



INTRODUCTION COMMUNITY AND CREATIVE RESEARCH. DEVELOPING PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGIES

**LORENA SANCHO QUEROL
& CLÁUDIA PATO CARVALHO**

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: LORENA SANCHO QUEROL. EMAIL: LORENAQUEROL@GMAIL.COM

© 2018. LORENA SANCHO QUEROL AND CLÁUDIA PATO CARVALHO. THIS IS AN OPEN ACCESS ARTICLE DISTRIBUTED UNDER THE TERMS OF THE CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-NON COMMERCIAL 3.0 UNPORTED LICENSE ([HTTP://CREATIVECOMMONS.ORG/LICENSES/BY-NC/3.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/)), PERMITTING ALL NON-COMMERCIAL USE, DISTRIBUTION, AND REPRODUCTION IN ANY MEDIUM, PROVIDED THE ORIGINAL WORK IS PROPERLY CITED.

**CITATION: CONJUNCTIONS: TRANSDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF CULTURAL PARTICIPATION, VOL. 5., NO. 1, 2018
DOI: [HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.7146/TJCP.V5I1.105285](http://dx.doi.org/10.7146/TJCP.V5I1.105285)**

"The rhizome is altogether different, a map and not a tracing. Make a map, not a tracing. The orchid does not reproduce the tracing of the wasp; it forms a map with the wasp, in a rhizome. What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields, the removal of blockages on bodies without organs, the maximum opening of bodies without organs onto a plane of consistency. It is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 12).

From collective behavior to collective creative research

In September 2016, we organized a roundtable entitled "Community engaged cultural research: an emerging agenda of practice" at the 9th Midterm Conference of the ESA Research Network *Sociology of the Arts* in Porto, Portugal. The authors sharing their research during that session challenged us to go further and publish our experiences with society-friendly research in a variety of cultural contexts, practices, backgrounds and beliefs. By choosing the theme of "community and creative research", this thematic issue of *Conjunctions* has gathered experiences from around the world (Australia, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, Portugal, Switzerland, Argentina and Cyprus) on different approaches to democratic practice using the lens of cultural participation. It feeds on the intersection of action research work performed by academics, activists, artist, theorists and citizens, who study and work within different sectors of our societies through participatory methodologies. They all share the desire to transform realities, define new possibilities of solidarity development, encourage social and cultural creativity, and of course to strengthen individual self-esteem.

However, community and creative research remains an area where few structured contributions have been produced related to methodological approaches. The cultural sector in general and the artistic practice in particular can bring forward innovative perspectives of how interdisciplinary knowledge can be produced and how the processes of knowledge production in the social sciences and in the cultural and artistic fields may intertwine. Community and creative research integrate both a conceptual and a methodological component. "Community research" is related to research done in plenty articulation with all kinds of community groups that are not usually producers of scientific (and recognized) knowledge. On the other hand, "creative research" is connected to innovative and groundbreaking approaches on the methodological aspects of social science research.

From this perspective, both editors have been working to shape new forms of connections between professional social sciences contexts and the arts and ones related to culture, developing different projects in the performance arts field, the social museology field, the cultural management field, and the collective memory field, both on a national and international level. Step by step, project after project, we have realized that socially engaged creative research is becoming more and more relevant as a way of building equitable and useful science with and for society, or in other words, networked science with people, made to measure to their needs, challenges and dreams in each context.

Linked to network theory – to its political affirmation of freedom and democracy – and considering the order¹ as an object of permanent reinvention, Martinho (2001) defines a 'network' as a dynamic relation between dynamic things, while considering reality a fluid whole of relations in between substances in transformation. Built on shared values and objectives, autonomy, will, multi-leadership, decentralization and multiple levels of interconnected action, the network concept places us at the heart of the dissolution of hegemonic uses of power and, simultaneously, helps us face the creation of less hierarchical and multi-leadership processes within research field. From our perspective, this worldview can be considered one of the fundamental arguments by which to develop cultural research through social and cultural networking.

1 Using a philosophical point of view, the author refers here to natural order of things in life.

Near to this integrated perspective, and focusing on participatory culture (Jenkins *et al.* 2009) and emerging media, maximalist models of participation defined by Jenkins and Carpentier (2013) also help us understand the collective behavior of our societies; thus, they help us understand collective dimension also as an inner behavior of research about, with and for society.

When linking these visions to our theme, diverse forms of participatory research emerge. This is the case of Participatory Action-Research (PAR) methods, like community-based research (Steyaert, 2011; Gilchrist *et al.*, 2015) or collective cultural mapping methodologies (Duxbury *et al.*, 2014; Longley and Duxbury, 2016), which focus on context-dependent and collective decision-making, acting and evaluating practices. PAR has been described by Gabarrón and Landa (2006) as a methodological and ideological alternative based on practices of full participation and networking, characterized by their potentials to decolonize and transform.

In the artistic field, Claire Bishop (2012) reflects on the complex nature and relation between artistic work and participation, showing how cultural participation may have unpredictable effects at the level of social structure, reflecting on its cultural impacts in different manners. In her work, artists include people in their creations as direct intervenors, because they want to reconfigure everyday actions as performances, to give political power to certain social situations, to problematize the tensions between reality and fiction and to examine the construction of collective identity. In fact, and based on Bishop's critical perspective towards the relation between culture and participation, there is a need for redoubled attention on the mischievous effects that cultural participation might have.

Combining technology, knowledge and environmental conscience, Noortje Marres (2011) investigates forms of material participation and links the concept to daily practices of using green technologies, which are sometimes initiated or reflected on through artistic interventions. Marres shows how materiality (through technology) can enlarge the practices associated with the concept of participation, but also materialize participatory actions with ecological effects. Under the same umbrella, Brydon-Miller *et al.* (2011) reflect on processes of knowledge generation, integrating the arts in conducting and communicating action research projects in countries around the world, including Buenos Aires, British Columbia, Switzerland, Austria and Denmark. Here monologues and all kinds of creative expressions are transformed into collective research dialogues in order to reveal problems and possible solutions.

By combining the field of artistic practice with the social sciences, a new paradigm for making research is established. From one perspective, this paradigm accentuates the relation between society at large and social science research as it offers conditions for the development of more reflective and participatory methodologies. From another perspective, it stresses how different sectors of society can be involved in the process of knowledge generation. Furthermore, it brings the civic component to the forefront of academic knowledge production. Integrating cultural participation (Sancho Querol, 2017) in research and methodology thus challenges the power of traditional academic research actors, the authorized research discourses, the risk of pre-formatted results, or even the use of predefined work dynamics. In destabilizing traditional social hierarchies in relation to 'doing research', participatory research methods nurture active citizenship and social transformation.

In this context, utopia is still a necessary motor for our minds, as it enables the creation of individual responsibility through collective interaction (Ainsa, 2013). However, community-engaged creative research is – compared to a more classical understanding of utopia – more focused on constructing collective futures. Futures that are being built day by day, in a step by step 'shared present'.

Attempting to answer the question "*what kind of world could we build?*", this research perspective is not only analytical, but also transformative, envisioning the creation of other forms of knowledge – like inter-knowledge, collaborative knowledge or experiential knowledge – through ongoing action and collaborative interventions in the real world (Gergen, 2014).

The objectives of this thematic issue

This special issue is an attempt to bring together a variety of different perspectives coming from various continents and countries. By including these experiences, we wish to contribute to generating transformative processes, to identify socially relevant methods and good practices. In addition, we wish to disseminate these experiences and projects, and therefore make a relevant contribution to the development of the field of community and creative research.

The reasons for doing this are manifold. With these experiences, concepts, methods and ideas we want to share the connections that exist between social sciences, local knowledge (its creators and users) and our evolving capacity to build new answers to the needs of societies around the world. We also want to learn from otherness and through other's experiences, spaces, perspectives and results. We want to contribute to the definition of the word "participation" by looking into the increasing variety of uses, meanings and levels of societal compromise behind it.

The thematic section of this issue consists of five peer reviewed articles, three "project experiences" and one interview. The five articles deal with creative and participatory research methodologies by focusing on small-scale specific contexts, like sensitive art practices in low-income neighborhoods, new perspectives on anthropological engagement, interactive film-making, collaborative research with circus artists and power distribution in peace-building processes. The project experiences bring us closer to a Portuguese UNESCO World Heritage site, to a Finnish project dealing with the arts as public service and to a Brazilian initiative dealing with social currency and labor activities to face marginalization. Finally, the interview addresses theoretical and methodological issues in the field of cultural participation, coming from Eastern Europe.

Some articles present possibilities of involving artists and collaborative art equally in social research and transformation (Infantino; Taylor and Warr). Others work in urban public spaces or deal with a participatory film-making project to nurture intercultural recognition (Salzbrunn, Dellwo and Besençon). Some analyze participatory intensities with innovative and useful tools (Carpetier and Yükses) or theorize different options of community engagement attending to specific goals, values or emerging needs (Nielsen and Jørgensen). In this way, the special issue covers a range of perspectives on and approaches to cross-cultural participatory methods and creative research tools that allow us to work from a society-friendly point of view in dealing with society's fragilities, necessities or unexplored potentials.

About the research and project articles

In the opening article, "Participatory Contact Zones and Conflict Transformation: the Participatory Intensities of the Cyprus Friendship Program", Nico Carpetier and Derya Yükses contribute to the development of the concept of a "participatory contact zone" by analyzing education-related project uses of participation among young people and discussing how the young people thus become more empowered. The paper more specifically analyzes power redistribution in the Cyprus Friendship Program (CFP) with particular interest in the power position of the youngsters and the degree to which the youngsters become involved and participate. The notion of collective empowerment plays a significant role here by contributing to conflict transformation due to the affective and identificatory opportunities created through experiences of co-decision.

In the second article of this issue, "Working with circus artists. Reflections on a process of collaborative research, participation and commitment", Julieta Infantino investigates the collective of artists *Circo Abierto* in Buenos Aires and the collaborative process of creating a National Circus Census and a National Circus Law in Argentina. She reflects on the different layers of authority in knowledge production, on the unequal legitimation of knowledge, on the division between research and action, and between "participation", "commitment" and "collaborative" processes, in favor of a critical knowledge production that can lead to the emancipation of subaltern creative sectors. Along with these collaborative processes, Infantino analyzes the dichotomist tensions between inside/outside, subjectivity/objectivity, rationality/passion and academic knowledge/artistic knowledge, and by placing artists and researchers on the same side through collective activist research she demonstrates how these distinctions have become more porous. Thus, synchronizing academic reflection times with action times – moved by curiosity, desire and passion, but also by her non-neutral, but still political-ideological position – Infantino shows how otherness transforms into a larger "we" with the shared focus of creating a new socially, politically and artistically transformative path.

In "Analysing participatory cultural practices in a medium-scale Swiss town: How multiple belongings are constructed and consolidated through an interactive film-making process", Monika Salzbrunn, Barbara Dellwo and Sylvain Besençon explore a specific filmmaking methodology as a participatory approach to the field of cultural practice. In this context, the authors explore what participation means in such a setting by considering three scales of participation: the participatory node, participatory collaboration and participation as an argument in a top-down setting of municipal policy. Accordingly, the authors deal with the concept of power by showing how negotiation between participation and authority takes place in the specific process and how participatory film-making, in a context of community-engaged cultural research, can lead to the emergence of active citizenship.

The next article, by Gritt B. Nielsen and Nanna Jordt Jørgensen, entitled “Engagement beyond critique? Anthropological perspectives on participation and community”, explores how different understandings of the role of anthropology in promoting social or political change interact with different theoretical and analytical conceptualizations of community and participation. In an effort to make anthropology more “engaged” in the promotion of change, the authors discuss three alternative contemporary positions on anthropological engagement: policy-oriented activist research, feminist inspired collaborative research, and research for alterity and alternatives. These approaches enter different dialogues with the growing and always complex conditions of a segregated and differentiated society. In addition, the authors discuss issues related to power, segregation and the position of the researcher. With this discussion, they stress that anthropological research seems to hold varying potentials for engagement, and therefore different potentials for cultural participation, within an ever more diversified world.

“Touchy Art: a creative investigation to challenge stigma in low-income neighbourhoods” is co-authored by Gretel Taylor and Deborah Warr. It describes an art/research methodology applied at low-income neighborhoods in Tasmania and Victoria (Australia), aiming to explore new involvements in art in the search for social and political recognition. Combining socially engaged arts practices, site-responsive art and sociological discursive reflections to explore ‘touchy’ (sensitive) issues of place-based poverty stigma, the project creates opportunities for residents to represent their lived experiences of place. Working in an inter-epistemological arena, the authors propose a shift from participation to generation. Participants in this shift become the makers of the process and its form/content, while the artist’s role shifts from control to a more subtle supervision of emergent forms of self-expression and self-representation, as the curator of collective work that represents a plurality of perspectives. The resulting artworks offered dignifying representations, but without glossing over the difficulties that are also present in these neighborhoods.

Besides the five peer-reviewed research articles, this special issue also presents three challenging projects experiences and one interview.

The first project experience shares an innovative methodology used for on-the-ground participatory processes, where residents, businesses, local services, academics, cultural agents and municipal representatives are involved in implementing an arts intervention project in an UNESCO World Heritage Site in Portugal. The work presented here is integrated in the *Arteria* project, a regional initiative focused on innovating approaches to community-engaged cultural research.

The second experience is a national project working with arts and art education as an equal basic public service in Finland. The public service in ArtsEqual takes place in different institutions (schools, eldercare centers, prisons, youth associations) and the author discusses its methodologies and impacts using a multidisciplinary approach.

The third experience unfolds a recent initiative in the context of the European Research Council Project “ALICE. Strange mirrors, Unsuspected lessons”. It is related to the alternative and dynamic use of the social currency commonly known as the *Glicerio Exchange Circuit*, located at a flyover in the center of the city of São Paulo in Brazil. The *Glicerio Circuit* aims to address the economic and social needs and potentials of local homeless people by developing a valuable and relevant way for marginal groups to become slightly more empowered.

In closing, we present the results of an interview with Milena Dragičević Šešić that took place in November 2017. Milena is a social activist strongly involved in civil society groups – particularly in the former Yugoslavia – and also holds the title of President of the University of Arts, Belgrade, and Head of the UNESCO Chair in Interculturalism, Art Management and Mediation. Her interview allowed us to question, reflect on and understand her point of view in terms of methodological and epistemological approaches in the field of cultural participation, from an Eastern European perspective.

References

- Bishop, C. (2012), *Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity*, *October* 140, Spring, 91-112.
- Brydon-Miller, M.; Antal, A.; Friedman, V.; Wicks, P. (2011), The changing landscape of arts and action research, *Action Research*, 9 (1), 3-11.
- Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, Felix (1987), *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. Mineapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Duxbury, N.; Garrett-Petts, W. F.; MacLennan, D. (orgs.) (2014), *Cultural Mapping as Cultural Inquiry*. New York/London: Routledge
- Gabarron, L.R.; Landa, L.H. (2013), O que é a pesquisa participante? In: Brandão, C. R.; Streck, D. R. *Pesquisa Participante. O Saber da Partilha* (Coord.). São Paulo: Ideias & Letras.
- Gergen, K. (2014), From Mirroring to World-Making: Research as Future Forming, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*. 45:3, 287-310.
- Gilchrist, P.; Holmes, C.; Lee, A.; Moore, N.; Ravenscroft, N. (2015), Co-designing non-hierarchical community arts research: the collaborative stories spiral. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 15 (4), 459-471.
- Ainsa, F. (2013), Los senderos de la utopía también se bifurcan. 40 años de viaje buscando llegar a alguna parte. In: Gozalez de Oleaga, M. *En primera persona. Testimonios desde la Utopía*. Col. Huellas y señales. Barcelona: NED ediciones.
- Hurtado, C. N. (2013), Uma consulta cidadã participativa: o caso do Estado de Michocán, México. In: Brandão, C. R.; Streck, D. R. *Pesquisa Participante. O Saber da Partilha* (Coord.). São Paulo: Ideias & Letras.
- Jenkins, H. ; Purushotma, R.; Weigel, M. ; Clinton, K. ; Robison, A.J. (2009), *Confronting the challenge of participatory culture: media education for the 21st century*. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Reports on Digital Media and Learning. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Jenkins, H; Carpentier, N. (2013), Theorizing participatory intensities: A conversation about participation and politics, *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 19, 265-286.
- Longley, A.; Duxbury, N. (2016), "Introduction: Mapping Cultural Intangibles", *City, Culture and Society*, 7, 1.
- Marres, N. (2011), "The costs of public involvement". *Economy and Society*, 40, 510-533.
- Martinho, C. (2001), Algumas Palavras sobre Rede. In: Silveira, C.M. & da Costa Reis, L. (orgs.), *Desenvolvimento Local, Dinâmicas e Estratégias*. Rede DLIS/RITS, 24-30.
- Sancho Querol, L. (2017), Os novos modelos de gestão participativa em museus: contributos para o desvanecimento das dicotomias. *RIGS*, v.6-n.2, 41-70. Available at: <https://portalseer.ufba.br/index.php/rigs/issue/view/1513>
- Steyaert, C., Beyes, T. (2011), The ontological politics of artistic interventions: Implications for performing arts research. *Action Research*. 9 (11), 100-115.