and their docility (Foucault, 2002)

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<sup>6</sup> Original title: *Histoire de la sexualité: La Volonté de savoir*. Published in 1976.

For this paper, both concepts –*biopower* and *anatomy-politics*– are important for evidencing how "power relations penetrate the body"<sup>7</sup> (personal translation from Foucault, 1979: 153), modeling and disciplining it, to enclose, imprison and conduct its behaviors (Antón and Damiano in Marín, 2010). Thus, as a result, the body has become a battlefield, and what can be found are, bodies economically useful and politically conservative (Foucault, 2002).

Then, taking the body as the mirror of society and of the social relationships in which it is immersed, can allow social research to understand how the discomfort of the bodies – derived from the social struggles– is the "symptom of the immanent contradictions of the social order" (personal translation from Antón and Damiano 2010: 31). The first proposal with regards to the body is to consider it as an indicator of disagreement or dissatisfaction<sup>8</sup> towards the social order, for making observable what remains unobserved. (personal translation from Antón and Damiano 2010: 21).

Moreover and focusing on agency and body(ies), what is especially interesting is to focus on bodies' behavior for analyzing their scope of action. Bodies' scope of action is delimited by social relations, and translated into individuals, as an evaluation of what it is, and what it is not, possible to do.

In this field, the Sociology of the Body is in part devoted to this question, and authors, as Le Breton, evidence how each situation is "implicitly limited by a scope of corporal, gestural, facial positions" (personal translation from Le Breton, 2012: 126), and this unwritten or taken for granted bodily behavior is the result of the interaction of sex, social level, age, degree of familiarity with the interlocutor, and the context of interlocution (Le Breton 2012). Although this body behavior is considered as intuitive, it is the result of a socialization process.

Due to its potential as a research indicator of discomfort towards the social order, it is argued that emancipatory knowledge production should put the body and its agency at the center of research for, from a negative ontology, turning it as the space main space from which criticize and problematize social inequalities.

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<sup>7</sup> Original citation: *Les rapports de pouvoir passent à l'intérieur des corps*. Interview conducted by L. Finas, in *La Quinzaine Littéraire*, n. 247, 1-15 January 1977. Pp 4-6.

<sup>8</sup> Original terms: *malestar*, *disconformidad*

The body's agency:

The body as the vehicle of power relationships

So far the body has been analyzed from a passive approach, as an object for observation or as an indicator to be used in social sciences. However, as mentioned in above, what is important for this paper is the dual character of the body, then in the following two sections the body will be tackled as the center of individual action, putting the focus on its agency.

The body makes power relationships possible because of its inherent capacity of action (agency). In Sartre's book, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*<sup>9</sup>, the author describes how a waiter interiorizes the gestures of his job and specifically focuses in how the individual "plays to be a waiter" (Sartre, 2017). Thus, while bodies "play a role" or "play to be", they are actively producing and reproducing power relationships in which they are immersed.

Goffman's *dramaturgical interactionism* also points this idea of playing a role, and the author uses the metaphor of the theater in his book *Presentation of the person in everyday life*, for explaining:

"On the stage one player presents himself in the guise of a character to characters projected by other players; the audience constitutes a third party to the interaction (...) In real life, the three parties are compressed into two; the part one individual plays is tailored to the parts played by the others present, and yet these others also constitute the audience (Goffman, 1956: 7).

During an interaction, understood as any meeting of individuals in continuous mutual presence, the *performance* of the actor is the activity that aims to influence the other participants, and the *role* (part) the pre-established pattern of action during the performance. The social role, defined as the enactment of rights and duties attributed to a given status, would imply one or more roles (Goffman, 1956).

Goffman's notions of *performance*, (*social*) *role*, and the parallelism he does between theatre and real life, are key elements for this paper, which we will take in the third chapter.

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<sup>9</sup> Original title: *L'Être et le néant : Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*. Published in 1943.

Butler (2011) also inspired by this idea of playing a role, focuses gender issues and claims that "gender is *performative*" meaning that when a person is acting a gender role through his/her behavior, gestures and acts (the performance), s/he is actively building it, consolidating an image of being a man or a woman. Moreover, this performance needs of repetition for stylizing the body (*body style*) (Butler, 2007: 271), and the actors themselves to "believe and act in the modality of their belief" (Butler 2007: 274). Then, gender as a "performative realization", exists only as long as it is acted (Butler, 2007: 10).

As a result, relevancy is given to body's agency from Butler's contributions by revealing how gender, or in a larger analysis, class, race and other identity categories, are social constructs, learned and internalized into individuals (belief) which actively produced and reproduced by bodies' performances (action). From a negative ontology, this methodological proposal puts forward body's agency in reproducing unequal social relations; however it is also an attempt to open ways for exploring bodies' agency for different –resisting or transformative– actions.

The body's agency:

The body as the space from which to resist and transform power relationships

"There is something we have lost in our insistence on the body as socially constructed and performative, (...) the fact that our body is a receptacle of powers, capacities and resistances".

"Our struggle then has to begin with the re-appropriation of our body, the re-evaluation and re-discovery of its capacity to resist, and the expansion and celebration of its individual and collective powers" (Federici, 2016 s/n)

Federici's statement, in line with the proposal developed in the book *Choreographies of resistance* (Väyrynen, 2017) appear as fundamental in this field since, they do not just focus on the oppressed bodies and how they reproduce power relationships, but also, from a positive ontology, they analyze bodies' political agency and power of resistance.

In this line, critical social research could foster emancipation by re-articulating the capacity of bodies for obstructive, resistant and transformative action by which "they disrupt existing scripts and orders that others seek to impose on them" (Väyrynen, 2017: 3); as well as,

evidencing that "bodies have more agentive capacity and political potential than usually assumed" –assumption resulted of a power relationships game– (Väyrynen, 2017: 11).

In this sense, an emancipatory knowledge production process, is understood in this paper as an "embodied terrain of agency and action" (Väyrynen, 2017: 10), whose aim is to reveal "the agency of the seemingly excluded" (Ackerly and True 2006: 249 in Väyrynen, 2017: 10), by seeking all the possibilities of action for individuals transformative agency. However, since "spaces for political agency never simply pre-exist" (cf. Manning 2007 & 2009 in Väyrynen, 2017), special attention should be paid to how these spaces are configured.

Finally, since it is through movement how the body enacts its own agentive capacity (Väyrynen, 2017), methodologies and tools analyzed in this paper –chapters 2 and 3– focus on bodies in movement for fostering a more emancipatory dimension of research



## CHAPTER 2. Looking at the means:

### What methodologies in accordance to the research objectives?

The first chapter was dedicated to analyze why critical social sciences should envisage emancipatory knowledge production. This second chapter digs into this question by looking to the ways to achieve this objective, seeking coherence between the means and the ends, so studying methodologies in accordance to this (final) research objective.

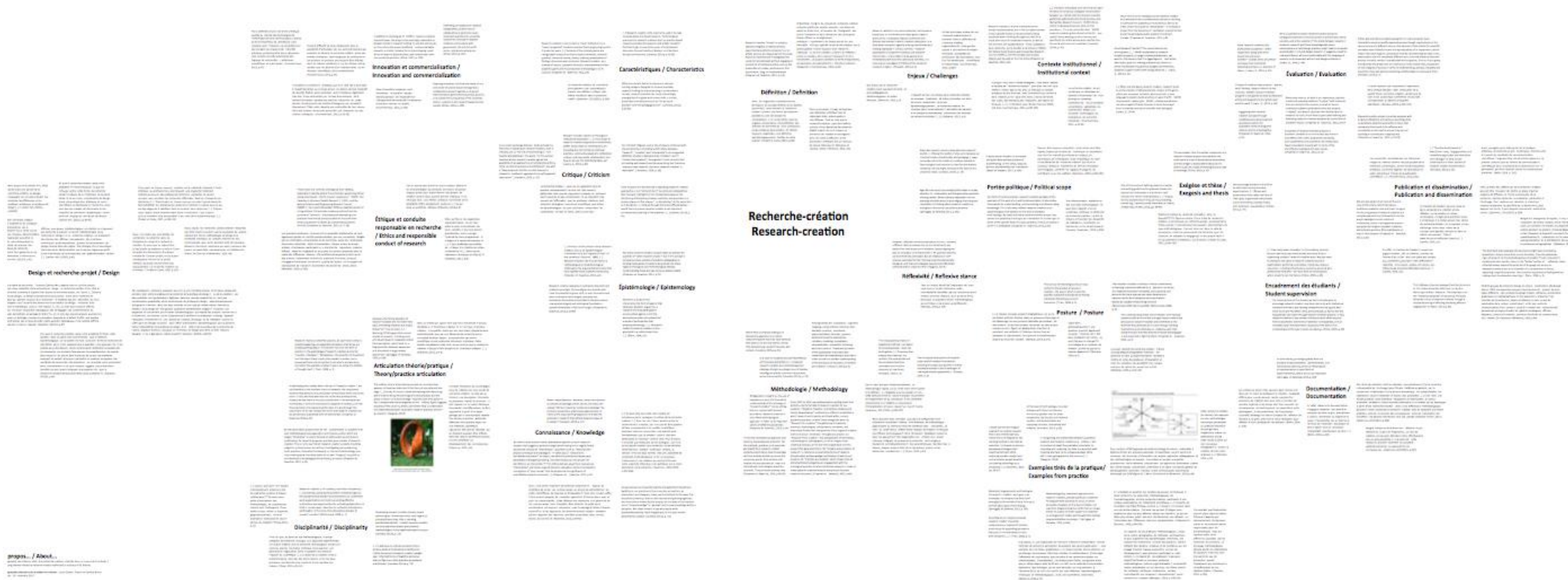
The two methodologies chosen are *recherche-cr ation* and research-action. The reasons of this choice lie, on one hand, on my personal experience in performative arts and *recherche-cr ation*, and on the other hand, stem from realizing, while experimenting *recherche-cr ation* and studying it as a methodological tool, of its missing social role, what brought me closer to research-action. Thus, this chapter is devoted to analyze the political interaction between both, *recherche-cr ation* and research-action, to analyze to what extent they can potentially be methodologies that allow a more emancipatory knowledge production. It will be nourished from researchers and/or artists, study cases, and examples from my own experience.

In relation to the above mentioned emancipatory potential of these methodologies, it is important to clarify that *recherche-cr ation* and research-action are not inherently emancipatory methodologies, but I rather argue that some elements of their idiosyncrasies can be mobilized in order to approach a more emancipatory knowledge production.

#### 2.1. *Recherche-cr ation*

*Recherche-cr ation* has a variety of definitions, but in this dissertation I will be using some of those presented by Paquin and Noury (2017) in *Cartographie en cours de la litt rature sur la recherche-cr ation*, in which the authors, to avoid inherent reductionism of any definitional approach, rather map the diversity of its practices (Paquin and Noury 2018).

Image 1. *Cartographie en cours de la littérature sur la recherche-cr ation*<sup>10</sup>



Important note: The purpose for presenting this map lies more in its aesthetic dimension rather than in its content –the information relevant for this paper is later presented–. Thus, not wanting to modify the original presentation, but being conscious of the difficulty for reading it, I encourage the reader, if interested, to check this work available in: [https://www.acfas.ca/sites/default/files/documents\\_utiles/Cartographie%20en%20cours%20de%20la%20litt rature%20sur%20la%20recherche-cr ation.%20%28Paquin%20et%20Noury%2C%202017%29.pdf](https://www.acfas.ca/sites/default/files/documents_utiles/Cartographie%20en%20cours%20de%20la%20litt rature%20sur%20la%20recherche-cr ation.%20%28Paquin%20et%20Noury%2C%202017%29.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Personal English translation: Ongoing Mapping of Research-Creation Literature

In their map, the authors include the definitions of many authors, such as the one by Stévanche and Lacasse, in which *recherche-crédation* is defined as a "research approach based on, or through a creative process, that encourages the dissemination of artistic production and discourse of a theoretical nature"<sup>11</sup> (Stévanche et Lacasse, 2013 as cited in Paquin and Noury, 2017); or the one by Chapman and Sawchuck in which they explain that:

"Research-creation "theses" or projects typically integrate a creative process, experimental aesthetic component, or an artistic work as an integral part of the study. Topics are selected and investigated that could not be addressed without engaging in some form of creative practice, such as the production of a video, performance, film, sound work, blog, or multimedia text" (Chapman and Sawchuk, 2012: 5-6 as cited in Paquin and Noury, 2017).

Besides these two definitions, the one from Quéinnec is also fundamental to the extent that *recherche-crédation* is characterized as a "practice through critical reflection, itself introduced into the creative process". (Quéinnec , 2011/2012: 205 in Paquin and Noury, 2017).

For this paper we will nourish and start from these authors, then we will consider *recherche-crédation* as a methodology integrating an artistic dimension and a critical reflection through practice, and the task will be to explore, what potential *recherche-crédation* could have as a methodology for an emancipatory knowledge production in critical social sciences.

### 2.1.1. What elements from *recherche-crédation* can be mobilized for a potential emancipatory knowledge production?

Among *recherche-crédation* features –which do not apply to all such practices, it is worth noting, first of all, the search of what has been conceptualize as sensible reason (*raison sensible*). Blanc and Legrand (2019) in their work *Vers une recherche-crédation: explorer la portée transformatrice des récits dans les relations au milieu de vie*, claim that it is not possible to separate science and rational knowledge from intuition and feeling.

Since reason has been usually linked to science and emotion to art, this first premise somehow opens the door for put into question this constructed separation, and to think in a

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<sup>11</sup> Original citation: C'est pour cela que la recherche-crédation peut-être définie comme "une démarche de recherche établie à partir de ou à travers un processus de création encourageant dans son sillon la diffusion d'une production artistique et d'un discours de nature théorique?" (Stévanche et Lacasse, 2013) (Stévanche, 2012, p.8)

potential interaction between them. As Amilhat Szary (2016) argues in her paper *Asserting the critical potential of social sciences -/ arts experiments? A portrait of the researcher as an artist*, this interaction, in the first instance, allows to rethink "the creative dimension of cognitive processes".

A second feature of *research-cr ation* is the importance given to space-time situated experience<sup>12</sup> and experimentation. In their paper, Blanc and Legrand when explaining their work on the field, explain:

"*Recherche-cr ation* implies taking the field as a lived experience in order to materialize it through practices that are both artistic and scientific"<sup>13</sup> (personal translation from Blanc and Legrand, 2019: 55).

And what it is an important contribution from this methodology to include in a research process is that by putting the focus on experience and experimentation, primacy is given to the process over the results: the importance do not lie in the research result, but "in the very process of maturing that result" Amilhat Szary (2016 n.d.)<sup>14</sup>. *SenseLab*, a pioneer structure in *recherche-cr ation*, regarding its events or activities explains:

The *SenseLab*'s product is its process, which is meant to disseminate. The measure of success is the creative momentum that spins off into individual and group practices elsewhere, to seed new processes asserting their own autonomy<sup>15</sup>.

These mentioned features of *recherche-cr ation*: the search of the sensible reason, the priority given to the creative dimension of a cognitive process, to be based on experience and experimentations, and putting the process over the results; are thought-provoking for their potential to contribute for an emancipatory knowledge production.

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<sup>12</sup> In Spanish I would use the notions of "experiencia" and "vivencia", but in English both are translated as experience.

<sup>13</sup> Original citation: "Pour notre part, le travail de recomposition auquel nous nous attachons passe par une approche artisanale. La recherche-cr ation suppose en effet de prendre appui sur le terrain comme un v cu afin de le mat rialiser par le biais de pratiques qui sont   la fois artistiques et scientifiques"

<sup>14</sup> I would like to note that due to the structural functioning of research in *Academia*, and do not know to what extent creation-researchers can avoid the importance given to research results and evaluation.

<sup>15</sup> SenseLab's website: <http://senselab.ca/wp2/about/>

First of all because they imply a critique to hegemonic scientific rationalism and its defense of the reason as the only way towards knowledge –predominant paradigm in social sciences production, as it was presented in the first chapter–. Thus, *recherche-cr ation* confronts this dominant academic paradigm, intervenes in the “regime of truth” of the university and, epistemologically and methodologically, challenges "the argumentative form(s) that have typified much academic scholarship" (Chapman and Sawchuk, 2012: 6 in Paquin and Noury, 2017).

Secondly, producing knowledge which puts the accent on people's experiences, sensations, and creativity, promotes a larger conception of knowledge, the ways in which it can be produced, favoring an ecology of knowledge(s) and widening the spectrum of who can be considered as a knowledge producer. By doing so, moreover, the researcher figure can be re-positioned, and can help to de-hierarchize the knowledge production system. In this line, when explaining their research process Blanc and Legrand (2019: 69) point:

"The field (is turned) into a laboratory of lived and situated experiments not exclusively reserved for the researcher. The latter therefore invites residents, artists and designers, designers of facilities to collaborate by seeking to limit the effects of power, following the principles of collaborative research. In this way, we wish to show the creative force of knowledge based on the intertwining of activities associated with the environment as the primary engagement in space and the writing that emerges from it a graphic or sound production."

Then, some features of this methodology are worthy to mobilize in a research process since they can contribute to re-politicize and democratize knowledge production and favor an ecology of knowledge(s) (Santos, 2010), both, key elements for contributing to a more emancipatory knowledge production. Then, if this paper is interested in an interaction of research and arts is because:

"What is at play in the relationships that are forged between sciences and the arts is certainly a desire to shift the hierarchies inherent in the manufacturing and structuring of knowledge" (Amilhat Szary 2016 n.d.)

### 2.1.2. Art(s) from this methodological proposal

*Recherche-création* approaches art from different angles and uses a multiplicity of arts and artistic tools, for this paper the approach towards arts is conditioned by its final objective, how to produce emancipatory knowledge production, then it this paper is influenced by approaches towards the social engagement art can have, in artists that understand art as a way to transform society.

In an interview with Rancière, the author explains:

In contemporary societies (...) art does not illustrate politics or creates forms of political conscience anymore (...) we are in a situation of overlapping of different spheres (...) And given the raising impoverishment of the official political sphere, we assist to the fact that artists become a sort of militant or researchers<sup>16</sup> who try to rebuild the visibility of common events (...) Increasingly artists take in charge ways of political research or become participants in political protests, but not simply as artists at the service of politics, but as performers<sup>17</sup>.

And continues:

The ways of political protests nowadays occur less in the traditional ways (...) but more by occupying the streets. And those are aesthetic<sup>18</sup> ways: they do not lean on political parties but they are ways of occupying collectively a public space. (...) There is an increasingly research dimension and political activism from artists, and an aesthetic feature of politics".

The analysis of this author is relevant to the extent that it points the erasure of the border between activism, art and (social) research and somehow this is the political interaction sought in this paper. Art, from this approach is conceived not as a representation of reality, but rather as a weapon to give shape and to transform reality (art and social role), and when intertwined with knowledge production (research) can be a powerful mean for an

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<sup>16</sup> In the interview the author uses the French terms: *chercheurs* and *enquêteurs*. This last concept can be translated as researcher or interviewer.

<sup>17</sup> Rancière illustrates this idea by mentioning the work of the filmmaker Eyal Weizman, who according to the author, no longer represents political events, but tries to reconstitute them (...) To know what happens in a bombardment in Gaza

<sup>18</sup> Aesthetique according to the author is related to sensitive experience (*expérience sensible*)

emancipatory dimension in critical social sciences.

In relation to what arts in particular are going to be used for this paper, it is important to mention that, whereas *recherche-cr ation* takes a large variety of creative practices, performative arts and specifically in theater –as we will see in chapter 3– will be tackled. This choice lies on my personal experience in performative arts, *recherche-cr ation* and inspiring examples on the field by researchers and artists as Lise Landrin and Julie Armenio, who made me discover a new and exciting field, how to use theater for social transformation and research. Moreover, because of the corporeal dimension of research sought in this paper –as seen in the first chapter–, theater can be a potential tool for putting the body in the center of action –and research–. The third chapter will be devoted to analyze, what tools, specific features, and types of theater, to mobilize for this methodological proposal.

### 2.1.3. An (auto/embodied) ethnography of two *recherche-cr ation* experiences

#### *STREET TREE-TWINNING PROJECT at PerformanceLab*

##### Description

As part of this master, I did an internship in PACTE within the cross-disciplinary project *PerformanceLab*<sup>19</sup>, funded by UGA under IDEX, from January to May 2020. In the project, the internship was carried out at the *Choreographic Cartographies* workpackage, specifically at the research laboratory entitled *Geo-gestes*, and in support to the artist-researcher Rachel Gomme and her project *Street tree-twinning*.

The project *Street Tree Twinning* explores individuals' relationships with trees in their environment and the urban choreography produced and facilitated by trees. Gomme's aim is to investigate ways of engaging city-dwellers' relationships to trees in the street, and in other public spaces, and building communities of celebration and support around these trees.

This artist-researcher works the *material resonance* between trees and humans through techniques from the body as: Body Mind Centering, Body Weather, Authentic Movement and Stillness; as well as other methods including: sensitive cards, walking, drawing and the use of materials.

For developing this project in Grenoble within *Performance Lab*, her research was

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<sup>19</sup> *PerformanceLab's* website: <https://performance.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr>

organized in the following stages:

- Exploration of Grenoble's public trees, focusing on street trees
- Observation of residents' engagement with street trees [SEP]
- Solo choreographic exploration of dance with/for particular trees [SEP]
- Group choreographic exploration of dance with/for particular trees, and of in-situ choreography with groups of trees. [SEP]
- Workshops with local residents to explore relationships with street trees, including haptic engagement, memory and everyday embodied relationship. (

In the next section it will be tackled specifically the stage of group choreographic exploration for having a more in depth vision of how *recherche-cr ation* was implemented.

### Group choreographic exploration

This stage of the research was a group choreographic exploration of dance with/for particular trees, and of in-situ choreography with groups of trees. Rather to relate to the trees as scenography or site, Gomme's aim was to research the possibility of "collaborative choreographies with these other beings in the city", "building on the everyday collaboration that constitutes city-dwellers' relationship with the trees in their environment" (Extract from Rachel Gomme's proposal for *G o-Gestes Performance Lab*).

She worked during two weeks with a group of 5 dancers –which I was part of–, indoor at *Maison de la Cr ation et de l'Innovation*, where the *Performance Lab* is based, and outdoor in different spaces of Universit  Grenoble-Alpes, as at Saint Martin d'H eres, and around the city of Grenoble. The exercises and techniques used were from Body Weather, Body Mind Centering, Authentic Movement, Bisoku and Stillnes.

Following there is an excerpt of one day of this group choreographic exploration, from my internship's field notebook, which I after digitalized. At the beginning I also added the legend and some notes to clarify the following writing. It was written in French, because it was the vehicular language during the internship.



## LÉGENDE:

- Description, faits observés
- Des mots/phrases utilisés par Rachel ou les danseur.euses que je veux remarquer (parce que j'ai partagé les mêmes sensations, parce que je trouve qu'ils décrivent bien le travail ou parce qu'ils sont de référents théoriques).
- Réflexions, positionalité
- TERMES/CONCEPTS ET CONNEXIONS THEORIQUES, (AVEC L'ENTRETIEN FAIT À RACHEL ET D'AUTRES TERMES QUI ME SONT VENUS À LA TÊTE PENDANT L'ÉCRIT)
- *Mots en langue étrangère*

## Clarifications

- *Arboretum* : parc sur le campus de Saint Martin-D'Hères, derrière la faculté de Biologie.
- *Maci*: Maison de la Création et de l'Innovation
- *Somatic Lab* : Salle destinée aux pratiques somatiques à la Maci. Les séances à l'intérieur avec le groupe de danseurs.euses se déroulèrent principalement dans ce espace.

9 mars

Aujourd'hui on travaille depuis les muscles. Comme tous les jours, on fait un échauffement guidé par Rachel et après on regarde le livre d'anatomie.

Ce travail c'est un peu comme avoir une palette de couleurs ou une boîte à outils. Chaque jour, on travaille quelque chose de différent qui nous amène à un mouvement différent.

On discute sur la lenteur. On a l'image d'un travail lent lié à quelque chose de mou, mais par contre notre travail est lent et en même temps vivace. Notre travail part depuis la lenteur mais est hyper présent, et sensitif dans l'environnement.

→ Lenteur + vivacité → RYTHME

→ Lenteur + présence → PRESENTNESS

On sort faire un exercice dehors, à côté de la faculté de sciences humaines. Sur une ligne d'arbres, chacun.e choisit un et marche pour le relier à un autre. Notre disposition va nous amener à des croisements entre nous.

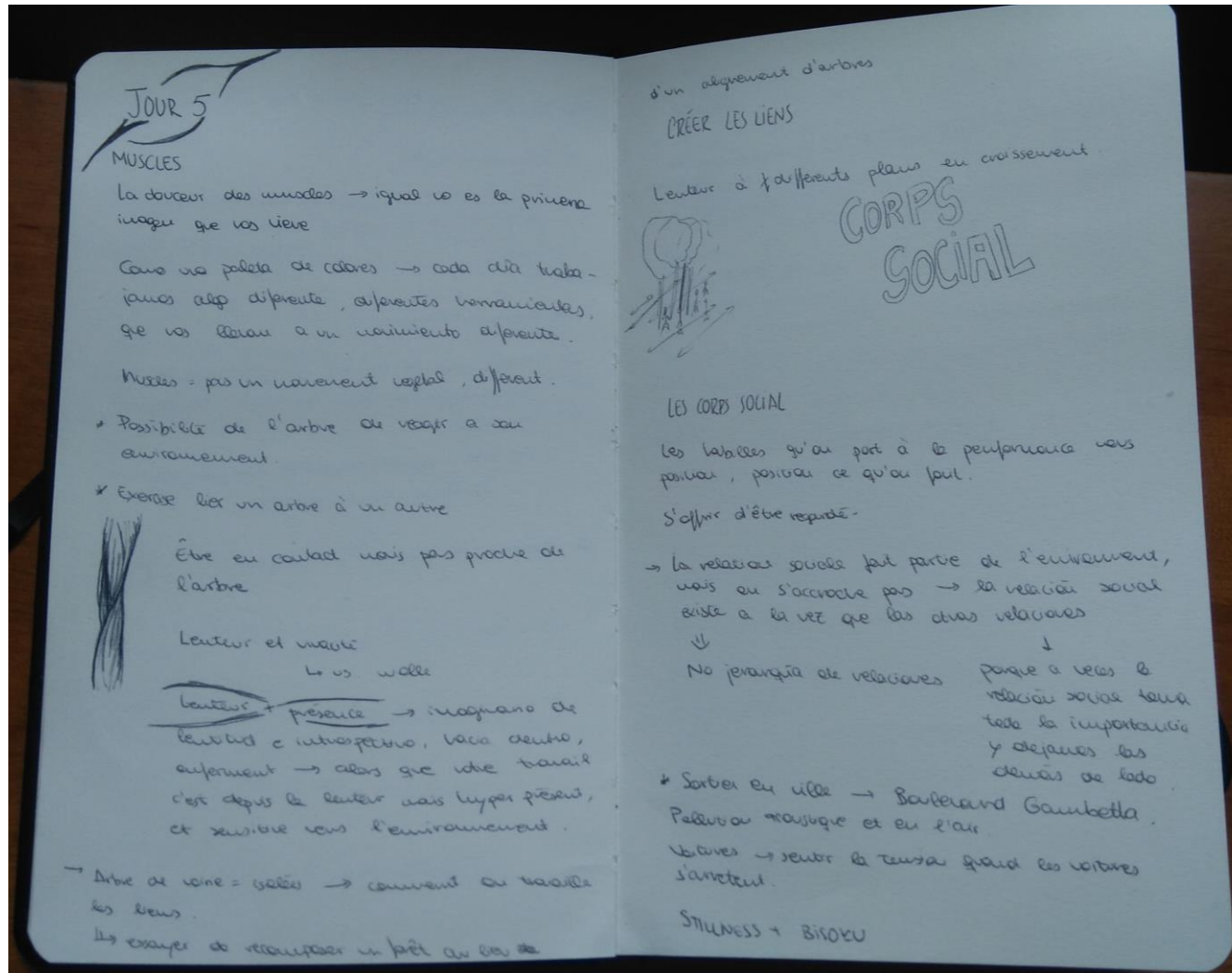
À la différence d'autres jours, aujourd'hui on est en plein milieu du campus. Il y a plein d'étudiant.e.s et de gens qui passent. Il y a des regards. Au *debriefing* plus tard les questions de « s'offrir à être regardé », et d'inclure ou pas un possible public, sont mis sur la table. Rachel parle de la hiérarchie des relations, et elle explique que la relation sociale faite partie de l'environnement, mais on ne s'accroche pas. La relation sociale existe au même temps que d'autres relations, souvent les relations sociales prennent toute l'importance, par contre Rachel refuse une hiérarchie de relations.

#### → DICHOTOMIE HUMAIN-NATURE → RELATIONS

Le concept corps social est noté dans mon carnet, quelqu'un.une a dû le nommer, mais je n'ai pas noté dans quel sens il a été utilisé.

Ici un extrait de mon carnet de terrain de la journée du 9 mars, écrit en français et en espagnol :

Image 2. Fiedwork's notebook





Lorsque je suis à côté de l'arbre, il y a une voiture qui arrive, qui veut se garer. Je réalise que moi, mon corps occupe une place de parking. Je me décale même si la consigne était de ne pas bouger. Je continue à regarder mon arbre. Une personne sort de la voiture et part.

Entre temps : Un homme dans sa voiture s'arrête au feu. Mon regard se dirige vers l'arbre, d'un coup je vois la voiture qui avance à 1 km/h et l'homme qui avance son corps pour mieux me regarder, je le regarde et il est extrêmement curieux, d'un coup, naturellement un gros sourire me sort, et l'homme me fait un énorme sourire. Il se retourne pour regarder, derrière, devant, sur les côtés, et il a les yeux très ouverts. Il comprend qu'on est plusieurs. Et comme un enfant dans un jeu il nous cherche et il cherche à comprendre le délire. Ça a été un moment magnifique.

Après la personne qui avant était sorti de la voiture revient. Il s'agit d'une femme, je crois qu'elle revient de la Caserne du Bonne. D'un coup, la femme me demande: « Mais qu'est-ce que vous faites?????!! » J'aperçois sa curiosité, elle essaye de comprendre. Je lui dis qu'on fait une recherche sur les arbres. Mais cette réponse ne suffit pas pour elle, elle veut savoir en quoi cela consiste. Je lui explique.

J'ai aussi beaucoup senti la pollution de l'air et la pollution acoustique. Je traverse la ville tous les jours pour aller à la Maci depuis le quartier Mistral (30 min de vélo), du coup je suis habituée à la pollution de la ville. Mais le fait de faire une activité si différente de ce que je fais d'habitude en ville, et d'« extrapoler » un travail qu'on a fait sur le campus dans un espace si différent (ici, le centre-ville) donne une sensation toute à fait bizarre et nouvelle.

Il y a aussi bien plus du monde –par rapport au campus, et à l'Arboretum- spécialement des voitures, qui s'arrêtent. Une des danseuses a souligné la tension ressentie quand les voitures s'arrêtent au feu rouge et au *debriefing* il est mentionné les sensations de lutte contre l'étouffement qu'on a eu. Par exemple, les racines des arbres qu'on voit, qui essayent de sortir/respirer du béton donne déjà une sensation d'étouffement.

Aussi on discute qu'on a eu plus une invitation à la verticalité au sein du travail au centre ville que sur le campus. Une danseuse souligne qu'une femme lui a demandé si elle allait bien quand elle s'est assise au pied de l'arbre. Du coup elle a dû répondre. Moi, le fait d'être si proche de la route, et sur des places de parking, ne me donnait pas la sécurité nécessaire

pour aller au sol car il était possible de ne pas être visible pour les voitures qui arrivent, et de me faire écraser...

- End of the internship's field notebook excerpt -

### *Street Tree Twinning Project's group exploration from a methodological approach*

This example is used in this paper for giving a glimpse from the field of *recherche-cr ation* from an embodied experience, the reflections which came along, and for studying the features of *recherche-cr ation* previously mentioned, and how they can contribute for an emancipatory knowledge production.

The first remarkable elements of this experience is as a research process from sensible, basically from a sensitive exploration of the trees, and establishing a relation through the body. Working this sensitive reason was personally challenging for trying to not rationalize my practice, what brought me closer to experiences of dance workshops rather than university and research. At this point it might be interesting to point out the difficulty in which I found myself –shared also by the other dancers– to translate into words our explorations, something purely from the sensitive; in this sense I guess this is one of elements creation-researchers confront in their work.

Secondly, although the exploration was mostly individual –body-tree–, after each exercise-exploration there was a *debriefing* with the whole group. What is worth noting from these moments is a sensation of a truly open space to share the experiences, it was a collective work in which all contributions were welcomed. From these moments I realized: first, Rachel Gomme and the other dancers were not looking for a specific outcome, but the value was rather given to the lived experience. Secondly, the space was welcoming feelings and emotions that came during the experience. And thirdly, all contributions were welcomed, and any of them was never rejected or rendered as less valid, most of the contributions were noted by Rachel Gomme in her notebook during these debriefing moments.

What I argue is that these features, or the way in which this research process was realized, brought to a –felt– horizontal relationship among the participants. There was an active contribution of all of us, and a very in depth engagement with the process.

Another element to point out is that, as a result of the tools used, the body was the vehicle for research and it was in the center of all action. Every morning we met at the dance studio for putting the "conscience" in the body, "awakening" our senses, for afterwards going outside to meet the trees and work the resonances with them.

Considering the artistic dimension of this research, there are two remarks to be done. I consider that dance or performance in this research was a mean for entering in contact with trees or the result of the *material resonance* with them. Thus, when *Performance Lab* asked Rachel to do a final performance for closing the project it was difficult to imagine it, what we had been doing was not meant to be shown. After discussing within the dancers group, we decided to do two different performances, both of 2 or 3 hours, one in the street in the city center and the other one in one of the parks where we worked, Parc Jean Verlhac, at Villeneuve neighborhood.

We planned to do the same type of work that we had been doing, but taking more in consideration a potential public (people who cross) and maybe putting some cards with notes to be read<sup>21</sup>. It is important to mention that those events are considered as "performances" –and not "exercises" as they were called during the research process– because according to Rachel, if there is an intention, if it invites people's attention then it is a performance (Extracted from Pammela's Hammar interview to Rachel Gomme on February 27th at *La Maison de la Création et de l'Innovation*).

Thus, although methodologically speaking it was really learning experience and I could see its potential, the research's aim remains on the trees and how to raise awareness of them in Grenoble. Then, with regards to the features to mobilize from *recherche-création* mentioned in last part, the outcome is that because of the way in which this research process was developed, from a body experimentation with major importance given to sensitivity and feelings, and to the debriefings as a open space for sharing the lived experiences; brought to a horizontal relation between the participants.

Finally, this internship was inserted in one of the four axes of research at *Performance Lab*, *Géogestes*, in which migration and exile appeared as a research topic, however, Rachel Gomme, as the artist-researcher chosen for this residency had a project not related to this

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<sup>21</sup> For reasons linked to Covid-19 these performances could not take place, but they will take place in September and October.

field. Then, this example was not is a social sciences field, neither from a critical framework; I am curious then to see how *recherche-cr ation* could be materialized in a research project framed in critical social sciences, how the subalterns can take place in a research process and how the body can enact for overcoming inequalities.

### VIOLENT PAIX

#### Description

Also as part of this Master, I took a class entitled *When diversity becomes a problem: processes of 'othering' and building bridges*, and this year, this subject was based in a residency of *recherche-cr ation* in the Presqu' le neighborhood, in Grenoble, from December 9th to 13th of 2019.

The pedagogic team was composed by Julie Arm nio, actress and stage director; Karine Gatelier, co-founder of Modus Operandi, an independent action-research institute in Grenoble; Lise Landrin, currently working on a PhD in PACTE laboratory (IUGA); and Claire Revol, associate professor at Institut d'Urbanisme et G ographie Alpine. The students attending this residency came from masters from –a priori– two different fields: *Cr ation artistique* (artistic creation) – UFR LLASIC and the one I am attending, *International Development Studies: Sustainability, Participation, Innovation*.

The theme and title of the residence was: "*Violente paix*": *What is violent in Presqu' le urban narrative?* and the course was an immersive and experimental workshop for questioning the spaces of the city and the narratives of transition from a performative experience focused Presqu' le.



Image 4: Pedagogical booklet's cover

**"Violente Paix" " : What is violent in Presqu'île urban narrative ?  
Research-creation in residence in Presqu'île neighborhood  
*Les corps pensants* - Embodied thinking**

**A cross disciplinary residence with two masters groups : Master *Création artistique* (artistic creation) – UFR LLASIC and Master International Development Studies – UFR IUGA  
9 – 13 of december, 2019**



photo taken in Grenoble- August 2019

### *Violent paix* from a methodological approach

This example, as the one exposed before, is used in this paper for giving a glimpse, from the field, of *recherche-cr ation* from an embodied experience, the reflections which came along, as well as for studying the features of *recherche-cr ation* previously mentioned, and how they can contribute for an emancipatory knowledge production. The particularity of this study case is that it is framed in social sciences from –what I consider to be– a critical approach.

Before looking at the methodology it is important to mention that the research aim<sup>22</sup> of this residency was to question the hegemonic narrative of transition and to propose counter-narratives. Moreover, it was tackled from a structural violence theoretical prism, and the field study was the urban narrative of Presqu' le neighborhood, due to the strategic paper this neighborhood is having in shaping Grenoble as an innovative metropolis and in the ecological transition agenda of the metropolitan urban projects. The two images below give a glimpse of how this is being developed.

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<sup>22</sup> Being framed in a Master curriculum, this residency also had pedagogical aims, common and specific for each Master, however, for this paper we will just be looking at the research objective in order to analyze it as a research methodology.





The methodology implemented was *recherche-cr ation* including a large and mixed variety of artistic tools from theatre, dance, drawing, writing; geographical tools as individual and collective mapping; as well as reading, watching videos etc. Following some specific tools will be analyzed for studying their potential for this methodological proposal.

*Derives* (Debord 1981) is the French word for urban explorations, which during the residency took the form of individual and collective walks, for capturing perceptions and sensations from the neighborhood. The outcomes of these *derives* were translated in different ways: by sharing through word, in small groups or with the whole group; for inspiring text writing; for drawing an individual *carto-strate* (described in the next paragraph) or a collective *carto-strate*; and as material for theater workshops or for the final performance.

The *carto-strate* was a notebook given to students, composed by a map of the neighborhood and different tracing-sheets that overlapped the map and, in which, after the individual *derives*, we had to represent our sensations. A legend was proposed for registering each element in which we focused in each *derive*: borders, zones or fluxes. The images below are the proposed legend for the *carto-strate* (image 7); and a student's representation of the fluxes in his/her *carto-strate* (image 8).

Image 7. Carto-strate's legend proposal

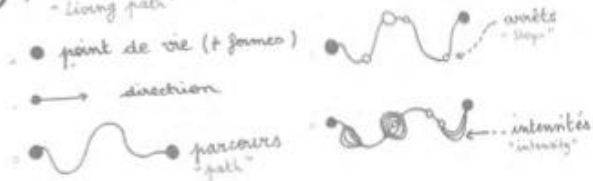
CARTO-STRATE  
CARTO-STRATUM

## Légendes [potentielles]

"potential legend"

### ① Parcours Vivants

"living path"



### ① Frontières

"border"



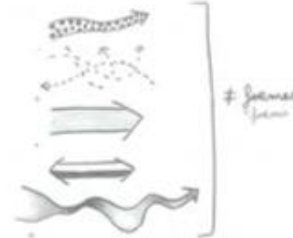
### ② Zones

"spots"



49

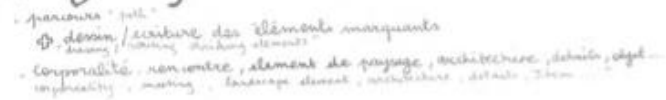
### ③ Flux



### ④ Carte Sensible

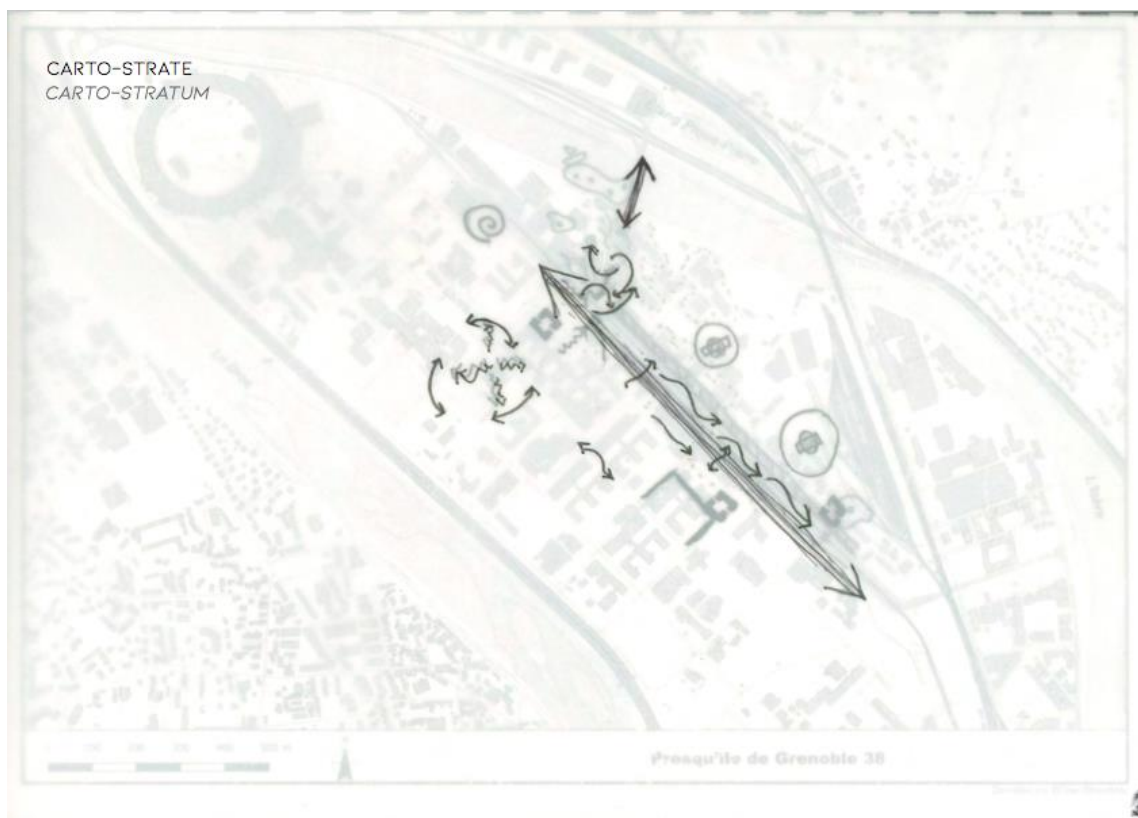


### ⑤ Paysage Vivant



50

Image 8. Fluxes' representation in a student's carto-strate



All along the residency, the body was at the center of the research. We did many theater exercises, games and instant composition performances for warming-up and creating. Some theater exercises were based on *Theater Image* –which is one of the varieties of the Theater of the Oppressed, the type of theater analyzed in the third chapter–. And for example, the first day after arriving, in a circle, we did an exercise in which we had to perform a body-statue based on what the neighborhood inspired to us when we first crossed the neighborhood that morning. Another exercise was to read out some phrases given to us, represent it by a body-statue or image, other students had to bodily complement for after being presented, comment and interpret the image.

We also had some debates and discussions nourished from bibliography the pedagogical team previously sent to us, based on violence, conflict and peace, and the role, they play in the "construction of an urban imaginary that informs our daily interactions in space" (Extracted from the pedagogical booklet of the residency).

From all the material produced and given during the week: writing, performances,



## HORIZON-UN SENS-PIÉGÉ.E.S

Cette performance a été créée pendant le séminaire «Violente paix» par les étudiant.e.s de Master 1 en Etudes de Développement International et Master 2 Création Artistiques Parcours Arts de la scène. A la suite de plusieurs discussions et ballades dans le quartier de Presqu'île à Grenoble, on nous a demandé de créer une performance de 5 minutes dans un espace public spécifique avec les matériaux recueillis pendant la semaine. Horizon Un Sens Piégé.e.s donne à voir une expérience du quartier de façon sensible et réelle afin de montrer la solitude et l'enfermement ressentis pendant le séminaire. Cette façade d'un endroit idyllique et vivable est peu à peu déconstruite au cours de l'évolution de la performance. Les performeuse.s veulent atteindre l'**Horizon** mais elles sont forcée.s d'aller dans **Un Sens**, inéluctablement **Piégé.e.s**.



Les constructions nous maintiennent restreint.e.s d'aller seulement dans **Un Sens**.  
*Buildings maintain us restricted to go only One Way.*





## HORIZON-ONE WAY-TRAPPED

*This performance was created during the seminary Violent peace by both Master 1 International Development Studies and Master 2 Artistic creations students. After discussions and walks in the neighbourhood of Presqu'île in Grenoble, we were asked to create a 5 minutes performance in a specific public space with the materials given to us. Horizon One Way Trapped makes the experience of this neighbourhood real and sensitive in order to show the solitude and the isolation felt during the seminary. This façade of the idyllic and liveable place is being deconstructed while the performance evolves. The performers need to reach the **Horizon** but they are forced to go **One Way** - inescapably **Trapped**.*



>En haut

**Alors que nous marchons, les alarmes, la circulation et les endroits isolés apparaissent à nous.**

**Les contrastes sont clairement visibles : la saleté, la propreté, l'ancien et le nouveau se mêlent.**

**Ce qui n'est pas visible, en revanche, c'est la violence structurelle qui en résulte, avec tous ces carrés et lignes qui nous entourent.**

>Up

**As we walk alarms, traffic and isolated places appear to us**

**Contrasts are visible: dirty, clean, old, new. What's not visible is its structural violence, full of squares and lines.**

>En bas

**Les clôtures nous gardent enfermée.s, nous empêchant d'atteindre l'Horizon. Nous nous retrouvons dans une boîte, faisant parti d'un puzzle, jouant un jeu.**

>Bottom

**Fences keep us Trapped, stopping us from reaching the Horizon. We find ourselves in a box, being part of a puzzle, playing a game.**

The first, and main, reason that makes this case study very revealing for this methodological proposal, is that it reveals a research process of creating a bodily counter-narrative versus a hegemonic urban discourse.

The approach towards the body and how it was articulated –previously presented- derive two key elements for this paper: a collective embodied thinking, and an embodied public counter-narrative. With regards to the first element, this experience was a collective embodied thinking, because the body was the mean from exploration, we researched by doing, from the sensitive, and the outcomes were collectively shared and discussed. Besides the tools given (artistic and scientific), the fact that there were students coming from an artistic field and students from a social field, made a very valuable experience of knowledge complementation and interaction of research and arts.

But at the same time, it was an embodied public counter-narrative mainly by how the body was immersed in public space. Although during the residency we had a "base-camp" in *Escape Espace* in Presqu'île –were we met in the morning, and left our stuff–, most of the time we were outdoors, –it was December in Grenoble, so I can still feel my frozen finger toes–. Thus, the neighborhood was our field case study, in which we explored and performed: we used space in a non-usual way; we occupied the space differently; and we finally embodied a counter-narrative of the neighborhood.

Therefore, the methodology implemented during this residency I think could be a powerful tool for critical social sciences, however, due to the fact that it was done in a pedagogical frame, this means that the participants were students and not the local population. I am curious then of the potential it could have by doing it on hand with the inhabitants of the neighborhood; but also with inhabitants of other neighborhoods of the city which might be excluded from this one.

The research process brought me to wonder: what are the limitations for old people or people with mobility limitations in a neighborhood in which there are no –or a few– benches on the street? What are the limitations for kids in a neighborhood where there is just one playground? What are the limitations for a low-class person in a neighborhood where the urban design is just meant for high-level jobs and consumption (stores, bars, restaurants) or studies? In this sense, a residency of this kind could make the seemingly excluded from this neighborhood or the already oppressed by its urban design to question: What and for whom

is Presqu'île designed for? And hopefully it might encourage population to act and pluralize urban narratives. If this is the case, then there would be an ontological, epistemological and methodological alignment, which could allow knowledge production to be emancipatory.

This question of who are, and what role, have the participants in a social research process as well as the social role of research itself –for fighting inequalities– is what raise my attention towards research-action tackled in the next section.

## 2.2. Research-action

*"La science est devenue aveugle dans son incapacité à contrôler, prévoir  
et même concevoir son rôle social"*

Edgar Morin

Addressing the definition of research-action has been a difficult task because of the multiplicity of approaches –as it was also the case for *recherche-cr ation's* definition–. For this paper we will mainly lean on SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research in which research-action is:

A term used to describe a global family of related approaches that integrate theory and action with the goal of addressing important organizational, community and social issues together with those who experience them. It focuses on the creation of areas for collaborative learning and the design, enactment and evaluation of liberating actions through combining action and reflection, in an ongoing cycle of co-generative knowledge. Another way to think about this is that it is really a shared-values stance founded on a commitment to generating knowledge through democratic practice in the pursuit of positive social change (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller in SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research 2014).

Under the tag of research-action there are different methodological strands, in this section we will be looking at specifically at Anti-oppression Research and Participatory Action

Research as methodologies that could complement *recherche-cr ation* and foster more emancipatory knowledge production<sup>23</sup>.

These two methodologies are important for this methodological proposal because first of all, they have the common feature of assuming a social role and an engagement in society as part of the research. On one hand and with regards to Participatory Action Research, as Pant argues (in Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014: 583), knowledge produced through this methodology "does not just intend to contribute to the theoretical corpus of the social sciences, but it also inherently contains an agenda of social change", or as Anadon ( 2007: 22) claims:

(It) is characterized by a political and ideological commitment to social transformation from the researcher towards the subaltern sectors of society. The researcher is considered (...) as an intellectual militant for the interests of the popular movement. In this context, action-research provides an important space for social participation and a method for political action <sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, Anti-oppression is described as research that ensures action, resistance and/or reciprocity, and understand that researchers using this methodology "walk away from research that might contribute to the further oppression of a community (...) and do not just focus on research: they focus on making systemic change within the institution so that research can be done in a truly anti-oppressive way" (Lavall e in Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014: 44).

Thus, these methodologies inherently incorporate a crucial element missing in *recherche-cr ation*, a social role for transforming society by criticizing structural power relationships and by capacity building and empowerment of the subalterns for overcoming them.

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<sup>23</sup> In SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research, Theatre of the Oppressed is considered as a methodology, however for this paper it will be considered as a tool for research.

<sup>24</sup> Original citation: (Recherche Action Participative)"se caract rise par un engagement politique et id ologique de transformation sociale de la part du chercheur   l' gard des secteurs subalternes de la soci t . Le chercheur est consid r  comme un intellectuel organique dans le sens gramscien du concept, c'est- -dire un intellectuel qui milite en faveur des int r ts du mouvement populaire. Dans ce contexte, la recherche-action constitue un important espace de participation sociale et une m thode d'action politique".

Secondly, these methodologies also have in common, the importance given to symbiotic relation of action and reflection, a key stone for this paper which also was a feature of *recherche-cr ation*. Moreover they recognize the importance of critical reflection and reflexivity in a research process, which I think should be included in from the departure and during the whole process of an emancipatory research process.

If we look to specifically to anti-oppression methodologies there are also inspiring elements to mobilize for this methodological propose, as it is the approach of power relationships and oppressions, from a micro and macro level as well as from intersectional dimension. On one hand, from a micro-level, anti-oppression research tries to effect change within the individual, as it can be empowering participants through a participatory action method; and on the other hand, from a macro-level perspective, it tries to affect change within policy and programs or contributing towards societal education and community development.

But it also tackles oppression from an intersectional approach, taking into account the multiple systems of oppression, such as gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, age, ability, madness and colonization. This vision is important to the extent that anti-oppression methodologies are concerned with all forms of oppression and recognizes that one form of oppression does not exist in isolation. As a result, it is not surprising the fact that anti-oppression research overlaps with other approaches to research such as critical, critical race, feminist, decolonizing, indigenous, participatory action or community-based research.

The second remarkable feature is that there is an effort to keep the anti-oppressive perspective all along the process, understanding that it should guide the research "from the formation of the research idea to the design and execution of the project, to the dissemination activities" (Lavall e in Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014: 40). This element I argue can help to the sought coherence between the means and the ends, or between the methodology and the research objectives.

On its own, Participatory Action Research methodologies are relevant for this paper due to the attention paid to the co-production of knowledge and participation. This methodology "emphasizes collaborative participation of trained researchers as well as local communities in producing knowledge directly relevant to the stakeholder community"; and this is done by "mobilizing local communities to have a concrete role in solving their own problems in an effective and systematic manner" (Pant in Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014: 583-588). This

feature is of special relevance because of the question raised in last section of the subaltern's role and participation in a *recherche-cr ation* process, and at the same time resonates with Freire –mentioned in chapter 1– who understood, thought (...) above all, as a collective act, which cannot be the exclusive attribute of a few (Freire, 1984); indeed, Freire's contributions inspired action-researchers.

An example of this Participative Action Research on the field is illustrated in *Les tours d'en face*, in which Dijkema, Gabriel and Koop, reconstitute the job done by a working group of researchers, students and associations who work on the link between the university and the Villeneuve, the neighborhood that surrounds the university in Grenoble city. In their work they put into question the purpose of social sciences as well as the so-called "participative" methodologies, and based their work in a co-construction of knowledge. For this co-construction of power, they understand that in a research process: power relationships should be overcome, relations should be built over reciprocity, there should be a recognition of the multiple knowledge sources and their complementarity, and a collective construction of research questions, interpretation and writing of the research outcomes (Dijkema et al., n.d.).

Hence, research-action, and specifically Anti-oppressive and Participatory Action Research, are crucial for this paper because, to recognize the social role of research and the subalterns participation in the process, are imperative elements for knowledge production to be emancipatory.

### 2.2.1. Modus Operandi

*Penser la recherche comme une praxis de l' galit *

Modus Operandi

Modus Operandi<sup>25</sup>, an association created in Grenoble in 2006, works from a constructive approach to conflict and seeks to act on conflicting situations as inequality of position, stigmatization, or power asymmetry; by making possible for the people concerned, to publicly speak –even in the form of confrontation–<sup>26</sup>. Modus Operandi "analyses the causes

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<sup>25</sup> Modus Operandi's website: <https://www.modop.org/modus-operandi/>

<sup>26</sup> Original citation: *(l'association) cherche   agir sur une situation conflictuelle d'in galit  de position, de stigmatisation ou encore d'asym trie de pouvoir, en rendant possible la prise de parole publique,  ventuellement sous la forme de la confrontation.*

of the different types of violence faced by the people concerned: structural, institutional, direct or physical, daily micro-violence and post-colonial legacy (epistemic violence)" and, according to them, the interest of this approach is to avoid the emergence of violence.

The social conflicts, in which the association works, involve groups that are excluded from power, perceived as violent, threatening or stigmatized; and by understanding that these groups have been minimized by the rest of society and by the public authorities, the aim of the association is to be an intermediary for making the voice of these social groups to be heard. They are organized in research collectives, and the methods used to study these situations focus on facilitating the participation and integration of the people concerned by these conflict situations. From a co-research approach, they also foster the intersection of knowledge and action, and develop different *actions de recherche* (research actions) in specific conflict situations.

Their work for making possible the subalterns to speak for themselves and to be heard, is very revealing for this paper because of tackling one of the main consequences of epistemic violence analyzed in the first chapter. To give a more in depth vision of their work and for analyzing how they implement this vision in their methodology one of their *action de recherche* called *A plus d'une voix* will be presented.

#### *A plus d'une voix* from a methodological approach

One of its *actions de recherche*, deals with the situation of asylum seekers in Grenoble, and takes the form of the radio workshop *A plus d'une voix*. For the past three years, this radio workshop has been offered to asylum seekers, as part of a French course, for creating a space for speaking, free from the relations of domination posed by the migration situation of its participants, then: offering the conditions for a speech emancipated from their subordinated condition and the possibility to be seen as autonomous political subjects.

The radio workshop operates on the basis of two-hour session per week, where participants exchange on the subjects they choose in a free discussion, they realize interviews between them or with guests, they listen current productions, live radio broadcasts or, they debate with a public following a listening.

Image 12. Workshop *A plus d'une voix*



Source: <https://audioblog.arteradio.com/blog/98862/a-plus-d-une-voix>

While discussing with Karine Gatelier, one of the persons in charge of this radio workshop, she explained to me:

It is both, radio production and research, in which in fact, we want to question and correct research relationship asymmetries. We see ourselves as a "research collective", we depart from a conception of a diversity of knowledge to be valued, from the postulate of the necessary *horizontalization* of knowledge, and therefore from the co-production of knowledge (Extracted from an e-mail exchange with Karine Gatelier, personal translation)<sup>27</sup>.

Moreover, this collective does an open critique towards conventional methodologies, due to its resulting epistemic violence, and they argue for a collective dimension of research by recognizing knowledge diversity and analysis capacity to all of the participants. They also start from an analysis of subalternity inspired by post-anticolonial thinkers; understand knowledge as situated; and focus on the importance of reflexivity, reciprocity, and equal relations in the whole knowledge production process.

Hence, they start from a critical framework and collect many of the approaches that have been taken for this paper, from critical, post-anticolonial and feminist epistemologies, and authors as Sousa de Santos –ecology of knowledge–, Spivak –subaltern–, Harding –

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<sup>27</sup> Original citation: *C'est à la fois un travail de production radiophonique et de recherche, mais où justement, on veut questionner pour les corriger les asymétries que pose la relation de recherche. On se voit comme un "collectif de recherche", on part d'une conception d'une diversité de savoirs à valoriser, du postulat de la nécessaire horizontalisation des savoirs et donc de la co-production du savoir.*



Standpoint theory—, or Freire and hooks -the importance of saying their own word, and reciprocity—etc.

But also, methodologically, it is an example of: research-action –chapter 2–, because of the incorporation of a vision of research based on the co-construction of knowledge, participation, fight against inequalities, then understanding the social role of research; but also by using prefigurative politics –chapter 1–, Modus Operandi thinks and acts research as a praxis of equality, developing a radio workshop for creating the conditions for speaking out (*prise de parole*), considered necessary for being considered as a political subject and getting rid of subalternity. The following excerpt illustrates their prefigurative research:

"While the condition of exiled cannot be abolished, the essentialisation of persons as exiled, can be. It is therefore a question of putting people in positions other than those of exiled, asylum seekers, etc., and of talking about subjects with which other people can identify. Dreams, anger or fear, for example, provide this opportunity to exchange and participate in public debate on common issues and to be seen as citizens. On a daily basis, in the workshop, the reciprocal questioning of participants is a way of putting equality into practice, in the choice of working methods, without sending it back to an indeterminate horizon, or a hope (Nicolas-Le Strat, 2017, Rancière, 2012)<sup>28</sup>.

Then, Modus Operandi work is a valuable example for this paper because of materializing some of the features of research-action presented above, incorporating the critical framework necessary for critical social sciences. Then this ontological, epistemological and methodological coherence of this association is an inspiring example of how to produce emancipatory knowledge production. However, understanding the potential of arts, and research which departs from the subaltern bodies themselves what this paper looks for is an interaction of both *recherche-cr ation* and research-action.

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<sup>28</sup> Original citation: *Si la condition d'exilé-es ne peut  tre abolie, en revanche l'essentialisation des personnes comme des exilé-es peut l' tre. Il s'agit donc de mettre les personnes dans d'autres positions que celles d'exilé-es, de demandeur-ses d'asile etc. - et de parler de sujets auxquels peuvent s'identifier d'autres personnes. Les r ves, les col res ou la peur, par exemple, donnent cette possibilit  d' changer et de participer au d bat public sur des sujets communs, et d' tre vu-es comme citoyen-nes. Au quotidien, dans l'atelier, l'interpellation r ciproque des participant-es est une fa on de mettre en pratique l' galit , dans les choix de m thodes de travail, sans la renvoyer   un horizon ind termin , ou une esp rance (Nicolas-Le Strat, 2017, Rancière, 2012).*

### 2.3. INTERACTIONS BETWEEN RECHERCHE-CRÉATION AND RESEARCH-ACTION

In the last two subsections *recherche-cr ation* and research-action and analyzed specifically what elements could be interesting to mobilize for this methodological proposal. This last subsection is devoted to a political interaction between them, for analyzing how it could allow a more emancipatory knowledge production, but also the challenges and limitations that could appear. While posing a political interaction of *recherche-cr ation* and research-action, this paper seeks to the potentialities of the mentioned elements from *recherche-cr ation* on one hand, and from Antioppression Research and Participatory Action Research on the other.

This interaction can be productive because by arts-based methods are considered to be participatory by definition, engaging and accessible and exciting, elements which while applied in a research-action process could be a potent tool for **engaging** the community or the oppressed social group and having and **active role** and **participation** in the research project.

Moreover, these methods, in terms of **data collection**, are considered "to capture the reflexive, insightful and creative capacities of participants" (Wilson and Flicker in Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014: 58), which might be a key element for working from a different angle, some specific social issues which are –a priori– difficult to tackle, as for example gender violence, sexual abuses, bullying etc.

In this sense, an interaction of this methodologies could potentially foster emancipatory methodology because it will be producing knowledge from the subalterns in a way that it is emancipatory in itself, engaging the oppressed not only in the research process but in their seek of ways to fight the social issues they confront.

However, and there are some limitations and challenges, in this proposed interaction between *recherche-cr ation* and research-action, to take into consideration. Asserting arts as a useful tool for working with marginalized communities –because of their accessibility and ties to historic and cultural traditions–, can first of all, counterproductively contribute to homogenize and disempower the community because: they insinuate problematic assumptions about the competences, culture, or artistic or educational level of marginalized communities, who are considered to gravitate more readily to song, dance and image, rather than to written or numerical methods, such as surveys" (Wilson and Flicker in Coghlan and

Brydon-Miller, 2014: 60).

Secondly, they are costly, require advanced technical expertise and be demanding of time and human resources. This requires special consideration and strategizing on the part of those interested in employing these approaches. Related to the nature of funding systems and the costs associated with arts- based approaches, in many cases these projects are short-lived interventions and are unable to influence policy in any measurable way (Wilson and Flicker in Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014).

Hence, although the high potential of this methodological interaction, there are some challenges and limitations to which to pay special attention for, and the most important, not reproducing epistemic violence or reinforce power inequalities. In the next subsection there will be presented an example, from the field, which –I argue– implements both *recherche-création* and research-action methodologies.

### 2.3.1. Urban Aboriginal Diabetes Research Project

This research project<sup>29</sup> focuses in urban aboriginal diabetes and the objectives are: to gather information regarding Aboriginal cultural perspectives about diabetes and barriers to diabetes management; to identify challenges that Aboriginal peoples living with diabetes in the greater Toronto Area experience; and to uncover misconceptions and cultural nuances in order to identify barriers and interventions that will enable positive health outcomes in Aboriginal people with diabetes.

This example was chosen because of the close link to some of the social issues linked to my Master as it is health issues in an indigenous communities, however for this paper we will not be looking in depth to the social issue, but rather the vision of research it has, and how to how work has been conceived and developed. As described in its report:

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<sup>29</sup> This part is based on the Urban Aboriginal Diabetes Research Project Report downloaded from <https://www.ryerson.ca/asbr/asbr/examples.html>

*"One of the key outcomes of this research is the importance of understanding the range of perspectives on what diabetes is and means to Aboriginal people living with diabetes, based on their own experiences. (...), their voices are diverse while also affirming a wholistic vision of Aboriginal health. Diabetes is not only a physical illness, but also one interdependent with mental, emotional, and spiritual conditions, themselves connected with Aboriginal family, community and cultural health and well being. Challenges to managing diabetes identified by participants in this study may also be better understood and addressed by taking into account broader socio-cultural, historical, and economic issues, in addition to other aspects of the whole lives of persons with diabetes (...)*

*The findings in this report are particularly instructive and meaningful because the voices of Aboriginal people living with diabetes are at the center. This was made possible because the project was directed by the principles of Aboriginal governance of Aboriginal health research, with the incorporation of Aboriginal values to research. This ensured that the project built capacity within the Aboriginal community, directly involved the Aboriginal community, and provided outcomes that will be of immediate help to the community, including recommendations for programme and policy development. (...)*

*In keeping with the values of Aboriginal research, the project also began with the establishment of the Governing Circle (...) included: a male and female Elder, two Aboriginal people living with diabetes (male and female), and two Traditional Healers (male and female). Capacity building components of the project included co-mentorship among the project research scientists, the hiring and training of Aboriginal research staff, and training of the researchers and staff with the research methods adopted for the project. Community-based participatory research methods ensured continuous engagement between the research team and participants, as well as with the Governing Circle and Anishnawbe Health Toronto throughout the research process from design through dissemination of the findings".*

I consider this research project vision and implementation very significant because they put the community in the center: research departs from the experiences of the diabetic persons – taking into account their social, cultural, economic and historical contexts–, they assure their active participation, and they include the community's values in the research process. All this is intentionally done for developing capacity building of the community, then this project includes in its research process a social role.

When focusing in the methodology implemented in this project, it is found a variety of

methods and research activities as: Concept Mapping, further quantitative analysis with a statistical software programme, Photovoice and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection. The later is going to be presented more in depth for analyzing if it is a potential tool for an emancipatory knowledge production project.

Originally the Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection<sup>30</sup> was developed by Dr. Lynn Lavallée –one of the two principals co-researchers of this project– in 2005 when she was contemplating the challenges of researchers applying meaning to participants' words and thoughts. According to Lavallée, making a symbol, like a dream catcher, painting, drawing, or beading is a spiritual experience, opens the door to expression and healing, and leads to an in-depth understanding of a particular topic. The principle of the Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection is the connection to spiritual experience and Indigenous cultural protocols. Circles, where participants share their symbols and stories, are important factors that accompany the method.

It is important to also remark that this method encourages publish the findings of the research in plain language, community reports and open journals available free and on-line and the participants themselves to present their work at conferences or in public forums.

Thus, this methodology is a valuable example of emancipatory knowledge production –in the terms this paper proposes–, because it includes the research-action features presented in last section, but also intertwines with *recherche-cr ation* by using art as a tool for easing the participants to express themselves and engage them; artistic tools which moreover are chosen according to the cultural and historical context. However in this paper it is sought an approach to arts from the performative and from the body, thus, next chapter will be devoted to analyze how theater forum can be a potential tool for an emancipatory knowledge

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<sup>30</sup> This part is mainly based in Lavall e's website dedicated to Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection: <https://www.ryerson.ca/asbr/asbr/index.html>

## CHAPTER 3. Forum Theater as a tool for emancipatory knowledge production

From a *recherche-cr ation* and research-action methodological framework, this chapter is devoted to study theater, and in particular Forum Theater, as a tool that could foster a more emancipatory knowledge production in social research. The choice of studying this tool comes from discovering that Theatre of the Oppressed –which Forum Theater takes part of– it is being used in social research, but also and specially because when experimenting it I could see the potential of art, activism and research articulation in its practice.

For studying Forum Theatre, and before passing to an intensive analysis, there will be presented the type of theater from which this paper depart from, and the theater current from which Theater forum is part of. The corpus consists briefly on literature review, and mainly on an (auto) ethnography and two interviews.

### 3.1. Theatre

*La soci t  est un spectacle que nous pouvons transformer*

Ru'elles<sup>31</sup> (cf. Debord *La soci t  du spectacle*, 1967)

Theatre, as a performing art, has a wide variety of currents, types and styles; for its accordance to the research question, for this paper it is revealing Applied Theater, which is defined as:

The practice of theatre that has been adapted, shaped, morphed and re-deployed by practitioners, educators and facilitators to bring about, for both participants and audiences, a heightened awareness of human and social issues through a focus on a particular topic. (The goals of Applied Theater are to) challenge the societal norms and encourage reflection in order to bring greater understanding with a view to empowerment of its participants" (Kandil in Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014: 608).

These features result in a type of theatre that first, can be practiced outside of conventional theatre spaces as in classrooms, community halls, work spaces, village settings, or streets;

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<sup>31</sup> Rue'lles is a collective of artists and researchers established in Grenoble, which develops *Th atre D clencheur* (triggering theater) in a "wish to surprise, reveal the invisible and question our daily lives in situ". Ru'elles' website: <http://www.ru-elles.com>

second, it may or may not involve a performance since the aim is not a final artistic product; third, it may include trained actors, but often does not; fourth, the spoken text generally emerges from improvisation, rather than pre-written script.

Thus, the goals of this practice –raising awareness (*concientizar*) and emancipation –, and the ways in which it is developed –in non-conventional spaces, open to non-experienced participants, focusing on the process and not in the results–; make of this practice a powerful tool, fitting ontologically with critical social sciences, and epistemologically with this research-action and *création* methodological proposal.

Going a step further and narrowing on the importance of participation in a research process –putted forward from research-action in the last section–, Participatory Theater appears as an illuminating tool. This theater practice, one among others under the umbrella of the just mentioned Applied Theatre, "generally plays an educational or interventionist role, that involves its audience in discussion and dialogue about the performed piece and in which the audience and the performers or presenters interact during and/or after the performance"(Kandil in Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014: 608).

Thus, since this methodological proposal pretends theater as a tool for social research and action, the type of theater sought is one which aims the oppressed emancipation through raising consciousness on social inequalities and agency for transforming them; and framed by Applied and Participatory theatre, the Theater of the Oppressed and Forum Theater seem to fit within.

### 3.2. Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum Theatre

Theatre of the Oppressed was systematized in the 1960s by Augusto Boal who was highly influenced by Freire –mentioned in chapter 1– and his pedagogy of the oppressed. Thus, Boal's final goal for developing this type of theater was empowering the oppressed, and training them to liberate themselves from oppressions, for their emancipation.

Authors, as Esterri (2004) describe Theater of the Oppressed as a collective seek, from the marginalized or disadvantaged people, of constructive proposals to social issues for fostering active and participative transformation of the community through art. Boal himself, in his book, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, describes his participation in the theater sector of the national plan of alphabetization in Perú, *Operación Alfabetización*, from which he

systematized this practice in four stages (Boal, 1989):

1- To know the body

2-Turn the body as expressive

3-Theater as language

4-Theater as discourse

What it is important is that Boal focuses on this process by which the spectator becomes "spect-actor", subject, actor, and dramatic action transformer; a process of agency development which starts from the body. From his experience in Perú and being conscious of the distance between alphabetizers and peasants, Boal argues that theater should start from the body of the participants, rather to something alien to them. Thus, the first exercises focus on putting the attention into bodies for unraveling the muscular structures resulted from an alienation imposed to bodies from work, and from this concientization, build new structures (Boal, 1989).

In this process, Forum Theatre takes part in the third stage "theater as language", and –in an attempt to present it the most synthetic way possible– it consists in:

Performing a play or a series of scenes with the purpose of highlighting a situation where an individual or a group is oppressed by another individual or group. The performance is taken to the community whose issue is being investigated and played in its entirety once. The performance is then replayed, and the audience is invited to stop the performance at moments when they see an act of oppression taking place. The audience member who stopped the performance is then asked to make suggestions to the actor playing the character of the oppressed individual as a means for that character to resist the oppression. Sometimes, the 'spect-actor' will perform his or her own suggestions within the scene. It is quite common for suggestions that are then played out to meet with obstacles or negative repercussions as the other characters respond to this new input as they think might happen in real life. Someone from the theatre group, called the 'Joker', is assigned the task of 'liaising' between the audience and the performers. The role of the Joker is very important in keeping the dialogue alive and current and within the bounds of what the drama is exploring. At times, the audience feels the need to change the actions of the oppressor, but that goes against the rules of forum theatre, which focuses on creating change instigated by those who are oppressed, because it is they who need to



find their voice (Kandil in Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014: 608).

This theoretical contribution is going to be complemented by an (auto) ethnographical work and two interviews done for investigating how Forum Theater can be a tool for emancipatory knowledge production in critical social sciences.

### 3.3. An (auto/embodyed) ethnography of Forum Theatre

#### *La Pagaille*

I came to be interested in the potential of Theatre of the Oppressed for social research thanks to Lise Landrin –presented in chapter 2– who uses this type of theater as a tool for social geography and specifically focuses on gender issues in rural Nepal. Highly inspired by her work when I moved to Grenoble this year I started to practice Theatre of the Oppressed, for experimenting this tool from myself, with a company and association called *La Pagaille*<sup>32</sup>.

*La Pagaille* constructs artistic actions and spaces for reflection within the fields of social transformation, popular education and *artivism*. Seeking dignity, justice and equity, the association bases its efforts on disseminating the tool of Forum Theatre as widely as possible<sup>33</sup>.

Image 13. La Pagaille



*La Pagaille : art et éducation populaire*

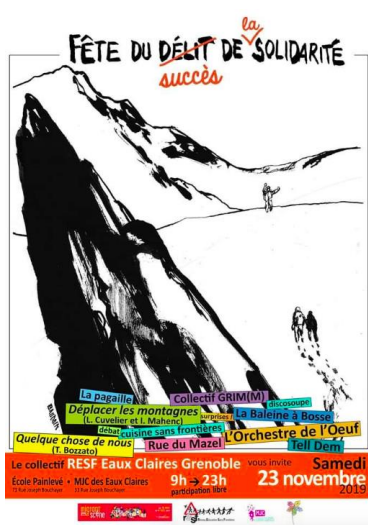
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<sup>32</sup> La Pagaille's website: <https://lapagaillesite.wordpress.com>

<sup>33</sup> Original citation: La Pagaille a pour objet la dignité, la justice et l'équité. Elle s'appuie sur un mouvement de rencontre, de construction d'actions artistiques et d'espaces de réflexion. Ses actions s'inscrivent dans les champs de la transformation sociale, de l'éducation populaire et de l'artivisme. Nous faisons partie de la grande famille du théâtre de l'opprimé, et souhaitons diffuser le plus largement possible l'outil du théâtre forum.

By chance I discovered *La Pagaille* and went for the first time on a Wednesday night of mid-November to an self-formation workshop of Forum Theatre at *l'Espace Partagé Vigny Musset*; and three days later I found myself performing at *Fête du succès de la solidarité*, an event organized by RESF Eaux Claires in partnership with *Migrant'scene* about migratory questions. From this departure and during this academic year, I came to be quite engaged in this association and assisted regularly to the self-formation workshops.

Image 14. *Fête du succès de la solidarité*



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10218081244456503&set=gm.2576479875965457>

For analyzing Forum Theater as a tool for emancipatory knowledge production, the next sections will be based on an (auto)ethnography and two interviews done to three participants of the workshops as a fieldwork.

## Two workshops of Theatre of the Oppressed

### Description

The first workshop is done on June 3rd, with a group of 10 people. As always, we do a shared picnic before starting, then the coordinator introduced the workshop, and the company because they were new participants, and organized some warm-up games.

The workshop starts by paying attention to breathing, stretching and "waking-up the body", for putting consciousness into the body. Afterwards we play some games, to get to know each other and to create a group, since some of us do not know each other.

For example, one of games consists in organizing the group by some features, random features as "feet", the participants have to look for features in common, as it can be with or without socks, or the design of the socks, and groups are then formed. Another feature is "experience in theater" by which I learn that the group was quite varied, from people for whom it was their first time and people with much more experience. The coordinator notes that there is no a pre-requisite for practicing Theater of the Oppressed.

After some games we start the Forum Theatre part. The coordinator asks if someone had brought scenes to work, and not being the case, he proposes two. First of all he reads them out loud.

We separate in two groups, I will be the *joker* of one of them. Since there are some people for whom it is the first time practicing Forum Theater I take the role of explaining how it works, the structure, and making sure everyone understands it. This is part of the role of the joker.

We are going to work the scene, and for doing so, first we have to decide who is going to play what role. One man is going to play the role of a woman in the scene, and he asks to the women in the group how to react in the scene since he is "not subject of these type of oppression so he does not know how to react".

For preparing the scene there is a discussion and agreement among the group, but somehow me, as the joker I play also the role of *mise en scene* (direction or coordination), something I have just practice 1 or 2 times.

After 20 minutes we present the two scenes. In the first scene, there is a student who enters in a classroom and the teacher says: "again, you are late, no no, you cannot enter in the class". The teacher is angry and when the student tries to answer the teacher does not allow her to speak. There are two more participants who play the role of two students. One seems to feel the unfair of the situation for the student and the others seems to agree with the teacher's reaction. In the next scene the rejected student goes to secretary and explains that she was not able to enter in class and that she is a process of scholar-phobia recognition. The secretary answers, "go to class, that will heal you". When exiting from the secretary, the secretary says oh la la, what they are capable to invent".

We do forum, and while discussing there are two themes debated: the difficulty to tackle

mental issues, and the difficulty for teachers to manage students who always come late. There is a discussion about how to change the situation for the student, which has been identified as the oppressed, and one participant notes "maybe trying to defend the victim in this situation would be counterproductive since the victim just wants to be unnoticed" Finally it is decided that one of the students will go to speak to the teacher after the class to explain that the other student has scholar phobia.

The second group presents the scene. It is developed in the street, a car arrives and a woman exits from it and goes to take something from the backseat. For doing so she needs to bend down. At that moment, there is a man who passes by and says "Miss, it's almost obscene, it might give ideas..."<sup>34</sup>. Two witnesses see what happens from a café, and do not show any visible reaction.

They played the scene once, and afterwards, as the joker I ask the public interpretation of the scene, their reactions and the type of oppression. They agree that there is a scene of sexism; and I ask for someone to come and substitute a role in the scene –the role of the oppressor cannot be substituted–. One spect-actor, comes to scene and substitutes one of the witness, which this time will go to talk to the oppressed woman after the oppression and ask if "she is ok".

After the new scene there is a debriefing, in which as the joker I ask to the participants what has changed from the previous scene. Some participants –both the performers and the spectators– argue that the oppressor "left scot-free" and others argue that, at least, the victim now knows that someone has seen it, and that the violence is not "apparently invisible".

From these arguments a debate is opened about street harassment and there are some personal shared testimonies. One participant –a woman– explains that when this kind of situations happens to her "I feel blocked (...) in that moment I do not act, but afterwards I regret not saying anything...". Another participant –also a woman– says "I would go to the oppressor to say that I am alone in the street and that what he has done makes me scare"; to what another participant –a woman– reacts " I would not do that, to say to an oppressor that I am scared".

There is also a debate about being witness in these situations focus on the oppressor or

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<sup>34</sup> Original phrase: "Mademoiselle, c'est presque obscène, cela pourrait donner des idées"

rather the oppressed. Some argue that the importance relies on the victim and that we should accompany her; others argue that the importance relies on "sowing the seed" (*mettre la graine*)" in the oppressor and show the sexism in his actions.

We speak of the difficulty of doing that in the street, and as a joker, we are conscience that this is not our daily life, but this Forum Theater practice might serve as a training.

We end the session again sharing some food and discussing.

Two days after the workshop, one of the participants tells me that something similar happened to her when she was on the street, a boy tried to take a picture of her, and she reacted and asked what was he doing. She told me that, after the workshop, she was eager to react and that in another moment she would not have done anything.

The next workshop is a week after, on June 10th. For this one, we agree to take the experience occurred in the street -just mentioned- as a scene to work that day. The structure of the workshop is similar to the previous session, but this time we would just work on one scene.

We reconstitute the scene, and different proposals are discussed and performed. Proposals discussed and latter performed are: the oppressed asking the boy to show her the photo he has taken; the woman taking her phone and starting to film the man in an invasive way; adding a witness, an old woman who passes by and supports the victim. This last one is really funny, because oppressor denies have taken the picture, and the old woman starts to cry "liar-liar!" and starts threatening the body with her cane, finally they get him to delete the picture.

After the scene a debate opens about street harassment. There are different views on considering or not that scene as harassment; some argue that for them harassment implies something physical, but in the scene he does not touch the woman; other argue that harassment is something more intense; and another participant argues that for her harassment has to be something repetitive, and it is not the case.

There is also a discussion about violence and whether or not the scene can be considered as violent; one participant argues that for her that is not violence; as a participant and joker I argue that violence is not necessarily physical.

## Forum Theater from a methodological approach

These field notes are part of a larger (auto) ethnography done of the Forum Theater, now it will be analyzed, together with two interviews done, for extracting what elements make Forum Theatre a very potent tool for emancipatory knowledge production. the first part will be devoted to analyze its potential in terms of social role and the second part in terms of data collection for social research.

As it has been presented, this type of theatre was originally developed for the oppressed emancipation, so it focuses on oppressions linked to variables as class, sex, race, ability, age etc. –mentioned in chapter 1–, which stratify un unequal social system. A surprise was to find in the practice a dual dimension for tackling oppressions: from a macro-level, understanding them as the result of a larger power relationships system, and from a micro-level, focusing on developing the oppressed agency for overcoming the oppression.

This first element is revealing for the potential it gives to this tool in terms of social research and action, allowing uncovering root –structural– causes of oppressions which participants might face in their daily lives, visibilize, raise awareness and encourage action for fighting them.

Some examples can illustrate this process of putting into question oppressions and the identification and visibilization of their structural causes, which can help to problematize and criticize them. As one of the interviews, while speaking about the scene of psychophobia, one participant, referring to teacher-student relationships, said:

I am not sure how I feel about that, but it makes me to ask questions (...) it calls me into question (...) The relation of the teacher and the student, being more horizontal, I've never experienced that. I've spent 26 years looking at that in one way and suddenly that one guy says that –referring to the discussion after the scene that day – and I was like (...) It made me to look at the situation from a different angle. (Interview 1)

Another participant, referring to the street harassment's scene, argued during the interview:

It can help me to see more this type of situations, to pay more attention, and if I see again (...) I mean, to see sexism in these scenes. (Interview 2)

But also, from the practice I claim the potential of this practice for developing individual's

agency, by a reflection and training of the capacity to act and re-act in an oppression situation. As one interviewed noted:

It is interesting to reflect and to look for solutions, even if I know I had already reflected on that (...) that can help us to reflect on how to react in that kind of situations. (Interview 2)

However, it is not just about reflecting on possible solutions to the situation of oppression, but also a training for "real life", embodying proposals of changing the situation. And the fact is that, by training how to overcome the oppression, the actor practices a real act: "within its fictive terms, the experience is concrete" (Boal 1989: 42). What I argue is that by this practice what it is being done is the prefigurative politics and a transformative praxis, mentioned in chapter 1 and 2, opening the door for a prefigurative research too. Thus, this tool can help for developing agency and empowerment for a possible emancipation.

As one interviewed mentioned:

It really inspired me because it just brings the attention back to those events. I think it is empowering (...) it is not just that this happens, harassment happens, we see a lot of stats, domestic abuses, harassment on the street and stuff, but I think there is not much out there which gives you concrete action that you can do to help the situation. So for me I think it was like pretty empowering to bring you to the situation and like what would you do in the situation. If you do this, this and this, how could you help, and I think it is because I am often in that situation (...) when I want to say something, but I don't really know what to say, and I am not sure it will help, but I would like to say something to feel better or trying to appease the situation. So I think it is really good trying to make you think how would you be acting, to be prepared for that situation (...) (Interview 1)

Maybe in the situation I would not act, but at least I am training it (...) (Collected from a discussion during workshop # 2)

It really gave me strength (...) now I am eager to try all the different situations that happens to me in the street (...) to be less scared (...) (Discussion with a participant after workshop #2)

Literally 12 hours before I watched the scene and it made me think ok, next time I'm gonna try to say something, so as I was walking away I was like "YES, GO" (Participant who had a

similar situation of street harassment the day after the workshop, Interview 1)

Secondly the way in which this practice is developed favors participation, which takes different forms as discussing, making proposals, playing a role. The importance of this element is that not only favors agency but also an engagement of all the group in the workshop, both elements crucial for this methodological proposal.

The third potential element from this practice is that it is based in constant and collective process of creation and interpretation. And this collective aspect interests me to the extent that it is not just participatory but rather that it is the group who collectively seeks the proper solutions to the situation. The figure of the joker can somehow be understood as a coordinator during the forum theater –as it will be explained later on– but from my experience, the relation between him/her and the other participants has always been horizontal and his role has always being based on collecting the proposals and not imposing any of them.

The fourth element is that it combines a simultaneous action and reflection. One scene is presented, participants reflect and propose how it can be changed. The proposal is interpreted by the participants –and mediated by the joker– and new proposals for improving the situation are performed.

As a fifth element, Forum Theater puts the body in the center, since the oppression is always tackled, first of all, from the body performance. Linking with the first chapter and the importance given to the body, I argue that this practice can allow to put the focus on how oppressions go through the bodies, how we carry and construct them through our body-performance, and finally how can we resist and transform them from our bodies. As one of the interviewed mentioned:

I really like theatre and I know I am not really comfortable in theatre with the fact of moving my body, my voice is ok, but with my body (...) I am not necessarily comfortable, so I was eager to see... (Interview 2)

To put consciousness and work from the body I think it can be emancipatory in itself, but especially in what I am interested is in putting the attention on how violence impacts in our bodies and embodying the oppression's overcome, being the reason why I argue this tool can an exercise of transformative praxis.



The sixth element is its accessibility, which has been illustrated by my own experience on how I started to do Forum Theater at the beginning of the subsection, but also by the fact that, at each time there is a new person in a workshop, and that the coordinator notes that it is not needed any previous experience and that it is open to everyone. Also one of the interviewed recognized the importance of the role joker –in explaining, clarifying the scene– for making this practice accessible to new participants (*...pas si dur d'entrer là dedans*) (Interview 2). Another interviewed recognized though:

Thus, from my this (auto) ethnography and the interviews done, I think Forum Theater can be a tool to use in this theoretical tool which pretends to favor a more emancipatory knowledge production, specially, because for addressing social inequalities from a macro-micro level approach, for visibilizing, raising awareness (*conscientization*) and training to overcome them.

But if so far it has been analyzed its potential in terms of social role, the fact is that from the field, I took advantage to analyze Forum Theatre for social research data collection. For tackling this data collection dimension I will focus in the social issue which crossed the two workshops: sexism, and specifically street harassment. It is important to mention that these workshops were not meant for research, but I rather took the advantage of this experience to look at how it can be a tool for it, then I will just briefly analyze the results from a gender perspective for evidencing how it can be used for social research.

Here are some observations quite revealing of how street harassment is understood and lived by this group of participants:

- 1- Many participants –women– shared the feeling of being blocked and not able to react while experiencing street harassment.
- 2- There is no unanimity about what exactly means harassment. One participant considers harassment only when is a repetitive act.
- 3- At least one participant does not consider street harassment as violence if it does not include a physical dimension ("he did not touch her").
- 4- Two of the three interviewed explained a lived experience of street harassment although they do not feel victims in the experience.

5- The three interviewed focused more in the role of witnesses and projected themselves more in this role rather than in the victim's role.

6- Many participants recognized that training how to react when seeing a sexist act is a positive tool for their daily lives.

In the interviews I tackled more in depth the question of street harassment and I departed from the living experiences of the interviewed. To the first interviewed I asked specifically if she felt oppressed by the situation lived the day after the workshop. To my surprise, she answered:

No, I think oppression is also how you react and how it makes you feel. And did not have the impression that it has made me.... I mean the other day, there is this friend of mine who told me that when she was going to work, to the market at 5 a.m. there was a guy in the train who touched her butt (...) she cried, and it can of ruined her morning and when she came back she was really angry about that and quite upset (...) so I feel that two people can have the same thing happen to them, but I do not know if you could say that they are both equally oppressed. For me personally, if you do not feel oppressed, you cannot really call you victim of oppression (...), I found it rude (meaning what happened to her on the street), he shouldn't be doing that, but I didn't feel necessarily as a victim of oppression. I am not getting upset for something that doesn't even got me upset

There are a lot of people who do feel oppressed and are oppressed. If I don't feel oppressed I'm not going to make space for like being the victim of oppression when there is so many other people who do feel bad (...) I see more myself as being the person who intervenes, and less as the victim who changes the situation

From a gender perspective, these reflections are important to the extent that it shows that:

- Women tend to do not see themselves as victims of gender violence. They recognize gender violence as a real social issue but which always happens to someone else.
- For an act to be oppressive it is subject to individual's interpretation.

From the second interview and in relation to street harassment:

I am lucky; I am not really touched by street harassment. For example just before

someone whistled to me, but I am not 100% sure it was to me, so I said to myself it was not to me, even if maybe it was me, but I am not exactly sure, so if he does not come to me to talk, I do not really care (*je m'en fiche un peu...*) but yeah I do not find that cool, but as I am not confronted to that every day-every day I think we are focalizing in some particular moments (*petits moments*) that happens once in a while, although it is important.

Still from the second interview and while speaking about the two workshops in which we focused on street harassment:

There are always men the guilty, and I know it is often the case, but it bothers me. (When asking what exactly bothered her she replied) (...) It bothers me that it is always men who are put as the aggressor (...) I have the impression that it does not give necessarily the image of men, who always have that behavior (...) It bothers me to generalize (...) For changing things I think we could do a scene where men are the victims and that... it happens on the other way round. (Interview 2)

Some observations about these statements:

- Recognition of the importance of street harassment and personally do not wanting to pay much attention.
- Working on street harassment and putting men as aggressors (in two workshops) is considered as a bias for tackling the issue

It is important to note that during the interview, when the interviewed proposed working "on the other way round" (meaning playing women as oppressors and men as victims), the other interviewed claimed that would be an overrepresentation of the issue.

As a whole this experience was quite revealing in terms experiencing how this tool could be in this methodological proposal. In terms of social action it was inspiring to see how it made the group to reflect and to act, and how they felt empowered to tackle this issue, and in term of research, although the purpose was not to investigate about street harassment in the group, the performances and specially the afterwards discussions and interviews, were quite exciting because of the potential it could have to investigate specific social issues.

## Reflections, challenges and limitations from the experience

In relation to the research dimension some reflections and questioning come along with the experience:

1- The performance should occupy a main space during the workshop, but the discussions occurred in between, and after the scenes are very revealing for data collection. The discussion about issues related to street harassment came naturally after the performance, but as a joker I could foster to go further on the subject.

2 - Discussions are not just important in terms of data collection but it helps the participants to put into question what they are seeing. Importance should be given to people's participation and interpretation of the scene. One interviewed in relation to this argued:

"For me it was more the discussion afterwards (...) I think during the scene it just seemed very normal, and it was more seeing how people felt about that after (...) specially, there was one guy who was saying I can't believe how authoritarian teachers are, and it shouldn't be normal that we feel this way (...) that made me question why I think it was normal to me".

3. The interviews highly complemented the workshops and allowed to dig in some specific themes of street harassment and participants' experiences and perceptions.

4. How to tackle power relationships which might appear among the group?

5. What do to if the group does not recognize the social inequality, do I have to evidence it? What if they do not agree that it is as so?

6. I realized that during the workshops I focused more in the oral contributions rather than in body performances, how do I systematize it for later analysis?

7. It should be taken into account the impact for participants of evoking and seeing violent situations, which can link to personal experiences.

This last question of the impact on the participants I am going to develop a little bit longer because it was also a matter of debate in *La Pagaille* which interested me.

This type of theater works on daily-experiences of oppression, and usually works from

lived-experiences from the participants (if the person agrees first to share, and then to use it as material for the workshop). Thus, it happened in a workshop with *La Pagaille*, that we were working on an scene of psychological violence between a divorced couple, and being the lived experience of one of the participants –who played the role of the witness–, she broke down in tears while playing and we stopped the workshop. This question, of the impact to the participants, was later discussed with her and with the group

But also, during the interviews it was mentioned:

I felt a little bit bad, I felt sadness and anger, and those are bad feelings that I do not like to feel (...) the fact that we spoke of situations of inequality and the fact of playing the situation... in life I like to focus on positive things, and not just thinking all the time about that, even if I know that that exists. So living the experience and focusing on that, it bothered me, but after there are proposals for changing it and this is however positive and that might make me to react in the street if that happens. I really feel the injustice when it happens. I feel a real discomfort while doing theatre of the oppressed I prefer the exercises at the beginning (the interviewed means the games before starting Forum Theatre). I would do it again, but doing that each week in terms of moral, I would have a hard time (Interview 2)

For me to fight against femicide it is also important to show the opposite, to show men who have a good behavior rather than those who have a bad behavior (...) Instead of showing the bad scenes for criticizing it.

This element has also being pointed out in an assembly at *La Pagaille* where a participant also argued why not working on "positive" scenes, where people had "good" behaviors. In this sense, while using this tool I think it is important to take into consideration the impact it can have in the group since spect-actors are seeing, experiencing and embodying violent situations, which can have a hard psychological charge.

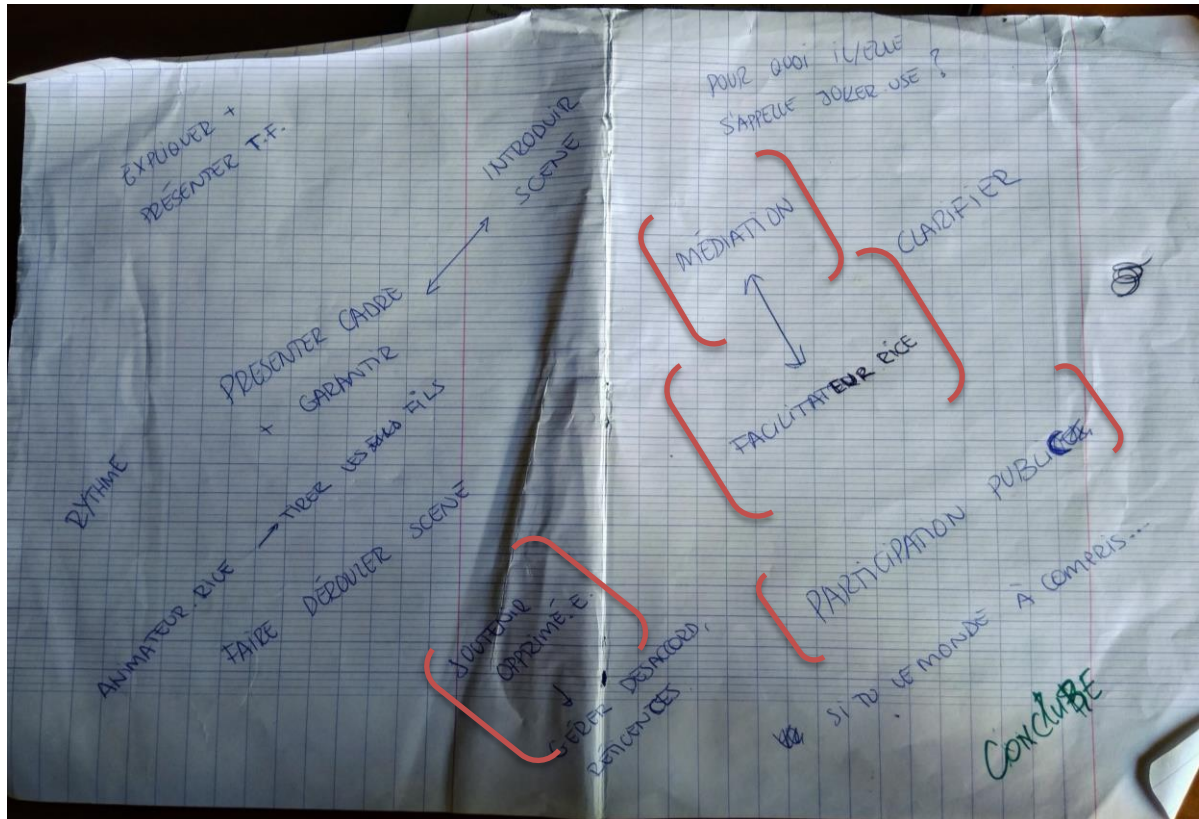
### The role of the joker as a change facilitator

While months of theatre practice were passing by I also attended my master courses on development studies and I started to discover how development work is done on the field. Thus, I came to be interested in the parallelism between to –a priori– two different figures: a development worker/change facilitator and the joker in Forum Theater; this question, was in

part the triggering to do an (auto) ethnography of two workshops as a joker.

I did a two-days training on "jockage" (joker's role in forum theater), and in a brainstorming we noted:

Image 15. Brainstorming on the joker's role.



And the stages I learnt for exercising this role in Forum Theater were:

1. Welcome emotions
2. To name the facts
3. To name the theme
4. Underline the oppression
5. Raise reactions
6. Collect proposals
7. To focus on one proposal
8. To accompany the participant to the scene

While experimenting this role I could see parallelisms to what I consider a development worker or change facilitator should do on the field and the role of the joker in terms of: facilitating, mediating, fostering participation, supporting the oppressed, and encourage to change the situation from themselves.

In particular by my own experience I was interested in the fact that the joker does not give the solution (to the scene of oppression) but rather encourages the participant to seek the solutions and embody them. After the solutions are performed, and at the end of the working time of an scene, the joker can suggest other resources for tackling the oppression as: calling the police, collective support (being witness and going to support the victim), recording the scene,; and the coordinator also explained that the joker can also can give the name and information of institutions, associations or NGO's who work specifically in that issue.

These features of the role of the joker and this sensation of "faire germer" the solutions from the participants, really made me think in the role of a change facilitator and to look the potential this tool could have in the development field.

Personally and for ending this chapter it was an exciting experience, and at the same time amusing experience because when experimenting the role of the joker questioned myself: How will I do if I have to animate a Forum Theater on racism? Sexism well, I have read a lot, I am a woman, but racism.... This does not even oppress me... Do I have the tools to animate it? In fact, from the experience of joker, they came the same questions of position and legitimacy to speak/work on inequalities which I do not suffer that burst me while doing social research –or imagine myself as a development worker– then: do not they have something in common?

## CONCLUSIONS

### Main outcomes

Because of their incoherence between means and ends, critical social sciences limit not only their potential for social emancipation but they are also actively reproducing epistemic violence, and then inequalities, through their own methodological practices. It is needed then from critical social researchers to re-examine and adjust the ways of doing research for promoting an ontological, epistemological and methodological alignment that could allow to achieve the final goal this research should have: emancipation of the oppressed.

Critical, feminist, post/anti-colonial epistemologies already set the bases for making possible knowledge which pursuits this objective, by combining a dual ontology: problematizing existing conditions of inequality, exploitation and oppression, as well as, formulating alternatives for overcoming inequalities by emancipatory and transformative agency.

For knowledge production to be emancipatory, the Marxist current and its notion of emancipation is a nourishing line because the process of emancipation departs from the oppressed themselves, who, from a conscientization reveal their own oppression for later action to overcome them. Freire and his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, contributes to this methodological proposal, for evidencing the importance of the word, that the oppressed speak for themselves, and are heard; a process which allows the oppressed to participate in the world's building, as knowledge producer subjects. Moreover, anarchist currents give the frame for defending the importance of coherence between methodologies and objectives in a research process, for putting forward the oppressed agency development, and work from transformative praxis for exploring what has been called *prefigurative politics*.

From this ontological and epistemological framework, this present dissertation attempts defending the body as the space from which emancipatory knowledge production should depart due to its dual character: the space where power relationships traverse, the vehicle for producing and reproducing them, but also from which to resist and transform them. The potential of putting the body in the center of research lies on the fact that it is an indicator of discomfort towards the social order crucial then for criticizing it, but also due to its agentic capacity, can be not only the space from which problematize power relationships bodily reproduction, also the space for fostering its capacity for resisting and transforming them.



Some features from research-action and *recherche-cr ation* make these methodologies potential mean for fostering emancipatory knowledge production. Thus, from *recherche-cr ation*, the seek of a sensible reason, giving importance to the experience and to feelings, and using art as a mean are important elements to mobilize with the social role and participatory dimension that Anti-Oppression and Participatory Action Research mobilized from Research-Action. A political interaction of these elements could foster a democratization and de-hierarchisation of knowledge production, which might open the door to a more emancipatory knowledge production.

Finally, from a personal practice of Theater of the Oppressed and in particular Forum Theater, this type of theater has appeared as a promising tool in this methodological proposal, tackling oppressions from a macro-level –structural causes–and micro-level –by developing individual's agency– and showing it as a powerful tool for data collection. Then integrating the triple aim of: art, activism and research in one tool.

#### Future lines

As mentioned in the introduction encounters with certain persons and this academic year as a whole has inspired me to see that there are other ways of doing, or at least, that there is more margin of maneuver than what I thought. From this opened door, this Master Thesis has allowed me to experiment tools and start to think how emancipatory knowledge can be coherently produced.

It has raised my curiosity about the role of the joker and change facilitator, and for further research I would like to dig into this question and experiment it on the field. But also, there is a whole field of exploration from dance, which I did not have the time, neither the structure for developing it, but what I had started last year for my undergraduate final paper, and a field of exploration which I would like to continue discovering.

This Master Thesis has also allowed me to discover the challenges and limitations – developed in each chapter–, this methodological proposal might face, which I would like to tackle by actually putting this methodological proposal into practice and seeing how it can be adapted to the research objectives, participants, and structural and contextual conditions.

### A final reflective point

From the, sometimes confusing fact, that this Master Thesis was a research about how to do research in which the methodology used was not mainly the methodology researched; I would like to do a final reflective point.

An important contradiction or difficulty which I faced or more accurately I embodied was researching about the body, claiming to produce knowledge, a re-appropriation and empowering from research and at the same time erasing my body for being able to work for this final part. It is true that there was a practical part, some months ago, but specially the last part of this Master Thesis process has been from this process an static body, a body which many moments tried to resist by taking impossible body-forms and positions between the screen of the computer and the chair, melting in the 35°C of a Valencian summer, a body which has been forced to an erasure because of work/study, the same erasure which I criticized in the first chapter on this Master Thesis.

But the only person from the academia with who I was in contact during this last part of my master thesis was my tutor, and I found her also walking on her living room during a skype meeting because it was a Friday of July at 6.p.m, and she could no longer continue sitting on her chair. How can I erase my bodies while working, or in my case in a research process and claim at the same time the opposite in my research?

The second difficult contradiction was managing not to reproduce epistemic violence, of what I criticized social research to do in the first chapter of my master thesis. Due to a brightly proposal of my tutor, I checked my bibliography for physically localizing the authors and thinkers I was using, and I have to accept that in a paper who attempted to fight epistemic violence, they have been reproduced.

Nevertheless, instead of allowing these contradictions to block myself I am taking them as a challenge, thus, this Master Thesis has taken the pleasant role of putting: myself into question, my position, my role and the ways I produce knowledge, which allows to make the statement that maybe the most important personal outcome of this paper, has been to understand the position from which I depart and recognize my limitations in a research process; giving the possibility to reconcile me with the researcher role.

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