Knowledge Politics and Intercultural Dynamics

Actions, Innovations, Transformations

V Training Seminar of Young Researchers in Intercultural Dynamics

CIDOB

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COLECCIÓN **MONOGRAFÍAS**

CONTENTS

This publication contains all the papers and lectures presented at the V Training Seminar for Young Researchers in Intercultural Dynamics (FJIDI) of CIDOB which, under the title "Knowledge Policies and intercultural dynamics: actions, innovations, transformations", took place in Barcelona between December 14-16, 2011.

The Forum was created in 2004 as a meeting place for doctoral students under the framework of the Intercultural Dynamics Programme of CIDOB. It aims to create an open space for the exchange of ideas and research tools, made by and for researchers working in the field of intercultural dynamics from multiple disciplinary perspectives. The proposal to establish an annual meeting emerged at the Forum itself in 2006, after two years of collaboration and common reflection workshops.

The thematic areas chosen by the young researchers are discussed and debated throughout the year, culminating in the Training Seminar. The first such Seminar, "The politics of the diverse: production, recognition or appropriation of cultural aspects?", questioned identities and imaginaries as intercultural practice in the search for new spaces of negotiation and new tools for investigation. The second edition, "The dynamics of contact: mobility, encounters and conflicts in intercultural relations," examined the subject of spaces of contact, as well as the dynamics that are established within them, delving deeper into issues of conflict negotiation and into strategies of transforming the uncertainty of contact into known codes. The third edition continued in the same research trajectory and approached the issue of the acceleration of mobility and, consequently, of the exchange between people. From this perspective, we analyzed the relationship between culture and politics to reflect on the meaning of cultural democracy.

In 2010, with the intention to further open the Training Seminar to new areas of research and participation, the young researchers of the Forum raised the problem of forms-others of knowledge which sometimes remain outside the purely academic knowledge or the methodologies of traditional research. With this aim the fourth seminar was born which focused on the "Forms-Others: Knowing, naming, narrating, doing"

with the proposal to bring together points in motion, connections and transformations capable of organising themselves without setting axes or coordinates.

The fifth edition of the Training Seminar took place in 2011 and followed the intention to continue the route taken and to question the politics of knowledge themselves and their relationship with the creation and development of intercultural dynamics. Guided by Mieke Bal, Sanjay Seth, Alexandra Zavos, Ramin Jahanbegloo y Gonçal Mayo Solsona, the participants established a long debate on the categories of intercultural dynamics as well as on their capacity to adapt to different disciplinary perspectives and methodologies. In this sense, the focus laid as much on academic knowledge as on other sources of knowledge production and new means of information diffusion and knowledge processing. This volume, combining the contents which have been addressed, proposes numerous points of view on the role of the researcher and the research as well as on the sources of knowledge production, recognizing the ambiguities and contradictions which the young researcher encounter while carrying out their research. Beyond academic knowledge –reflecting on practices that produce knowledge on the one hand and mirror it on the other hand– a thorough debate develops along the texts on the difficulties and limitations of knowledge and the possibility of alternatives and potential options for new spaces of intercultural dynamics. The publication also includes the items contained in the closure of the V Training Seminar, a panel on the relationship between methodological research methods and the construction of a particular form of knowledge, with a reflection, in particular, on the ethics of online social research.

On this occasion, together with the four directors of the panels who contributed the introductory articles for each of the blocks of this publication, the event had Mieke Bal as keynote speaker who, besides introducing and concluding the seminar, and dialoguing constantly with the participants, presented her film "A history of Madness". In this volume we present her introduction on the concept of "*Extranjerías*" (an untranslatable Spanish term according to the author).

The aim of this publication is to disseminate the collective work of the members of the Forum of Young Researchers of CIDOB and record their work which will continue to create broader networks that disseminate and deepen the research themes and study of intercultural dynamics.

Thanks to the collaboration of the University of the United Nations for the Alliance of Civilizations the V Training Seminar of FJIDI could take place and the contribution could be united in the present volume.

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INTRODUCTION

- *EXTRANJERÍAS*, OR HOW TO EXIT CULTURAL AUTISM

  Mieke Bal

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My idea for this seminar and its publication is simple: it is possible to leave behind the political and academic limitations imposed by tradition through focusing on something I will call, using an untranslatable Spanish word, *extranjerías*. What are *extranjerías,* and what is the point of invoking them in this context?

In their proposal for an exhibition held in the spectacular new MUAC (Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo) in Mexico City, from January to July 2012, under the title "Extranjerías," curators Néstor García Canclíni and Andréa Giunta came up with this word. They sum up their topic as "el tránsito de lo propio a lo diferente" – again, somewhat untranslatable, but approximately rendered as the transition from "one's own" to the different. What does that mean, and how can it help us in our academic research?

If we consider "lo propio" ("one's own") to mean routine – what we already know – as well as what is locked up in a narrow conception of our lives and work – what I will provocatively call a "cultural autism" – I would say that the growth of knowledge depends by definition on a move toward difference, or *extranjerías*. For it depends on a certain discontinuity, that is, a transition, between what we already know and the unexpected. The need for *extranjerías* also holds for the "own" of the disciplines, and even for the media we use for our research.

Extranjerías are not absolutely different. They are that which goes beyond the "own", making contact with what seems different from the point of view of the "own" – a true transition, always dynamic, in movement. In the domain of academic research I have called such movements "travelling concepts." As Jonathan Culler (2006) has argued, Western culture propagates the idea that you have to travel to make your fortune. One needs to undertake exciting, dangerous, and tiring travel to acquire new experiences.

Culler wrote this at the opening of an article that traces the fortunes of the concept of the performative. This concept made a return trip, at first between philosophy (where it was used for the first time) and literature (where it resolved fundamental problems while exposing some

limitations of the philosophical idea); subsequently, it returned to philosophy and from there it went on to cultural studies, returning again to philosophy. This "fortune" looks a lot like that of the heroes of the picaresque novel.

Another way of bringing movement into research is the development of what I have called "intellectual friendship." For example, Néstor García Canclini has written a review of *Travelling Concepts* in the magazine *ExitBook*, in which he approved of the idea of "friendship" – with its intimacy but also its critical perspective – as a guide for cultural analysis (2011). This idea fits in with Moritz Gansen's "ontopolitics" according to Latour, in this volume. In this sense, García Canclini is an "intellectual friend" (Bryson 2001). I am happy that *Travelling Concepts* has been translated into Spanish, so that my conversations with Spanish-speaking colleagues can continue and gain in depth.

According to my conception of concepts that are useful for interdisciplinary analysis, there are connections between art and research beyond the relationships between object – artwork – and subject – the skill of the analyst, capable of "opening" the works up to the gaze of their spectators. According to the definition of *extranjerías*, I would contend that between the two, a relation of intersubjectivity prevails, in which the two participants can learn from each other because of their differences. I would even submit that this intersubjective relationship is indispensable and that, in consequence, *extranjerías* are equally indispensable.

Nevertheless, if there is absolute discontinuity, we cannot acquire new knowledge, either. Knowledge depends as much on the recognition that enables us to connect what we discover with what we already know, as it depends on the exciting experience of newness. I saw in the exhibition proposal an opportunity to strengthen an intellectual friendship that already existed: between travelling concepts and *extranjerías*. I participate in Canclini and Giunta's exhibition with three collaborative works that I consider experimental documentaries.[1]

We have made these films with various motivations, but an important one for me as academic researcher was to go beyond the limitations of what we can do with traditional media such as books and journals. Those media are limited both in terms of data and of their intended audiences – specialists in the narrow sense. Sensing those limitations, we sought to examine what *extranjerías* remain invisible as long as we docilely respect the limits between disciplines and mediums. An intelligent and open use of different disciplines and media, in contrast, allows us to do much more, and to make visible enriching aspects and nuances; that is to say, we can discover *extranjerías*.

Audio-Visual Media: **Documenting *extranjerías***

The curators have selected three films for their exhibition: *Becoming Vera* (2008), *Colony* (2007), and *Elena* (2006). All three revolve around a concept that requires interdisciplinary analysis, and at the same time pertain to the idea of *extranjería*. The first one concerns a three-year-old girl and her "identity"; the second, a multinational company from before the Second World War, and the social aspects of the labour

1. I am a member of an informal collective of filmmakers called Cinema Suitcase. For a survey of the films, see www.miekebal.org/artworks/films.

relations it invented and implemented; and the third is a dialogue or, mainly, a monologue by a Romanian woman whose son has left for Canada in migration. It ends up concerning a concept I had never thought of, which I have subsequently called facing (Bal 2006). Below, you see a video still of each of these films.

Figure 1. Still from Becoming Vera (2008) by Mieke Bal, Alexandra Loumpet Galitzine, and Michelle Williams Gamaker. Documentary, 54 minutes.

Figure 2. Still from Colony (2006) by Michelle Williams Gamaker, Mieke Bal, Gary Ward, Zen Marie, and Thomas Sykora. Documentary, 33 minutes.

Figure 3. Still from Nothing Is Missing – Elena (2006) by Mieke Bal. Multiple-screen video installation, 25–30 minutes (looped).

Becoming Vera celebrates the imagination as a tool against the enclosures the cultural constrictions impose on subjects, including the concepts with which we frame our objects of analysis

In what follows I will explain how, in different ways, these videos are examples of the use of the audiovisual medium of video to complement the concepts without which we cannot do research; to overcome one of the limitations of our academic work; and to achieve a kind of "translation" beyond the epistemological domain only. In each video there is an "*extranjería*" that precludes facile conclusions, that transforms the concepts, and that in the end compels us to an epistemological modesty imposed by the ontological difference as well as by a creative approximation between research and art. If you have seen our film *A Long History of Madness* (2011) it is easy to see what I mean by that.[2]

In *Becoming Vera* we filmed a "multicultural" three-year-old girl – the age we considered to be the pivotal moment when she began to develop a conscious awareness of her identity. We tried to get a better grip on the nature of identity – and how the concept helps and, at the same time, limits our understanding of cultural being. Culturally and ethnically, Vera is Cameroonian (or rather, Bamun), Russian, and French. In terms of social class she is of aristocratic lineage on both parents' sides; since her parents are also intellectuals, she hears a lot of talk around her, including contradictory things; and economically she lives quite modestly in Paris. Thus summarized, she has three ethnic identities and three class identities. And while Vera is strongly framed by the ambitions and preoccupations of her parents, she positions herself in the stories she invents, fictions in which she integrates her desires into what she has heard around her. Jumping through the world according to her own rhythm, and attempting to see through her eyes, the film *Becoming Vera* celebrates the imagination as a tool against the enclosures the cultural constrictions impose on subjects, including the concepts with which we frame our objects of analysis.

2. This film was screened the evening before the seminar began (December 14ᵗʰ, Barcelona at Arts Santa Monica). In my conception, it was an integral part of my lecture.

In *Colony* the perspective is more historical. This film is about multinational corporations at their beginnings, and the consequences for the workers they employ – the people who live by virtue of, and for, the business of their employers. Here, no satisfactory concept helps us conclude; that of "progress" does not work, and hence, nor does that of "development." *Elena*, finally, is a very personal document that shows us the experience of a woman belonging to a group never documented before, and about which the media do not talk: the mothers of migrants, women who stay behind in the country of departure, their houses empty of their children. They remain unacknowledged and neglected, as if they did not exist. I will connect each of these videos to the concepts central for the analysis on which they are brought to bear, and will determine to what extent the audiovisual medium is indispensable for the analysis, without dismissing as redundant the traditional information media such as books and journals. Through this commentary I hope to answer the questions to which this seminar was devoted.

Becoming Vera questions the limiting aspects of what we have learned to value as "identity politics" in our attempts to break with the hegemony of white, wealthy, and heterosexual men in politics, culture, and the academy. *Colony* aims to question the paternalism in multinational labour relations in the first half of the 20th century, and juxtapose them to the cynical alternatives of today. The film also documents a certain continuity between those two attitudes. That is to say, it questions the historicist idea of progress, as well as the short-term cultural memory that considers the current labour migration as something new. *Elena* aims to make visible what remains silenced simply because it is overlooked in the study of migration. It considers the concept of experience and what the displacement of migrants means for those who stay behind. Hence, these three works, different as they are, all endorse the concepts we work with and examine their limiting effects.

From identity to cultural citizenship[3]

When I showed *Becoming Vera* to an international audience in Germany, a French viewer expressed his astonishment that we had made such a "French" film. The remark clearly went beyond the obvious, namely that the child who is the film's main character is, in fact, "simply" French. She was born in Paris, though brought over from Cameroon for the occasion; her mother is primarily French, and she lives there, most of the time. She goes to school in France, and hence, she is in the process of being shaped by that forceful school system I admire and find confining at the same time, even if she spends much of her summer holidays in Cameroon. As you noticed, all these forms of Frenchness are subject to some qualification, but then again, these are "minoritarian."[4]

More than identity, what matters in Vera's life is indicated as "cultural citizenship" – and what the film explores is the ways in which this citizenship is constructed and transmitted. The case of the very young child, happily unaware of the pressure on her cultural identity that our age imposes on its citizens, lends itself very well to such an inquiry. The film demonstrates the first glimpses of the transformation "into" cultural citizenship. But what kind of citizenship is this?

What matters in Vera's life is indicated as "cultural citizenship" – and what the film explores is the ways in which this citizenship is constructed and transmitted

3. For a more extensive discussion of the issues that this film presents, see Bal 2009.
4. My interpretation of Vera, her life and situation, is my own reponsibility only. Her mother participated in the making of the film, and will probably see things quite differently.

Figure 4. Still from Becoming Vera (2008) by Mieke Bal, Alexandra Loumpet Galitzine, and Michelle Williams Gamaker. Documentary, 54 minutes.

Vera's father says that "contact", as colonization is euphemistically called, only strengthened the culture of the Cameroonian kingdom of Bamun. Since the confrontation with Europe, he claims, there exist

> very specific mechanisms …
> of resistance and survival thanks
> to which the kingdom of Bamun
> survives the major political elements
> of the history of the 20th century

Resistance and survival have clearly saved the kingdom from demise. The colonizer, in this case France, has thus strengthened instead of weakened the cultural citizenship of the Bamun. Vera's father is himself a case in point: having been educated, first, in the French colonial school system, then at a Parisian university, he nevertheless returned to occupy his position in the kingdom. He takes his small daughter's position as a link in the lineage extremely seriously:

> of the ancient organization always
> based on lineage, a political idea …
> as long as the Njis survive
> and the transmission continues
> the kingdom of Bamun survives, hence
> she is called to …
> … ensure the continuity

From this perspective, we can see the entire organization of the ritual around Vera's enthronement as a "French-driven" assertion of Bamun cultural citizenship. Bamun, by the way, is also a political entity without political citizenship in the form of passports; the kingdom is part of the Republic of Cameroon.

Someday, Vera's "French" cultural unawareness had to change. Her parents were bound to transmit to her some of what they got transmitted to them, fragments of other cultures than Paris, from which at first she can pick and choose elements that suit her own play. We sought to capture that change in the film. Between the ages of three and four, Vera traversed many landscapes, exploring where she comes from, to come into her own. The film's title refers not to the old idea of becoming as a transition to a permanent state, however, but more to an ontology of instability; more Deleuzian than, say, according to a psychoanalysis-inspired commonsense notion of identity. In and of itself, it questions cultural citizenship.

Clearly, her parents, both anthropologists, look upon their daughter's status in the Bamun tradition with a double view. Double, not divided; her father's commitment to her status in Bamun is total, even if he seems not wholeheartedly convinced of the ethnographic "truth" of it all:

> she must naturally play her role
> even without knowing it
> I asked the other Njis
> don't you think she's very good?
> and they answered
> "no it's not she who acts"

Perhaps Vera's cultural citizenship of Bamun, which complements her Frenchness, will be inflected by this striking integration of complete commitment with the scepticism of anthropological canniness; a canniness he incurred in a French university, through the lens of French higher education.

A similar double allegiance shines through Vera's behaviour during the ritual, captured with great intimacy. As her father proudly comments on her being "good" and the elders explain that her aptitude is the result of her ritual occupation by the ancestors' spirits, she sits still for hours while the women and men of her father's people dance around her. This was quite astonishing and moving indeed. But just when the images suggest a small girl made the object of an incomprehensible ritual, her self-absorbed face suddenly lights up in a smile to someone outside the frame. Clearly, she is both "inside" the situation and distanced from it when it suits her.

Her mother, also an anthropologist and art historian, took Vera to Russia for the first time, to encounter her side of where she comes from. In Russia, in Moscow and surroundings, she visited the estates of her mother's ancestors, who were exiled during the revolution. Here, Vera runs around in the setting of historical socialites described and sometimes mocked by Pushkin, where strict social rules determined gendered lives. A hospital, a railway station, a town, and a palace, all called after her mother's name, cannot but astonish the little girl. Thus, as in Fumban, along with her cultural identity, it is her class identity that is mirrored to her. And this, to put it bluntly, is as much in tension with her everyday situation in Paris as is her status as oldest daughter of the Ngi in Bamun. Her Frenchness is bound to a class "normality" from which the two other aspects of her background set her apart.

Between the ages of three and four, Vera traversed many landscapes, exploring where she comes from, to come into her own

Figure 5. Still from Becoming Vera (2008) by Mieke Bal, Alexandra Loumpet Galitzine, and Michelle Williams Gamaker. Documentary, 54 minutes.

Clearly, for Vera these visually engaging landscapes seem easily integrated into her rich fantasy world. Equally clearly, and in contrast to the vision of the Elders in Fumban, she takes bits of her being into her own hands. In Russia, she looks at paintings and sculptures in the stately homes her mother shows her, but onto these pieces of fiction she projects her imagined stories. These, in turn, are clearly influenced by her cultural surroundings. For example, in a painting of Cleopatra she points out the black man in the background.[5]

Vera's mother Alexandra recounts how her great-grandmother barred the young Pushkin from courting her daughters. In this context she mentions the possibility that slavery was the background of Pushkin's ancestor's arrival in Russia:

> by the way, they say that Pushkin
> who was a …
> descendant of a young Cameroonian
> who was probably taken in slavery
> to the court of Peter the Great
> was courting the young Galitzine girls
> hence my great-great grandmother had
> refused him access to Viaziomy house

At that moment in the film, Vera covers her eyes as if horrified by the story of slavery. When her mother continues suggesting the great-grandmother's probable racism and/or classism in this interdiction, Vera sits on the stairs making indignant faces.

The most tangible site of encounter between Vera and Pushkin is the bust, which functions as a remarkable target of identification for the little girl. She recognizes it as African rather Russian. Pushkin's African identity is clear in the bust, most unambiguously in the curly hair. And

[5]. Here she acts as if practicing the teachings of African-American artist Fred Wilson (Corrin 1995).

that hair is in fact Vera's one and only clearly "African" feature. Vera's hair, densely curled, golden-blonde, comes up several times in the film, as a modest motive. It is remarked upon, braided in African style, and changes several times, thus attracting attention. In the little scene with the bust, she is clearly proud of her bunches. In semiotic terms, the encounter is based on a subtle iconicity that Vera's finger, a true index, points out to the viewer.[6]

Clearly, even at this young age she is not simply a passive recipient of this cultural nourishment. Toward the end, there is a trialogue when Vera, almost falling asleep, talks into a toy phone:

Figure 6. Still from Becoming Vera (2008) by Mieke Bal, Alexandra Loumpet Galitzine, and Michelle Williams Gamaker. Documentary, 54 minutes.

(to the bandits) bandits, what's come over you?

  I tell you to stop it!
  Alexandra:
  to whom are you speaking?
  Vera:
  (to Alexandra) I'm talking to the two gentlemen
  (to the bandits)
  yes yes but …
  (to the others in the room)
  when I am on the phone
  one doesn't make noise!
  (to the bandits)
  yes, I'm fine
  but what are you doing

6. On Pushkin's African background, see Gnammankou 1997 and Lounsberg 2000 and 2006. For an extended discussion of Vera as a contemporary Tatiana (the woman character in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, 1833), see Bal 2008.

near Buka's street?
no, we are NOT in Paris
we are in Moscow!
no, not at all!
no, we are not in Fumban
after this we go to Paris

In this stunning play with fantasy, reality – specifically, her multi-national background – becomes an ingredient for the imagination. And the addressee is the anchor of both domains. The international figures of bandits, obviously, enter Vera's imagination from reading and television. But in shifting addressees, Vera also changes her discourses, with a fine sense of what is becoming in a certain situation. The "yes I'm fine" is a learned phrase of politeness. The bossy request for silence is a case of role-playing. But it also shows that she is not simply absorbed in her imaginary world. This is how she precludes her cultural citizenship to transform into a rigid, singular cultural identity.

Vera's canny address tells us that such mixtures are not naïve or romantic, but an extremely savvy way of dealing with confinement (in gender, class, or culture, three forms of belonging that lead to a notion of cultural citizenship) to pick and choose and thus constitute, or become, oneself. This, then, is the history Vera demonstrates to us: the history of the present – the intercultural reality in which we live.

Colony: **Labour relations**

Colony is primarily set in Batanagar, India, in 2006. From the present, the film looks back to the past; often with longing and a sense of loss, but also with questions. These questions in turn address the future. Batanagar today is a crumbling outpost of the Bata Empire. In its heyday 16,000 workers lived and worked together for the Bata organization. The Czech-born shoe manufacturer Tomas Bata established his company as an early multinational company alias family business in 1894 with the aim of providing shoes for the people of the world. He envisioned a world where no man need go barefoot and he employed many thousands to make this a reality. His legacy has been passed down the generations to Thomas Bata Junior, his grandson, now the current CEO.

Bata was an experiment in social care as a means of increasing profit – in other words, of merging private and social lives with the work people did. The Bata "family spirit" extended to the work force who produced the shoes in all the satellite outposts of its empire.

The film opens, but does not answer the question so crucial to the contemporary world: is the overcoming of colonialism ever able to avoid neocolonialism? Like all the films from the collective Cinema Suitcase, the film has no voice-over, no explanatory narrative. Instead, the people in it tell their own stories, their own versions and views of what it meant to be involved in this massive enterprise called Bata – a globalized business, we would now call it.

In this stunning play with fantasy, reality –specifically, her multi-national background– becomes an ingredient for the imagination. And the addressee is the anchor of both domains

Is the overcoming of colonialism ever able to avoid neocolonialism?

Figure 7. Still from Colony (2006) by Michelle Williams Gamaker, Mieke Bal, Gary Ward, Zen Marie, and Thomas Sykora. Documentary, 33 minutes.

Figure 8. Still from Colony (2006) by Michelle Williams Gamaker, Mieke Bal, Gary Ward, Zen Marie, and Thomas Sykora. Documentary, 33 minutes..

The film is political in its critical presentation of both past ideals and contemporary alternatives. A political film, we found, is not a film that comes up with political conclusions but one that opens up the everyday to its political aspects and then leaves it to its viewers to reflect on how the political of the presented situation speaks to their own politics. The film is "migratory" in the sense of my larger project on migratory aesthetics. This becomes clear in the focus on the transport of the fabrication of shoes to the southern hemisphere, where cheap labour increased profit but at the same time produced jobs for the employed. As a result of this, artisans lost their clients to larger businesses. The film explores, in other words, the dialectic of international commerce. *Colony* is also "migratory" in its loose aesthetic forms as well as in its multi-voiced content. It harbours the traces of situations and relationships of the past that "colour" the present world. Hence the muted, somewhat dusty colours in present-day Batanagar. And because there is no progress, a film like *Elena* became necessary.

Extranjerías of history: On facing

Elena was made as an element of the video installation *Nothing Is Missing*. This installation consists of several half-hour videos, with a maximum of seventeen, displayed on old-fashioned monitors. Imagine a living room in a public space. Visitors are invited to sit in armchairs or on sofas. Around them, women speak to someone else. The interlocutors are people close to these women, intimates, but their relationship with them has been interrupted due to the migration of the women's children: a grand-child they did not see grow up; a child-in-law they did not choose or approve of; or the emigrated child itself. The intimacy, which is sometimes fraught with slight uneasiness, is characteristic of the situation. Sometimes you hear the other voice, but sometimes you do not.

Communication unfolds between the woman and her relative, but due to the installation set-up, also between the women, and between the women and the visitors, all at once. The performative aspect on all these levels brings about a merging of communications. The armchairs can be moved or turned, as if one were visiting the women on the screen, concentrating on a single mother or alternating one's attention among them. The women are filmed in consistent close-up, as portraits. The relentlessly permanent image of their faces provides a modest monument to the women who suffered these profound losses. It also forces viewers to look these women in the face, in the eyes, and listen to what they have to say, in a language that is foreign, using expressions that seem strange, but in a discourse we can all, affectively, relate to.

There is no narrative voice; only the mothers do the talking. Any sense of tourism is carefully avoided: while intensely visual, the films show neither monumentality nor picturesque scenery. No spectacle is offered to gratify a desire for beauty. Instead, the films engage intimately with the individuals concerned. All sound is diegetic. Indirectly, the installation constitutes a monument to those mothers who were left behind, bereft of those they most cherished.

Figure 9. Overview of the installation Nothing Is Missing (2006–2010) by Mieke Bal. Multiple-screen video installation, 25–30 minutes (looped). Exhibited at "2MOVE: Migration + Video," Zuiderzeemuseum, Enkhuizen, the Netherlands, 2007–2008. Photo by Astrid Van Weyenberg.

Figure 10. Still from Nothing Is Missing – Elena (2006) by Mieke Bal. Multiple-screen video installation, 25–30 minutes (looped).

Intimacy in the films is enhanced not only by the subject discussed – the departure of the child who left for North America or Western Europe – but also because the mothers talk to someone close to them. Moreover, the filmmaker sets the shot, switches the camera on, and leaves the room, only to return after the allotted time. This gesture of

abandoning authority and leaving what happens to chance, serendipity, and the interaction between the two people (of whom only the mother is visible) makes the filming highly performative. Things happen between the speaking parties, but this is due to the filming rather than any directions from the maker. This performative aspect enhances the value of the process, some of which is also at issue during viewing.

My primary goal is to explore the possibility of an "aesthetic understanding" which, through intimacy and bridging the gaps dug by globalization, can participate in the political. For the concept of aesthetics I revert to the eighteenth century, to the philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1970 [1750]), who developed the concept of aesthetics as binding through the senses. He also considered aesthetics as a useful focus for the political. For the concept of the political I look to the distinctions between "politics" and "the political" proposed by Jacques Rancière (1999) and Chantal Mouffe (2005).

In this distinction, politics is the organization that settles conflict; the political is where conflict "happens." Yet, it is by virtue of the political that social life is possible. It can thrive, be alive, and also be dangerous. No wonder, then, that we usually seek to avoid conflict by means of consensus. Politics comes in to avert the potential of danger and constantly attempts to dampen the political. A positive view of conflict might sound counterintuitive. Since most of us love to hate politics as domineering and menacing, we tend to attribute the negativity of conflict to politics rather than to its counterpart, yearning to be reassured by political leaders that conflict can be eradicated. And true enough, we eschew conflict in our own social environment. Yet, as Mouffe cogently argues, the culture of consensus resulting from politics does not eliminate conflict at all; it suppresses conflict, leaving it to its own potentially volcanic devices and forcing it underground. Politics is in fact highly exclusivist, and lives by "the negation of the ineradicable character of antagonism" (2005, 10). It is also in blatant contradiction to the lived social reality, in which conflict is generally present.

With this distinction in mind we are better equipped to understand the political point of the film's intimacy. How do two people who, after a life together, are so drastically separated, speak to each other? In this conversation there are moments where the monologue transforms into drama. For example, just when Elena is at the point of complaining about her husband (Simion's father), the young man interrupts her to ask about something very different.

> every time someone would come
> to ask for my hand
> father would start arguing
> saying whatever came to his mind
> he would say
> "keep your mouth shut, you stupid girl, stay out of it"
>
> that's how it was for me
>
> after I came here it was the same
> with your father I still had a hard life
> – can you talk a bit about me?

Clearly, the interview does not only serve to make people talk but also to shut them up. That is what the son is doing here. It is easy to understand why.

Of all the videos of which this project consists, *Elena* is the clearest example of "facing," the concept it actually creates. Facing is three things, or acts, at once. Literally, facing is the act of looking someone else in the face. It is also coming to terms with something that is difficult to live down by looking it in the face rather than denying or repressing it. Thirdly, it is making contact, placing the emphasis on the second person, and acknowledging the need of that contact simply in order to be able to sustain life. Instead of "to be is to be perceived" and "I think, therefore I am," facing proposes, "I face (you), hence, we are." For this reason, facing is my proposal for a performance of contact across divisions that avoids the traps of universalist exclusion and relativist condescendence.

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Instead of "to be is to be perceived" and "I think, therefore I am," facing proposes, "I face (you), hence, we are"

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The perception-image is the result of the viewer's selection from the visible world of those images that might be useful for her. The action-image presents possibilities to act upon what is seen. In between, the affection-image compels the viewer – who is affected by the perception – to consider action. In *Nothing Is Missing*, and a priori in *Elena*, these three types of images culminate in the mitigated close-up of the face that shuttles between perception-image and affection-image without the leap to action. Here, rather than a passive perceivedness that hands over human agency, a rigorously affirmed second-personhood is displayed. The perceivedness that the predominance of the close-up foregrounds leads to an empowering performativity. This brings me to the academic question of interdisciplinarity. With the aim of transforming it from a fashionable term into an intellectually responsible and specific idea, interdisciplinarity can be a model of the meaning of the preposition "inter-" that I am interested in: as a practice of singular relationality.

With this in mind, the face, with all the potential this concept-image possesses, seemed an excellent place to start. But to deploy the face for this purpose requires one more negative act: the elimination of an oppressive sentimentalist humanism that has appropriated the face for universalist claims in a threefold way – as the window of the soul, as the key to identity translated into individuality, and as the site of policing. With this move I also seek to suspend any tendency to sentimentalizing interpretations of *Nothing Is Missing*.

The abuses of the face that individualism underpins are, in turn, articulated by means of a form of thought that confuses origin with articulation, and runs on a historicism as simplistically linear as it is obsessive. Common origin is a primary ideology of universalism. This involves motherhood: all human beings are born from a mother (even if this universal is no longer true). Creation stories from around the world tend to worry about the beginning of humanity in terms of the nonhumanity that precedes it. Psychoanalysis primarily projects onto the maternal face the beginning of the child's aesthetic relationality. Both the discourse of psychoanalysis and, as I will demonstrate shortly, that of aesthetics show their hand in these searches for beginnings. Both searches for origins are predicated on individualism, anchored as

they are in the mythical structure of evolution as ongoing separation, splitting, and specification.

Today, with authorities displaying high anxiety over the invisibility of the Islamic veiled face, we cannot overestimate the importance, not of the face per se, but of the ideology of the face for the construction of contemporary socio-political divides. To show briefly the workings of this ideology I look to an art-historical publication that earned its stripes in its own field: a study on the portrait, the artistic genre par excellence where individualism is the condition sine qua non of the genre's very existence. The point of the portrait is the belief in the real existence of the person depicted, the "vital relationship between the portrait and its object of representation" (Brilliant 1991, 8). The portraits that compose *Nothing Is Missing* challenge these joint assumptions of individualism and realism, as well as their claim to generalized validity.

The women in this work are, of course, "real," as real as you and me, and individual – as different from you and me as the world's divides have programmed. At first sight, they have also been documented as such. At the same time, however, the installation enables them to speak "together" from within a cultural-political position that makes them absolutely distinct and absolutely connected at once. This is the meaning of the silences that suggests they are listening to one another, even if they never met in reality.

As for the documentary nature of their images, again, this is both obvious and obviously false, since the situation of speech is framed as both hyperpersonal and utterly staged. I filmed the migrants' mothers talking about their motivation to support or try to withhold their children who wished to leave and about their own grief to see them go. The mothers talk about this crucial moment in their past to a person close to them, often someone whose absence in her life was caused by the child's departure. This is a first take on the universal performance of contact I want to propose, against the more exclusionist universalities. In this performance, I contend, intimacy plays itself out against the odds of globalization-informed separation.

The act and mode of filming itself is implicated in this theoretical move. It is, in one sense, perfectly and perhaps excessively documentary. I staged the women, asked their interlocutors to take place behind the camera, set the shot, turned the camera on, and left the scene. This method is hyperbolically documentary. To underline this aspect I refrained from editing these shots. *A slow, unsmooth, and personal talk results – an extranjería*.

The relentlessly permanent image of their faces is meant to force viewers to look these women in the face, and listen to what they have to say. This is a second form of the performance of contact. The mothers become the holders of the inter-face. The face as inter-face is an occasion for an exchange that, affect-based as it may be, is fundamental in opening up the discourse of the face to the world. Only when she takes the trouble and the time to participate in the *extranjería* of this interaction can she achieve, or earn, a sense of participation.

With authorities displaying high anxiety over the invisibility of the Islamic veiled face, we cannot overestimate the importance, not of the face per se, but of the ideology of the face for the construction of contemporary socio-political divides

Conclusion: What to Do?

What can we do, in our work of research, to exit cultural autism? In the three films I have briefly discussed, the images work with the unfolding of the affection-image. Close-ups subvert linear time. This is how they inscribe the present in the image. Between narrative images and close-ups, then, a particular kind of intertemporality emerges: one that stages a struggle between fast narrative and stasis. Between the perception of *extranjerías* that is in a certain way unsettling and an action you still ponder, affect emerges.

The close-ups possess a temporal density, inhabited by the past and the future, while affect (and especially, the affect produced by close-ups) remains an event in the present. This is not an event in the punctual sense but a slice of a process during which the external events unfold more slowly and even remain out of view. "Becoming" refers to the presence of the past, its present tense. If we consider this present in the domain of the social, we can no longer deny our responsibility for the injustices of the past, even if we are not guilty of them. The affection-image binds with a perception that already took place but leaves a trace that can lead to an action in the future.

This enables us, as researchers, to realize the connection, in the present and across cultural divides, between a series of discourses and activities that are routinely treated either as separate or irresponsibly combined. Of the women of *Nothing Is Missing,* I have learned that the invocation of a disciplinary frame can sometimes do more harm than good to the ideas that we try to develop through it. We need to make the transition from an essentialist conception of a static culture to a performative one, of the confrontation of what we can call "the cultural"; of culture as a process of contestation analogous to the distinction Mouffe makes between politics and the political. Thus it becomes possible to make the transition from "one's own" to the different – by means of *extranjerías*. It is in this direction that I see the possibility to articulate an intercultural dynamic in the globalized world. The face looks and turns the spectator into an interlocutor. It faces something that is difficult to acknowledge. In order to be able to examine what we can do to understand the contemporary world on its own terms, we must exit our cultural autism.

We need to make the transition from an essentialist conception of a static culture to a performative one, of the confrontation of what we can call "the cultural"

In order to be able to examine what we can do to understand the contemporary world on its own terms, we must exit our cultural autism

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PANEL I
CATEGORIES AND GRAMMARS
OF INTERCULTURAL DYNAMICS

- WESTERN KNOWLEDGE AND NON-WESTERN OBJECTS

  Sanjay Seth

- DECOLONISING TERRITORIAL STUDIES:
  EPISTEMIC CONSIDERATIONS FROM THE CASE OF
  HAVANA

  Yasser Farrés Delgado and Alberto Matarán Ruiz

- GASPING FOR BREATH: INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGY
  AND THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN
  YORUBA PROVERBS

  Oluwole Coker

- 5,000 FEET IS THE BEST: RE-VIEWING THE POLITICS
  OF UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS

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I will begin this essay with a ghost story. In his ***Ghosts of War in Vietnam***, Heonik Kwon describes a region of Vietnam abounding with the ghosts of those who had met violent deaths away from home. The humans who share their world with these ghosts –and also with gods and other deities, and with the spirits of their dead ancestors– are part of an eminently modern society, characterised by extensive market relations, and many of the other appurtenances and symbols of modernity; and the ghosts themselves are not remnants of a time long past, because a large number of them are the ghosts of the war dead, both American and Vietnamese. These ghosts require the same things that the living require, and so are made offerings of food and drink, votive money, clothing, and sometimes, even a bicycle or Honda. There are those in Vietnam –and they include many, though by no means all, of the members of the ruling communist party– who disapprove of such offerings, and regard this as 'illusory thinking", but they are, Kwon tells us, "greatly outnumbered by those who instead consider it a part of the nature of being and becoming in the world, that is, as an ontological question" (2008: 16). Those who attend to the needs of ghosts make their offerings irrespective of the nationality of these spectral figures; at a séance a deity explains to the anthropologist, "my dear foreigner, dead people don't fight. War is the business of the living. People in my world do not remember the intentions and objectives of the war they fought while they were in your world" (2008:135). Whatever their nationality or politics, ghosts have a right to exist in the social world of the living, and the rituals and offerings the living make are, writes Kwon, part of "a constant negotiation over social and ecological space with this ontologically given, socially distinct group of beings" (2008: 18).

If there are those who confuse ghosts with men, there are also those who confuse nature with society. According to Philippe Descola, the Achuar people of the upper Amazon "do not…share our antimony between two closed and irremediably opposed worlds, the cultural world of human society and the natural world of animal society" (1994, 324). They have only one society, which includes animals, spirits and plants; in their understanding, "all of nature's beings have some features in common with mankind, and the laws they go by are more or less the same

If there are those who confuse ghosts with men, there are also those who confuse nature with society

as those governing civil society" (1994: 93). The Achuar, Descola writes, "confer the attributes of social life upon plants and animals, regarding these as subjects rather than objects" (1996, 405-6).

When we as scholars of the human sciences seek to explain and understand such phenomena, we usually engage in a form of conceptual translation. Confronted by those who believe in gods, spirits and ghosts, we treat these as manifestations of some other, intelligible phenomena. We then explain such beliefs as self-estrangement, if we are Marxists, or as in some way necessary to the representation of social unity, if we are followers of Durkheim, or in terms of some functional requirement, if we are functionalists. We do this despite the fact that ghosts, spirits and dead ancestors are ontological phenomena for those whom we are seeking to understand, not allegorical or metaphorical ones; their existence does not depend upon whether or not they are 'believed' in. When we confront those who do not distinguish nature from society, we smile indulgently, for we know that we are in the presence of those for whom the world is still not disenchanted, for whom, mistakenly if charmingly, the world as a whole, including nature, is pregnant with meaning and purpose. And we usually try to find a social-cultural explanation for their confusions that would render these comprehensible; or, if we are socio-biologists, we seek a natural explanation in the form of environmental or genetic constraints. In either case, the very mode of our explanation presupposes a distinction between nature and society –precisely the distinction which the subjects of our study cannot conceive of, or deny. In both the case of the Achuar and the Vietnamese, the understandings that the human sciences make available to us, varied as they may be, all rely upon translating the explanations and self-understandings of those whom we are seeking to understand into our own terms. Not just translating, but also overriding– for we assume that our descriptions and explanations offer an understanding superior to their own.

Of course, it is often thought to be a mark of the rigour of social-scientific explanations that they get 'behind' or 'under' the self-understandings of agents to causes and conditions which are unavailable to social actors. But note that when we apply the social sciences to our own understandings, when we invoke hidden or underlying causes to explain features of our own culture, they are ones that are part of our conceptual world. We may assent or deny if told that our erotic relations are connected to the workings of our unconscious, but we recognise this sort of explanation, for by-and-large, the Unconscious is a part of our world. The sort of explanations we offer in the above cases, however, are not always and fully part of their world. It is as if the Achuar of Amazonia and the Vietnamese of Cam Re were to explain to us that our failure to attend to the needs of ghosts, and our worship of our malign god, the Unconscious, is bound to result in a tortuous erotic life. What is at issue, in other words, is not whether we have to take the self-understandings of our subjects at facevalue –we clearly do not have to do so, and the cosmologies of other peoples also regularly invoke hidden factors as explanations– but rather whether the categories invoked in social science explanations are superior to those they translate.

Where do our categories come from? Like all knowledges, they have an origin in a particular time, and place. The place is Europe. The time is the early modern period. As modern knowledge emerged and came to be

defined through a critique of scholastic, other medieval and Renaissance knowledges, all of these were condemned for confusing humans with their world –for attributing to the world a meaning and purpose which in fact belongs to us, and which we have projected onto it. One of the defining features of modern knowledge, then, was that it presumed a sharp distinction between subject and object, knower and known. It further assumed that the world was divided between a disenchanted nature, which was to be understood in terms of laws and regularities, and a newly-discovered object called society, which was a realm of meanings, purposes and ends. It also reversed the order between god(s) and men, presuming that gods were to be explained in terms of men, rather than men in terms of gods.

 Once novel and engaged in battle with other knowledges, this knowledge today is triumphant. The natural and human sciences which began to be institutionalised in the 19th century are elaborations and institutionalisations of its core presumptions. Moreover, this knowledge is global- it has not only superseded the pre-modern knowledges of Europe, but also the autochthonous knowledges of the non-Western world. Max Weber once wrote that explanations in the social sciences aimed to be acknowledged as correct 'even by a Chinese' (1949: 58); today, they usually are, for the only knowledge which counts as 'respectable' knowledge, whether the site of its production is London or Barcelona or Hanoi or Delhi, is the knowledge produced within the modern human sciences. Other knowledges have been devalued and survive, where they survive –as in the case of the examples with which I began– in the quotidian, where they are often subject to the finger-wagging strictures of the post-colonial state which scolds its citizens for their 'backward' views.

For a long time we have lived with a paradox. Even as the world became more global, even as the recipients of Europe's civilizing mission insisted that their voice be heard and we had to learn to talk of 'intercultural dynamics', the knowledge through which we sought to understand a changing world and our present was a knowledge produced within the modern human sciences– sciences that were born in Europe. That is, the knowledges through which we sought to apprehend changes characterized by their global scope and reach were nonetheless knowledges that derived from, and were produced in a specifically European setting. Any embarrassment that may have been warranted by the paradox described above was deemed unnecessary. For despite their European 'provenance', the human sciences were presumed to be 'universal'. They replaced other ways of knowing the world and being in it because they were 'superior' to these other ways. All the more so since this was not always contested, even by the anti-colonial movements which sought to overthrow Western rule; for the most part, these movements sought the knowledge which they presumed to be the source of Western power and prosperity for their own nations and peoples, and they fought under the banners of liberty, equality, fraternity, the right to self-determination, democracy and socialism. What may once have been 'European' knowledge came to be endorsed and used by the elites of all countries. The claims of the human sciences were seemingly vindicated by the fact they had been globalized.

But… just as the moment of the victory of the free market, democracy and the West turned out to be closely followed by economic crises with

The knowledge through which we sought to understand a changing world and our present was a knowledge produced within the modern human sciences– sciences that were born in Europe

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unpredictable consequences, and by sustained challenges to free-market orthodoxies, similarly, at the very moment when the universality of the human sciences seemed almost self-evident, doubts and self-questioning have emerged. Dipesh Chakrabarty, for instance, has suggested that the very concepts through which explanations in the human sciences are fashioned have genealogies "which go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe" (Chakrabarty, 2000, 4), and that while this does not in and of itself mean that they are 'merely' European and provincial, it does mean that the analytical categories which the social sciences presume to be universal (including capital, state, individual, civil society and so on) may not in fact transcend the European history from which they originate. Others have argued that knowledge is connected to power, and that the triumph (and global reach) of the modern social sciences is a consequence, not of their intellectual superiority, but of the force of arms; modern knowledge superseded the indigenous knowledges of the non-West not because it was superior, but because it was allied with colonialism. The current dominance of this knowledge, it has been observed, is also an exercise of power, one that maintains the power of the First world (or 'core' countries) over the Third world (or the countries of the periphery), and of the elites in the latter over their own people (Nandy 1983). Others still, have suggested the need to experiment with the 'preservation' and invigoration of indigenous knowledges that hitherto had usually been condemned as mythic, superstitious, and more generally, untrue.

The contemporary intellectual scene, I suggest, is characterised by an acute consciousness of the historicity of our knowledge, but now unaccompanied by any compelling argument for its superiority to other knowledges. Once we were confident, in David Kolb's words, that modern knowledge was "not just another in a sequence of historic constructions", but was rather "the unveiling of what has been at the root of these constructions" (1986: 9-10). Today, I suggest, we are coming to belatedly realise that modernity and modern knowledge are, in fact, 'just another in a sequence of historic constructions'.

Society without gods and nature

This brings me to the next part of my paper. Once we acknowledge that the categories of modern knowledge are not the truth uncovered, but 'just another in a sequence of historic constructions', we can begin to face up to the fact that they are often inadequate to their non-Western objects.

I want to suggest that the concept of 'society' is a particularly important and revealing example. The discovery of the social is one of the hallmarks of modern thought and the modern social sciences; where others explain things with reference to gods and cosmic forces, we moderns not only override these explanations, we typically outflank them by diagnosing these as misperceptions arising out of social causes. For us, society is at once the cause and the locale of explanation, both first mover and substance. Following the lead of Castoriadis and others (Castoriadis 1987, Baudrillard 1983, Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Wagner 2000), I suggest that society is not something we discovered, but something we created. Keith Michael Baker, historian of the French revolution, puts it most directly

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and forcefully: "Society is an invention not a discovery. It is a representation of the world instituted in practice, not simply a brute objective fact" (1994, 114). 'Represented' and 'instituted' do not, as I will shortly explain, mean imaginary or fictitious, but they do mean 'not discovered'.

If for a moment we entertain the possibility that society is but a particular way of construing and constructing human interdependence, rather than an ontological given, then the question arises of how it came to be constructed. In contemporary jargon, what is the 'constitutive outside' of society- what has to be excluded in order to construct this concept-reality? The answer is of course complex, but I suggest two elements stand out, elements that refer us back to the two examples I began with- the exclusion/expulsion of god(s), and of nature.

The expulsion of gods and spirits occurs by bringing them under the category of 'religion', a category that takes the form of a genus divided into different species (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism etc). But understanding gods and spirits thus is itself a product of a history, and a specifically European and Christian history, as some scholars of religion have come to recognise. This is one in which 'religion' and 'belief' emerged as mutually constitutive categories, making it possible to invent the category 'religion', as the genus of which different religious beliefs are the species. Thus the very notion of 'religion', as one scholar describes it, is "a Christian theological category" (King 1999, 40), or as another puts it, is "a modern invention which the West, during the last two hundred years or so, has exported to the rest of the world" (Hick 1991: vii). Like many Western exports, it is not always, however, a useful one - it produces misunderstandings and unfruitful comparisons when applied to 'religions' that have not undergone the same history that rendered them into systems of belief. (In parenthesis we may note that it was the 19th century founder of comparative religious studies, Max Muller, who reported with some puzzlement that when he quizzed Indians who had arrived in Oxford about their religion, they hardly understood what he meant by religion, and wondered why Muller took so deep an interest in mere dogma, or as they expressed it, made such a fuss about religion- Muller 1892: 155) For the use of this category already exorcises the world of gods and ghosts; they have been relocated from the world to our minds, from ontological realities to social products. To use it is already to dismiss the self-understandings of Vietnamese who share their world with ghosts, or of Hindus who share their world with their numerous gods.

Related, and equally important, society is constituted by distinguishing it from nature. We already know from the work of Descola and others that this distinction is not, however, made by all peoples. Bruno Latour claims –with some hyperbole– "Non-Western cultures *have never been interested* in nature; they have never adopted it as a category; they have never found a use for it…Westerners were the ones who turned nature into a big deal…" (Latour 2004: 43). Indeed, even Westerners did not always make such a big deal of it: the historian of science Lorraine Daston reminds us that the medieval period operated not with two categories, the natural and the social, but a host of them, including the supernatural, preternatural, artificial and unnatural, and that the "categories of nature and culture, conceived in yin-yang complementarity, are of relatively recent provenance" (Daston 1998: 154). They are, I would

suggest, as recent as the early modern period, when Hobbes, Hume and others began to mock the idea that the invocation of 'purpose' and 'meaning' could play any role in understanding a domain of reality now understood to be characterised by its impersonal and law-like regularities (Shapin 1996, Dear 2006).

I am suggesting, then, that the invention of society involved a reshuffling of categories, such that gods and ghosts could no longer be treated as ontological beings, because they were relocated in the human mind and in this new object, society; and nature, conversely, was expelled from this new object. That is why when we encounter Vietnamese ghosts, and the animal and plant subjects of the Achuar, we are forced to translate. We cannot take their explanations seriously because our categories are born out of a denial of theirs: some Vietnamese might treat ghosts as onto-logical, empirical beings, but we treat them as signifying belief, a belief that is most likely socially rooted, and can be 'read' for evidence of their society's concerns and anxieties. If the Achuar invoke nature as filled with meaning and purpose, we treat these meanings and purposes as what Achuar society has 'projected' onto nature. And, following the earlier part of my argument, I am also suggesting that we have no compelling reason to privilege our category of society; that this is not a 'discovery' of what has always been there, all along, but rather a fabrication largely peculiar to us moderns. And finally, because it is a fabrication, I am sug-gesting that it often it does not serve well to understand worlds that have been fabricated differently.

Representing and constituting

In using verbs like 'constitute' and 'fabricate' to discuss knowledge, I aim to challenge what is perhaps the most fundamental presumption of modern Western knowledge and the human sciences, that knowledge is essentially passive, that knowledge is an act by a subject who mirrors or represents objects. I will use this concluding part of my essay to suggest that knowledge is not only a matter of 'cognizing' a world out there, but that it helps constitute whatever world we have; that modern knowl-edge is not simply the self-apprehension of modernity, but has played a critical part in constituting it. Of course, such a suggestion invites resistance. One is liable, for instance, to be charged with 'idealism'. But that, it seems to me, is only because we have been caught too long in a metaphysics that divides the world into reality and representation, the real and the ideal, the material and the ideational. These binaries are not features of the world as such, but the consequences of certain practices and forms of organization. When I say that that our categories are con-structed or fabricated, I am not thereby saying that they are fictional or illusory, that they are 'mere' invention and do not really exist, or that to think differently will make society, nature and religion disappear. Let me explain what I do mean, through some examples.

Timothy Mitchell argues that the distinction between real and represen-tation, central to modern Western ways of apprehending and organising the world, did not make much sense to the people of Egypt, who neither thought that way nor inhabited a world organised around this distinc-tion. However, as the institutions and practices of colonial administration, of commodification, and of new forms of power and representation

The invention of society involved a reshuffling of categories, such that gods and ghosts could no longer be treated as ontological beings, because they were relocated in the human mind

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acted upon Egypt, modern knowledge and the social sciences became more adequate as tools for 'representing' that changed scene (Mitchell 1988). In a similar vein, I have argued that many of the anxieties and complaints that came to centre around the introduction of Western knowledge in colonial India –that Indian students were absorbing the new knowledge in their old ways, by rote learning, or that educated Indians were in the throes of a moral crisis, 'torn' between their traditional beliefs and the new ideas they were exposed to at school and in university– should be read less as testifying to real problems, and more as indicating that certain foundational assumptions of modern knowledge could not, in fact, be assumed in India. I read these complaints and controversies as indicating that the foundational assumptions that underlie them, that knowledge is a relation between a meaning-endowing subject and a world of disenchanted objects (which is why knowledge has to be made one's own, and rote learning is a failure of knowledge rather than a form of it), and that morality is a matter of 'beliefs' held in something called the 'mind' (hence why Western-educated Indians were assumed to be suffering moral crisis, even though most of them seemed blissfully unaware of this fact) did not have purchase in India. However, as the subject/object relation came to undergird not only pedagogy but the spatial layout of the city and the practices of the law courts and the office, some Indians did become subjects who experienced morality and religion as beliefs, and were now capable of being rent by the conflict between different beliefs; and some Indians did become expressive subjects confronting a world of objects, and thus became capable of regarding (and bemoaning) rote learning as a failure of knowledge, rather than a form of it (Seth 2007).

Another example: 'Hinduism', itself something of an invented term, was not a matter of beliefs, but as elite Indians sought to meet the civilisational challenge of the West, one of the ways they did so was by reinterpreting some of their practices as expressions of more-or-less coherent 'beliefs'. In the reformulations of the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, the Hinduism of some Indians became a 'proper' religion, one that now fitted the category that had once misdescribed it. And the census, as many, myself included, have argued, did not simply 'count' how many Hindus and Muslim, low castes and high castes there were in India, but created new ways of thinking and experiencing religion and caste (Seth 2007). In other words, to the degree that central concepts of the social sciences such as nature, society, religion and the like came to inform institutions and practices, concepts which previously pertained to someone else's history now were a good, if partial, guide to understanding Egypt and India.

But if we think of 'constitute', 'fabricate' or 'construct' along these lines, it will also immediately become clear that such fabrications do not work on inert material, on a tabula rasa. They encounter other forms of constituting and comprehending the world, which they to varying degrees replace, displace, and reconfigure. Certain things are effaced, they disappear. Others are reorganised: religion, for instance, does not disappear, but is reconfigured as something that happens inside men's hearts and minds (belief), and is reallocated to the private sphere. Maps and other technologies make it possible to 'see' things that could not be seen before, but do not necessary displace other relationships to land and landscape. In short, modernity and its knowledges do not com-

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pletely remake the world, and to the degree that they do not, modern knowledge remains inadequate to representing and understanding these worlds. That is, while modern knowledge has constituted our global modernity, it is never homologous with the entire world; or to put it another way, the world that modern knowledge creates continues to sit alongside other worlds. This, it seems to me, is glaringly apparent in many parts of the non-West, but it is also true in the heartlands of modernity. Even here, where modernity and its knowledges are auto-chthonous products, and have been doing their work of transformation over many centuries, they have to coexist with other ways of under-standing and hence being in the world. In the Western world as in the non-Western world, there are realms of knowing and living that are part of the modern- they are not 'survivals' of pre-modernity destined to eventually be swept away- but which are neither lived through nor are wholly accessible to us through the categories of the social sciences (see Chakrabarty 2000, 62-71).

The conclusion to be drawn is not that modern knowledge and the social sciences are 'wrong' or are 'merely' European. The genealogy of modern knowledge, I have suggested, is undeniably Western; it arose as part of, and as an attempt to account for and make sense of, the recent history of Europe. But that knowledge is now global, and, with differences of degree, is the heritage of most people. 'Global', however, is not the same thing as 'universal'. It is not that this knowledge has risen above the circumstances of its production and revealed that it is true for all– on the contrary, the failure of the attempts to ground modern Reason are more apparent today than ever before. Rather, this knowledge and the historical processes with which it is closely associated have, for good or ill, refashioned the world. While they have served to constitute a world in common –our global modernity– this world continues to sit alongside other ones, worlds to which the social sciences are only a limited guide. I conclude by submitting that modern knowledge, and the social sciences that formalise it, have constituted our modernity, and are at once indispensable –but also inadequate– to making sense of it. They do not simply mirror or 'represent' the real, more accurately than other knowledges, but rather translate, mediate and create.

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The homogenising and unsustainable nature of generalised territorial, urban and architectural practices

By the mid-20th century, the debates in architecture, urbanism and land use management had acknowledged the homogenising nature of the generalised practices based on functionalism, advocated a rupture with the ideas of the Modern Movement – disbanding the International Congress of Modern Architecture – and commenced new experiments. However, today the tendency towards homogenisation is still a generalised practice: the main cities on the planet that have become global landmarks display "a process of reproduction of typologies that are mutually self-referential globally, but which have few reference points that associate them with a specific culture or local territory" (Farrés, 2010). This phenomenon – which is identifiable both through an abstract architecture with a supposed universal validity and characterised by the use of glass and metal; an architecture which "fetishizes" images of the past and voids them of any content – is not recognised by much of the professional community of these disciplines, who have gone so far as to deny it. Such blindness is understandable because in spite of the critiques of the *International style*, the widespread practice continued to be imbued with the ideas of *modernity* and *modernisation*, so much so that the exhaustion of post-modern architecture brought a reinstatement of the modern ideals.

This being the case, in order to grasp the global dimension of the problem we must take a step back and compare today's cities with the ones that existed before the colonialist expansion of the West: even when the cultures of yesteryear interacted with each other, a *typological variety* coexisted that is difficult to compare with the situation today. The models of Christian mediaeval cities differed considerably from their Islamic contemporaries, as well as those from the Far East and Mesoamerica; even more so in the case of Great Zimbabwe, an example that is little documented in the volumes of World Architectural History. The relations between each group and their territories corresponded so specifically to physical-environmental, technical-productive and socio-cultural factors that they could be said to

have established particular biunivocal relations between the typologies of the settlements and the actual worldviews of each society.

Can we see the same thing in the context of today's world system, dominated by the Western modern and developmental worldview? Are connections between typological diversity and the diversity of worldviews homologous to those of yesteryear encouraged today? Is typological diversity promoted? Or a desirable diversity? To answer all these questions, let us consider that the traditional links with the land are disappearing and that the reproduction of global models does not encounter any restriction, not even in physical-environmental conditions or the limitations of local and autochthonous technologies, since the transfer of technology, exporting of building materials and use of fossil energy are able to overcome any obstacle (even though they create new problems).

All this emphasises the idea that the phenomenon of homogenisation, rather than an aesthetic problem, is overflowing into areas such as the social, environmental, economic and other fields. In fact, it is no coincidence that it is studied by very diverse disciplines, with many different ways of approaching the problem. In this respect, the idea of the *deterritorialisation of the metropolis*, coined by the Italian town planner Alberto Magnaghi, is particularly interesting, owing to the multi-scale and multidisciplinary nature of his quest.

Magnaghi (2011) has referred to territorial-urban-architectural problems[1] as the generalisation – at the expense of autochthonous territorial values and traditional cultures – of a model of a megalopolis characterised by the *metropolis form*, an "urban structure with a strongly dissipative and entropic nature, which has no physical confines or limits to its growth, and is unbalancing and strongly hierarchical, homogenising the land it occupies, eco-catastrophic, devaluing the individual qualities of the places, lacking in aesthetic quality and reductionist in terms of life models" (Magnaghi, 1989: 115). It is a state of the city in which the presence of the skyline of concrete, steel and glass skyscrapers contrasts with the marginalised districts (Magnaghi, 2011), patterns sold as the pinnacle of urban evolution and repeated under the pressure of a developmentalism that promotes an exacerbated territorial competition in which each city aspires to enter into the elite of "superstar" cities.

According to Magnaghi (2011: 53-68), the use of technology favours the *liberation of the city* from the territory and culture, which represents the ideal situation for the place to lose its cultural identities and traditions, and to generate an unequal use of space by the social groups inhabiting it whose access to technology is limited and inseparable from the *liberation of the territory*[2]. The two processes have two characteristics in common: *decontextualisation* and *degradation*. The former highlights "the destruction of *landscape identities* (…) through the breaking of the links between the new forms of settlement and the places"[3]; the latter shows both the effects on the *environment* ("the breaking of environmental balances owing to the loss of environmental knowledge and the abandoning of its care by the community settled there"), *social exclusion* ("induced by the worsening of the living conditions of the poorest members of society, who suffer the effects of environmental degradation to a greater extent"), and the effects of *rootlessness* and geographic mobility ("which have given rise to loss of identity").

1. We have highlighted the multi-scale view using these adjectives, even though his book does not explain it as such.
2. That is, the use of this as a simple support for economic activities and functions that are increasingly independent and disconnected from the location and its specific environmental, cultural and identity qualities, with the aim of creating a second, artificial nature.
3. Magnaghi views the landscape as a representation of the result of the long historical process of territorialisation, thus, the interruption of this synergic relation by a settlement culture that reduces locations to functional "sites" and to an artificial order that is indifferent to the individual features of the actual places represents an act of "interruption of the landscape" as an expression of the identity of the place.

Homogenisation presented as a *sui generis* product of capitalism

Table 1. 100 concepts to describe the recent urban changes	
A. NAMES GIVEN TO NEW METROPOLITAN FORM	**B. NAMES GIVEN TO NEW INTERCITY RELATIONS**
1 ANTICITY	1 ARCHIPELAGO ECONOMY
2 BOOMBURB	2 CHAIN OF METROPOLITAN AREAS
3 CITIES À LA CARTE	3 CITIES IN GLOBAL MATRICES
4 CONCENTRATED DECENTRALIZATION	4 CROSS-BORDER NETWORK OF GLOBAL CITIES
5 COUNTRIFIED CITY	5 FUNCTIONAL WORLD CITY SYSTEM
6 DISURB	6 GLOBAL CITY NETWORK
7 EDGE CITY	7 GLOBAL CITY SYSTEM
8 EDGE COUNTY	8 GLOBAL COMPETITION AMONG CITIES
9 EDGELESS CITY	9 GLOBAL GRID OF CITIES
10 EXIT RAMP ECONOMY	10 GLOBAL METROPOLITANISM
11 EXOPOLIS	11 GLOBAL NETWORK OF CITIES
12 GALACTIC CITY	12 GLOBAL NETWORK OF FINANCIAL CENTERS
13 LIMITLESS CITY	13 GLOBAL NETWORK OF MAJOR METROPOLITAN MANAGEMENT CENTERS
14 MAJOR DIVERSIFIED CENTER	14 GLOBAL NETWORK OF NODES AND HUBS
15 MEGACENTER	15 GLOBAL SYSTEM OF CITIES
16 MEGACOUNTY	16 GLOBAL URBAN HIERARCHY
17 MEGALOPOLIS UNBOUND	17 GLOBAL URBAN NETWORK
18 METROPOLITAN-LEVEL CORE	18 GLOBAL URBAN SYSTEM
19 METROPOLITAN SUBURB	19 GLOBAL WEB OF CITIES
20 METROTOWN	20 HIERARCHICAL GLOBAL SYSTEM OF URBAN PLACES
21 MINI-CITY	21 INTERNATIONAL GLOBAL-LOCAL NETWORKS
22 MINI-DOWNTOWN	22 INTERNATIONAL HIERARCHY OF CITIES
23 MULTICENTERED NET	23 INTERNATIONAL SYSTEMS OF INTERLINKED CITIES
24 NET OF MIXED BEADS	24 INTERNATIONAL URBAN SYSTEM
25 NEW DOWNTOWN	25 INTERNATIONALLY NETWORKED URBAN SPACES
26 OUTER CITY	26 LYNCHPINS IN THE SPATIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE WORLD ECONOMY
27 OUTTOWN	27 METROPOLITAN HIERARCHY EXERCISED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD
28 PENTURBIA	28 NEO-MARSHALLIAN NODES IN GLOBAL NETWORKS
29 REGIONAL CITY	29 NETWORK OF WORLD CITIES
30 REGIONAL TOWN CENTER	30 NODAL CENTRES OF THE NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY
31 RURURBIA	31 NODES IN GLOBAL NETWORKS OF INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS
32 SERVURB	32 PLANETARY URBAN NETWORKS
33 SLURBS	33 SYSTEM OF MAJOR WORLD CITIES
34 SPILLOVER CITY	34 SYSTEM OF WORLD CITIES
35 SPREAD CITY	35 TRANSNATIONAL SYSTEM OF CITIES
36 SPRINKLER CITY	36 TRANSNATIONAL URBAN SYSTEM
37 STEALTH CITY	37 TRANSNATIONAL URBANISM
38 SUBCENTER	38 WORLD CITY ACTOR NETWORK
39 SUBURBAN BUSINESS CENTER	39 WORLD CITY HIERARCHY
40 SUBURBAN DOWNTOWN	40 WORLD CITY NETWORK
41 SUBURBAN EMPLOYMENT CENTER	41 WORLD CITY SYSTEM
42 SUBURBAN FREEWAY CORRIDOR	42 WORLD HIERARCHY OF FINANCIAL CENTRES
43 SUBURBAN GROWTH CORRIDOR	43 WORLD RELATIONS OF CITIES
44 SUBURBAN NUCLEATION	44 WORLD SYSTEM OF CITIES
45 TECHNOBURB	45 WORLD SYSTEM OF METROPOLISES
46 THE NEW HEARTLAND	46 WORLD URBAN HIERARCHY
47 URBAN CORE	47 WORLD URBAN SYSTEM
48 URBAN GALAXY	48 WORLD-SYSTEMS CITY SYSTEM
49 URBAN REALM	49 WORLDWIDE GRID OF GLOBAL CITIES
50 URBAN VILLAGE	50 WORLDWIDE GRID OF STRATEGIC PLACES

Source: Taylor y Lang (2004)

YASSER FARRÉS DELGADO AND ALBERTO MATARÁN RUIZ

There are a number of different conceptualisations relating to territorial, urban and architectural homogenisation. To name but a few: *no-place* (Augé, 1993); *global city* (Sassen, 1999); *festivalisation* (Venturi, 1994) and *urBANALization* (Muñoz, 2008). Each one offers its own view, some more critical than others, but all of them coincide in describing the changes as a *sui generis* product of the logic of global capitalism, alluding to globalisation and neoliberalism as a fundamental factor in the expansion of homogenising processes. These perspectives exist within a broad universe which shapes what we propose to call the "hypothesis of the capitalist exclusivity of the processes of territorial, urban and architectural homogenisation", in light of these claims that global capitalism is the origin of these processes. It is mentioned in Magnaghi, who echoes the arguments of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) on capitalism as a deterritorialising machine, and also in the 100 concepts compiled by Taylor and Lang (2004), based on the Anglo-American literature on the transformations experienced by cities and territories since the mid-20th century. This is a list that features adjectives such as *global, international, world* and *transnational*, and which represents evidence of the importance granted to the economic dimension of capitalism as a definitive reason for such transformations (Table 1).

The deterritorialisation of the metropolis in Havana: the collapse of the hypothesis of capitalist exclusivity

The phenomena described can also be identified in the case of Cuba. In line with Magnaghi's comments on decontextualisation and degradation, six such manifestations can be cited: 1) the proliferation of global architecture; 2) the *fetishisation* of the urban and architectural image; 3) the emergence of new urban artefacts (malls and other *no-places*); 4) the progressive loss or incoherent transformation of the built heritage; 5) the growing visibility of marginalized areas, and 6) the redistribution of the use of metropolitan land that is in contradiction with the historic logic of the settlement. These classifications are the result of fieldwork carried out between September 2009 and June 2010 to show the new constructions and refurbishments with a high impact on Havana's urban landscape that have been carried out by state bodies, and furthermore, to illustrate the informal transformations carried out by the population that have affected the image of the city.

Hotels, shopping centres, office buildings and other programmes linked with the opening up of the country to foreign investment since the 1990s represent further examples of the phenomenon. These new constructions are representative because they constitute urban landmarks and represent all of the structures built since then with a similar impact[4]. The refurbishments included – representing infelicitous trends – also stand out in terms of the impact they have had on the landscape. The examples of transformation or loss of built heritage through informal action by the population were only included to illustrate a situation which, owing to its extensiveness, goes beyond the limits of the work, though this has already been explained by Mario Coyula (2007) and Eliana Cárdenas (2000).

Viewed as a whole, the selection exemplifies the degradation of the built environment – this being understood as the physical loss of built

4. The number is small because the spending that has had the greatest impact on urban landscape carried out in that period was mainly concentrated on the refurbishment of the historic old city centre of La Habana Vieja, the main point of concentration for tertiary activity in the city, the traditional Malecón, the Barrio Chino and a few areas in El Vedado.

heritage, incoherent transformations and the insertion of features that break with local traditions. To give some idea of the problem, we include a few images of some of the works studied (Figure 1); a cartography of all of these illustrates the way in which deterritorialisation is spreading through the city (Appendix 1). We must stress that these are not isolated cases with few urban or territorial implications, but works that represent a trend.

Figure 1. Examples of the deterritorialisation of the architecture and the city in Havana
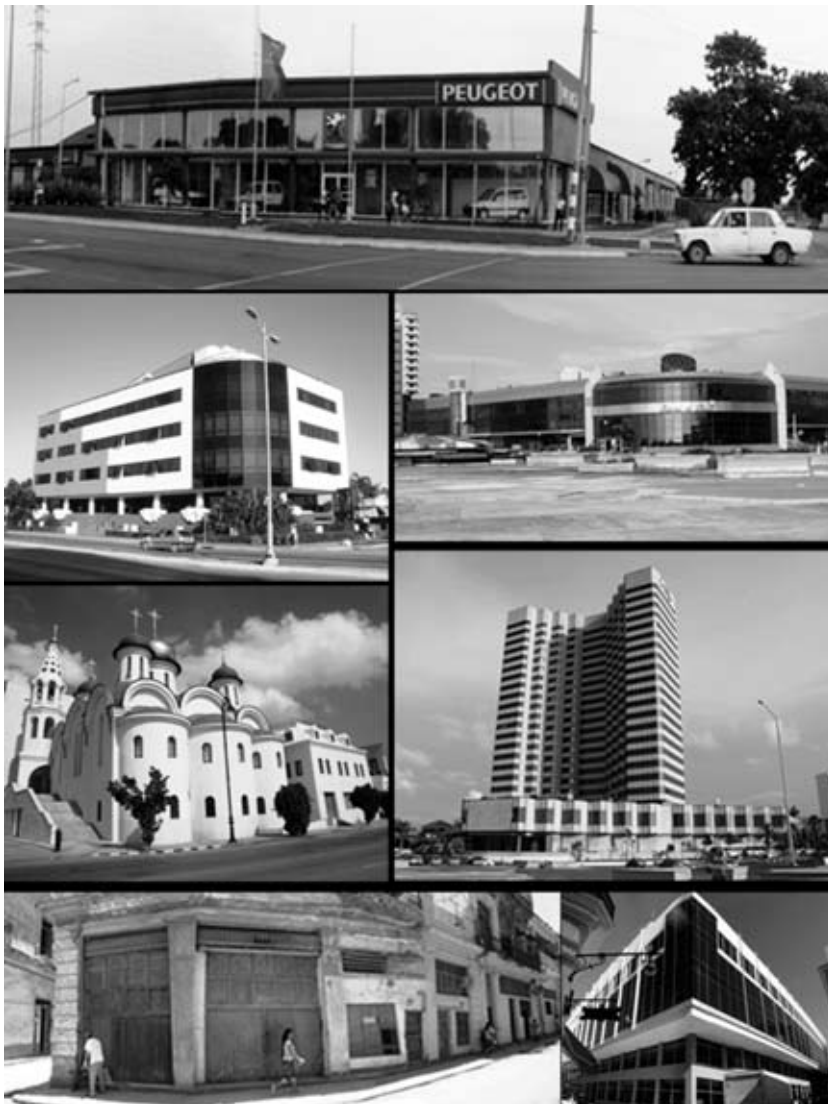
Photos: Libertad Rodríguez Otero, architect.

In line with Magnaghi, deterritorialisation in Havana can also be described in terms of *eco-environmental degradation*. We can see this, for example, from the hydrographic systems and the urban green spaces, aspects that have been the guiding threads in the metropolitan organisation plans ever since Forestier's proposals in 1926 right up to the present day; that is, they are considered key variables for the territorial evolution of Havana (Gómez, 2008).

In Havana deterritorialisation can also be described in terms of *eco-environmental degradation*

YASSER FARRÉS DELGADO AND ALBERTO MATARÁN RUIZ

The development of Havana at the expense of its natural resources dates back to the origins of the town, which swallowed up the surrounding forested area. Today, official sources claim that the city "complies with the regulations of the World Health Organisation in that it possesses 10 or more square metres of green spaces per inhabitant", given that it has 13m^2/per inhabitant[5]. However, there are few green spaces in either the central municipal areas (Habana Vieja, Centro Habana and 10 de Octubre) or in the peripheral districts (such as Marianao and Lawton). This has its roots in the evolution of the metropolitan area, the compact nature of the city's fabric and the fact that the large green areas are concentrated in a peripheral belt around the city – due to causes prior to 1959. But for many reasons, urban green spaces are still today one of the most important demands: parks and tree-lined avenues are often subjected to indiscriminate pruning with the pretext of preventing accidents in the event of cyclones, while in other cases, deterioration occurs as a result of the incorrect selection and planting of trees, whether it be for financial reasons (cheaper plants) or aesthetic snobbery. These are issues discussed by the professional collectives, but applying the correct solution is often beyond their decision-making powers, a point that has been suggested by the architect and landscape gardener Sergio Ferro (2010).

Meanwhile, the pollution of the rivers and the bay, the infelicitous urbanization of the hydrographic basins and other manifestations of degradation of the water systems are crucial to environmental quality. Historically speaking, the city turned its back on its rivers (Guanabo, Bacuranao, Cojímar, Luyanó, Martín Pérez, Almendares, Quibú and Jaimanitas), but this lack of concern has persisted beyond a few specific initiatives, as has been noted by research studies carried out in the geography faculty of the University of Havana (Hasdenteufel, Mateo *et al*., 2008).

The deterritorialisation of Havana's metropolis can also be described in terms of *socio-economic degradation*, a situation that recently drove the Cuban government to decree the measures described in the Social and Economic Policy Guidelines of the Party and the Revolution[6]. It must be stressed that this problem has intensified over the past decades.

In Cuba, since the early years of the revolution, the middle classes disappeared as a social group, as they either emigrated or because those who stayed behind were stripped of their privileges on behalf of an equality that never progressed beyond "downward egalitarianism" (Coyula, 2008: 568). The relations established by means of the Soviet bloc's Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) enabled the society to function, up until 1990, using homogeneity criteria that were highly effective, and "which brought about a process of levelling that was unprecedented in South America, though it tended towards a proletariatisation of the people" (Dilla, 2001); the latter was embodied on the territory by the generalisation of *micro-districts*, residential areas built in the form of typified, anonymous projects, both on the periphery of Havana and throughout the rest of the country (see Figure 2).

5. http://www.radiorebelde.cu/noticias/ciencia/ciencia1-140508.html
6. Passed in February 2011. The document is available at www.granma.cubaweb.cu

Fig. 2 The microdistrict Plaza de la Revolución. An example of the model of deterritorialised, functionalist, anonymous town planning that spread throughout the country in the 1970s to provide a mass solution to the housing problem, using Soviet technology and standardised projects.

Photo: Libertad Rodríguez Otero, architect.

The deterritorialisation in Havana is important for studying this phenomenon as a global process

After the break-up of the Soviet Union (which resulted in the loss of 75% of the Cuban economy), an economic crisis commenced which has brought "classist reconfigurations and a growing social contrast" (Dilla, 2001), which clashes with various satisfactory macroeconomic indicators that conceal the problem. In spite of the country's opening-up to overseas capital and other debatable measures, socio-economic degradation has become increasingly visible since the 1990s. Raúl Castro (2010) hinted at it when he declared that "there is a surplus of hundreds of thousands of workers in the public and business sectors, with some analysts calculating that the excess number of posts runs to more than a million people, and this is a very sensitive issue that we will have to tackle with firmness and political good sense". All this is expressed in the architecture of the *nouveau riche* or "*macetas*" which contrasts with an increasing precariousness in construction.

A need for new explanations for the deterritorialisation of the metropolis

The deterritorialization in Havana is important for studying this phenomenon as a global process because it suggests that its likelihood of existence goes beyond capitalism or socialism. This reveals a problem with a two-fold interest:

- *Theoretical:* formulating deterritorialisation in a socialist system goes beyond the theories which claim that it exists as a *sui generis* product of capitalism; that is, it distorts the aforementioned *hypothesis of capitalist exclusivity*.
- *Practical:* the very significance of the theoretical aspects requires the deployment of a new critical assessment of what is happening in Cuba's territorial, urban and architectural scenarios, and which could clarify paths to follow in Cuba for future scenarios of alternative territorial evolution.

Likewise, the case questions the possibility of offering alternatives from a possible *socialist antithesis* based on socialism's supposed ability to overcome the problems engendered by capitalism as a deterritorialising

machine. This raises many questions, since Cuba's socialist system has proved to be an example of sustainability, according to human development indicators that place it near the top of the international rankings[7]. This leads us to the question, why does this tendency towards deterritorialisation exist in Cuba? Possible answers could be that one of the following historical scenarios has been taking place:

- *Scenario A:* Cuba's *real socialism* was a form of state capitalism and, therefore, the hypothesis of capitalist exclusivity explains the existence of the deterritorialisation of the metropolis.
- *Scenario B:* Cuba's *real socialism* was not a form of state capitalism; the deterritorialisation can be explained as a remnant of the capitalist territorial thinking that operated before 1959, or in any case, as a resurgence of same owing to the fact that the Socialist territorial thinking implemented has not been sufficiently transformational to overcome its capitalist counterpart.
- *Scenario C:* in fact, conditions exist which favour the proliferation of the deterritorialisation of the metropolis beyond the issue of whether it is a socialist or a capitalist system.

In any case, it is clear that the problem of the deterritorialisation of the metropolis has transcended the scientific-technical and academic spheres, and has reached political and social dimensions, where the debate is unavoidable. Nevertheless, judging by recent praxis in Cuba, it does not seem that sufficient awareness exists regarding these implications, at least not among those responsible for making the decisions on territory or for those designing the plans. This can be partly explained by the "lack of spaces for criticism" (Cárdenas, 2000). Another influential factor is the way in which the models disseminated through international specialist magazines – resulting in the promotion of solutions typical of capitalist, developmentalist and deterritorialising approaches –become established within the professional imaginary.

Regarding the aforementioned scenarios, unquestionably the third contains the most interesting hypothesis. The arguments that justify *Scenario A*, as well as corresponding to traditional critiques of socialism as not offering any other proposals than capitalism does, would appear to be a simplistic explanation, as it does not take into account the role granted to Physical Planning, the results of which (compared to "territorial macrocephaly"[8]) are undeniable, and the fact that during all this time the land market and real estate speculation have not exactly been the driving forces of territorial management. As was noted by Sergio Baroni (2003), "It cannot be denied that the country, even with the shortcomings that have been widely described, has undergone a radical economic and social transformation" in which "the geographic space has played a central role". Meanwhile, the justification for *Scenario B* chimes with certain celebratory discourses that form part of everyday Cuban life, according to which the decisions made have always been the correct ones, but the problems arise from a lack of control. All that is needed, therefore, is to tighten up control and update the systems and approach. This stance does not offer any space for criticism directed at the root of the problem either because, as we will show further on, it leaves the basic elements of praxis untouched and does not allow a dialogue with the existing alternative and innovative concepts.

7. According to the UNDP Human Development Report (2010), Cuba is in eighth position in America.

8. The term "territorial macrocephaly", used among Cuba's professional community, indicates the excessive influence Havana has had as a capital to the detriment of conditions in the other cities; this situation is combated by promoting a system of more diverse populational settlements throughout the entire country. For further information on this policy, see Coyula (1997).

Meanwhile, accepting the possibility of *Scenario C* represents a different point of departure: far from exalting the differences between socialist and capitalist territorial practices, it decentres the traditional discourses and focuses on the similarities. Here it might prove useful to discuss the issue using the grammars which supplement the critique and theory of Architecture, Urbanism and Land Use, focusing on the complex and cultural nature of its objects of study.

Innovative grammars: territorial coloniality and its triangular structure

Some of the most important critical theories that seek comprehensive explanations for architectural, urban and territorial praxis are founded on economic aspects; among these are the Marxist-rooted approaches (Harvey 2004a, 2004b) which explain the evolution of human settlements as part of the history of the class struggle, turning forms of production into the "ultimate reason". This being the case, it is no coincidence that homogenisation is explained by granting great importance to the reproduction of modern developmentalism. They are valid arguments, there is a "productivist reasoning that has impregnated both capitalism and unrealistic socialism" (Taibo, 2009: 63), but they do not reveal the whole network of hierarchies that organise the production of human spaces. This only becomes visible if we consider the complex cultural nature of architectural, urban and territorial praxis (Cárdenas, 1998), which implies not isolating their understanding of the general critique of world society. Hence the reason for creating a dialogue with the Theory of Modernity/Coloniality.

Owing to the close link that exists between the deterritorialisation of the metropolis and modernising processes, we propose introducing the study of same into the critique of the Western hegemonic model of civilisation. This reveals that the *deterritorialising praxis complies with the hegemony of the epistemic model deployed by the West in the modern/colonial world system.* To understand this, it helps to use *territorial coloniality* as an analytical category, as the supposed need for modernisation still focuses generalised praxis on the idea that *there is no modernity without coloniality*. Considering it thus reveals complex reasons why deterritorialisation exists, beyond one or another social system.

If we consider that coloniality is a collection of patterns of power which, established during modernity and the European colonialist expansion, affect the entire world system and go beyond liberating colonies because the national elites reproduce Eurocentrism (Grosfoguel, 2003, 2008), it is plain to see that the generalisation of deterritorialised practices is a consequence of the privilege of the Western episteme. We can thus define *territorial coloniality*, a particular expression of the concept of *coloniality* offered by Santiago Castro-Gómez (2007)[9], by presenting it as the "collection of patterns of power in the territorial praxis that served to establish hegemonically one territorial conception above others that are consequently 'inferiorised'". Likewise, we can speak of the triangle between the *coloniality of territorial knowledge*, the *coloniality of territorial power,* and the *coloniality of territorial being* (Figure 3). Many facts verify this.

The deterritorialising praxis complies with the hegemony of the epistemic model deployed by the West in the modern/colonial world system

[9.] Castro-Gómez specifies that the civilising discourse is organised through the triangular structure between *coloniality of knowledge, coloniality of being,* and *coloniality of power*, exercised from Western privilege. E. Dussel, A. Quijano, W. Mignolo, C. Walsh, R.Grosfoguel, E. Lander and others explain how this reality has been introduced historically.

For example, the *coloniality of territorial power* can be defined – in line with the concept *coloniality of power* of Walter Mignolo (2003) – as "the field of intersubjectivity in which a certain group of people define what is territorially correct and, therefore, they sustain their power of enunciation". This is exercised both in global territorial scenarios (where transnational agents hold the power of enunciation – monopolies which exploit natural resources or construction, foundations, international organisations and others), and in local territorial scenarios (where local governments act, as well as other actors with decision-making powers); though the scales are not unconnected.

Figure 3. *The triangle of territorial coloniality.* **A conceptualisation created to present the arguments of Santiago Castro-Gómez (2007) on the structure of coloniality.**
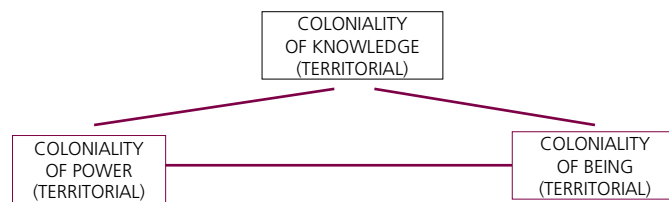
Source: produced by the authors

Meanwhile, the *coloniality of territorial being* lies in the dominance that the *urban being* possesses over other forms of human existence (*non-urban being*) that have been "discarded" by the organisation of world society. The adverts to buy and sell flats and houses, the "festivalisation" of urban politics (Venturi, 1994), the housing bubbles and the notable differences in the remuneration of agricultural work compared to non-agricultural work are just some of the mechanisms that encourage this dominance. Let the population of the world become more and more urban, it is telling us: *living* is synonymous with *living in the city*.

As for the *coloniality of territorial knowledge*, this is established by a professional praxis in which certain types of knowledge dominate the decisions on how to conceive and inhabit the territory, the city and architecture. Examples of this are: the privilege with which the disciplines universalise Western notions of territory, city and architecture; the exporting of patterns of Western urban life, and the rejection of everything that is traditional, vernacular and popular as a possible valid response to the present-day problems that the teaching of generalised urban-architectural design tends to produce.

The singularity of the *coloniality of territorial knowledge*. Comprehensible alternatives from an intercultural and inter-scientific grammar

For the purpose of this seminar, it is important to highlight the fact that the *coloniality of territorial knowledge* is exercised globally by the Western worldview onto other non-western worldviews; and even by some scientific disciplines onto others (Figure 4). The actual tree structure with which modern scientific disciplines tackle human territorial

existence is a determining factor to ensure that this is the case. In this respect, the cartography of different knowledges (which, without claiming to be conclusive, is represented in Figure 5) shows the foundational nature that the Latin concept of territory (*terra-torium*: land that belongs to someone) possesses in contemporary praxis. This separation, boosted by the hegemonic deployment of the reductionism of modern science, colonises the professional imaginary and is present today when *environment* and *society* are treated as different conceptual universes; a distinction that does not exist in other, non-Western worldviews .

Figure 4. Hierarchies in the coloniality of territorial knowledge.
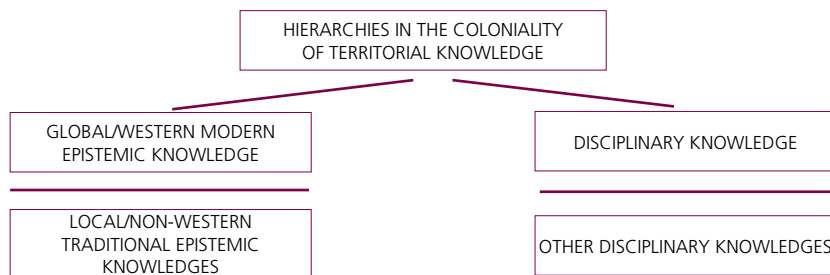
Source: produced by the authors

Figure.5. The decolonisation of territorial knowledges involves transgressing the tree structure of the production of knowledge.

Source: produced by the authors

If we bear in mind the fact that the globalisation of this Western-centric worldview is responsible for today's unsustainable world situation, it is perfectly comprehensible that there is a need to *decolonise knowledge* in territorial studies by taking into account grammars and worldview discourses not founded on that division. This is a challenge that is only attainable by overcoming the limits of the disciplines introduced with *transdisciplinarity* (Castro-Gomez, 2007), and by establishing a *critical interculturality* (Walsh, 2010) beyond Eurocentric universalisms. Both stances allow us to see that alternatives to deterritorialisation have always existed apart from the dominant territorial, urban and architectural practices; we only need to see how "other territorial practices" are articulated through "other ways" of conceiving life which the Andean notions of *sumak kamaña* and *pachamama* promote in Bolivia and Ecuador.

Returning to Havana

The perspective of modernity/coloniality raises some interesting explanations to the hegemonic tendency of homogenisation that exists beyond capitalism and socialism; it makes visible issues which, when reduced to a merely economic explanation, go unnoticed. With this approach, it is possible to rethink the study of the deterritorialisation of the metropolis as a global phenomenon by insisting on the need to seek alternatives to the unsustainable global Eurocentrism.

Applying this perspective to Havana encourages us to explore more deeply the ways in which the deterritorialisation of the metropolis affects the built environment in this context. This point cannot be fully explained in terms of eco-environmental or socio-economic degradation, as it involves debating the idea of the *identity of the territory*; this has historically led to a discussion of "the new" and "the old" which, seen from this perspective, proves Eurocentric in that it is a historic consequence of the modernising project. In this respect it is worth remembering that the idea of *identity* in South American and Cuban architectural theory dates back to the mid-20th century, when it was being debated whether the region was "peripheral" in terms of production of "modernities" (Cárdenas, 1998). Here, once again Eurocentrism raises its head, as the notion of *identity in architecture* is based on a construction of *national identities* which has been synonymous with a celebratory discourse of "hybrid cultures", and is not used to champion pre-Columbine cultures or other emerging "subalternized" cultures.

Without wishing to enlarge upon the existing general debate in South American cultural studies, it is worth mentioning, in the specific case of Cuba's territorial, urban and architectural culture, that the idea of identity refers exclusively to its European roots; because on one hand, the extermination of the authtoctonous peoples during colonialisation did not enable them to leave any more footprints in the characterisation of Cuba's population and settlement apart from the *bohío* (typical hut), while on the other, nor did the Afro-Cuban population contribute its own conceptions to the shaping of the Cuban habitat, given that they were slaves to the colonies and marginalised in the republic. This Eurocentrism justifies the term *white city* used by Mario Coyula (2009) to describe Havana, and exemplifies a coloniality of territorial knowledge exercised from a Western episteme.

As a result of everything expressed in the previous entries and these last few details, it can be concluded that in the case of Cuba it would be useful to examine more deeply: a) the conditions expressed by the theory and criticism of the architecture, urbanism and land use in Cuba on which the construction of "other territories" could be based as a re-territorialisation of the existing one; b) the possible sources for this decolonisation of the dominant imaginary; and c) the real willingness to do so that exists between the groups of professionals and local actors.

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GASPING FOR BREATH: INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN YORUBA PROVERBS

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Among the Yoruba, a linguistic-cum-cultural group found in the Western part of Nigeria, knowledge production resides in the proverbial lore of the people. The generative capacity of the intrinsic resources of Yoruba proverbs is eminently visible across several frontiers of epistemological precincts. However, it has been increasingly difficult to exploit these resources for contemporary appropriation as a result of factors such as counter-culture, gaps in educational planning and the erosion of indigenous values by waves of modernisation. To fully understand the objective of this paper is to adequately locate proverbs in the knowledge production enterprise in African consciousness. Of course, owing to Africa's non-scribal tradition, which compelled the transmission of communal ethics via oral means, it naturally follows that each society would naturally evolve oral forms to serve the multifarious purposes in the social equation.

Several scholars have dwelled on the significance of oral tradition/oral tradition among people of African descent. Scholars such as Ruth Finnegan in her ground-breaking work *Oral Literature in Africa* emphasise the uniqueness of various forms of oral art. Later scholars like Abimbola (1975), Ajuwon (1979) and Barber (1988), to mention just a few have demonstrated the vibrancy of the oral genres through specific studies on isolated forms such as *Ifa* Religious poetry, *Ijala* Yoruba Hunters' Dirge, *Oriki* (Yoruba Praise or Descriptive Poetry), respectively. What comes out of these scholarly interventions is that the Yoruba possess a rich and almost inexhaustible repertoire of oral art. However, the focus of this paper on the proverb genre among the Yoruba is a direct consequence of its centrality in Yoruba epistemological processes .This is to say that, the diversity of proverbs and its unarguable penetrability makes it the form that best suits the knowledge enterprise, especially for production, transmission and diffusion across all strata of the social fabric.

This paper draws from a corpus of Yoruba proverbs, *in situ*, to instantiate the fact that the relevance of the verbal resources among the Yoruba people, as in several indigenous societies, extends beyond artistic and aesthetic appeals. Given the key role proverbs perform in pre-literate societies, it is stressed that knowledge production, articulation and

This paper draws from a corpus of Yoruba proverbs, *in situ*, to instantiate the fact that the relevance of the verbal resources among the Yoruba people, as in several indigenous societies, extends beyond artistic and aesthetic

exploitation for human development are deeply enshrined in the rich repertoire of Yoruba proverbs. This paper highlights specific epistemological concerns, like health and ethical precepts, to suggest that the survival of oral artistic resources is directly proportional to the humanistic quest for advancement. From a literary analytical standpoint, for example, proverbs as essential thematic drivers are well represented in the corpus of written African literature. The argument we can deduce is that the epistemological lacuna and the disconnect between socio-historical realities and frontiers of knowledge find an explanation in the fate of under-explored orature in African's drive for an epistemological order.

As I pointed out earlier, the Yoruba have a rich tradition which has been adequately researched by scholars across disciplines. A unique feature of this tradition is the richness of the oral culture. Proverb as an oral subgenre among the Yoruba permeates all other genres. Proverbs are so highly regarded basically because of the multifarious functions they perform and their centrality to knowledge production in indigenous societies. The point is that, being an essentially oral-driven culture, the Yoruba place a lot of emphasis on the content and nature of proverbs. This becomes particularly relevant when one considers the major sources of knowledge production, as well as the channels of dissemination.

The point to note in this regard is that, as a tool of education, religious entrenchment and epistemological relevance, proverbs are of key importance in Yoruba societies in preliterate times. Proverbs become readily available to elders who guard the socio-cultural values of the society and point ways forward all the time. As the saying goes, *agba ki I wa loja ki ori omo tuntun wo* (when an elder is in the market, the new-born baby would not lack attention). Therefore, the role of elders in using proverbs as embellishments in genres like folktales is paramount. Perhaps one central area where the Yoruba deploy the intricacy of proverb dynamism is in the area of religion.

Owing to the structure of the Yoruba religious pantheon which accommodates several deities next to a supreme being, the use of proverbial sayings becomes an imperative. However, the centrality of Ifa, also called *akerefinusogbon, akoniloran bi iyekan eni…* (Ifa, the one whose wisdom is immense, the omniscient teacher like one's relation…); particularly foregrounds the spiritual essence of oral and verbal resources. As oracles in Yoruba pantheons relate with devotees through riddles and proverbs, it becomes a question of religious imperative to interrogate proverbs. As a matter of fact, as the central source of Yoruba indigenous being is the Ifa literary corpus, the density of the messages requires great tact and mastery to penetrate them. This explains why the corpus is described as the storehouse of Yoruba philosophy.

Indigenous knowledge production among the Yoruba depends largely on the exposition of the proverbial lore. From the womb-to-tomb continuum, proverbs are strategically exploited to interpret existential positions and offer insights into challenges of individual and communal existence. Elders are saddled with the onerous task of using appropriate proverbs in this regard, since *oro ki i tobi ka bi obe bu*, (no matter how weighty a matter is, it must be discussed). In other words, proverbs are like diplomatic tools which ultimately endure across generations. What the Yoruba use to further enhance their societies and advance the cause of human-

ity is inherently embedded in the proverbial lore. In fact, the Yoruba have proverbs which relate to each occasion and which further different epistemological ends. For instance, the admonition contained in the saying that *ilera loro* (health is weath) indicates the importance of healthy living among the Yoruba, while *okunrun diwo n diigun, bowo ti mo ni oogun n mo* (when a sick person reduces the cost of service/medication, the medication is naturally reduced since the amount of money determines the volume/quality of drugs) implies that like all human societies, quality healthcare comes at a premium. In spite of the foregoing, however, about the numerous potentials of a rich verbal storehouse in Yoruba societies, the problematic herein is the seeming disconnect of its continued relevance in contemporary society. This development, as mentioned earlier, can be said to be the fallout of pseudo-literacy, counter-cultures and the sweeping effects of a globalised world.

To expatiate a little: by pseudo-literacy, one refers to the fact that despite the assumption that the society has transited to the scribal tradition, a vast majority of the population is still unlettered. They are lost between the poles of literacy and illiteracy; and are unable to adequately accommodate the cultural ethos replete in proverbs which make a mockery of both tradition and modernity. In other words, while indigenous resources gasp for breath and beg for attention, the reality is their utter neglect by society, so much so that a supposed elite tribe cannot further the valuesof the traditional society mirrored in proverbs.

Counter-cultures which negate the *ise loogun ise* principle (hard work as the antidote to poverty) also lead to chaos in the cultural space. The contemporary society contends with the evils of acute materialism, neglect of values and the tendency to ignore noble achievements. Ordinarily, the indigenous wisdom replete in proverbs would have sounded a caveat on this development that *oun ti a ko jiya fun ki i to ojo* (anything not laboured for does not last); but the reality is that life is now lived as *bo ti gba*, not *bo ti to* (the expedient way, not the right way). In other words, the emerging society hardly pays attention to the values promoted hitherto and instead celebrates ephemeral issues which are antithetical to the ethos represented in traditional societies.

As the Yoruba would proverbially admonish, *agbajo owo la fii so aya* (it takes a clenched /total palm to beat the chest), the evolution of an appropriate and beneficial epistemological order in contemporary society depends on how prepared and accommodating the forces of modernity can be. The fact that *omo to so ile nu, o so apo iya ko* (when a child forgets the home, s/he should await a looming danger) implies that the politics of knowledge production which frustrate the inculcation of cultural values and virtues is bound to suffer a setback, as is currently being witnessed in the visible chaos in the public space. The fate of proverbs in contemporary society, therefore, is like that of the forgotten stone which ironically has the capacity to be the cornerstone.

My impression is that the society which emerges from the present epistemological contraption faces a critical loss of direction. The issue is that the foundation of social values has long been consigned to the dustbin of pseudo-Westernisation, which in itself is not adequately imbibed. For proverbs to wriggle out of this suffocation, a reorientation which transcends mere aesthetic colouration would be required since, as the

Yoruba would say, *omo to so ile nu, o so apo iya ko* (a child that jettisons the home is a disaster waiting to happen). To succinctly capture the knowledge politics as it affects the place of proverbs among the Yoruba, the proverb that, *arakun laso gbagi, ko si eno to rin ihoho de ibe* (going to shop for a new fabric at Gbagi market is only to add to one's wardrobe, no one goes to the market naked), aptly captures the situation.

Proverbs in the knowledge equation

Yoruba epistemological equation oscillates among the cycles of knowledge (*ogbon*), wisdom (*imo*) and understanding (*oye*). For Falola, the relationship between these key signposts is not only interwoven, but is also interdependent, just like a mathematical equation. To fully appreciate the significance of knowledge as the first pillar in the epistemological process, there is a need to analyse proverbs that feature knowledge as their thematic thrust. It should be emphasised that this becomes pertinent given what the Yoruba conception of proverbs "as a storehouse of Yoruba knowledge" (Abimbola).

To start with, the Yoruba proverb that *Ogbon ologbon ki i je ki a pe agba ni were* (someone else's knowledge does not earn the elder the sobriquet of being mad) indicates that experience and the ability to sift through different viewpoints are the qualities of being an elder. This directly relates to the place of elders in the Yoruba pantheon. They serve as interpreters and disseminators of indigenous epistemology, using proverbial language to intervene in matters considered intractable, hence the proverb *agba ki i wa loja ki ori omo tuntun wo* (it is not possible to have an elder in a market where the newborn's head would be bowed). In this regard, the proverb just highlighted relies heavily on the place of elders not only as purveyors of sound judgments, but also as being central to the maintenance of law and order. In fact, when a child or even someone considered to be childish in conduct transgresses, it is common among the Yoruba to proverbially insinuate that *ko ni agba nile* or *a o ran an sile* (there is no elder in the person's family/the person needs to take a message back home). Such messages are usually indictments of whether the person is *abiiko or akoogba* (born and not trained or trained but unbowing). It should be noted that in this regard, emphasis on training or education points, interestingly, to indigenous and not Western/formal education. This implies that in a situation where someone is seen to lack the requisite knowledge base, the indictment goes back to the domestic setting. This is the scenario on the home front.

Knowledge production in the larger society is only different when the setting is taken into account. In this case, knowledge sharing, principles of collective responsibility and democratic ethos hold sway. Therefore, when the Yoruba declare that *Ogbon o di igi (knowledge does not tie logs of wood)* and *Oro sunnukin, oju sunnukun ni a fi n wo (a serious matter requires serious pondering),* the caveat being sounded is the fact that knowledge requires serious pondering, and no one can claim to have a monopoly over same. In other words, consultation is necessary in tackling such issues; after all, *Ologbon kan o ta koko omi seti aso ri* (no matter how knowledgeable someone is, he/she cannot tie water in a knot, and *isin wo, iworiwo wo, oun ti a ba jijo wo,gigun lo n gun* (when all parties consider an issue, there is bound to be progress)

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The fact that proverbs are vehicles of knowledge and are central to knowledge production and, in fact, strategic in the knowledge equation is indubitable. In fact, "proverbs are regarded as the core of "traditional" knowledge because the metaphoric representations conveyed through them become useful sources of lessons that have to be learned." (Kazeem, 2009, 12).

This necessarily derives from the oral nature of indigenous society, where knowledge is transmitted across generations. As rightly noted by Akoma (2007):

> …oral narratives were not regarded as flights of fancy but as a body of the community's cultural and philosophical thoughts, even as the actual performance of these narratives was equally aesthetically and emotionally pleasing. Thus, the narratives were rigorously composed and kept alive in the consciousness of the citizenry through memorization and ability to recall… (14)

Hence, the non-formal transmission of knowledge among the Yoruba can be said to have implications for its continued survival. The corollary of Western education can only be found in specialised knowledge among the Yoruba. In this regard, *Ifa* and *Isegun* readily come to mind. *Ifa* (Yoruba god of divination) and *Isegun* (medicine/healthcare practice) are specialised forms of knowledge base that are disappearing, or at best, they exist in diluted, corrupted forms. These forms of specialised knowledge belong mostly to *awo* (cults), and are held sacred and revered in Yoruba culture. Thus, the knowledge of both epistemologies requires not only a specialised training, but also a formal initiation. This ultimately means that although *oogun ti ko ba je, ewe e lo ku ikan* (when a herbal preparation is non-effective, there is a constituent ingredient missing), the reality is that there is a knowledge gap that is created as a result of the cultic nature of indigenous healthcare practice. The implication is that indigenous medicinal plants and the knowledge of their efficacy or even dosage gets lost in oral transmission, or in deliberate acts associated with cultic esotericism. Gbadegesin (2007) laments this development when he says

> that "the secret of its efficacy is not revealed by its practitioners", then "it becomes impossible to develop it…"(121)

The point being stressed is that indigenous epistemology among the Yoruba is suffering and gasping for breath as a result of several factors. Though the Yoruba place knowledge in a prime position in the equation, the challenge of knowledge production is that both its producers and transmitters are contaminated by several forces. Modernity and globalisation are the most recent agents of decimation of indigenous knowledge, given the way values have been relegated to the background and that society now adores materialism and ill-gotten wealth. This is contrary to the jealously-guarded principles of indigenous conducts of decency, hard work, integrity and honour. Daramola acknowledges proverbs as a site for enshrining these values when he states that Among the Yoruba, proverbs and maxims are traditionally frequently used to teach moral and honourable behaviours known by the people as *iwa omoluabi*. This may be in the form of a (an) corrective, didactic, abusive or even eulogistic measure. Whichever way proverbs are used among the people, there is always a message to be passed across and a lesson to be learnt. (121)

Indigenous epistemology among the Yoruba is suffering and gasping for breath

As depicted above, since the Yoruba believe that, as a member of the larger society, an individual is morally bound to carry himself/herself with self-respect. After all, *bi oju ko ba ti ole, oju a ti ara ile re* (if a thief lacks shame, the members of the household would be ashamed). In other words, ill-gotten wealth cannot be adored in a society where it is generally believed that *e ri oju ole e o mu, omo yin o se agbafo o n ko aso wa sile* (what further evidence does one need to identify a thief when a child is not a launderer, yet he/she comes home with clothes).

There is of course a larger debate in the above connection, especially regarding the mode of instruction in the received Western education curriculum. The arguments range from the adoption of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction to the infusion of cultural education in the school curriculum (Dasyla, 2005). Akinyemi (2004) champions proverbs as the basis of a sound moral education. For our purpose here, one notes that it is not a matter of a medium of instruction of content of the school syllabus, but the general buy-in of all stakeholders on the need to re-establish the sound cultural foundation of indigenous society, which enables a seamless knowledge transmission. The fact therefore is that in order to wriggle out of the present epistemological conundrum, contemporary aspirations must continue to reflect on, and relate to proverbs, given the realisation that, "The proverb is regarded as a noble genre of African oral tradition that enjoys the prestige of a custodian of a people's wisdom and philosophy of life. (Ssetuba, 2002, 1), and also the fact that 'proverbs evolved with the growth and development of the society, it reflects diverse aspects of a people's culture, beliefs, traditional, social and political institutions, ethics, commerce, health.' (Adewoye, 1987, 1).

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5,000 FEET IS THE BEST: RE-VIEWING THE POLITICS OF UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS

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Less than six months into the American-declared Global War on Terror, military officials announced an unprecedented success: "[A]ll major U.S. television networks reported that an unmanned Predator drone operated by the Central Intelligence Agency fired a missile […] at a group of people believed to be senior al-Qaeda leaders meeting near a cave complex known as Zawar Khili near the border with Pakistan" (National Post News Services, 2002: A10). The events were described as a "tactical innovation of the highest order" and marked the first time that a MQ-1 Predator unmanned aerial system (UAS) killed suspected militants (Sisk, 2002: 20). The reports indicated that the men attacked were wearing traditional Arab garments and one man was taller than the others; consequently, analysts claimed the strike may have killed Osama bin Laden, known for his height (National Post News Services, 2002: A10). Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld used the opportunity to testify before Congress, promoting the new weapon. "If you have an unarmed Predator that's out there gathering intelligence information and you replace it with an armed Predator, that not only can gather intelligence information, but then can actually fire a Hellfire […] you've got different lethality" (in Shanker & Risen, 2002:12).

Operators far from the battlefield in Afghanistan used a satellite data-link to remotely fly and control the MQ-1 Predator, which struck the targets in an isolated mountain location. As a result of difficult weather conditions and other issues of accessibility, United States soldiers did not arrive to survey the aftermath of the drone strike until several days after the attack. In Senate testimony, Army Gen. Tommy Franks, commander of United States forces in Afghanistan, commented, "We know we have [killed] some bad guys, but we just don't know who they are yet" (in Sisk, 2002: 20). News reports described how DNA samples from the site would be used to determine if bin Laden had been killed, noting that soldiers on the scene "[p]icked up communications gear, weapons, documents and the remains of people killed in the strike, any of which might help determine who those people were" (Shanker & Risen, 2002:12). Yet, while the military team sought genetic proof of the MQ-1 Predator's success, another account emerged. Daraz Khan, a villager from Lalazha about ten miles from the attack site, was nicknamed "Tall Man." On 4

February 2002, the date of the MQ-1 Predator strike, he and two other villagers, Munir Ahmed and Jehangir Khan, went to collect scrap metal, sold for fifty cents a camel load across the border in Pakistan. Former battlegrounds, like the site near Zawar Khili where they went, contained metal remnants from the Soviet invasion and more recent fighting between the Americans and the Taliban (Singer, 2009: 397). While President George Bush announced he was "fully satisfied" that members of al-Qaeda were killed by the strike (Scarborough, 2002: A01), Gurbuz tribal elders from the village insisted the men who were killed collecting scrap metal were not al-Qaeda. Khan's sixteen-year-old niece protested, "Why did you Americans kill Daraz? We have nothing, nothing, and you have taken from us our Daraz" (in Herold, 2003).

The so-called success associated with the 4 February 2002 attack faded from headlines and, like thousands of other Afghan civilians, Daraz Khan, Munir Ahmed, and Jehangir Khan became what the United States Military terms "collateral damage," forgotten deaths of local people killed in a battlefield beyond their control. Eight months later, on 5 November 2002, a MQ-1 Predator killed al-Qaeda operative Abu Ali al-Harithi in Yemen, along with five men in a vehicle with him. This attack is now recorded by the Pentagon as the MQ-1 Predator's first successful targeted strike in the Global War on Terror (Zaloga, 2008: 35). Ten years and hundreds of UAS missile strikes later, I return to the 4 February 2002 MQ-1 Predator attack because the tragedy it foregrounds persists. The account asks one to question who is taken as an enemy and how this is framed through the circuit of intelligence information and lethality that is the basis of the MQ-1 Predator. A man's height and use of a traditional garment allowed for three men's deaths, while American leaders' conviction that they killed a bad guy silenced the voices of local tribal leaders and victims' relatives. Officials had complete confidence in images captured by a camera on a remotely controlled drone, flying over the region at 7000 feet in the air. Side-by-side, DNA testing and the MQ-1 Predator were poised as conquerors of the mountainous areas of southern Afghanistan, littered with the metal from the history of war in the region. Yet, even while the attack revealed the limits of these technologies and by extension, what United States officials could claim to know, it nonetheless served to promote UAS. Donald Rumsfeld's testimony points to the powerful equation of intelligence and targeting enabled by the MQ-1 Predator. Notably, in this formulation, the question of whether the intelligence obtained through the system was accurate or the men's deaths were just is not raised.

In the first part of this essay, I examine the knowledge politics of UAS, drawing on frameworks from post-colonial studies, bio-politics and science and technology studies. These approaches offer insight into the circuit of intelligence and targeting enabled by the MQ-1 Predator, complicating the connection between the two terms. In the second part of the essay, I turn to *5,000 Feet is the Best* (2011), a video installation about a UAS pilot by Omer Fast from which this piece takes its title. The figures the video screens cannot be framed as predictable images or through simple equations; rather, the video is fraught with impossibility and error. Through this work, I argue that by attending to the failures of UAS, i.e. what cannot be seen or sensed, possibilities for transformation may be opened up. I ask how impossibility, failure, and unpredictability elide the equation of knowledge and dominance, and examine these interstices.

Intelligent targeting: Knowledge politics of Unmanned Aerial Systems

Potentials found in intercultural dynamics, many discussed in this volume, open possibilities for rich and productive forms of exchange by intertwining multiple, varying groups of people. However, these relations operate alongside cultural encounters that challenge such possibilities. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) emphasizes how knowledge of others has been systematically linked to colonial and post-colonial relations, prioritizing Western dominance and control. More recently, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work* (2006) by Rey Chow examines knowledge production and worldwide targeting in the aftermath of World War II. She argues that the development of Area Studies, employing social scientists and linguists to study different world regions, was linked to an array of Cold War projects aiming for systematic world control, most notably, American nuclear missile programs (Chow, 2006: 12-15). Chow's insights provide an apt framework for thinking about the cultural encounter enacted by the MQ-1 Predator, which both collects intelligence and targets.

Based on unmanned vehicles developed for reconnaissance during the Cold War, MQ-1 Predators provide real-time, continuous video and infrared imagery of the areas where they are flown. Often, they are used in combination with surveillance that captures mobile or satellite phone communications. Most MQ-1 Predators are flown from bases in the United States, where the operator monitors the system through information relayed on a computer screen and manipulates the UAS through satellite. Armed with Hellfire missiles and a laser designator, MQ-1 Predator operators can laser pinpoint a target to which a missile is directed. Soldiers on the ground can also use laser pointers to guide missile attacks (Singer, 2009: 34-37). The precision and success that has been attributed to the MQ-1 Predator (Department of Defense, 2005; Drew, 2009: A1+) relies on the connection between ongoing, real-time collection of intelligence information and being able to use the laser system to target. Significantly, the tragedy of misinformation also becomes apparent in this circuit. While UAS are promoted by the United States Military as an all-powerful seeing eye, they are simultaneously limited, relying primarily on images and intercepted communication. Though the United States Military and CIA operators are technologically extended through UAS, they are circumscribed in their modes of seeing and listening. These modes of interaction, watching and eavesdropping, not only diminish possible relations to the targeted other, they also give form to a "we" contradistinguished from the target.

This movement from others to operators suggests how such cultural encounters are enmeshed with knowledge politics. To explore this further, I turn to the concept of bio-power. In *Security, Territory, Population* (2009), Michel Foucault defines bio-power as "the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became object of a political strategy, a general strategy of power …" (Foucault, 2009: 1). This understanding maps onto contemporary forms of power enabled by UAS. Foucault claims techniques of surveying, analysis, and reflection employed during the modern period came to define humans both biologically and as a surface for calculated and reflected governance. Notably a particular conception of the human

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emerges through these techniques, one that reflects not only on those surveyed but also the surveyors (Foucault, 2009: 71-80). This complicates the strategic circuit of intelligence and targeting, indicating how it is not just enemy targets that are impacted by the system but also the humans who develop and use UAS. Below, I examine the human and nonhuman mechanisms and procedures the MQ-1 Predator mobilizes, indicating how technological strategies are layered into bio-power in its most recent iterations and how this leads to particular formulations of who is human.

MQ-1 Predators both fly lower to the ground and slower than a piloted plane could and some models can operate continuously for up to 22 hours, more than double the length of time a human pilot could fly (Drew, 2009: A1+). These aspects of the UAS highlight how the system is more-than-human and can enact previously impossible strategies through its technologies. UAS are potent reminders of the ways humans extend themselves through technologies and the consequences of this. Yet, that the system is unmanned is a misnomer; there are always humans linked to them. A ground crew, located at an air base near to where the UAS is deployed, oversees the aircraft's take-off and landing. Once the UAS is in the air, operations are taken over by pilots and sensor operators based in control trailers in the United States. Data and images transmitted through UAS can be displayed on computer screens not only in the control trailer, but also in the battlefield, at the Pentagon and in the White House, while military orders are typically relayed back to operators through chat boxes (Singer, 2009: 35, 337). So, while UAS are designated as unmanned, at the same time, they are a prosthesis that defines the context of the American solder and the commands he or she is given, opposing them to others, who are targets outside the system.

Political ecologies: UAS between Nevada and Waziristan

Unmanned Aerial Systems incorporate complex relations between humans and nonhumans. The previous discussion showed how UAS are deployed against others, distinguishing populations through technologies of bio-power. Science and technology studies (STS) contribute to this analysis by offering ways to re-think how humans act alongside complicated physical, technical and biological processes. In *States of Knowledge* (2004), STS theorist Sheila Jasanoff proposes the concept of co-production to consider the states produced through interactions between humans and nonhumans. She writes, "Knowledge and its material embodiments are at once products of social work and constitutive of forms of social life" (Jasanoff, 2004: 2). The twinning of materiality and knowledge captures how UAS gives form to both the United States and its soldiers, while the system is simultaneously formed by them. Jasanoff examines, "[H]ow knowledge-making is incorporated into practices of state-making, or of governance more broadly, and, in reverse, how practices of governance influence the making and use of knowledge" (Jasanoff, 2004: 3). At the same time, Jasanoff writes that the term plays on the multiple layers of the word 'state', which refers not just to a governed body, but also to various organizational, material and embodied forms (ibid). UAS are a technology deployed by the United States to collect intelligence and enact its politics. Yet, co-production between the technology and state not only occurs at a national level, rather, UAS

technologies have multiple aspects co-produced between physical geographies, technical infrastructure, government officials, industry representatives, media spokespeople, and counter-movements.

Developed as a reaction to technological determinism, STS emphasizes the multiple and varying technical and material relations that connect humans and nonhumans (Bijker, 2006). In this way, I want to highlight how techniques of bio-power enacted by UAS are not pre-given; rather, they are continuously co-produced through shifting relations between humans and nonhumans. In *Cosmopolitics* (2010), Isabelle Stengers elaborates the concept of political ecology to consider these interconnections. To make something intelligible, she argues, is never merely a matter of representing reality. It is also a practice of giving value. She writes, "Ecology is, then, the science of multiplicities, disparate causalities, and unintentional creations of meaning" (Stengers, 2010: 34). I use the plural, political ecologies, in this account to emphasize how UAS variously move between and beyond military, economic, political, and scientific terrains. While I am wary of how UAS are deployed by the United States, I also want to show how they do not align with a single field of power. Below, I suggest how UAS both link and divide two geographically distinct regions and analyze the multiple relations co-produced by these interconnections and disjuncture.

In control trailers at Creech Air Force Base in Indian Springs Nevada, UAS operators fly MQ-1 Predators in war zones and beyond. The base is located at the site of a World War II auxiliary air field, adjacent to the Nevada Nuclear Test Site, about forty-five minutes northwest of Las Vegas (United States Air Force, 2012). The UAS are manufactured by General Atomics, a private defense contracting company in San Diego, California, founded in 1955. As the name suggests, the company began by developing weaponry for nuclear missiles and its UAS programs emerged from its guided weapons projects and early reconnaissance drones (General Atomics and Affiliated Companies, 2012). Drones, as they were called during the Cold War, were deployed for various missions, serving as practice targets, measuring the effects of atomic tests and to collect still images with film cameras (Zaloga, 2008). The MQ-1 Predator was first fielded in 1995 for surveillance during the Bosnia War (Defense Airborne Reconnaissance Office, 1996). In 2001, the system was armed with missiles and by October 2004, after its widespread use during the Iraq invasion, the MQ-1 Predator reached 100,000 flight hours (Department of Defense, 2005). In 2012, the Department of Defense announced thirty-one percent of all aerial systems in the military were now designated as unmanned, five times more than in 2005 (Ackerman & Shachtman, 2012). UAS industry advocates promote a growing market for unmanned systems and analysts argue that robotics will become increasingly important for the United States Military in the 21st century (Singer, 2009).

UAS were significant in the American occupation of Iraq and continue to play an important role in Afghanistan. As a weapon, the MQ-1 Predator has also been used outside of declared war zones, including Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia. Investigations by the United Nations and Amnesty International have raised significant legal concerns about the use of UAS in targeted killings outside war zones, calling them extrajudicial executions (Horton, 2010; Reuters, 2002: A21). Of these

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The surveillance network and extrajudicial attacks enabled by UAS largely failed to control the historically contested border regions between Pakistan and Afghanistan

locations, Pakistan has had the most UAS strikes. As of February 15, 2012, the United States had carried out 314 reported drone attacks in Pakistan, the majority in the Northern Waziristan region, along the border with Afghanistan. Starting in 2004 and growing substantially in scope beginning 2007, the strikes have killed between 1,741 and 2,712 people. The large discrepancy in these numbers indicates the difficulty of obtaining information about the attacks. While the United States does not officially acknowledge the UAS strikes in Pakistan, they have, at the same time, highlighted the program's success. Officials maintain civilian deaths account for fewer than 20% of the total killed and as few as 5% of the deaths in 2010-2012 (New America Foundation, 2012). These reports differ significantly from those of the Pakistani government, Pakistani press and reports by independent observers, which claim as many as 90% of those killed by the strikes are civilians (Rogers, 2010).

Waziristan is known as a Federally Administered Tribal Area in Pakistan and policies that guide the region's governance emerge from the Frontier Crimes Regulation established by the British Raj in 1901. Part of the formation of Pakistan in 1947, the area was of strategic importance during the Afghanistan War against the Soviets during the 1980s. Constitutionally, the area is not bounded to decisions made by Parliament, and the President of Pakistan exercises considerable, direct control over the region. Access is limited (Rakisits, 2008). Nonetheless, furor caused by the drone attacks has not been contained. Reports in 2011 describe thousands protesting against these strikes and they are an increasingly potent political issue for Pakistan and the United States (Al Jazeera, 2011). While American soldiers watch the region, locals have become wary of the ubiquitous presence of the drone. The MQ-1 Predator is made with an engine akin to those used in snowmobiles. Similarly, the vehicle has an unmistakable hum, which can be heard when it flies closer to the ground (American Forces Information Service, 2011). The ubiquitous buzzing sound of the drone, flying overhead, often, in groups of four or five, marks the air system in Waziristan. The hum is a persistent reminder that "they" might strike, at any time. *Bangana*, a Pashto onamonapia, variously translated as meaning a thunderclap or wasp, is used by locals to describe the UAS (Rogers, 2010: 20).

The fragmentary scenes above suggest a series of incompatible, yet, deeply interconnected frames. Linguistic differences, found in the space between UAS, drone and *bangana*, gesture to technological, economic, political, and social patterns that give rise to these two unequal, yet, linked ecologies. Operating from control trailers in the Nevada Desert, soldiers watch and listen through a drone system, which emerged from military-industrial relations that coalesced during the Cold War. Their attacks are cloaked in a vocabulary of protection against terrorists. Americans are invited to see the weapons systems and the soldiers who operate them as justified, mimicking logics developed during the Cold War. Yet, the surveillance network and extrajudicial attacks enabled by UAS largely failed to control the his-torically contested border regions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Rather, the hum of the system produces critique, discontent, and widespread outcry. As a number of analysts have suggested, drones may work to undermine American power (Bishara, 2009; Horton, 2010; Swift, 2011).

I am deeply concerned about the legal and political consequences that are a result of the United States UAS attacks and support continued efforts to question drone strikes through these means. However, the final part of my paper turns to a video artwork to examine the questions raised by drones. I use this onscreen account to think about the critical work that can be done visually and affectively to address UAS. The images transmitted through UAS are described by the United States Military as intelligence. Yet, the above political ecologies suggest this imagery should instead be viewed as conveying values, enabling the United States to systematically order attacks of targeted groups in certain geographical regions. Both extending from and responding to the political ecologies described above, my analysis of *5,000 Feet is the Best* does not offer a simple answer to UAS lethality. Instead, I highlight the role disjuncture, impossibility, and failure to suggest that these gaps open multiple spaces to re-view and, simultaneously, to reconsider and re-imagine the use of UAS.

5,000 Feet is the Best

Omer Fast's video, *5,000 Feet is the Best* (2011), provides a subtle and insightful critique of the United States MQ-1 Predator program. I use this piece to elaborate on tensions developed in the previous sections. Intertwining what is known and unknown, the concepts of fact, fiction, success, failure, imagery, and communication are all problematized through the video. In this way, Fast indicates the challenge of drones might be countered by attending to their multiple impacts, thus, shifting the singular equation of knowledge and power they unsuccessfully enact. The video is drawn from an account given by a MQ-1 Predator operator with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Yet, this is not immediately apparent and, rather, appears to be a series of staged interviews between two characters, one who portrays a drone pilot and the other who acts the role of a journalist. The scene of their interview is a non-descript, yet, vividly filmed hotel room. Their encounter is repeated three times. Between each repetition, the MQ-1 Predator operator tells a part of his story. His account, voice and affect contrast with the actor's performance. The duplicity between the operator and the actor is significant, signaling the difficulty of separating the individual from the roles he or she is expected to perform, while at the same time, highlighting the distinction.

Each interview begins with the journalist asking, "Everything okay?" after the pilot comes into the room and lies down on the bed. The pilot replies, "Yeah, I'm okay." In a painful moment between them, the pilot tells the journalist, "I didn't realize you'd be filming." The journalist tells him, "We can stop, if you are uncomfortable." "Yeah, right," says the pilot. He takes some pills, asking the journalist if they can hurry up because he has a doctor's appointment. The journalist asks him, "What's the difference between you and a real pilot?" "No difference," the pilot replies. In each repetition, the explanation of why there is no distinction leads to a different vignette, apparently unrelated to his role as a UAS pilot. Filmed in neutral shots, the drone pilot first narrates a story about a young man obsessed with trains who successfully takes on the identity of a train conductor for a day. At the end of the day, he is caught by the police breaking into his own home because he left his keys in the real conductor's locker. The journalist asks what the story has to do with

being a drone pilot. He is told, "The moral of the story is [...] you keep your work life and your domestic life separated." "You're not serious," replies the journalist. Yet, the vignette is also about race. A black man is portrayed the role of the conductor until the journalist asks, "Why did the man have to be black?" The pilot replies, "I didn't say he was black. Who said anything about color?" The image shifts to a white man and the pilot explains, "This has nothing to do with race."

After the interviewee finishes the vignette, admonishing the journalist to "ask him a better question," he leaves the hotel room and seems to catch sight of himself as he lingers in the hallway. The image then cuts to the account given by the MQ-1 Predator operator. The first time the viewer sees him, his face is blurred and the only distinguishable feature is his eyes. His narrative then provides the voice-over for a series of aerial shots. These include a suburban neighborhood with a boy biking through the streets, a New England village, recognizable because of the white church steeple in the center of the shot, and a nighttime view of Las Vegas, lit up with flashing colors and lights. The MQ-1 Predator operator says, "I guess Predator is similar to playing a video game– but playing the same video game for four years straight on the same level." As the images slowly move below the viewer, he recalls, "One time, I just watched a house for a month straight, for eleven hours a day." But then, there were also moments of stress. "There are some horrible sides to working Predator. You see a lot of death [...] doing this, you had to think there is so much loss of life that is a direct result of me."

These questions of race and death haunt the final vignette. The pilot tells how "Mom, Dad, Johnny, and little Zoe are going on a trip." A white, American family is pictured packing their things into a station wagon in front of their suburban house. They leave the city, passing through a military check-point as they drive into the country side. On a lonely dirt road, they see a group of men in the distance and stop the car. The men are planting an improvised explosive device. The pilot narrates, "One of the men is younger, almost a teenager, and he wears a traditional head dress." The image cuts to a white male, wearing a t-shirt and baseball cap. The narration continues, "The other two are older. They're dressed in clothes more typical to tribes from the south." These two men are wearing flannel shirts and ballcaps. One man raises his weapon as he indicates that the vehicle should pass by. The car drives slowly by the men. The viewer is told, "the crisis is averted," and the three men exchange smiles with the family. In a close-up, the driver squeezes his wife's hand. At that moment, a Hellfire missile strikes, "almost vaporizing the men on impact," and the family emerges from the car like ghosts.

Re-viewing the MQ-1 Predator's strike with a white American family in its target highlights cultural assumptions relayed through UAS' imagery. Notably, the Hellfire missile attack screened by Fast enacts key elements of the drone strike that I described at the beginning of this paper. Even while the drone pilot maintains "who said anything about race," markers like skin color, dress, and age are all factors used to visually target certain humans. *5,000 Feet is the Best* shows how the circuit of intelligence and targeting enabled by UAS takes the lives of people who are identified as others, turning the assumptions made about the tribal peoples of Afghanistan and Pakistan onto Americans. However, *5,000 Feet is the Best* unsettles this reversal by not only examining who

is targeted, but also who targets. They are not separate figures, rather, they are linked. Instead of enacting a position of dominance, in Fast's video, the MQ-1 Predator operator is figured through the condition of PTSD. Intertwining these two layers, the veneer of the MQ-1 Predator's success reveals a mode of relation that is deeply flawed, not unlike the impossible dialogue between the pilot and the journalist. Looking at UAS technology as a dense web of connected political ecologies reveals its failures, demanding a reconsideration of how humans and non-humans through UAS shape and give shape to social forms, at once, personal, political, and intercultural.

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PANEL II
STRATEGIES AND RESISTANCE FROM THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE

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INTERSECTING RELATIONS OF POWER AND DIFFERENCE IN ANTI-RACIST ACTIVIST RESEARCH

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The argument is that agency exists in the possibility of a variation within a repetition. In order to be intelligible, we need to repeat the familiar and normalized. The task is not whether to repeat but how to repeat in such a way that the repetition displaces that which enables it. While Butler's work was on gender performance, it can be used to rethink practices of feminist methodology in displacing the idea that the work of methodology is to take us to some noncomplicitous place of knowing. Instead, the work of methodology becomes how to negotiate the "field of play" of the instructive complications that knowledge projects engender regarding the politics of knowledge. Here method is resituated as a way into the messy doings of science via risky practices that both travel across contexts and are remade in each situated enquiry. (Lather 2007: 39).

Taking up the invitation of feminist theorist Patti Lather to "rethink practices of feminist methodology" in order to address "the complications that knowledge projects engender regarding the politics of knowledge", in this paper I reflect on issues of authority and power confronting the researcher, and the uses to which this power is put, by considering the complex modality of doing activist research in a political context. For this purpose, I use my own experiences of working on women migrants' rights issues with a leftist anti-racist group in Athens, anonymized as 'Support Action'. Based on the work of setting up a 'gender and migration' initiative in 'Support Action', I trace the gendered and racialized interpellations that shaped political relationships between myself and other Greek and migrant activists, and highlight some of the complications and displacements that ensued.

I carried out my research as a feminist intervention in anti-racist migration politics. The objective was to learn about and publicly expose the position and problems of women migrants in Greece, and in doing so, *intervene in* dominant antiracist practices that tend to represent migrants in general 'human' terms, obscuring the intersecting gendered and racialised inequalities that inform their experiences and trajectories. A significant

A significant overlap occurred from my doubled position as activist/researcher: the political relations I engendered simultaneously constructed the research field I was studying

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overlap occurred from my doubled position as activist/researcher: the political relations I engendered simultaneously constructed the research field I was studying. Research, designed and practiced as a political project, where the boundaries between knowledge production and activism are necessarily blurred has been discussed as 'activist research' (Biglia 2006, Zavos and Biglia 2009). The multiple, shifting methodological registers of such engagement highlight the context-specific, unpredictable and 'fuzzy' development of research that wishes to accommodate a 'bottom up' rather than 'top down' approach (Mac Lure 2006).

Setting up the 'gender and migration' initiative became part of my PhD fieldwork[1], carried out between September 2005 and July 2006. Over the course of that year, together with other Greek members of 'Support Action' and migrant women, we organized a campaign on the problems migrant women, working as domestic laborers in Greece, face; an issue not hitherto addressed in the anti-racist movement. The initiative involved setting up a small working group within 'Support Action' dedicated to investigating and raising awareness on the specific legal and labor conditions migrant women domestic laborers confront, liaising with different migrant communities and individual migrant women, as well as labor union representatives, organizing public assemblies and staging a political intervention during the Athens Anti-racist Festival, the annual highpoint of anti-racist mobilizations in Greece. In the following discussion I draw on my diary notes (abbreviated below as FD) and fieldwork records (abbreviated below as FN) as narrative material through which to trace not only the discourses through which we were interpellated into gendered and racialized positions, but also the rationalizations deployed to understand and negotiate these power asymmetries, and the feelings that surrounded and qualified my political and research engagement, thereby situating personal experience within wider socio-cultural dynamics.

The ambiguous positionality of the researcher: negotiating the 'field of play'

Feminist theory, with its interventions into epistemology and methodology, has been instrumental in conceptualizing, deconstructing and re-framing the research process as a situated, relational, accountable, reflexive engagement (Fonow and Cook 2005, Harding 2004, Haraway 1991). In reaction to objectivist, and masculinist, assumptions about the nature of knowledge production as neutral, detached and all-encompassing endeavor, it is argued that knowledge is produced in a web of social relations, hierarchically and asymmetrically ordered, abided by and contested, and is, therefore, a political field open to resignifications (hooks 2004). Feminist research does not mean studying *only* (for, about, with) women, 'giving voice' to, or (externally) 'validating' their experience as a separate, and exceptional, social category (Smith 1991); it *also* means studying relations of power and the politics of representation, implicated in the social and discursive construction of difference, that manifest in different social contexts, the field of research being one of them (Phoenix 1994). To do so consistently requires, among other things, the inclusion of accounts of failure, silence, collusion or conflict where the boundaries of entitlement are contested towards a renegotiation of power relations, commitments and personal relationships within the field of research.

1. PhD, "The politics of gender and migration in an anti-racist group in Athens", Manchester Metropolitan University, March 2010

As I will illustrate further, my fieldwork experience was replete with doubts about the soundness of my research approach and worries about its political efficacy.

> I feel quite immobilized as to which migrants to approach, how to approach them, and with what credentials, how to encounter the understandable reservation and suspicion with no institutional backing and nothing to offer. (Fieldwork Notes, 25.11.05)

The constant questioning of my own judgments and priorities proved to be quite distressing, and reflected how the embodiment of particular engagements, such as being a political activist and an academic researcher, is normatively gendered. Central to my preoccupations and frustrations, as activist *and* researcher, were my relationships to other members of 'Support Action' as well as to the migrant women who got involved in the initiative. As a 'Greek' woman engaging in public political activism in Greece, I felt challenged to perform a simultaneously authoritative (in relation to migrants and other anti-racist groups) and submissive (in relation to other members of 'Support Action') role, all the time feeling compelled to justify my actions, minimize my disagreements and accommodate others' political priorities and interpretations. In this sense, I occupied a complex position of power, on the one hand being attributed, and exercising, authority over other migrant activists, on the other hand, being circumscribed and subjected to the hierarchies of 'my own group', within which I occupied a more marginal position, as a woman, a 'newcomer' and a foreign-trained academic researcher. In other words I felt myself to be interpellated by a double imperative: as an activist 'expert', I was expected (by members of 'Support Action' and by other migrant activists) to guide migrants, based on my assumed superior political understandings, to the 'proper' political involvement in antiracist activism; as a 'compliant' (or competent) group member, I was expected to willingly and unquestioningly adopt 'Support Action's' agenda, thus becoming one of the group's spokespersons. The tension emanating from this contradictory positioning, and from my reaction to both interpellations, became the telling mark of my overall activist-researcher experience. Additionally, my own ambivalent cultural belonging, coming from a mixed family background, contributed significantly to my feelings of insecurity and discomfort about my cultural competence in properly understanding and performing 'Greekness' in a socio-political context that assumed cultural sameness among 'Greeks' as given. In this sense, certain parallels can be drawn between my experience as borderline insider and that of other migrant activists in Greece, who are at once both outsiders to the national Greek socio-cultural context (as migrants) and insiders to the 'family' of anti-racist political organizations (as fellow-activists). However, as I will subsequently illustrate, in my relationship to migrant women I did not draw on this potential affinity to encourage a 'feminist politics of alliance' (Phoenix 2000) that acknowledges differences, but rather assumed the role of 'gatekeeper' safeguarding the ideological purity of 'Support Action', thereby excluding particular migrant women from our initiative and inadvertently reproducing the gendered ethno-racial borders that I was keen to disrupt.

My relationship with migrant women activists was informed both by our assumed or disavowed differences and by our stated or imagined common goals. In practice this meant that, depending on circumstance,

I would describe my authority as activist as both enabled and restricted by the intersections of my gendered, classed, racialized and cultural positioning

I could draw both on feminist discourses around women's oppression, which I thought we shared as women, as well as on anti-racist discourses of migrants' exploitation and persecution, which as activists we denounced. Nevertheless, the implicit understanding between myself and migrant women was that I held more privileged and authoritative status in Greek society and in the anti-racist movement, which I had to use to further migrants' and migrant women's causes, albeit within the acceptable boundaries set by 'Support Action'. Thus, I would describe my authority as activist as both enabled and restricted by the intersections of my gendered, classed, racialized and cultural positioning. In the following section I focus in detail on the deliberations and challenges involved in developing the 'gender and migration' initiative and particularly on the pitfalls that accompanied our efforts, which revolved around the disavowal of the intersecting gendered, racialized and classed differences (and prejudices) that surfaced in our personal relationships and the eventual exclusion of one of its members.

Setting up the 'gender and migration' initiative. Gender tensions, 'race' anxiety and class guilt: marginalization and exclusion in a women's anti-racist group

After what seems like an extended period (September 2005 – December 2005) of preliminary talks and investigations about where, with whom and how to set up an initiative on 'gender and migration', we arrived at an agreement at 'Support Action' that I was to be responsible for forming a sub-group on 'gender and migration', along with anyone else who wanted to join this initiative. As it turned out, our sub-group was formed by three Greek women from 'Support Action', myself, Maria Plati and Elsa Nomikou, and a migrant woman from Nigeria, Kehinde Obinrin, who joined later, and left soon after. (The names of the participants have been anonymized.)

The initiative had to be presented and sanctioned at a general assembly meeting of 'Support Action'. A couple of days before the general assembly meeting, and while I was already anxious about addressing the wider audience of anti-racist activists, I had a strong argument with one of the older male members of 'Support Action' about the prevailing anti-racist attitude of patronizing migrant communities. The discussion centered on the topic of women migrants' participation. Older male activists claimed that women migrants are either not interested in collective action (because they do not attend the meetings of their migrants' associations and communities), or that they are unable to translate their lived experience into political discourse.

> We were told that "migrant women cannot express the problems correctly; they cannot grasp the root of the problems; they don't know their rights, they don't know how to fight for them. You have to talk to them, and then you have to surmise the problem from what they have told you. It's very difficult to find [migrant women] leaders. If you don't set goals for them, for organizing actions, they cannot progress." (FN, 19.12.05)

Moreover, when Maria, one of the members of the 'gender and migration' initiative, commented that there is legal discrimination concerning

specifically *women's* legalisation – the issue of migrants' legalization being one of the par excellence focal points of the Greek anti-racist movement - because there is no provision for women who migrate as part of a family to gain independent residence status, but instead 'belong' to their husbands as appendages, it was stated that:

> Women don't very much care about whether they are legal or not, they aren't leftists, the decisions are made by their families. (FN, 19.12.05)

This judgment, once again, relegated women not only to a secondary position within their families, but also framed them as disinterested, passive and a-political. Thus, even though women migrants' problems, and the need for the anti-racist movement to approach them, were adopted as useful new lines of mobilization, the prevailing sexist attitude regarding women migrants was to see them as 'lesser subjects' than their male counterparts. Additionally, these statements can also be interpreted in terms of a 'gatekeeping' process at work that intended to regulate our access and approach to women migrants, who, so far, had been subjects 'out of bounds'. As I noted:

> Men's interest in our initiative never ceases to amaze me. It is as if they need (by default) to take on a guiding, leading role, not getting directly involved but setting the general parameters and frame/boundaries for our approach. It is not only (although of course also) about sharing their experience, knowledge, resources, it is also a kind of alignment or calibration process, to make sure, through our interaction, that we are on the same page/agenda, and understand what is 'really' politically at stake and how to represent it. The men emerge as the guardians, gatekeepers and elaborators of the proper political profile of the initiative. We 'women' are relegated to the more practical, implementation, task fulfillment, 'dirty' work. (FD, 18.12.05)

Gatekeeping and properly guiding migrant women, as well as being interpellated as 'representatives' of 'Support Action', were dynamics that repeated themselves at various levels and instances of the our initiative's trajectory. They not only represented a form of political disciplining but also encoded a male activist anxiety about, both migrant and Greek, women's 'otherness'.

Proceeding, the first meeting of the 'gender and migration' initiative was held on 12.01.06 at 'Support Action's' offices, under conditions of intense cold. Apart from myself, three other women participated in the meeting, Elsa, Maria and Kehinde. We used English as a common language between us, since Kehinde did not speak Greek. We discussed the identity of our group, agreeing that we basically wanted to address migrant women (and Greek women activists) as *women*, invoking a common gender identity, and "not particular categories of women". Kehinde, who had migrated from Nigeria and worked as a journalist for *The African Informant*, a commercial magazine for Africans who lived in Athens, suggested that we hold separate women's groups from different countries and use the magazine to publicize our meetings; a suggestion that the rest of us did not support since it fell outside 'Support Action's' usual publicity strategies. We were all, nevertheless, on 'best behavior',

very polite lest we insult each others' sensitivities or imply any 'real' differences between us in spite of the very *real* fact that Kehinde was not only a young *African* migrant woman living in Greece but also racially marked as '*black*'. Indeed, the issue of 'race' was markedly absent from our discussions, and understandings, of migrant women's oppression in Greece.

Avoidance by white women (activists, researchers) of sensitive issues related to racialized difference has been addressed in some of the feminist literature on inter-racial relations as 'race anxiety' (Burman and Chantler 2003). In order not to be seen as prejudiced (i.e. accused of racism), 'race' disappears from liberal white women's vocabularies (including 'ours': mine, Maria's and Elsa's) leaving an awkward and telling gap. 'Race' avoidance, sometimes also coded as 'tolerance', far from indicating absence of discrimination, functions in fact as a form of *implicit* racialization, since it elides the issue of privilege on the part of those who are not racially marked, i.e. white women, thereby obscuring the ideological foundations of racism in Western societies. Rather than addressing racism as a systemic aspect of social relations, the occlusion of 'race' on the assumption of equality or sameness - where there is none since 'white' and 'black' subjects are asymmetrically marked - establishes the simultaneous invisibility of both racial discrimination *and* white privilege (Ahmed 2004). Anti-racism, thus, is cast as moral and 'enlightened' stance, a matter of individual(ized) attitude, rather than fundamental political critique.

Importantly, Kehinde *herself* did not wish to be identified as a 'black woman' but rather, in keeping with our migration agenda, or to avoid potentially uncomfortable racial confrontations, as an 'African woman'. Her prioritization of her migrant rather than her racialized identity is understandable in the context of the dominant 'migration' frame of our initiative; a frame set out by the political context we found ourselves in, as well as 'our' (Greek women's) priorities, which she felt she had to accommodate. Her choice to identify herself as 'African' rather than 'black', given the above-mentioned discomfort around issues of 'race' as well as our political orientation, was welcome to the rest of us. In this way, while migration was indeed the explicit focus of our anti-racist engagement, the intimate connection between migration and 'race' was ignored (or suppressed) under the assumption that discrimination and racism against migrants is only related to *national and cultural* differences and not 'racial' difference as well. An assumption further underscored by the common disclaimer in the Greek anti-racist movement that "We (Greeks) do not hate Blacks".

Class difference turned out to be another repressed part of our experience charged with assumptions about migrants' social status. On the second meeting of the 'gender and migration' initiative, on 20.01.06, the same four women met at Elsa's home. Elsa, a 74-year old middle class Greek woman, had only recently returned to Athens after 35 years in Brussels working for the European Commission, and was trying to get involved in anti-racist politics because she was "appalled and disturbed by Greek racism, xenophobia and the hatred of difference and cultural heterogeneity that Greek society exudes" (Interview, 21.05.06). As a European public servant, and an educated and 'progressive' Greek woman, she had been exposed to those aspects of cultural difference associated with the more liberal notions of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism,

'Race' avoidance, sometimes also coded as 'tolerance', far from indicating absence of discrimination, functions in fact as a form of *implicit* racialization

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which she defended strongly. Her revulsion inscribed a classist outlook, since it is mainly the assumed rough and uncouth working classes who have been associated with populist racist reactions against migrants. Elsa's generosity in welcoming us to her home was perhaps an example of how socio-economic privilege can be put to use; nevertheless, it also represented indirectly exerted patronage as well as accrual of social and symbolic capital (Skeggs 2004). The offer of resources and hospitality was not only a political choice; it also served to mark economic and social status and moral integrity and established a normative example of how things should be done 'properly' and in 'good taste'. While I appreciated Elsa's intentions and willingness to engage in politics at an age where most Greek women retire from the public sphere, I was also worried that class differences and privileges, upon becoming obvious, would split the initiative. Associating migration, especially female from the 'Third World', with poverty and lack of resources, a common representational motif in the anti-racist imaginary, I assumed that Kehinde, as an African migrant woman, might be uncomfortable with and/or resentful of 'our', Greek women's, privileges, but unwilling to confront us; even though she did not express such feelings at any point. Indeed, my fear was more revealing of my own self-consciousness and 'guilt' around class differences rather than Kehinde's possible apprehensions.

These unaddressed social dynamics accounted for an atmosphere of tension that emerged quite early on in the initiative.

> There are points of tension and disagreement, which are still encompassed under the common denominator of working with and addressing ALL women, AS WOMEN first. Issues of how to engage with women's groups emerge, as well as of our own identity as an initiative. The latter is considered to be under construction (negotiation), to be refined and formulated as we go along, and in relation to our experience both internally in the group, as well as through our outreach and relations with women migrants (groups). (FD, 20.01.06)

What stood out as the beginning of a divide between us, even though we seemed to be entertaining a common starting point about wanting to address *all* women based on a common *gender* identity, was how we envisioned and represented *migrant* women's engagement as similar or different from our own.

> Kehinde: [We need to] Make [the call] *general*, to not make a distinction that affects women. We have to be very specific, because gender opens up a broad range of issues, which issues we will address in this area. We are addressing those who identify *as a woman first*.

> Kehinde: We are opening up an avenue to discuss issues that involve us as *women who are living outside our countries*, identifying with *all* women [rather than a particular ethnic group of migrant women].

> Maria: [We should say] "Come and let's talk about issues that *you* want to talk about, we want to hear from *you*", even if we know the issues. The mistake we make is to impose *our own* views. (FN 20.01.06, my emphasis)

For myself, Maria and Elsa, the focus of our anti-racist intervention was *migrant* women and our goal was to communicate with *them*, listen to *their* problems and possibly help *them,* assuming ourselves from the start as not an equal but a more detached, enabling or overlooking part of the process. In other words we did not even imagine the possibility of a working from/towards a shared ground of engagement. For Kehinde, in contrast, the most important aspect of our mobilization was a common *gender* identification, which took into account, but did not organize around (national and social) differences. Even though invoking a common and enveloping 'womanhood' that can encompass (and subsume) other differences disregards and erases inequalities that create asymmetrical relations between women (Brah and Phoenix 2004), in this circumstance, Kehinde's reference to a *shared* gender identity could also be viewed as a form of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1989); a way of looking for common ground in 'foreign' territory.

On the issue of how to approach migrant women, we were again at odds. While Maria was concerned about how to elicit migrant women's accounts and inspire their involvement in our initiative through offering them some kind of 'compensation', Kehinde was more 'tactical' and measured:

Kehinde: [We need to] emphasize that we are not coming to move heaven and earth. We are here to support, to see where we can help, offer the necessary assistance.

Maria: Yes, but what can we offer? D. [an Albanian woman activist] was very reluctant. She said: "It's very hard to organize women, Albanian women don't go with other nationalities". She was not giving me a hand.

Kehinde: That's why I said we will meet them individually. We must go to the Filipinos and meet them [separately]. If she [D.] has that opinion it doesn't speak for all women. With African women, whoever is the organizer determines the whole event, how to mobilize people. We must understand how we are going to mobilize these women. It's something we need to work at.

Maria: I don't feel comfortable going somewhere to speak and not having an agenda in my mind. I want something to propose. I feel uncertain to approach people. Try it your way and tell me how to do it.

Kehinde: We can't offer something we do not have. But, before I can offer something, I need to understand what you are lacking. [The point is] How to mobilize women irrespective of where you come from.

Alexandra: I emphasize that we have to know who we are, what we want. *We* are a network of women who want to support *them*. (FN, 20.01.06, my emphasis)

In relation to migrant women, Maria and I were speaking from the position of 'outsiders' to the migration experience: as Greek women who do not know how, feel uncomfortable, to approach migrant women, who might turn down our 'hand of support'; a blow to our narcis-

sistic aggrandizement (Hook 2011). The anxieties formulated around the need to "offer something", and the assumption of distance and inequality which the possibility of offering inscribes, indicate that it was not only strangeness but also hierarchies of entitlement that structured our approach to migrant women. Kehinde, on the other hand, was speaking as a woman who feels more certain and confident about relating with migrant women, since she could, selectively, identify with their experience. The two positionings appeared mutually exclusive and were subsequently displaced, and reframed, as oppositional 'politics'. Following these unsuccessfully negotiated divergent approaches, Kehinde did not remain in the initiative for long. Two months later, and after a series of awkward miscommunications, she dropped out. This coincided with a period of intensive outreach activity during which the regular 'home' meetings took place infrequently, so that, in the end her withdrawal went unattended.

> I noted after a phone call with Kehinde: "Again misunderstanding … and awkwardness, issue delegated for later face to face, rather than over the phone, discussion. (Later never happened because our next meeting was cancelled and things froze after that)." (FN 02.02.06)

The overt point of contention was Kehinde's association with a black American woman activist and member of the PASOK Socialist party in government, who expressed the desire to come to our meetings. This was interpreted by older members of 'Support Action' as a wish to 'colonize' the initiative on behalf of PASOK and 'we' – Elsa, Maria and I - were explicitly advised to refrain from any such contact. The three of us, *in private*, and without consulting Kehinde, and thereby in effect excluding her, agreed that we did not want to endanger the leftist identity of the initiative and decided to cancel the meeting with her friend, without in fact giving any specific reasons for this so as not to 'insult' Kehinde's political sensitivities. Our political correctness regarding 'freedom of choice' did not encompass the possibility of negotiating *internal* political difference. Thereafter, contact with Kehinde faltered and eventually broke off, and the initiative was carried forth by the three Greek women participants, as 'proper' representatives of 'Support Action'.

Conclusion

My research hoped to address how gendered ethno-racial borders are redrawn within the anti-racist movement, marginalizing migrant women, represented as 'passive victims' assumed to be devoid of political agency, to subjugated and feminized positions, and how they in turn, using and displacing the available discourses to become legible in public, claim presence and belonging. The aim of this analysis has been to trace, through the researcher's personal accounts, the gendered, racialized, classed, cultural axes of power that determined relations in the 'field' (in the doubled sense of research and political field), in instances where the social and political identities of the participants became salient and contested, in order to claim these relations of power, and their critique, not as accidental but *central* to anti-racism. In other words, *how* we relate impacts *what* we do, the *politics* of anti-racism. The articulation of feminist research and activism can serve a double purpose: to politicize research while simultaneously engaging politics from a reflexive

Gendered ethno-racial borders are redrawn within the anti-racist movement, marginalizing migrant women, represented as 'passive victims'

standpoint. I traced some of the effects of these power relations and the attempts to come to terms with them *during* the fieldwork. These attempts were not only politically salient for developing feminist anti-racist practices but were also an organic part of the development of the research itself and of my understanding of the political field I was simultaneously immersed in and producing.

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WHEN THE FIELD STRIKES BACK: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY APPROACHES TO FIELD WORK IN SOCIOCULTURAL DYNAMICS IN GUADALAJARA (MEXICO)

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Introduction

Lomas de Tabachines (LT) is a poor neighbourhood in the Zona Metropolitana de Guadalajara (ZMG) that was originally created in the form of illegal housing settlements (without planning permission) in Jalisco, Mexico. In mid-2009, the Western Institute of Technology and Higher Education (ITESO) commenced an intervention within the framework of the UNESCO Chair in Habitat and Socially Sustainable Development. One of the main objectives of the intervention was to foster the generation and presentation of fairer, more democratic urban and regional development models, based on a needs assessment. Later on, after it was noted that the neighbourhood's problems are not solely the result of a lack of infrastructures and services, the decision was made to intervene in creating, maintaining and promoting the associative fabric.

However, and basing the information on the work carried out in LT, the aim of this article is a dual one. On one hand, I will be examining the concern shown for the relations that come into play in the entire process of Participatory-Action-Research (PAR), beyond the satisfying of the most obvious material and economic needs; and on the other hand, I will be proposing – based on contributions from *Science and Technology Studies* (STS) – a greater commitment to objectivity in the process of knowledge production. This objectivity has nothing to do with the positivist conception of the same in terms of representation or correspondence with a particular reality, but instead it concerns allowing people and the field to *object*, or rather, to resist being included in any explanation offered in their name. Therefore, in order to achieve my aim, I will start with a short introduction to the details of the intervention carried out, after which I will be presenting a few reflections on the subject.

Transforming realities through culture

In 2009, at the explicit request of a neighbour's association, an intervention process was commenced in LT, in conjunction with architects, engineers, media analysts and psychologists, in order to make a parti-

cipative assessment. During this phase, in addition to the improvement of certain urban infrastructures (such as access to dwellings and drains), one of the most important achievements consisted of bringing the community to the notice of the government, with the result that "in 2011, [LT] was selected as a site for intervention through the strategy *Convivir Mejor* [Coexist Better], a programme proposed by the Presidency of the Republic" (Isoard, 2011). Subsequently, as the project coordinator Verónica Isoard (2011) notes, several projects were proposed, in March 2010, including a sports centre, a riverside park, the rehabilitation of streets and pavements, and the rehabilitation and installation of drains. Out of all these proposals, only the sports centre was built, which was inaugurated at the end of summer 2011. Neither was the need for drains or a water supply met (through SIAPA, the sewers and drinking water system).

Given the fact that options for meeting material and economic needs were limited, the project focused on promoting public spaces for coexistence, and specifically on "contributing to social development and empowerment by means of cultural, sports and educational projects" (Isoard, 2011).

The central idea of the intervention was the need to empower the social fabric of the community. As Zermeño notes, "at present, the best way for us to achieve the objective of improving people's quality of life in a country such as ours is by generating middle social fields and empowering them..." (Becerra, 2011: 5). Thus, one of the objectives was to initiate a route of social densification that "depends on the generation of social groups in intermediate spaces, environments that are manageable for non-professionalised social beings: regional autonomy, participative democracy, neighbours' organisations; groups empowered on at the social level that are capable of establishing relations of equality and respect with the forces that come from outside them (economic development projects, trade flows and national and international commercial and industrial establishments, governmental projects at all levels, the media and other agencies that speak about these groups, study them, interpret them and even claim to represent them)" (Zermeño, 2005: 18).

Using these guidelines, a series of workshops were set up (on cooking, football, dance, graffiti, etc.) that were aimed at three population groups: children, young people and women. The aim of these workshops was to generate friendly links between all the participants, as well as to set aside part of the workshop period for talking about the everyday problems in LT. As an additional criterion, we decided not to work with gangs[1], though their members were admitted on an individual basis. It should be borne in mind that, according to surveys and data recorded by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), LT is catalogued as a poor, marginal community. From these statistics, we know that LT has a population of some 17,000 inhabitants, half of whom do not have the right to health services, and 65% of whom have not completed their basic education. We also know, from having met with the local people, that the neighbourhood's problems include: intra-family violence, territories controlled by gangs, small-scale trade in illegal drugs (known as *narcomenudeo*) and problems of addiction that seriously affect young people, especially those addicted to *toncho* (an octane booster for petrol). Furthermore, the health centre closes for holidays and there are

1. In 2010, graffiti workshops were set up to promote young people's skills. A competition was also organised, with the aim of generating a meeting space for gangs: "For at least two weeks of the activities, last November, the stone-throwing battles and other aggressive behaviour came to a halt" (Salgado, 2011).

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no emergency services, the police patrols do not turn up, people have the batteries stolen from their cars, etc.

However, what is interesting is that the intervention through cultural and sporting activities did not achieve its objectives, nor did it succeed in maintaining the initial participation of the people in the community who, in previous informative meetings and activities, had committed themselves to the project.

The intervention had to be rethought, and the idea of social densification temporarily abandoned, in order to find out why people were not coming to the activities, and why a social fabric was not being generated. In fact, so as to avoid delving into the neighbourhood's deprivation and shortcomings, the inquiry was reformulated in terms of seeking the reasons and places where people were participating, where they were generating a social fabric, and it turned out that the gangs (among others) were an ideal means for such participation.

In any event, now that we have given the reader a brief snapshot of the research, we can add that, in addition to this change of focus, for which alterations and informal interviews in the colony were carried out, the programme's participants agreed on a series of demands, which included the following: a concern over the project's continuity and the dissemination of the results (who are we writing for?), problems with gangs, complaints over the town halls' use of the needs assessment, the discontinuity of participation of those concerned, the welfarism culture, and the negative image of the neighbours' association among those living in the neighbourhood.

While many criticisms and reflections on intervention processes and community action have already been expressed (Walkerdine, 2002; Krause, 2002; Montero, 2003; Montenegro, 2004), our concern specifically focuses on two aspects which perhaps have not received much attention. Firstly, the idea of relating; that is to say, **the relational space in which a research study is likely to bring about change.** In our case, as we were not successful with the programme workshops (even though 40 people had signed up for them), we explored the reasons why women did participate in other spaces. At that point, a few notions emerged which differed greatly from a view based on providing material resources, or even of sociocultural activities, and which had to do with demands to bring an end to *apathy* in the community, to promote *respect* and generate *affective* links. **Thus notions emerged which focused on taking care of relations rather than on providing resources.**

This represented a qualitatively significant change, because in the first needs assessment the priorities were not couched in those terms. This taking care of relations makes it hard to assess the intervention. An assessment based on levels of satisfaction ("Generally speaking, are things in your neighbourhood (*zapopan*) getting better or worse? 54%: worse; 43%: better" [JaliscoComoVamos, 2011]) is relatively easy, but how do we assess the changes in relations, how do we take care of the relations in which we are interested, how to turn them into something useful?

The intervention through cultural and sporting activities did not achieve its objectives, nor did it succeed in maintaining the initial participation of the people in the community

Third party in discord: relations of exchange in knowledge production

Michel Serres (1980) refers to the idea of exchange in a short story about a paralytic man and a blind man. In the tale, Serres says that both the paralytic and the blind man are hungry, but neither of them is able to get food on his own. The paralytic man can see where the food is, but he cannot get to it. Meanwhile, the blind man could reach it, but he cannot see where it is. In such a situation, an agreement is created whereby the blind man carries the paralytic man on his back, who guides him, and an exchange is also generated: the blind man's energy for the information provided by the paralytic. What they are exchanging, however, is of different types: "The blind man provides the solid part, the strength, the transport, a power that is calculable in calories [...] But what does the paralytic give? [...] He just gives the orders, that's all." (p. 72).

While Serres' little illustration is a sad analogy that represents the relations of exploitation between the state and its citizens, it can also be considered an analogy for rethinking all relations of exchange between information and energy or, if you wish, between knowledge and action. Thus, in order to remain seated on the backs of those providing the energy, the producers' eyes need to be burst. "Those who possess the energy should not have the information; in such a way that those who have the information can do without the energy. Information is just as precious, or even more, the scarcer and less available it becomes. And so, this scarcity needs to be brought about." (Serres, 1980: 73). It is precisely these dynamics of exchange that interventions involving Participative Action Research (PAR) and community psychology are attempting to reverse, by facilitating information, making it available, acting together with the members of the community, etc. However, even if we achieve the commitment of the community, or carry out needs assessments, we believe that the questions over who is providing the energy for the work for whom, and how decisions about what we should intervene in are made, are still valid. That is, there are some people who are necessarily excluded from the process of research-intervention. But in both cases, whether it is to listen or make others listen to us, we need to exclude the noise. The exchange only works if we exclude a third party who prevents it from working.

On this basis, we can formulate the question about those necessary exclusions to achieve a satisfactory exchange between the intervened and the interveners; between the intervention in a community, and the community itself. It is from this standpoint that we should rethink the exchanges between the interveners and the intervened. Not only in terms of the fairness of the exchange, but also to rescue that excluded third party which, very often, tends to be the territory in which the exchange takes place. Now let us transpose these ideas onto LT.

Resistances to objective knowledge

In LT there are gangs operating throughout the length and breadth of eight areas delimited by their inhabitants. The gangs do object to our intervention. These gangs include the d1p, 1fs, 1nk, dmb, tbs, the Pingos, the Chaplin and the Cobras. Their presence in LT means that care

> In order to be able to research, we need to obtain information, in order to be able to intervene we need to give information. But in both cases, whether it is to listen or make others listen to us, we need to exclude the noise

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had to be taken with the researchers' security, for instance, by limiting the period of intervention to before nightfall. We know that they throw stones at rival gang members, that some of them are involved in *narcomenudeo*, that they mark their streets with symbols… We also know that nobody cares about them, that they do not seem to have, or believe in any kind of life project, and that they are tired of everybody blaming them for all the neighbourhood's problems. That is what we knew before the intervention. But then, during the autumn semester, the gangs objected. So what does that mean, that the gangs objected?

To begin with, it means that we tried to exclude them, again and again, but they refused, again and again, to be excluded from the research-intervention. That does not mean, of course, that they came out and actually expressed a desire to participate in the intervention; it means that, during the production of knowledge we were generating, the gangs offered a response to our question about social densification that we did not want to hear. "By chatting with primary school children, we realised that more than half of them are considering joining the gangs, because they want to feel protected by them, just as they are attracted by the idea of belonging to a *powerful* group" (Becerra, Garciadiego, Gutiérrez and Verduzco, 2011). And so, it was not until the end, and almost by accident, that we realised that their objections had been systematically excluded. Fortunately, the field fights back when such exclusion is not satisfactory, and it reminds us that we should consider them even if we do not want to. Admittedly, we had agreed not to work with the gangs, but we never proposed to ignore their role as actors in the neighbourhood. And that is exactly what happened.

Obviously, there are other ways in which the territory can object. If the research concludes that people do not attend the workshops because they are "lazy" or "shiftless" or "apathetic", then perhaps the researchers are not acknowledging the objections to this idea, which take the form of facts such as the lack of public lighting and its connection with insecurity or the lack of surfacing on the streets, and its connection with people's difficulty in walking along these thoroughfares… That is exactly the point. The lack of lighting results in the fact that the streets are dark, and encourages drug dealing and mugging. Those unsurfaced streets result in the fact that police cars can't get along them. In short, this "results in the fact that" is an actor (to the extent that it modifies the current state of LT) and it must be considered as such. There is no need to restrict the field of actors to the relations between human subjects[2]. They are actors who, like the gangs, also object. They resist being shoehorned into a logic that links sociocultural activities to the empowerment of the social fabric. Put in a different way, we could say that the field fights back. Hence the need to redefine the research. Instead of representing a setback or a drawback, on the contrary, all these objections enable us to escape from an agreement with the intervened reality that is too quick, too superficial. It represents, therefore, a strength and a contribution to the objectivity of our research-intervention. It is particularly significant that, especially in the sphere of qualitative methods, the question of objectivity is often associated with a positivist view of the same; thinking that what faithfully represents reality is objective, and in contrast forgetting that, in order to represent reality, we have to give it the opportunity to object. "The ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the interpretive research tradition reject the existence

2. In the academic literature, this is a concern that is often linked to the Actor-Network Theory (ANT), even though several essays and theoretical trends exist which, while not agreeing with the ANT, pre-date it on this point (Whitehead, 1929; Ellul, 1954; Simondon, 1958; Lefebvre; 1974; Serres, 1974; Winner, 1987).

of an objective knowable reality beyond the human mind. Instead, they stipulate that knowledge is constituted through the lived experience of reality. Therefore, it would be inconsistent to justify knowledge produced within this tradition using criteria based on an objectivist ontology and epistemology" (Sandberg, 2005: 44).

On this point, if we turn our gaze to Science and Technology Studies (STS), there is a text by Bruno Latour titled *When the things strike back* which has been an important reference point for us. In this piece, Latour rightly presents the idea of objectivity that we have used here to consider the notion of resistance in terms of "things" that "object". That is, things that refuse to form part of some theory, research or intervention.

"Objectivity does not refer to a special quality of the mind, an inner state of justice and fairness, but to the presence of objects that have been rendered 'able' (the word is etymologically so powerful) to object to what is told about them" (Latour, 2000:115). In other words, if social scientists want to be objective, what they should do is to "find the very rare, costly, local, miraculous, situation where they can render their subject of study as much as possible able to object to what is said about them, to be as disobedient as possible to the protocol, and to be as capable to raise their own questions in their own terms and not in those of the scientists whose interests they do not have to share!" (Latour, 2000: 116).

Carrying out good socio-community intervention-research does not only involve meeting objectives, it also involves a concern for the objectivity of the intervention-research itself.

Conclusions

When we talk about objectivity in research of an ethnographic, interpretive or qualitative nature, it is almost always for the purpose of relegating them to a pejorative status. Objectivity emerges like the mirror image of subjectivity, into which we must try not to look. Thus, a grading of research studies takes place, from the most subjective to the most objective. If I say that the inhabitants of LT are apathetic, it is a subjective opinion and needs to be based on something more than just a researcher's observation. If I am an inhabitant of LT and I say that I am apathetic then I am, without any doubt, effectively experiencing this apathy. But that still does not mean that it is not a subjective quality (albeit one different from the first statement). If, in contrast, I carry out a survey and ask several thousand inhabitants of LT whether or not they are apathetic, then I am approaching research that is generalisable, representative and, many would say, more objective. However, the play of objectivity that is presented in this study does not fit into these divisions. It is not a question of distinguishing degrees of subjectivity or objectivity according to whether the results of the research are more or less representative, generalisable, accurate, unslanted, etc. The point here, in contrast, is to maintain a critique of the impossibility of achieving objective knowledge that corresponds to one single constitutive reality in the world, at the same time as affirming the need to allow the actors being researched to say something different to what we have established as researchers. As we are reminded by Bruno Latour (2000)[3], the difference

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between including this preoccupation with objectivity in our research and omitting it is similar to comparing pre-feminist sociology about housewives and gender roles, and the sociology that was produced after feminist theories had questioned the women interviewed and made them speak in another way. In this comparison, what we see is "the difference between a pseudo-objective science which had only the appearance of scienticity, with a startling set of discoveries on gender, which might not always have the trappings of the natural sciences but certainly have its objectivity, its 'objectity', that is, its ability to propel novel entities on the scene, to raise new questions in their own terms and to force the social and natural scientists to retool the whole of their intellectual equipment" (p. 116).

Hesitant progress is being made in devising and gaining access to a space for responses within actual research studies (in feminist epistemologies, for example, or in the rise of certain narrative methods [Biglia and Bonet, 2009]). In our case, we wonder how many research studies, how many PARs offer this ability to bring onto the scene (and in their own terms) the entities that are being researched. Even if it is a joint research study or a militant one, even if we are told that there are no distinctions between the researched and researchers. Progress is being made in narrative methods.

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3. A similar argument on the effects of the lack of objectivity can be found in the idea of nature that is offered by several scientific studies. See Donna Haraway's work Ciencia, cyborgs y mujeres: la reinvención de la naturaleza (1995).

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"I IS OTHER": SPLITTING AS A STRATEGY FOR APPROACHING RESEARCH THAT INCLUDES ONE'S OWN EXPERIENCE

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Madame Kalalú, illustration by Pablo Kalaka

Introduction

This text is derived from the ongoing doctoral thesis titled *Salsa nómada. Estudio etnográfico sobre los espacios musicales, bailables e itinerantes de la salsa brava en Barcelona* [Nomadic salsa. Ethnographic study of the musical, danceable and itinerant *salsa brava* spaces in Barcelona]. I will begin by presenting a brief conceptualisation of *salsa brava* and describing the existing salsa scenes in Barcelona, which will then provide me with more tools for establishing analogies between the researched Other and the otherness that *salsa brava* represents in Barcelona. I will then go on to explain a few of the analytical categories that are used as theoretical supports for this research, and which suggest the presence of an explicit Other and Others in terms of splitting as a methodological strategy. Finally, I will present a summary and a bibliography of the text.

The term "*salsa brava*" refers to the music that emerged in New York in the late 1960s, a product of the first and, particularly, second generation South American diaspora. This diaspora mixed its Hispano-Caribbean musical heritage (i.e. *son*, *plena* and *bomba*) with North American music (*jazz, rock, soul*, etc.), thus creating "a way of making music[1]" (Quintero, 1998: 21) that was at the same time dislocated from and consistent with its age:

> "Its free combination of genres and fusions turned the salsa movement into a highly heterogeneous sound and dance movement. In fact, it represented a bastion for the value of the de-centred nature of "mulatto" music and an acknowledgement of, and argument for, the importance of heterogeneity, precisely at a time in history when a model of accumulation based on unitary and centralised mass production was causing a crisis" (Quintero, 2009: 169).

Salsa was reproduced in large South American cities, featuring a major presence of Afro-descendants from whose original continent came some of the musical, social and cultural influences that made salsa's origin in New York possible. However, the adjective "*brava*" ['fierce' or 'angry'] has since then been used to allude (as Carlos Elías notes) to the songs' subject matter (social inequality, racism, marginalisation), musical aesthetics (polyrhythms, off-beats, harmonic variations) and to a specific political stance (support for the interests of subordinated sectors) (2010). Likewise, it has been used to differentiate *salsa brava* from other styles that have characterised the age of commercial salsa music (i.e. *erótica, romántica, timba*) that reached a turning point in the late 1990s when the commercialisation of this music resulted in danceable styles that were imposed by dance schools.

Salsa scenes: the state of the field of study

Based on the "here and now" and terms of cultural distinction (Bourdieu 1999), a number of different existing salsa scenes have been located in Barcelona. The term "scene" is conceived and created by Richard Peterson and Andy Benet, through identities that are fluid and interchangeable, not exclusive and complementary (2004:3); that is, part of the audience and the practices identified with a scene can be found in other scenes through processes of identity negotiation. Having said that, I classify salsa scenes in the following way:

- *The school-danceable salsa scene*: particularly widespread in Catalonia and basically divided into two macro-styles: *casino cubano* and *línea norteamericana*. In general, these are dances with preconceived, acrobatic steps and moves, learnt previously at dance schools, and that form part of the globalisation of the salsa industry.
- *The latina music scene*: especially popular among people from Ecuador, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Colombia, among other countries, and which features different styles of salsa, together with genres such as *reggaetón*, *merengue*, *bachata*, etc. It is also a scene that features a strong reaffirmation of the South American working classes[2].

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1. Characterised more "by its musical practices than by its specific content":
   "In this respect it constitutes an open expression – dynamic, varied, free, indeterminate. Its open nature of dialogical dynamic tension is manifested in the expression that became popularised as a cry of identity in the beginnings of the musical movement: ¡Salsa y Control! This call to the intensity of the expression through sound evokes many of its numerous internal dialogues: expressive frenzy and restrained establishing, rhythmic discharge and measured ostinato, improvisation and tradition" (Quintero, 1998: 21)

2. With respect to this reaffirmation and hybridisation with the school-danceable scene, see the progress made in Isabel Llano's (2008) research on immigration, danceable and Latin music in Barcelona.

- *The Cuban music scene*: features significant presence of Cubans as well as Catalans, and genres of danceable Cuban music such as *rumba*, *son*, *timba*, and "rutas del cubaneo[3]".
- *The gypsy salsa scene*: a type of salsa basically created by and for Gypsies, which includes salsa of different styles and origins combined with flamenco elements, thereby enhancing the historical and musical links between Spain and the Caribbean[4].
- *The salsa brava scene*: particularly popular among a sector of the Colombian and Venezuelan diaspora, as well as Catalans, in which the scene is exclusively dedicated to *salsa brava,* and to a great extent through the practised use of open spaces (Lefebvre, 1974; Certau, 2000; Delgado, 1999, 2002, 2003) which, at the same time, serve as a kind of "no-places" (Auge, 2000) owing to their temporary, itinerant nature.

Salsa brava: dislocation, possession and "subalternity"

The low economic returns generated by those who follow *salsa brava* (such as university students, artists and salaried workers), together with the strict regulations enforced on nightlife spaces in Barcelona, has made it difficult for places to exist where people can dance to salsa, listen to live music and drink alcohol. This has led to the transformation and temporary adaptation of different spaces: using halls for other kinds of music, restaurants, associations and suchlike as a venue for salsa, but which only serves to prolong the dislocation of those using it.

This dislocation takes place in a dual direction: South American people, in a diaspora situation, who use *salsa brava* in Barcelona, and Catalans, in a non-diaspora situation, who use this music that originated on another continent. Furthermore, both experience another dislocation that goes beyond space and makes use of time, in that the music they use has already had its commercial boom, and those who still listen to it, play and dance to it – in their own way – tend to champion the idea that better times were had in the past.

In this way, foreigners and local people escape the frames of time and space by allowing themselves to be possessed by the power of the music and of everything it evokes. If the urban context in which they live does not provide places where they can relive their music, then they appropriate them, negotiate them and create their own spaces. Once the refuge has been created, the escape is prolonged, and they are no longer 'he' or 'she', they become *El Molestoso* or *Mama Inés* - names from salsa songs or other similar styles that have been adopted by or assigned to people who, when they arrive at the scene, dress up as their respective characters, let themselves go and meet up again with this or that Other which determines their escape, and makes them part of a "lived theatre" (Leiris, 2007 [1934]) and a "ritual comedy" (Metraux, 1963) which "requires the reconstruction of certain body codes" (Sevilla, 1998).

Here, once again, the old imposes itself and disguises itself with the mantle of the new. The theories that explain ancient rituals of ecstasy practised by African societies and Afro-descendant communities are presented as analytical categories that enable us to link a specific religious culture with a specific musical culture (of which it is a representation, negation or surrogate), and with a specific social context of which they represent an adaptive instrument.

Foreigners and local people escape the frames of time and space by allowing themselves to be possessed by the power of the music and of everything it evokes

[3]. The term used by Iñigo Sánchez (2008) in his doctoral thesis to describe the musical practices and construction of cubanía through a study of three Cuban nightlife spaces in Barcelona.
[4]. For a general view, see (Linares, 1998-1999), and for a local view, see (Marfà, 2008) and (Gasol, 2010).

However, to return to my previous statements:

> "[…] What the individual engaging in ecstasy rituals desires is not so much to increase his subjectivity, but to get rid of it, as the main obstacle encountered by his knowledge in its itinerant state. Exulting the *self* is not what is taking place here, but rather abandoning it and relinquishing it, as an indispensable requirement for commencing a pullulation in the course of which someone that is not me meets up with me, without my having searched for them, but whom I had hoped to meet. This or that *Other* is me, but it's not me, since it is a stranger who travels by my side, or who enters my body to possess me" (Delgado, 1992: 112-113).

Within this splitting process, *salsa brava* exists as a kind of peripheral cult. The central or dominant cults are those that take place in the rest of the salsa scenes in Barcelona, but which possess greater dominance and positioning, such as the school-danceable salsa scene. Meanwhile, *salsa brava* exists as the least-recognised, lacking as it does a space of its own and possessing as it does a surplus of a low bodily control, or rather "of an Other control of the body" (Giobellina, 1994: 117) in that the body functions as a "vehicle for the divine" (Heusch, 1973: 255):

> "[…] the gods appear on Earth, they incarnate, they ride the faithful, they make them shiver and tingle, jump and skip, they lend him their voice: the worshipper's own personality is erased; he does not resist the invasion of the divine persona. The priest is nothing but the organiser of a ritual spectacle in which the actors cannot hide from their vocation: they are selected or chosen (Ibid.)".

And through this choice, the religions or practices that evoke this possession become conduits for "different types of social conflicts" (Giobellina, 1986: 170). In this case, the salsa periphery only channels its status of subalternity "[…] thereby marking its nature as being both marginal and dependent. Marginal because of the exclusion to which they are subjected and because of the criteria used to describe them as such; and dependent, in the sense that they cannot escape the power of the values that challenge them, as these values represent the insurmountable *factum* according to which the different subordinate responses are reorganised" (Giobellina, 2003: 51).

This is how, to a great extent, those who follow *salsa brava* escape from other scenes and create their own. When they become victims of commercial and/or police mobbing, they begin their nomadic travels again, thereby granting subalternity a new nature, in that while "the subaltern cults are cults of subalterns" (Giobellina and González, 2000: 54), this does not take place in an exclusive or homogeneous way. Those who follow *salsa brava* are typically bohemian and intellectual; at some *salsa brava* fiestas there are more university students and entrepreneurs than workers or artists with insecure incomes. In this way, subalternity is reshaped and goes from being a social enclave to become a musical one that flees and creates its own time and space, or rather its own "way of being" (Rouget, 1968: 1340) through music.

Those who follow *salsa brava* escape from other scenes and create their own. When they become victims of commercial and/or police mobbing, they begin their nomadic travels again, thereby granting subalternity a new nature, in that while "the subaltern cults are cults of subalterns"

Personal splitting as a methodological strategy

"I'm putting on the music at a salsa fiesta for the first time. I need a name. I never needed one as a dance teacher and a cultural promoter, but as a DJ I must have one […] I'll call myself: *Madame Kalalú,* after the witch in the song by Rubén Blades[5] […] But I'll be different, I'll create a new interior and exterior version of her[6]".

Through this testimony, we can sense that, even without a name or a personification, *Madame Kalalú* had always been present. Even though she had not been called by that name, a character existed that came into play on entering the salsa scene, that same person who had played the role of dancer, dance teacher, event promoter and performance DJ. Other characters played by this person on entering the academic scene have included the roles of student, doctoral student and ethnographer specialising in the study of salsa in Barcelona. To create an analogy with Jackson's arguments, the role exists in relation to others: "we have as many 'I's' as we have Others that recognise us, and bear our image in their minds" (Jackson, in Carman, 2006: 43).

Through this process of recognition, a methodological strategy was embarked upon to create distances between the researcher and the subjects studied, including herself. Likewise, this helped to overcome what is known as "research fatigue", a sensation inherent to many studies, and which is intensified when one forms part of what is being analysed, and even more so when that person has taken a long time to acknowledge that the researcher's presence is intrinsic to any research study, whether it be ethnographic in nature, auto-ethnographic (Esteban, 2004; Ellis and Bochner, 2004) or experimental (Pallini, 2011); that is, that it combines both the experience of Others and of that 'I' that forms part of the Others.

Amidst this new panorama, the ethnographer who always questioned her scientific abilities feels that she has become reconciled with the discipline, not to say disciplined herself. *Madame Kalalú*'s disorder seems to put in order the work of the person containing her. Likewise, she invites her to come into contact with theories that link up the field of ethnomusicology with that of religious and urban anthropology.

"The music is […] essentially identificatory […] the language the music speaks is understood by all, and each person decodes it at this or her own level. It is through this music, and through de dance to witch it gives rise, that recognition of the divinity's presence is conveyed to the entire group, a recognition that is indispensable because it authenticates the trance [...] Music thus appears as the principal means of socializing trance […] of exteriorizing his [the dancer's) trance. It is at this stage that music is indispensable. Why? Because it is the only language that speaks *simultaneously*, if I may put it so, to the *head and the legs*, because it is through music that the group provides the entranced person with a mirror in which he can read the image of his borrowed identity; and because it is the music that enables him to reflect this identity back again to the group in the form of dance" (Rouget, 1985: 323, 325-326).

5. In the song, the 'madame' is an old witch who uses her divinatory powers to rob her clients, and is personified by Blades, who experiences his own splitting: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O49jEWgmFug

6. Fragments from the diary of Madame Kalalú, 8 March 2011.

The observer who opts for that which is called 'participating observation', who participates by observing, uses himself as a recording instrument

Furthermore, the assessment of the personal experience, as a "borrowed identity" encouraged me to explore the French ethnographic tradition, represented by authors such as Metraux (1963), Leiris (2007 [1934]) and Griaule (1987), who incorporated elements of their personal lives, and which many authors consider to be subjective in research. A point which Fernando Giobellina questions very well with the following comment:

"The observer who opts for that which is called 'participating observation', who participates by observing, uses himself as a recording instrument. In other words, his (my) ideal is that of a kind of controlled schizophrenia: the brain divided into two halves; one that thinks, believes, feels and reacts like the 'natives'; the other which maintains one's own values and which watches his cranial neighbour out of the corner of his eye. To a large extent, it is oneself that one is questioning when it comes to writing the report that speaks of the Other into whom one should have converted oneself. Paradoxical as it might seem, objectivity involves introspection" (Giobellina 2003: 278).

So that what anthropology has always championed is personal knowledge through a knowledge of otherness (Ibid.: 17). Thus, the difference between studies in which there is deep involvement of what is personal and others where this is concealed, is that in the former, the 'I' is violated, and in the latter, it is protected (Pratis in Carman, 2006: 48). Thus the research study acquires a dual methodological complexity, through which the author confronts herself doubly.

The Other and the Others in the field

Based on the fact that the methodological strategy used in this research study has been of the performative type, I should point out that the character Madame Kalalú keeps a diary. In it, she tells of what happens when she goes out to dance salsa; it tells of her yearnings, her successes, her contradictions and, very subtly, her unsuccessful love affairs. Sometimes her prose is rebellious and flirts with poetry, as we can see from the following extract, in which she describes the night she went out to the salsa dance hall Antilla, and where she noticed changes in the venue's coding and its audience:

"The most sublime night at the Antilla was a day without a day. It was a Sunday that didn't seem like a Sunday, it was a Sunday with Thursday people, or perhaps a cosmopolitan Sunday holiday. It was during Easter of 2009 when, in the words of Sofía (a.k.a. 'Triste y Vacía'), some come and others go, or rather some take a rest and others get stronger. It was a day of the necessary people: neither too many, nor too few; of people who were into the music that the DJ gifted to their bodies that day, bodies melted together in each piece, in each gaze and in each correspondence, bodies given over to the beautiful art of making love while dancing, listening and sharing with those who were there and who weren't there, with those who left us sweaty, thirsty and with a desire for more, with a desire to carry on learning, to carry on sublimating and knowing that that night was special because it was the night of the freed bodies, of bodies without days[7]".

7. Fragments from the diary of *Madame Kalalú*, 6 April 2009.

In light of this account, the ethnographic objective is to analyse it, in turn bearing in mind the link between "poetry and ethnology" (Giobellina, 2005: 40):

"Both, in effect, have a similar capacity to make human reality clear, to dissolve illusions at the same time as reclaiming all the value of that mythical nature, of revealing truth. In this sense, just like poetry, ethnology creates a space for reversing the system which is, so to speak, carnavalizing. But every carnival has its Lent: poetry takes its place in the pantheon and ethnology institutionalises it. Levity becomes wisdom, liberty becomes subjection" (Ibid.: 41).

In the case of *Madame*'s poetic account, this needs to be compared with the testimonies of other followers of *salsa brava* who do not identify themselves with certain spots and danceable practices that form part of other scenes. Moreover, those who have ended up becoming evocators of what goes on, and what they have begun to miss, in the dance halls in South America where *salsa brava* is played regularly, and where collective use of it can be made any day of the week. In this context, I will include the testimony of Laura Farina, a Venezuelan who regularly attends the monthly fiestas that form part of the *salsa brava* scene. She admits that she did not use to dance salsa in Venezuela, though she sometimes went with a few friends to Maní (also known as the 'Temple of Salsa' in Caracas), but in fact she liked other kinds of music, and was not the type of person who depended on salsa, as is the case of the nomadic "family" to which Madame Kalalú belonged to in Barcelona. Knowing as she did that in this city there is a travelling fiesta (party) that adapts to different scenarios (namely *Entren que caben 100*[8]), where this research is based, where they play commercial *salsa brava* and where you can dance without needing to have taken dancing classes, has helped Laura to palliate her homesickness and, as an analogy, she uses a typical meal from this and other regions of South America as an example:

"Every Sunday I used to eat *arepa* in Venezuela; when I arrived here that changed, but knowing that I could go to the supermarket and buy flour to make and eventually eat *arepas* has helped to soothe my homesickness. More or less the same happened to me with salsa – knowing that there is a monthly fiesta where I can dance *salsa brava* is reassuring for me. Even so, while it's true that I wasn't very much into salsa when I was in Venezuela, what happens to me here is that when I go out to dance salsa, I experience it more intensely, perhaps because it's more commonplace back home, and here it's more difficult to find[9]".

But the search can result in a loss. *Laura Farina*, a name taken from another song by Rubén Blades, is another character in this thesis; one of her everyday roles is that of a student doing a Master's in International Cooperation who has found a refuge – just like *Madame Kalalú* did – at *Entren que caben 100*, and who has devolved the location of her name to ethnography, as part of a process of discursive and investigative homogenisation. On the subject of *Laura*, I should add that she has not been seen lately, as the monthly fiestas she used to go to a few months ago have now stopped. And so, followers of *salsa brava* have had to wait, or move to some other space where their dislocation, possession and "subalternity" are extended.

8. This fiesta forms part of the following salsa-brava category: "Fiestas run by DJs", where there may also be a VJ or video screenings, and where you can go to dance, listen to music and share with *salseros* bravos and others not so bravos (González, 2011). The other categories that have been identified to date are "Encounters with music lovers"; "Presentations of live music"; "Salsa brava classes"; "Concerts by international artistes"; Radial programmes and "Drink and food bars" (Ibid.).

9. Conversation with Laura Farina, 25 June 2011.

Summary

- *Salsa brava* first emerged from a context represented by spatial and musical dislocation. The former, characterised by the South American diaspora in New York; and the latter, by that diaspora's need to create a music in which the musical past and present were combined to challenge the dominant model of production through "a way of making music" that is heterogeneous and de-centred. Over the course of time, this "way of making" added the term "brava" in order to differentiate this style of salsa from others that have formed part of salsa's commercialisation, and which have now been eclipsed by dance styles that have turned salsa into a global phenomenon.

- When we talk about salsa in Barcelona, we could be talking simultaneously about several different salsas, hence we must bear in mind that there are several different salsa scenes in this city, which are interconnected but have significant identifying features. These features are represented through danceable and musical practices, as well as a public which, through "the distinction", has given rise to the school-danceable scene, the "Latina" music scene, the Cuban music scene, the gypsy salsa scene and the *salsa brava* scene.

- The *salsa brava* scene has been created through the practised use of the urban space and the music that expresses its dislocation in a varied way; in other words, salsa nomadism is not only inherent to the physical space, but also the human. Those who follow *salsa brava* in Barcelona are nomads because they do not have any fixed venues, and because they form part of a bidirectional diaspora in which there are people who have travelled with their music to distant lands, and others who have adopted the music from those lands. Likewise, they are nomads because they change their name: most of them adopt a character within the scene and, even if they do not do so expressly, their behaviour and practices change when the entertainment begins. Here, the art of possession comes into play; "I is Other", and that Other denotes his/her assumption of a perhaps imaginary subalternate condition, as *salsa brava* does not act as a dominant cult, but rather as an assumed cult, which takes the form of resistance to other new danceable and musical fashions.

- All research is *introspective*. The difference between those who champion the objective and those who favour the subjective is that in the former, the "I" is protected, while in the second, it is violated. That is how this research study presents a balance between the two tendencies from the collective and individual otherness. From a consideration of others who contribute their experience in the construction of knowledge, and from the actual experience assumed as the Other through theoretical and methodological suggestion.

- The techniques used in this research are conventional in nature (field diaries, informal conversations, etc.); the peculiarity is that the others have a character, a kind of salsa pseudonym through which they see themselves represented within the scene of which they form part and parcel. In the case of my own character, she has a diary, whose fragments (together with fragments of interviews with other characters) reveal that *salsa brava*, represented through the people on which this research is based, are subject to a threefold condition: dislocation, possession and "subalternity".

All research is *introspective*. The difference between those who champion the objective and those who favour the subjective is that in the former, the "I" is protected, while in the second, it is violated

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AGREEMENTS AND DISAGREEMENTS ON INHABITING THE FRINGES OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

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It was some decades ago that feminist epistemologies tore to shreds the positivist lie that claimed it was possible to produce objective, pure neutral knowledges. While there are some researchers (often in places of power) who continue to entrench themselves in such anachronistic stances, and who try with all their (by no means little) might to halt the proliferation of cognitive diffractions, their attempts can only fail in non-institutionalised spaces. However, feminist paradigms (and above all, the way they are used) are not without contradictions. That is why, continuing in the investigatory spirit that characterised the pioneering female epistemologists, we must carry on questioning our work.

In this article we would like to reflect on two central points:

• The consequences that the transformation of concepts such as gender into mainstream topics will have for the production of feminist knowledges.
• The difficulties we encounter when putting into practice feminist theoretical-epistemological teachings, and the lack of methodological systematisation, as well as of spaces for collective training/research to support them, and the challenges of situated research and its contradictory relations with the subject(s) producing knowledge.

The perverse effects of the gender perspective

According to Álvaro (2005), gender studies[1] first commenced in Spain in the 1980s, though Teresa Ortiz (2005) points out that these studies did not begin to be consolidated until the following decade. It was, therefore, in the new century when an increase took place in the proliferation of publications and research that used the keyword "gender". A cursory view of this evolution might give the impression that the demands of the feminist movement (that science should open itself up to other knowledge, and introduce the gender perspective into its knowledge

[1] It is important to stress that we are talking about gender study here as a "disciplinary area"; this does not imply that previously there were no researchers doing work with/on/for women, or even from a feminist perspective.

production) has been completely successful, and that today feminist research no longer has to exist on the fringes of science.

But if we carry out a more in-depth analysis, then this optimism evaporates. In fact, we have to acknowledge that in the 1980s, following the consolidation of gender studies, a separation also began between the academic and the non-academic feminist movement (Ortiz, 2005), which means that we need to reflect on the content of works on "gender". Thus, for example, after looking through articles in the magazines *Papeles del psicólogo*, *Psychology in Spain* and *Infocop*[2] (Biglia, 2011) we found that most studies that use the keyword "gender" are confusing it with sex, and propose a differential analysis between men and women (Cabruja, 2008). Many of the other works focus on the subject of gender violence, and frequently reproduce hetero-patriarchal stereotypes (Ferrer and Bosch, 2005). Assuming a realist-pessimist (and definitely not politically correct) stance, we would go so far as to claim that, unfortunately, the increased availability of research funding and the political interest in the problem of gender violence has directly contributed to the rising number of research studies and, therefore, of articles on gender violence produced by people who are insensitive to the subject.

However, as Margot Pujal (23 November 2010)[3] states, this is not a phenomenon that is limited to this sphere, but that "Recently [in our country] a large number of gender studies are being carried out that are not [...] feminist, owing to the institutionalisation of the subject, the prevailing neoliberalism in academia, and the appropriation of social critique as a commodified currency for use and consumption". In light of this situation, it is vital that we distinguish between studies of/on gender, and research based on a gender perspective (Amigot and Pujal, 2008).

In this respect, it is important to stress that while most of the public calls for applications in research mention the introduction of a *genderised* analytical perspective as a positive element, studies that are feminist/ with a gender perspective are not considered worthy of belonging to the different disciplinary categories. In the same way, as we can see in the manifesto written by international women researchers at a meeting in Poland (European Gender Summit, 2011), we must "acknowledge that the previous EU Framework Programs have failed in their attempt to involve, benefit and encourage women to the same extent as men [...]. The solid evidence that shows how gender inequalities can impact negatively on the quality of scientific research should be disseminated by research organisations and universities in all areas of national R+D budget management".

This is even more important at a time when works and curricula that are feminist/have a gender perspective are being evaluated by experts from other areas who do not know how or have any desire to distinguish between studies on gender and those with a gender perspective. The political message seems to be quite clear: "Talk about gender or about the female subject, but don't question hetero-patriarchal science".

Against this trend, the importance of "considering 'whether, and in what way, sex and gender are important to the objectives and methodology of the project' to guarantee excellence in research was stressed at the European Gender Summit (2011). The researchers funding the

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The political message seems to be quite clear: "Talk about gender or about the female subject, but don't question hetero-patriarchal science"

research study, the assessors, reviewers and editors of the magazines must all ask themselves this key question". Nevertheless, in contrary to this *desideratum*, there seems to be a prevailing tendency in Spain to favour research studies in which the word "gender" appears as a mere descriptor, as opposed to those that use it as an analytical tool. Perhaps that is why it is so hard to publish articles in autochthonous academic magazines that explicitly use the term "feminist", as they frequently end up being rejected as merely ideological. For instance, in our afore-mentioned search on articles published in three psychology magazines, we only found one (Yago and Paterna, 2006) with the keyword "femi-nism" (Biglia, 2011). In a similar analysis, León Mejía (2006) noted that out of all the theses deposited in TESEO[4] that used the keywords "gender" or "feminism", 63.9% used the former concept and 36% the latter.

In order to examine more thoroughly the way in which the popu-larisation of gender has contributed to the rejection of feminism, let us look at some of the results from a recent research study carried out by Cabruja (2008) on the inclusion of gender and/or feminist studies in psychology education. Both the academic staff and the professionals who took part in this study said that they are in favour of including gender subjects and/or those related to women in psy-chology. However, they consider that both the feminist movement and related theories have been unnecessary for, and even harmful to the discipline. They claim that psychology is neutral with regard to gender, and that feminism will end up producing another regime of inequalities, while gender discourses would be oriented toward equal-ity. Perhaps it is because of this kind of view that, according to Arranz (2004), feminist proposals are much less accepted in academic circles than those that are framed within a paradigm of gender, or that are carried out on women. In fact, many believe that the use of the word "gender" is in accord with present times, while feminism is deemed to be outdated: "among these strategies to disempower feminism, there are *historicisation* and *generationisation*, by which feminism is deemed to be out of date" (McRobbie, 2009:16).

However, in our view what is striking is the way that these discourses on the equality that would result from talking about gender fail to reflect on the values (i.e. androcentric, sexist, heteronormative and rac-ist) that have been adhered to in the construction of the equality model to which we should aspire, whilst once again reiterating the supposed neutrality of the sciences.

In this scenario, it should come as no surprise that the frequent appear-ance of the word "gender", in both the social sphere and in academic and political ambits, creates a hope for social displacement and for real disciplines geared towards less discriminatory perspectives. This, togeth-er with the messages intrinsic to the adoption of politically correct languages, has effects that transcend the academic space and make it hard for people (especially the young) to detect the gender stereotypes that they reproduce, as well as to identify the need to continue to sup-port feminist agendas (Biglia and Velasco, *forthcoming*).

Meanwhile, others consider that "this term [gender] is entirely neces-sary in order to discuss the subject in contexts that are not very well or

> Frequent appearance of the word "gender", in both the social sphere and in academic and political ambits, creates a hope for social displacement and for real disciplines geared towards less discriminatory perspectives

4. Database of doctoral theses (TESEO) https://www.educacion.gob.es/teseo/irGestionarConsulta.do;jsessionid=EAB65DE3B3035D2A8FF7EA4B35781A7C

BARBARA BIGLIA AND EDURNE

A definite tension exists within feminism, between the need to acknowledge its own proposals (theoretical and political) and the danger that this will involve its subversion and depoliticisation

not at all informed (and which are the contexts that particularly interest us), since working on the subject of gender represents in itself a certain personal revolution. If, furthermore, we add the deep-rooted prejudices in our country regarding the politicisation (as opposed to science) and social stigmatisation associated with women who are considered feminists, [...] then the response may be a blinkered attitude and extra overly-complicated difficulties. When one has already discussed the subject in some depth, the feminist perspective can be introduced directly, simply by talking about it. I speak from a pragmatic-contextual perspective" (Pujal, 23 November 2009).

Others claim that "while there is a need to assert feminism as a theory and a social movement in the struggle for equality and women's rights, the concept of gender as a tool or category of analysis is still valid to explain and understand the reorganisation of the patriarchy during the course of the history of humanity" (García Colmenares, 30 November 2009).

As we can see, a definite tension exists within feminism, between the need to acknowledge its own proposals (theoretical and political) and the danger that this will involve its subversion and depoliticisation. This tension is transformed into a personal dilemma for all we women who, situated on the precarious fringes of research, have to decide what to call ourselves and how to present our studies, and in the knowledge that, while we are more likely to be accepted if we use the gender perspective, we also run the risk that our words will be more easily co-opted or the results subverted.

In this respect, though we agree with the analyses carried out by Pujal and García, we believe that it is important to continue to defend the use of the term "feminist" in academia, as far as possible. Feminism not as a new identity, but as a political vision, an interpretive paradigm of reality. The commitment to carry out joint works based on self-identification as feminists, far from wishing to homogenise the subjects, represents an opportunity to form "a common ground that is no longer based on identity or essences, but on what is built through shared situations and struggles that are able to connect with a broader general feeling, by finding in life an echo of others' lives" (Gil, 2011: 266). We are aware that this option is strategic, but we consider it to be important, at least until the term "feminism" is discredited. That is why we acknowledge that in the academic contexts in which it has been accepted (and has become almost neutral), it could be more effective (as Mieke Bal suggested) to use other terminologies. We would like to stress that this option continues to be a "privileged" one, and that because of the current context of job insecurity being experienced by feminists and the geopolitical specificities of each individual, many may reach a situation in which they are unable to use the term in order to do their job.

However, we still believe that it is important to champion this point because, as Montse Torné (26 November 2009) put it so well, "speaking and thinking in terms of gender only goes to maintain the genderisation of reality, while feminism [...] makes it possible to think and act".

Difficulties in putting into practice what is learnt from feminist epistemology

We will now analyse the difficulty in applying the teachings of feminist epistemology in a research environment based on the experiences and actions of the people[5] who have participated in SIMReF (Seminar Interdisciplinary Feminist Research Methodology[6]) since 2008, of which the authors of this article are promoters and organisers, together with Jokin Azpiazu, Jordi Bonet i Martí, Luzma Martínez and Marta Luxán.

SIMReF is a space for training, exchange and reflection on feminist methodologies and epistemologies that has, over the years, organised the following actions: methodological lectures by renowned international researchers, research workshops to debate the epistemological and methodological issues of research in progress, intensive one-day conferences on data analysis, virtual courses on an introduction to feminist methodology, publication of teaching materials and, lastly, individual research studies. Approximately 300 people have participated in these events, including expert researchers and students, teachers of different academic disciplines (including sociology, pedagogy, political science, psychology, biology, demography, philosophy, law and art) from the local, national and international spheres, as well as people working in the field of social intervention and members of feminist groups. In all the actions and events we have attempted to encourage joint processes of self-reflection and diffraction between organisers and participants (in the role of teachers or learners). On this basis, we have systematised reflections on the possibilities and limits of online teaching from a feminist perspective (Luxan and Biglia, 2011; Biglia and Jiménez, *forthcoming*). We will be using the participants' experiences in this article to determine some of the problems and limits that many feminist researchers have encountered, as well as the attempts to tackle them that we have made from within SIMReF.

Firstly, we detected **a scarcity of feminist methodological points of reference**. Many female researchers experience a sensation of "being lost" owing to the general non-inclusion of rigorous methodological training (not to mention feminist methodologies in particular) in degree and Master's courses. Furthermore, not much specific literature exists, especially in Spanish, as a SIMReF participant pointed out: "I do the thesis in a discipline and a school (that of architecture) which is sexist and which, furthermore, indoctrinates its students to become architectural stars, individualistic, and generally promotes the idea of *anything goes*. As far as I know, there is no manual available on feminist methodology and urban development; there is a little material on urban planning (creating cities) and gender, but not much that is explicitly feminist, and almost nothing on designing cities from the feminist perspective" (anonymous).

In some way, the idea prevails that the challenges created by feminist epistemologies are more easily tackled on the theoretical plane than on the empirical one. Perhaps that is why recent international research studies (genSET2010; UN, 2010) "suggest the need to develop an international agreement concerning methods for transversalising the analysis of sex and gender in basic and applied research" (Caprile, Meulders, O'Dorochai, Vallés, 2011: 119).

[5.] In this section we will be quoting comments by some of the participants and seminar (who are either identified with their names or anonymously, depending on their preferences) that have been recorded over the past few years or which they sent to us specifically for this article. Thanks to everyone for granting us permission to publish your comments.

[6.] To find out more about SIMReF and what it does, go to www.simref.net.

In this experience we have also encountered a persistent confusion between using a feminist methodology, adopting a gender perspective and researching on women or issues associated with the feminine

The intergenerational relations within academic feminist spaces are not always positive or facilitative for working together

These difficulties in designing and carrying out research coherently with feminist epistemological proposals owing to a lack of training become even more extreme owing to the need to justify said proposals when it comes to presenting subjects and approaches that break with the patriarchal logic of science. As Alejandra Araiza[7] puts it, "many of us women have had to use different argumentive manoeuvres to defend the possibility of using feminist epistemological standpoints to develop our thesis. We have had to present the criticisms that feminists have made – over several pages – of Western and modern science. We have had to justify the feasibility of carrying out feminist science in all possible ways. It appears that this space – academia – is still hostile to the presence of feminism (theoretical and political)". However, this forces research to evolve, given that (as a participant in the permanent seminar noted) "when you have to constantly justify yourself, you end up developing much better arguments" (anonymous).

Even so, how can people work like this, with hardly any back-up, points of reference or guidelines? How can we work like this in critical spaces where, in opposition to the positivist mandates, a certain methodological laxity is championed?

At the lectures organised by SIMReF we have tackled the lack of reference points by creating a space in which the most expert researchers can reveal their research study 'tricks of the trade', in order to provide examples of how to put feminist epistemologies into practice, as well as to show the contradictions and difficulties that can be encountered in this process (Zavos and Biglia, 2009). At the same time, the permanent seminar has become a peer-to-peer space for validating colleagues' works, by using a traditional tool of feminism: the collective construction of knowledge and meaning (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2002). As a participant mentioned, "What's good about here is that there are no definite rules, we just have to build paths together" (anonymous) to develop methodologically rigorous research studies that are coherent with our feminist perspective.

Meanwhile, in this experience we have also encountered a **persistent confusion between using a feminist methodology, adopting a gender perspective and researching on women or issues associated with the feminine**, even in feminist academic spheres. While in the first section we carried out an in-depth analysis of some of the effects of the popularisation of the term "gender", here we will be continuing to stress the problems that this confusion creates for young female researchers. In fact, many of the women that have taken part in SIMReF uphold a feminist outlook that makes the implementation of feminist research perfectly comprehensible and auspicious without such research necessarily having to have women or feminised aspects of life as their object. Even so, while it is already difficult to find thesis directors to carry out a gender research study, finding one who is willing to support a feminist research study that is not about women becomes a herculean task.

In fact, the **intergenerational relations** within academic feminist spaces are not always positive or facilitative for working together. As Teresa Ortiz (2005: 57) points out, "relations between female teachers and younger researchers, who have had differing experiences and histories, are also fraught with dilemma; and the need and suitability of

passing on the baton, involving more people, consolidating new leader-ships and acknowledging authorities between us produces imbalances and contradictions. And, finally, we are (they see us, we see ourselves) simultaneously at the centre and at the periphery of the system, and this is also a source of tension". And so, while feminism has insisted on championing the personal as political, it seems to us that few hori-zontal spaces have been created to share the experiences, frustrations, negative and discriminatory experiences of those who are doing bat-tle with the windmills of hetero-patriarchal institutions. Unfortunately, many feminist academic groups have closed in on themselves and, perhaps to defend themselves and to be recognised, have ended up reproducing hierarchies and power relations that are very similar to the official ones. As a result, they have left very little space for self-criticism, for a change in paradigm or for validating the proposals of younger women. "Having a thesis director who you think is cool and 'on your side' can be even more dangerous. You work in the hope that they understand you, that you're sharing important theoretical frameworks and that you can dare to question the academic system, but then, in the end, you might find yourself in one of two opposing situations that are equally awful: the first is that at the moment of truth it becomes clear that when it comes to fighting against the academic establish-ment, you're on your own, and that your director is not going to take any risks at all for you, nor use up her time reading your thesis; the sec-ond is that this marvellous wonderful person belongs to a critical group in which your criticisms will only be accepted provided that they do not question the form of the group's critique: either you criticise like we do, or you're out!" (Pantera Rosa, 2004: 199-200).

We believe that it is vital to reverse this process, and that's why we are trying to ensure that the permanent seminar continues to be completely self-organised and self-managed, and with the clear intention of draw-ing on the wealth of intergenerational (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2002) and interdisciplinary spaces. As Araiza notes, the intention is to "create our own communities, within which it is feasible to find articulations that enable us – without too many justifications – to simply put our ideas out there, validate them collectively, rethink them as a group and seek shared meanings, given that, in effect, knowledge is (also for feminists) a collec-tive construction".

When we speak of the difficulties of intergenerational relations between "academic feminists", we must mention the difficulties that the eld-est and most stable, work-wise seem to have in understanding what **extreme job insecurity** involves for younger women (Biglia and Bonet, *forthcoming*), and how this affects knowledge production. In the words of one of the participants attending the seminar: "I've been working on my thesis for almost three years, and I still haven't written a single chapter because my working rhythms are very changeable: job insecurity, university researcher, paid to work 20 hours a week but working for 35 or more, and what's more on subjects that are unrelated to my thesis" (anonymous). This job insecurity is prolonged through time, beyond the supposed period of education, and leaves us with the continual sensation of jousting with windmills, as we can appreciate in these words pub-lished on Facebook by Gemma Ubasart, European Doctor of Public Policy who, after two years as a postdoctoral intern, now has to look for work again: "Over the past few days I've been busy copying and pasting my

CV four times, obviously in different formats, for bodies managed by Catalan and Spanish public universities – Aneca, Aqu, Beatriu de Pinós call for applications and UOC. An outrageous waste of productivity, money and time. As for the modernisation of the public administration and the simplification of procedures – when's that going to happen?" As we have mentioned, there are, unfortunately, few feminist academics with a stable post who acknowledge this job insecurity and bear it in mind when establishing collaboration rhythms, given that conditions have worsened greatly compared to when they were young (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2002).

One thing that does seem to have been transmitted intergenerationally is **a distrust of quantitative research**, which is based on the illusion that qualitative methodologies are in themselves more critical and more in alignment with the feminist perspective. It's not hard, therefore, to find comments such as "I'm going to come straight out of the closet and confess that I am *quantitophobic* and *philoqualitative*" (anonymous); as well as those who claim that they don't like figures, without bearing in mind that (as Marta Luxan, demographer and lecturer at SIMReF notes) "It's not a question of liking or disliking, but of aims, of adapting to the problem of the study in question [...]. The social reality is complex, and in my opinion, describing it, analysing it and attempting to change it requires the use of different methodologies, methodologies which, in my view, are complementary". In agreement with her, we at SIMReF believe that while a more-or-less real interconnection exists between the power and the use of quantitative methods, qualitative methodologies are no less liable to be used for purposes that are alien to feminist practices, as in the case of market research studies. Another problem (as SIMReF lecturer Amaia Bacigalupe points out) lies in the fact that "while it seems that we show excessive respect when it comes to using information from a database or a survey that we have carried out, it would seem that doing an interview or chairing a group and, what's more, analysing it rigorously afterwards is something that is a matter of common sense and within everybody's abilities. That is to say, *quali* opposed to *quanti* goes with a series of direct attributions that reduce them to *complex* vs. *simple*, *subversive methodology* vs. *methodology for the use of power*, etc. This leads us to fall, once again, into that dual, simplistic way of thinking about reality that has done so much harm. And furthermore, it discredits qualitative methods, as it appears that no learning or skill is required to use them properly".

In our view, it is also strange to note how this contempt for the qualitative is often justified by the use of personal preferences, as if desire were not a social construction, and the "start from yourself" idea that is so strongly upheld by feminists could end up turning into a "remain in yourself".

These questions lead us to reflect on **how we produce situated research studies**. One of the first guidelines we have managed to find in many research studies (especially autochthonous ones) that are supposedly based on the epistemology of situated knowledge (on which we also base our studies), is the fact that the application of this perspective seems to be resolved by means of *naming* the actual stances, instead of analysing how they influence our production of knowledges. Another tendency we have observed in self-focused and/or self-referen-

tial research studies is that, instead of producing diffractions of realities (Haraway, 2004), they tend to reinforce neoliberal individualism by confusing it with feminist politics, just as happens (as we have mentioned previously) with the way in which the rejection of quantitative methods and techniques is justified.

In our view (and simplifying greatly), this situation is the result of three basic problems. Firstly, there is the importance that is attributed to postmodern language in academia, which generates the impression that, instead of putting into practice the teachings of situated knowledges, it is sufficient just to narrate them, albeit with complex and high-flown terminology. Secondly, there is the fact that critical theory is relatively in fashion, and at present it is politically correct to make reference to certain aspects of feminist theories, elements that have led to the production of many de-politicised studies within these areas. Finally, there is the lack of systematised and embodied reflections on how to come to terms with these stances, as we have mentioned above.

In order to examine these issues more thoroughly, we cannot fail to mention the now-classic feminist (and not only feminist) debate on **representation and subjectivities**. While at present it is agreed in feminism that no one single female subject exists, and that minority groups should take a leading role in the processes of knowledge production, we find ourselves in a situation that always makes the fact of dedicating oneself to research (and not only professionally, but also within the area of activism) into something more elitist. There have been many cases where both we and other colleagues have attempted to open up research studies to other subjectivities, not only as participants but also as co-researchers, but generally we have come up against the impossibility of (and, to some extent, a lack of interest in) taking on such a task in a truly collective way (Pantera Rosa, 2004). Unquestionably, there are some studies that have carried out more open processes in this respect, for example with young people (students) or institutionalised people (for instance, Fine and Torre, 2006); but we still wonder: who, nowadays, has the time to spend on researching? Do minority groups believe that research studies are really useful?

Furthermore, the activist group processes in which we have taken part (for example, Investigacció and FEMact) have featured the participation of people who were, in some way, linked with the universities. This implies that, in the end, we researchers cannot get away from representing other groups and subjectivities in some way, and we should carry out a profound reflection on the responsibilities that this involves (Pujal, 2003). These responsibilities are even greater at a time when collective processes of knowledge production are not recognised as viable in academic spheres, and we have not managed to build validation mechanisms that transcend these spaces which seem to have been consecrated to this end.

These difficulties become even plainer when we attempt to introduce **intersectional analysis** into our studies. As Andrijasevic and Bracke (2003) claim, parallel to the analysis of the sexual division of work in academia, feminists have also developed a powerful critique of the production of knowledge with respect to the central theme of *race*; feminists who are **black** or from the **Third World** have complained that

while white academics have the right to devise theories about everyone else, oppressed groups have had to fight for their knowledge to acquire theoretical recognition. In fact, the contributions of ethnic minorities tend to be considered as merely practical examples of theoretical abstractions that are acritically linked with white people's formulation spaces. In the context of the production of feminist knowledge, this also involves a criticism of the codification of research studies by Western white feminists in racialised terms.

In this respect, we must carry out a self-criticism within the space of SIMReF where, although we usually bear in mind, when we reflect on the actual research processes, the way in which the participants' migratory experiences influence their research, we have not carried out a thorough examination of the subject of ethnic belonging, or of racist and ethnocentric dynamics in academia in Spain and even within the seminar itself.

We must ask ourselves: how can we truly understand intersectionality, beyond experiencing our own and sharing it with our friends (who, though we are subject to multiple discrimination, are still privileged subjects in comparison with broad sectors of the global population), and with so few opportunities to mix with other subjects? How can we ensure that intersectionality does not become relegated to theoretical, analytical spaces, but instead, on the contrary, that it is embodied in the entire process of our research?

Without pretending to offer any answer to such a broad debate, we consider it pertinent to note that, perhaps, one first necessary step is to acknowledge that when we produce knowledge, we are always representing other subjectivities, and we must accept the responsibilities that this involves.

Fresh start

To summarise the concerns presented in this short article, we believe that it is vital to maintain a continuous critical spirit in the context of the dynamics of the collective creation of feminist knowledge. Our commitment is, firstly, to use the concept *feminists* to define our studies, in response to the depoliticisation to which the most accepted use of the term *gender* might lead. Meanwhile, we believe that it is fundamentally important to create spaces to encourage the implementation of methodologically feminist studies, as we believe that it is the *process* of a research study that shapes it politically, and not the gender (or even the sex) of the subjects carrying it out, nor the feminisation of the issues. In these spaces, feminist networking should be encouraged (Biglia and Jiménez, *forthcoming*), as well as peer-to-peer validation and the deployment of intergenerational power dynamics and relations. We know that there are structural elements (such as job insecurity) that cannot be fully tackled here but which, however, we must bear in mind in the relational dynamics. Meanwhile, the multiplicities of our experiences should be reflected in rigorous situated studies that acknowledge the impossibility of not representing, and which carefully consider the effects of intersectionality.

Clearly, the debate is open, though we hope to have offered a few reflective elements to encourage it.

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PANEL III
CONTEMPORARY MOBILITY
AND ALTERATIONS

- OPTIONS FOR AN INTERCULTURAL WORLD:
  CULTURAL PARTICULARITIES AND SHARED VALUES

  Ramin Jahanbegloo

- INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND CINEMA: A
  COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE REPRESENTATION OF
  ISLAM IN HOLLYWOOD AND BOLLYWOOD

  Rajesh Kumar

OPTIONS FOR AN INTERCULTURAL WORLD: CULTURAL PARTICULARITIES AND SHARED VALUES

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Introduction

The increasing interconnection between cultures and the accelerating process of moving cultures involve an unprecedented challenge to contemporary research in social and political sciences. However, in apparent contrast to these trends, academic mainstream knowledge productions continue to work in a tradition of cultural dichotomies reflecting a rigid classificatory approach to knowledge. As a matter of fact, what we see is that in an increasingly intercultural and inter-connected world, the idea of a homogeneous and isolated culture becomes increasingly irrelevant. One might reason with thinkers like Amartya Sen that there is nothing new about this process of global inter-culturality and inter-connectivity. According to Sen, "Over thousands of years, globalization has contributed to the progress of the world through travel, trade, migration, spread of cultural influences and dissemination of knowledge and understanding (including that of science and technology). These global interrelations have often been very productive in the advancement of different countries. They have not necessarily taken the form of increased Western influence."[1] I would say that Sen's reference is more to the idea of "interculturality" as the coexistence of cultures.

However, globalization opens for different cultures the wide spectrum of possibilities of moving in other environments. In other words, there is an unprecedented type of worldwide inter-connectedness that is realized by the impact of knowledge mobility and new technologies. Last, but not least, one of the challenges of knowledge mobility and intercultural dialogue could be the rise of "uncertainty". We are no more in a homogeneous, stable, localized and predictable context of research. Actually from a research perspective, uncertainty is a highly significant point, because it provides an interface between particularistic psychologies and cross-cultural realities.

[1]. Sen, Amartya, *The American Prospect* Jan 1, 2002 v13 i1 pA2(5)

Theoretical perspectives and difficulties

'Dialogue of cultures' is a concept that is hopelessly general and varies hugely across systems. This observation might suggest that no necessary linkages, positive or negative, can be drawn between cultures and a dialogue that promotes a peaceful and democratic world. But it is worth exploring the relationship between culture and dialogue, not least because so many assertions, both favourable and critical, abound in the public discourse about dialogue of cultures. So there is merit in shedding new light on this subject. It is probably a sign of the times that the issue of dialogue of cultures is raised again among politicians, academics and social actors. It goes without saying that all over the world, globalization is bringing fundamental changes. The pace at which established cultures are changing as a result of the mixing of peoples and ideas, and flows of goods and services, means that it is not always possible to identify what has remained unchanged in different cultures where these transformations have taken place. As such, the only way for cultures to creatively construct a common future is to have a dialogue together instead of retreating into an exclusive identity paradigm or abandoning their cultural heritage in the face of uniformizing political and economic globalization. For this to be possible, two conditions must be present in every culture: first, a readiness to seek dialogue with other cultures, and, second, general agreement on the aim of constructing "common shared values" beyond the legitimate diversity of the cultures. That is to say, different cultures can see the world in very different ways while sharing norms that are universal. Cultures with shared common values naturally look to the universal (and hence mutuality and solidarity), while the process of dialogue between them thrives on diversity, and hence encourages difference. Dialogue of cultures is a philosophical and hence an urgent political task for our world. Thanks to the global reach of information in today's world, members of even the most traditional and isolated societies are daily exposed to different forms of ideas, institutions, moral and social practices, and forms of life which encourage a sense of common belonging to humanity and global citizenship. In other words, diversity has become an inescapable fact of life in our global century.

Any researcher, not only a social scientist, contributes to promote respect for cultural diversity if he or she is interested in the major themes of human culture. Today, the researcher deals with an even larger and intercultural universe and must constantly be aware of this. In doing so, he/she cannot but promote respect for cultural diversity. However, the relations between cultures in a plural world are too complex to be reduced simply to the necessity for dialogue. It is the researcher's job to analyze and explain this complexity, even when it does not lead to better relations between cultures. I believe it is clear to us that intercultural dialogue today represents an option for a plural world that would lead us to a new process of reinvention of knowledge that is reflectively conscious of the intercultural origins of its presuppositions.

But there are four elements which need to be taken into consideration in the process of intercultural construction of knowledge:

a) **Identity**: There is no such thing as a fixed and mono-cultural identity. Identity is thus understood as a permanent process of liberation that requires a task of constant discernment in the interior of the cultural

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Intercultural dialogue today represents an option for a plural world that would lead us to a new process of reinvention of knowledge

Identity is thus understood as a permanent process of liberation that requires a task of constant discernment in the interior of the cultural universe with which each person identifies

universe with which each person identifies.

b) **A sense of Belonging:** The culture of origin is not the individual's ineluctable destiny but rather her original historical situation. The culture of origin is the original social-historical situation and a *point of support* for the person that *situates* him/her in a specific vision of herself, in relation to others and to the world, but does not dispense with the task of having to make one's own way.

c) **Respect and recognition:** of cultures must be seen, therefore, as an ethical requirement that aims, in the final instance, to establish in reality the *practical* conditions of a research on interculturality.

d) **Narratives & stories:** If intercultural dialogue is to become real interpersonal dialogue, stories and narratives should be an integral part of its discourse. This means that interculturality is a continuous negotiation and re-negotiation of the multiple and mutual moments of co-existence.

Methodology

My work was and remains based on a pluralist perspective of cultural diversity. As it happens, this has gone with a challenge of the continuing legacy of moral monism in the contemporary process of knowledge-making. Although I have not developed this theory explicitly in my writings, certain central facets of it are obvious. For me, cultural pluralism is a necessary precondition of living in a properly self-conscious, self-assessed way that helps us to gain a critical distance from our initial cultural embeddedness. Consequently, my theoretical attempt has been to overcome difficulties such as the accepted boundaries between 'us' and 'them', while rejecting epistemological monism. What forms the substructure of such epistemological monism is the theoretical presupposition of a unitary human culture, with which the possibility of a universal ideal of human development is also given. I came, therefore, to the conclusion that there is not only a plurality of cultures, but also a plurality of knowledge that makes any mono-cultural temperament and attitude biased. Therefore, a point of departure for an intercultural research project would be a plurality of worldviews that are not hermetically closed. As Isaiah Berlin points out clearly, "Life may be seen through many windows, none of them necessarily clear or opaque, less or more distorting than any of the others." Changing the knowledge spaces and contact zones between worldviews that are already informed, shaped and constrained by existing textual practices that constitute a particular, and highly contingent, field of power relations. Thus, instead of speaking of 'modernity' in the singular, we should better speak of 'modernity' in plural. If this perspective of diversity in unity of modernity is right, then we can see to what extent a Eurocentric model of modernity is condemned to fail in a multicultural world where a will to modernize is always accompanied by a call to difference. Intercultural knowledge-making suggests a level of 'epistemic humility' as the grounds for political and ethical intercultural projects. That is to say, dialogue is a reciprocal relation to the ethical as a way of relating to truthfulness. Dialogue is, hence, a hermeneutic act of remaining true to the ethical, while engaging oneself to perceive the spirit of the other in a threefold perspective of mutuality, solidarity and hospitality. Valuing hospitality, mutuality and solidarity could well act as a necessary antidote to the endemic fears that are the result of the misperception, misunderstanding

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and stereotyping of the Other. As ethical categories, solidarity, mutuality and hospitality embody a dialogical function, but also extend the hand of friendship to others as an extension to the spirit which moves within them. As such, any dialogue starts with a spiritual effort of openness in the midst of ethnic diversity and cultural plurality. The protection of diversity cannot be effective unless the threats of ignorance and rejection of the Other are warded off. Indeed, perpetuating harmful stereotypes against others has always blocked paths of dialogue in the history of mankind. Stereotypes are engines that drive intolerances. They proceed from the inexperience of the world and from underestimating other cultures and civilizations. This matter has been a perennial source of debate since its conception. It touches all the cultures which base their judgment of others on a minimal or limited knowledge of them. Stereotypes are created when cultures look at each other without really observing and understanding each other. It is interesting that though people have been discussing prejudice for centuries, they continue to type and stereotype each other. They continue to perceive others not as different, but as inferior in their capacity for learning, making decisions and governing themselves. The devaluation of the Other has always created a sense of security for nations that remedies the fears brought by domestic violence and chaos. By externalizing an evil to another race, culture or religion, one "purifies" oneself by declaring the Other "impure". The responsibility of the evil is projected on another culture. The Other, therefore, is perceived as a threat and as a potential enemy, who can be harmful for the communal unity of the nation. As the image of the enemy develops, the Other is progressively dehumanized. All this can progress to the point where the enemy is perceived as literally demonic and as the incarnation of the evil. However, the image of the enemy tends to impoverish a nation's own self-identity in that it is tempted to define itself primarily as the opposite of its enemy. That is, the image encourages monolithic rigidity, lacking in depth and complexity. As such, a universal feature of the enemy image is the necessity of violence against the enemy. By projecting the blame for one's responsibilities on the enemy, one protects its own self-esteem from the errors and injustices that it has made. Therefore, the enemy phenomenon is a powerful excuse for not keeping in with reality. But the image of the enemy is not only very dangerous for dialogue between cultures, it also leads to highly negative consequences for the national life of cultures. Therefore, transcending the image of the enemy inevitably requires rising to a new level of thinking and acting toward the other cultures. Once such a mode of thinking has been created, there will be a desire to see everything in a light which will reinforce dialogue. Dialogue opens the minds and ends resistance to change in cultures. But it also extends the scope of the debate on the idea of "culture" itself. Dialogical understanding as the true matrix of hermeneutical encounter always generates a logic of on-going differentiation and negotiation that seeks to authorize a new approach to the phenomenon of civilization as a process of human self-consciousness. That is to say, there can be no phenomenological process of civilization-making without a strong presence of caring for and sharing with other human beings as citizens of human history. However, the claim that dialogical citizenship rests on the authority of tradition in general denies the possibility of critical self-reflection and its ability to break with the dogmatic elements in every tradition of thought which works against any effort of dialogue. I should add that the hermeneutical understanding of traditions (both religious and cultural), inscribed in a phenomenology of dialogue,

contributes to the discovery of a common voice in different traditions of thinking. Therefore, even in a closed and dogmatic society where citizens are discriminated and divided, there is still a space for dialogue which could be strengthened in the absence of a culture of dialogue, by giving voice to elements of solidarity and togetherness which underlie the civic life of each tradition. As such, what can make this state of interconnectedness authentic and practical is neither the work of rationality, nor our use of language, but an empathetic perception of togetherness. In other words, the feeling of empathy is necessarily a matter of sharing life with others. It is the recognition of the fact that in the context of human life, certain others are similar to us as humans, though different from us as members of another tradition of thought. We can see from this that living in a tradition of thought is accompanied automatically with a sense of shared values with other members of the same community, but it has also to do with what we might call a universal impulse, in the sense that its orientation toward its own life experience is based on the understanding of other communities as different experiences of the same shared life. This idea of shared life binds members of different communities together in various ways, though this binding is not the result of a recognition that other communities and cultures are, or must be like each other. But it goes without saying that our situatedness in a specific culture or tradition is indistinguishable from an effort to subsume one's individual history into a common history of humanity. This common history stands before us as our common destiny, and through its presence our shared fate is called forth, put into play, discussed and revised. Through this give-and-take, something comes into being that had not existed before, and that exists as a result of this shared destiny. It is the coming- into-history of a human destiny that is common to us. We can say, then, that the discovery of a common fate is a productive result of the dialogical process of cultures and traditions. Each culture discovers itself in the other cultures, and the other cultures in itself by seeing at the same time something common and something distinct. As such, a sense of solidarity is created, not only because of the awareness of similarities, but also because of the dissimilarities and differences that exist between human cultures. In fact, dissimilarities potentially bring every culture to an awareness of solidarity with other cultures. This awareness is not only based on knowledge of the Other, but also on a reciprocal empathy. Dialogue with the Other is a dialogue with the self. In other words, every culture sees the other culture as an event and an openness. The presence of the other culture is vital for creating new possibilities, and so a new perspective of truth is brought into being by encounters with the other cultures. Therefore, each culture can serve as a corrective to the other cultures. The solidarity that emerges from a dialogue of cultures will always be accompanied with a perspective of a shared life and what we have in common as humans.

Originality and contribution of intercultural research

A pluralistic conception of modernity implies a plural conception of globality based on difference of traditions and diversity of cultures. As such, intercultural citizenship is a different name for the interchange of opinions among different cultural actors. It is this interchange that promotes plurality and human solidarity. The basis for genuine interculturality, in which both cultural and individual identity is enhanced rather than

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threatened, is a recognition of the need for, and value of 'living together'. At this level, intercultural dialogue has the nature of an ethical imperative guided by the value of the reception of the other as a reality with whom one desires to share sovereignty, and with whom, consequently, one can share a future. Without doubt, the process of intercultural research helps us to discover a considerable common ground of shared values and principles. I myself have been involved in intercultural initiatives in the Indian Subcontinent, the Middle East and Europe, and the outcomes have been very fruitful. Not only is it an educative means of eradicating stereotypes, it is also an effective action in order to promote shared values. But sharing core values in a plural world does not mean necessarily abolishing the particularistic values of nations. Much of the discussion on interculturality would go profoundly wrong when we distinguish cultures as 'liberal' and 'non-liberal'. This means that democratic cohesion needs to be built on a foundation of cultural diversity and intercultural knowledge empowerment. Moreover, to argue for intercultural democratic thinking, one needs to take as the guiding thread a renewed analysis of democratic decision-making and its promise for a peaceful and sustainable future as a form of global maturity. Such a maturity should serve as a dual pivot: first, as a mechanism for linking a planetary consciousness with different socio-cultural actors and their democratic demands and expectations, and second, as a mechanism for strengthening a new political culture of reciprocity and responsibility which extends to the whole of humanity. It is important that we examine this new culture of responsibility as another dimension of human reflective awareness which points to what Jurgen Habermas calls "the thrust toward moral universalism".[2] There has been a tendency, especially in the past 20 years, to see Western liberal democratic theory as a sort of ethical absolute, capable of providing the only normative framework within which problems may be dealt with and managed. This has been conspicuous in the recent wars against the Taliban government in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq. One can object to this tendency in that it ends up turning democracy into a fundamentalist ideology. Thus, it risks rebuilding a wall of mistrust between a "democratic" West and a "non-democratic" East. One point must be made clear beforehand. There is no such thing as a democratic DNA which is possessed by Western nations and not by others. As such, it makes more sense to talk about democratic passion instead of neatly dividing societies into democracies and non-democracies. Surprisingly, what the recent popular uprisings around the Middle East revealed to us is that the democratization process takes place at the level of civic actors, and not states. An effective dialogue of cultures is, therefore, an enriching and fruitful exploration of worldviews which defines a new democratic thought. As such, transforming a culture of irresponsibility into a culture of responsibility will help to take it out of a form of self-isolation or of aggressive self-assertion at the expense of the surrounding world. This means the more demanding task of providing empathy and compassion, and accepting the agency of other cultures and traditions of thought. That is to say, only an open-ended, hospitable and empathetic dialogue which takes otherness (Fremdheit) seriously could be a genuine civilizational encounter. By "civilization" we do not mean progress in science, technology and industry, but a moral enterprise which shows to us the path of being human. Today, in a time when mankind is confronted with a grim scenario involving clashes of national self-interest, religious fundamentalism and ethnic and racial prejudice, dialogue of cultures can be a well-trusted means of laying the groundwork for a new intercultural

2. Habermas, Jurgen: Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy, traducción al inglés de William Rehg, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998, p.243

community. I sincerely believe that by promoting a better understanding of the Other and by drawing on the best in human cultures, dialogue of cultures could help generate fresh bursts of creativity in human societies. Looking to the Other is an ongoing process of dialogue and receptive understanding through which we can hope to enunciate a global ethic of behavior for the community of humankind. Thus, the dialogue of cultures must take place within the deconstruction of that which justifies violence. Strengthening the culture of dialogue between cultures proves to be a most important element in combating the calamities of our world, in particular terrorism and religious fundamentalism. Because they both seek to make the diversity between nations the source of conflict, while dialogue between cultures can help make that same diversity the foundation for human solidarity. Since violence and intolerance begin in the minds of human beings, it is in the minds of human beings that the idea of shared values and human solidarity must be constructed. It is not because of our differences that suspicion and mistrust exists between the peoples of the world, but because we are more conscious of our differences, than aware of what makes us part of the human race. This is what happens when difference becomes a license to kill. Cultural differences do exist, they are real, not imagined and they are part of what makes the human race vibrant. The idea of a common heritage and shared universal values among cultures could not be more timely, for clearly we do not live in different civilizations in the way that our ancestors did. We live close together, as never before, beyond old barriers and faced with new realities. Universality and particularity are not mutually exclusive, they need to be balanced. But the truth is that despite our political and religious differences, we all have a common understanding of what it means to be a human being. In their deepest aspirations, all cultures and religions, whatever their differences, are looking towards the same reality, the reality whereby, according to Gandhi, "All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family, and each one of us is responsible for the misdeeds of all the others."[3] Today this is the ethical foundation upon which a viable human civilization could be built. Because no one culture is capable of explaining all of reality, since each culture is only a particular interpretation of reality which is conditioned by the social and historical context. But to understand the unity of mankind requires that we think of the paradigm of interculturality as the *conditio sine qua non* of the variety and variations of our world.

Universality and particularity are not mutually exclusive, they need to be balanced

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INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND CINEMA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE REPRESENTATION OF ISLAM IN HOLLYWOOD AND BOLLYWOOD

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Hollywood, Islam, terrorism and stereotyping

An extensive review of literature shows that there exists a remarkable uniformity among scholars, analysts and critics regarding how Hollywood portrays Islam and Islamic terrorism. Thus, in order not to reinvent the wheel, specific case studies have not been taken from Hollywood cinema and the conclusions have been drawn from a review of the literature instead. It is important to define what a stereotype is. In essence, stereotypes are sweeping statements or suppositions about a group whereby a defined set of characteristics is ascribed to that particular social group (Snyder and Tanke 1977, 656). It is easy to construct stereotypes when there is an apparent and consistent trait that can effortlessly be identified. That's the reason why people of color, police, women, gays and terrorists are so easily stereotyped (Banaji and Hadin 1996, 136).

After understanding the concept of stereotyping, it is interesting to note how Hollywood, since its inception, has been stereotyping Arabs and Muslims in general and Islamic terrorists in particular. It is particularly notable that it is not a phenomenon that took place after the horrendous events of 9/11. However, it is true that the depiction of Muslims got even worse after the attacks of 9/11. Shaheen, the most respected authority on the portrayal of Muslims in Hollywood cinema, after analyzing over 900 films, writes:

He is what he has always been –the cultural "other." Seen through Hollywood's distorted lenses, Arabs look different and threatening. Projected along racial and religious lines, the stereotypes are deeply ingrained in American cinema. From 1896 until today, filmmakers have collectively indicted all Arabs as Public Enemy #1 –brutal, heartless, uncivilized religious fanatics and money-mad cultural "others" bent on terrorizing civilized Westerners, especially Christians and Jews. Much has happened since 1896– women's suffrage, the Great Depression, the civil rights movement, two world wars, the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf wars, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Throughout it all, Hollywood's caricature of the Arab has prowled the silver screen. He is there to this day– repulsive and unrepresentative as ever. What is an Arab? In countless films, Hollywood

alleges the answer: Arabs are brute murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women (Shaheen 2003, 172).

Simons (1996) argues that Hollywood has always been vilifying Arabs and Muslims. He analyzes films like *The Sheikh* (1921), *The Son of Sheikh*(1926), *Song of Love* (1923), *Café in Cairo* (1924), *A Son of Sahara* (1924), *The Desert Bride* (1928), and posits that these films represented Arab characters as thieves, charlatans, murderers, and brutes.

Similarly, Boggs and Pollard (2006), critically analyze *Delta Force, Frantic* (1998), *Navy Seals* (1990), *American Ninja 4*: *The Annihilation* (1991), *Patriot Games* (1992), *Chain of Command* (1993), *True Lies* (1994), *Under Siege 2* (1995), *The Rock* (1995), *Die Hard with a Vengeance* (1995), *Executive Decision* (1996), *GI Jane* (1997), *Air Force One* (1997), *The Peacemaker* (1997), *The Siege* (1998) and *The Sum of All Fears* (2002), and conclude:

In these films, as mentioned earlier, the demonized Other appears as a monolithic culture of thuggish male warriors who relish violence, directed mostly against innocent civilians, and who lack motives beyond hatred and jealousy. Despite their lack of intellectual sophistication and political strategy, however, such warriors are depicted as a grave threat to the very foundations of civilized society. As an FBI agent states in *The Sum of All Fears*, "These Arabs are attacking our way of life", a sentiment that increasingly permeates the film industry and political system, especially after 9/11…..Violent political encounters never occur in a vacuum, but such a vacuum is precisely what nowadays defines Hollywood cinema…… Widespread legitimate public fear of real-life terrorism enables the media to sensationalize one of the greatest symbols of modern barbarism through visual constructions of savage Others bringing death and destruction to innocent populations for no reason beyond their own pathological disorders. The terrorist personality is nihilistic, a trait typical of deranged serial killers and mass murderers. Within media culture sinister enemies of civilization lurk everywhere….. In other words, the new terrorist personality is distinct from anything that went before it, so utterly sui generis and irrational as to defy historical or even psychological analysis.

Vilification of Islamic terrorists became even more pronounced after the events of 9/11. Dana (2009), in her innovative study, makes a content analysis of films released five years prior to 9/11 and five years later and using quantitative methods comes to some interesting conclusions. This study found that Middle Eastern characters in post-9/11 films were darker-skinned, more likely to wear traditional (non-Western) clothing, less intelligent, and more likely to commit acts of terrorism than their pre-9/11 counterparts. If one were to construct a new composite character based on these four attributes, one might end up with something similar to the "villain" character type identified by Shaheen. Even before 9/11, Shaheen had pointed out that these types of characters tended to be terrorists and/or "buffoons, stumbling all over themselves. Dark skin and foreign-looking clothing might be used as subtle indicators to an audience that this character is different and not to be trusted. The lower intelligence of the post-9/11 characters might point to a desire on the part of the Hollywood studios to diminish the perceived real-life threat posed by this ethnic group, while still maintaining them as a useful villain.

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Thus, a review of the literature suggests that Hollywood, since the very beginning has been stereotyping Arabs and Muslims as nihilistic, less intelligent and irrational, who wish to attack the so called 'American way of life', and they deserve to be massacred by an ultra-masculine, patriotic and white male. After 9/11, these depictions became even worse and the ultimate stereotype of the Islamic terrorist is that he is so irrational that his personality is close to that of an unhinged serial killer and it is not possible to have a rational dialogue with him. The only solution is to kill him mercilessly in the end.

Islam, terrorism and Bollywood

India has been one of the biggest sufferers of Islamic terrorism over the last 20 years. Bollywood has found this theme very attractive and many movies have been made on the issue of Islamic terror. This paper undertakes the case studies of three movies –*Mission Kashmir* (2000), *Fana* (2006) and *New York* (2009). The justification for choosing these three movies is that they were part of mainstream cinema, had some of the biggest Bollywood stars and the story in all three films unfolds from the terrorist's point of view. This selection could be considered biased because in these films the storyline depicts the perspective of terrorists. But this is precisely the point here. Hollywood is not even willing to consider that instead of being a deranged killer or psychopath, a terrorist may also have a perspective. The basic methodologies used for the content analysis of these films are referred to as Semiotics Analysis and Discourse Analysis in the field of film theory.

In *Mission Kashmir*, the hero becomes a terrorist in order to avenge the killing of his family by the police. But in the end, he realizes that his boss has the evil plan of creating Hindu-Muslim riots. He helps the police in foiling the plot. In *Fana*, the hero, who is a terrorist, falls in love with a blind girl and after many twists and turns, reunites with her when she has gained her eyesight and is living with their son. In the end, the hero is shot dead by the heroine and dies in her lap saying that now he is not scared at all. He conveys that she has done the right thing by killing him before he could make a terrorist attack. In *New York*, the hero is a Muslim, who is arrested by the FBI on suspicion of being a terrorist. He is denied the right to consult his lawyer and kept caged like an animal. The torture meted out to him makes him a terrorist and, at the climax, when he is about to blow up the headquarters of the FBI, he realizes that his wife is also in the building. Instead of going ahead with his plan, he prefers to get shot and die in order to save his wife.

In all of these films, the hero playing the role of the terrorist is extremely good-looking, does not sport a beard and is always smartly dressed in modern clothing instead of salwar kameez (an Islamic dress), which is at complete variance with the depiction of a terrorist in Hollywood. In *Fana*, the hero has a great sense of both humor and philosophy. In *New York*, the hero is so good-looking that during a love-making scene the camera pans more on his body than that of the heroine.

Another marked difference from Hollywood is that in *Mission Kashmir* and *New York*, there is a strong justification for the hero's adoption of the path of terrorism. The coded message is that terrorists do not emerge from a

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vacuum, and that every terrorist has a past. If his past could be understood, then it is possible to reform him, because he is also a rational and intelligent human being, instead of a demon whose only well-deserved end is extermination by an ultra-masculine and patriotic hero. For example, in *Mission Kashmir*, the hero tells the heroine, "It is so strange that after 10 years you are sitting with me but I can't feel anything, there is beauty all around but I can't see anything. I can see only flying smoke, flying bullets and corpses." This dialogue signifies that he has lost the capacity to feel anything and gone numb inside because of the butchering of his family. As a matter of fact, had the director overplayed his hand, *Mission Kashmir* would have ended up justifying terrorism. But a fine balance has been maintained in contextualizing the terrorism without justifying it. The family which had adopted the hero as a child had a Muslim husband and Hindu wife, both practicing their respective religions with ease and without making any fuss about it. The message is that Islam can coexist peacefully with other religions.

In *Fana*, the hero is depicted as extremely intelligent. A police officer, while giving a presentation about him to intelligence officials, says "Rehaan has metamorphosed IKF from salwar kameez-wearing, kajal-filled-eyed terrorists to a professionally-run organization which is not less competent than the CIA, Mossad and RAW. Rehaan has made gruesome-faced and bloody-eyed terrorists obsolete. He is a thinker and a planner." Another quality of the hero of *Fana* is that he has a remarkable sense of humor, a trait which has never been associated with any terrorist depicted in Hollywood. For example he recites a couplet, "When I could not quench my thirst with water, I walked towards a bar. I thought I should complain about my beloved to God since she has given me an unquenchable thirst, but alas I came to know that God is also in love with her." Apart from being humorous, this couplet is also sacrilegious which shows that a terrorist by definition does not have to be a religious fanatic. In *Fana*, romantic as well as emotional scenes take place with the Islamic monuments of Delhi in the backdrop. Islamic art, culture and architecture are depicted in their full glory, thus portraying Islam as a splendid, powerful and benign religion. The national monuments of Delhi are also interspersed with full splendor, in order to convey that Islam is not a foreign religion for India but is very much a part of the Indian ethos.

New York was the opening film at the Cairo International Film Festival and went on to become a huge hit in Middle East countries. This deeply disturbing film portrayed the transformation of a well-settled and adjusted Muslim man into a terrorist without any kind of Islamic baggage. *New York*'s most unusual aspect is that the Muslim identity is just incidental to the character of the hero. As the story progresses, the viewer realizes that anyone who suffered such indignities would be justifiably angry. Yet the film does not justify terrorism. Roshan, a police officer, emphatically says that nothing justifies terrorism. Especially the ending of the film gives the message that there is a need for Muslims to move beyond the aftershocks of 9/11, and that there is a space for them in modern American society. New York is probably the first film to portray the torture in places like Guantanamo Bay in graphic detail. In a documentary-styled scene, a character recounting his experience in the torture camp says, "In the detention, they used to beat us. They used to force us to stand naked. They would handcuff us from the roof and leave us for forty hours. They would urinate on our faces. They wouldn't let us use the toilets. If we felt like using the toilet we had to piss and shit in our pants only. They would

abuse us saying your mother and sister are whores. They would tie a dog collar on our neck and pull us." After having gone through such animal-like torture at the hands of the FBI, the hero says (very much like the hero of *Mission Kashmir*) "I tried my best but I was dead from inside. I could not remember routine things, could not concentrate on anything. My tongue slurred when I tried to talk. I couldn't understand what to do. The world of terrorists was entirely different. Their motives were different but they were giving me a chance for reclaiming my lost honor."

All three films, without justifying terrorism, provide a context for the so called irrational behavior of terrorists and try to answer the clichéd question –why do they hate us? By using the example of *Fana* and *New York*, many scholars have contended that according to Bollywood, the only good Muslim is a dead Muslim (Khan 2009). These scholars fail to realize that in Hindi cinema a dying hero is a sure-shot formula for success. Some of the legendary actors of Bollywood, like Amitabh Bachchan, Rajesh Khanna and Dilp Kumar, attained their iconic status by repeatedly dying in their various films. Khan (2009) has also argued, using the example of *Fana*, that Muslims are depicted as hyper-sexualized in Bollywood. But again, such scholars need to understand that if the hero of *Fana* is compared to the heroes of other films, he appears positively under-sexualized.

Thus, the case studies of *Mission Kashmir*, *Fana* and *New York* conclude that Islam is presented as a benign religion that can peacefully coexist with other religions. Every terrorist has a past and his acts have a context. If his past and context could be understood then it would be possible to bring him back into the social mainstream. In complete contrast to Hollywood, in Hindi cinema, a terrorist is portrayed as extremely intelligent and usually very good-looking, someone who dresses smartly and respects women.

Tracing causality: Why Bollywood's portrayal of terrorists is different

This section traces causes why, in spite of the fact that India has been one of the biggest victims of Islamic terror, Bollywood portrays terrorists with sensitivity, without Islamic baggage and without attempting to depict the terrorist as the cultural 'Other', as Hollywood does in most of its movies. He is shown to be very much a part of the mainstream, albeit as someone who has lost his way and is to be brought back into the mainstream or domesticated by female characters. The acts of terrorism are almost always contextualized and there is a strong justification why a sensible and normal human being adopted the heinous path of terrorism.

There are a few subtle and not so subtle reasons behind this. Bollywood as an industry has somewhat always been dominated by Muslims. Some of the best known actors, directors, producers, technicians, writers and film critics are Muslims (CNN 2010). This phenomenon has no parallel in Hollywood. Naturally, an industry dominated or at least co-habited by Muslims will not portray Islam in a bad light or the Islamic terrorist without the context behind his adoption of the path of terrorism.

Bollywood's stars are famous for their secularism in their personal and professional lives. For example, Shahrukh Khan, the biggest star actor of Bollywood, is married to a Hindu and celebrates Diwali (a Hindu festival)

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Bollywood portrays terrorists with sensitivity, without Islamic baggage and without attempting to depict the terrorist as the cultural 'Other', as Hollywood does in most of its movies

with great aplomb (Rediff 2007). Salman Khan, another Muslim actor invited the wrath of Islamic clerics when he celebrated Ganapati Puja, another Hindu festival which is extremely popular in Mumbai (Times of India 2007). Hritik Roshan, hero of *Mission Kashmir*, is married to a Muslim. These are just a few selected examples. There are many similar cases in the Indian film fraternity. Given this scenario, obviously Bollywood's approach and understanding of Islam is much better than Hollywood's.

A typical Hollywood film is usually just one-and-half hours long, while a typical Bollywood film is around two and half hours long. Thus sheer lack of time in a Hollywood film may be responsible for not having the opportunity to contextualize the act of terror. On the other hand, there is plenty of time available in a Bollywood film, so that the director can explore the underlying psychological causes behind terrorism and establish a terrorist as a flesh-and-blood character instead of just demonizing him and establishing him as a cultural 'Other' like in a typical Hollywood film.

The Indian constitution accords great respect to the right to free expression. Yet, it is the only constitution in the world that places many restrictions on this right. Defaming any religion is a clear ground for curtailing freedom of expression. Therefore movie makers are completely aware that if they make a film that defames any religion, the Censor Board for Film Certification would never pass it and they will not be able to fight it out in court because the constitution itself places restrictions on freedom of expression. Incidentally, there is no censor board in Hollywood, so filmmakers feel absolutely free to depict whatever they want. But in India the censor board works as a filter and before releasing a film for public viewing cuts any scene which may be objectionable to any religion.

There are approximately 160.9 million Muslims in India, which is the third largest Muslim population in any country. These Muslims are as avid movie-goers as any other community of India. Obviously, Bollywood, driven by commercial motives, would not want to make any movie that would alienate such a large number of potential viewers. Apart from this, Bollywood has smartly exploited the dislike for Hollywood cinema in the Muslim world. Hindi films are extremely popular in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, UAE and other Muslim countries. The Indian film industry also targets the Muslim population of the US, the UK and other western countries. Naturally, Bollywood is unwilling to depict Islam as a malign religion and portray a terrorist without the context.

The Indian government has always been conscious of Bollywood's role in nation-building. During the decades of 1950s and 1960s, the project of nation-building was ably supported by Bollywood. The Indian political elite are very much aware that India cannot survive as a functioning democracy if its biggest minority turns against it. Now Indian politicians have also recognized the soft power of Bollywood. The collective result of all these factors is that the Indian government goes out of its way to promote cinema that preaches religious understanding. The makers and actors of such films are accorded the highest civilian awards and are even nominated for the Council of States, which is the upper chamber of the Indian parliament. Consequently, Indian film makers are directly encouraged to make films that portray Islam as a benign religion and terrorists with a heart of gold. This is not a satirical comment, since in all the case studies, terrorists have been depicted as very good human beings.

Conclusion

The US has been spending billions of dollars in public diplomacy campaigns in order to win the 'hearts and minds' of Muslim people. Hollywood's portrayal of Islam as a malignant religion is a major hindrance in achieving this target. In this respect, Hollywood can learn a lot from Bollywood. In spite of being one of the biggest victims of Islamic terrorism, Bollywood has rightly refused to equate Islam with terrorism and thus given the message that Islam can peacefully coexist with other religions and nobody becomes a terrorist out of choice. If Hollywood does not understand these basic realities, maybe the US and the western world will be asking the clichéd question forever: why do they hate us?

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PANEL IV
PATHS OF CULTURE
AND INCULTURE?

- KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE, AGENTS OF BARBARISM?

  Gonçal Mayos Solsona

- THE 'OTHER' AS A THREAT: BEYOND THE 1994 RWANDA GENOCIDE

  David Ngendo Tshimba

- AN ARTS COUNCIL: WHAT FOR? AN HISTORICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC REVIEW OF THE ARM'S LENGTH PRINCIPLE FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE INTERNATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

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- THE VISIBILITY OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON THE INTERNET

  Yanko Moyano Díaz

KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE, AGENTS OF BARBARISM?

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The dominant issue for our fourth panel was clearly anticipated by Walter Benjamin, though in many senses it has grown to become one of the greatest paradoxes of our time. At the end of section VII of *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Benjamin (1971: 81) warned that "without exception the cultural treasures [...] have an origin which he [the historian] cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism".

Benjamin points radically to the surprisingly easy way in which knowledge and culture are turned into agents of barbarism. He goes beyond the cruel subordination and tragic subjection of those who, through their anonymous sacrifice, made possible the great successes recorded in history. As Bertolt Brecht ironically notes (1976: 88s): "Every page a victory. / Who cooked the feast for the victors? / Every 10 years a great man. / Who paid the bill?"

That terribly easy feedback between culture and ignorance, between knowledge and barbarism, has become strongly emphasised in today's post-industrial knowledge society. While it is true that we have not often achieved the drama and cruelty of other ages, that does not make the need to reflect upon it any less dangerous or pressing. Indeed, the banal way in which certain new forms of barbarism are presented overemphasize its widespread, deep-seated and definitive effects. I will now proceed to analyse some of the mechanisms by which barbarism makes use of cognitive and cultural forms today, and I will note some of the challenges they present for humanity.

A knowledge (and a power) that is not innocent

More than any other society, the post-industrial version is based on the enormous potentiality of knowledge. As never before, it entrenches socially Francis Bacon's maxim "knowledge is power". Knowledge (we assume) will build a fairer, more human society than the ones based on

military might and economic pillaging. However, unfortunately, we can see that the latter can still be implemented (through new means, as Clausewitz said) in the "knowledge society".

In short, the fact that knowledge has been turned into the most powerful, effective productive sector does not necessarily put an end to its nefarious effects and uses. There are even worrying signs that its role as an agent of ignorance and barbarism could increase. Though such an interpretation might outrageous, it should not surprise us if we consider Benjamin and everything that has happened since his death.

<div style="color: #a61b5a; font-size: larger;">The fact that knowledge has been turned into the most powerful, effective productive sector does not necessarily put an end to its nefarious effects and uses</div>

I will present a few arguments that stress the negative side of today's knowledge society. Later on, I will be analysing the cultural roots of genocide and the most violent conflicts, in addition to presenting a few ideas on how to re-channel them. Right now I will consider the growing difficulties experienced by cultures to survive and interact positively in the face of the dominance of the "*pensée unique*" (Ignacio Ramonet, 1995) that is being exuded by the post-industrial society. Certainly, in continuity with all of modernity, this seems to bolster only the most instrumental and (at best) productivist version of the many possibilities and types of knowledge of which humanity is capable. In short, this *type of knowledge* or *culture* (which has become *unique* or, at least, dominant) displaces, negates and tends to eliminate all the other types of knowledge and culture.

Many claim that it does so innocently through its own success and virtues, but many more highlight the powerful interests and political pressures that are behind it. I cannot go into depth here on the causes of the increasing predominance of the *pensée unique*, but it has a clear link with what is called the "Washington Consensus" (John Williamson, 1989; Mayos, 2011b[1]). It also radicalises the colonial tendency to favour a few metropolitan cultures to the detriment of others that have been colonised, minoritised, or even exterminated.

Paradoxically, this began in the 16th century, underpinned by viewpoints (such as Messianism, ethnocentrism and racism) that were present in the complex European cultural tradition, from humanism to the Enlightenment, and which, in turn, were opposed to their finest ideals. Today, though the worst imperial urges have apparently been overcome, the great reduction experienced in desirable knowledge (*pensée unique*) is endangering the promise of cultural emancipation, liberty and justice that has existed since humanism and the Enlightenment. Thus we can easily lose our way towards dark paths of barbarism which, however, are concealed behind powerful knowledge, the growing information flows and a society that is increasingly interrelated and intercommunicated, but also increasingly less able to understand, and to understand itself. As I have already stated: culture as its own enemy and a source of barbarism and ignorance.

Reduction of cultural wealth in globalisation

The knowledge society is being imposed globally at a rapid rate in such a way that international competitiveness is being concentrated into whom and how the new post-industrial demands are embodied. Certainly, this

brings great economic and technological profits to the victors, even with significant consequences regarding military dominance.

Clearly, this also entails very considerable inconveniences for those who are defeated by today's post-industrial globalisation. Not only because they are left lagging behind but also subjected to the rapid obsolescence and impossibility of maintaining their cultures and ways of life. That is, they not only lose the race (in which, of course, many had no wish to compete), they also lose the chance to maintain the way of life they have led until now.

In this double defeat, the fate that is imposed upon them is very similar to the following: owing to their initial conditions, it would be hard for them to win the technology-knowledge race of post-industrial capitalism but, if by some chance they did win, they would also lose their own way of life. And if they refuse to participate in such an unfair race, the globalisation of the winners inevitably leads them to lose this way of life over the medium-term future (in addition to many other costs). They are involved, whether they like it or not, in a race that they will always lose; because even if they win it, they lose their own way of life, and then, they lose twice over.

This terrible dialectic is happening because our age is increasingly being constructed by globalisation (led by post-industrial societies) which inevitably imposes itself on all the other countries, including those that are (to simplify) preindustrial. It's a kind of turbo-globalisation (Mayos, 2011b) that is being imposed everywhere, reducing the Earth to a kind of monad without any gaps (Mayos, 2011b) and interconnected at an increasing pace by information and communication technologies (ICTs).

As many European countries are experiencing with the post-2008 financial-economic crisis, it is by no means sure that today's post-industrial societies are going to *win* this globalising race. But it is almost definite that –if there are no other corrective mechanisms to mediate the situation– non-industrialised societies, with their already highly relative independence, are going to *lose* it.

The current crisis shows that the pressure of turbo-globalisation could break up (or at least, call into question) the old international hierarchies. Even the United States does not seem to have its world dominance assured over the medium to long term. However, behind this changing international scenario that is threatening the imperial dreams of the old metropolises, most countries seem to be doomed to the aforementioned double defeat, an event that will accentuate still further their subordination, dependence and plundering. Theoretically speaking, they would not be colonies, but they would continue in a state of subordination, and sacrifice the last bastions of their cultures and ways of life.

Indeed, and at the dawn of the second decade of the 21st century, the dominant turbo-globalisation cannot yet be called complete, *unique* or total. It is still multiple (Berger *et al*., 2002) geopolitically and culturally speaking. As Huntington (1995) suggests, in the great regions or world *civilisations*, various alternative *modernisation* projects continue to exist which show certain internal levels of globalisation that are much higher to those achieved by other *civilisations*.

The current crisis shows that the pressure of turbo-globalisation could break up (or at least, call into question) the old international hierarchies

It is also a partial globalisation (and it will not always be for its own good) because some areas are not yet globalised. Putting it simply, the current model of globalisation is more accentuated (I prefer not to use the term "advanced") in the fields of finance, technology, economy, military and in their respective para-global risks (i.e. epidemics, environmental, crisis contagion). We could say that in these fields, monadic turbo-globalisation is almost total, and is provoking huge new risks. To the extent that Ulrich Beck (2007: 16) claimed: "The key institutions of modernity such as science, business and politics, which are, supposedly, the guarantors of rationality and security, are being confronted with situations in which their apparatus have no value [...] These institutions are no longer viewed solely as instruments of risk *management*, but also as *sources* of risk".

In contrast, globalisation is still anaemic and very incipient (though not absent) in the social and political aspects of world governance or, at least, of minimally effective international organisation. Also in relation to the very necessary convergence with respect to the possibilities of education, health, quality of life and civil rights, etc. (Mayos, 2011b). Finally, in aspects such as the population circulation, migrations, etc., today's globalisation creates a particularly negative scenario, where obvious improvements in transport only seem to entail more conflict, a renewed inconvenience and an increase in exclusions.

Imposing a "pensée unique"

As we can see, the current turbo-globalisation –increasingly monadic though still multiple– breaks down the *natural* distances, hierarchies and borders of yesteryear and, furthermore, creates a very deep imbalance in the effective development achieved in the different fields. As a result, it causes major dysfunctions, crashes, splits, clashes and conflicts. One would expect that the *pensée unique* might conflict with them (Ramonet, 1995; Mayos, 2000), culminating in today's postindustrial knowledge society since its modern genesis. However, as Beck (2007: 16) had already foreseen before the 2008 crisis, this crisis has painfully highlighted the ultimate inefficiency of the traditional political mechanisms to control –or at least, effectively determine– the financial and economic markets.

However, the *pensée unique* is more powerful today than it was pre-2008. The Washington Consensus is no longer just the dominant conception (to the extent of showing few signs of self-criticism) among the governments of the West, the big international institutions (UN, IMF, WB, WTO, etc.), the loyal business schools and, in short, the circles closest to the *Davos culture*. It also includes international NGOs, much of the international *intelligentsia* and a great many members of the *Academy clubs* (Berger *et al*., 2002).

Significantly, following the outrage and surprise at the bursting of the sub-prime mortgages bubble and the financial speculation generated around it, even leaders such as Sarkozy (who cannot in any way be described as a revolutionary) solemnly proclaimed the need to reform capitalism if it could generate such crises. Nevertheless, we are now in 2012, and despite the massive bank collapses such as Lehman Brothers and the astronomical sums spent to save the western banking

system, this kind of reformist self-criticism has disappeared completely. Movements such as 15M and Occupy Wall Street are the tip of the iceberg of the indignation of citizens who are much more outraged, impoverished and scared than ever.

But this does not prevent the situation, on the contrary, it shows the strength of the imposition of the *pensée unique*, from which most of the institutions, media and experts are unable to disassociate themselves (though neither can they conceal their puzzlement and dissatisfaction). Naturally, while it is not possible to disassociate themselves from it, they will find it hard to agree to really important reforms and, furthermore, to generate alternative channels that might prevent the barbarism of saving the rich who caused the crisis by means of painful sacrifices made by the completely innocent broad majority.

As if confirming the remythifying dialectic uncovered by Horkheimer and Adorno in their human emancipatory dreams, the existing acritical *consensus* situates the "markets" as the ultimate oracle for understanding reality. Even in the worst economic crisis experienced by the western powers, they are subjected to the accelerated, deregulated and independentised markets, without even really aspiring to amend or direct them.

Indeed, the idea of empowering the population and democratic political institutions with respect to the economy and the markets is simply relinquished. To the contrary, there is a tendency to increase the backward movement of the political (and intentionally, in many elites and governments). The areas that are democratically controlled by the population and parliaments are increasingly giving ground to economics, which has been given up to pure dialectics. The deregulation processes for labour relations and financial flows, that were commenced by Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980s, seem almost timorous nowadays, as they have now been pushed forward to the point of making the welfare state impossible.

The saddest part is that this entire process is being executed on the basis of a few principles that are not only frequently unjustified, they have even shown how dangerous they can be in previous economic and social *crashes*. We are talking, in fact, about a minimal ideological framework which shapes the nucleus of this consensus or *pensée unique* that is predominant today, and to which governments surrender their populations without any "plan B" or much reflection or (it goes without saying) self-criticism.

Thus an infallible dogma has been created that – indeed – could represent good advice in post-industrial societies. It is the unanimous message that says that the only way to evade unemployment or minimise job insecurity is to concentrate all our personal efforts on the new pagan idol of the techno-scientific speciality and the ICTs. Without doubt, the diminishing of traditional industry's added value and profitability has forced societies and populations to promote everything to do with the knowledge, information and communication society. Indeed, today it is here that we find the greatest profits and productivities, but we forget that it is hard to predict the future, and that technological development is characterised by rapidly making obsolete products that shortly before had been the ones in the highest demand and had even been profitable[2].

Even in the worst economic crisis experienced by the western powers, they are subjected to the accelerated, deregulated and independentised markets, without even really aspiring to amend or direct them

2. Mike Davis (2006) includes, within the great "holocausts of the late Victorian era", the hand weavers of India, when they entered the market en masse but the fabric produced industrially in England was much cheaper. On another level, I have personally seen many people lose great opportunities through having opted for jobs that quickly became obsolete. Who still remembers today the millions of jobs that were predicted, for example, for card punchers or for operators of the first generations of computers?

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Some human costs

As we have seen, international economic competitiveness (and a certain apathy) has led governments to direct professional and even general education in this direction. In a parallel way, students and workers are also pushed toward these sectors in a massive process that is not in itself criticisable, but which is highly dangerous if accompanied by improvisation and forgetting. Firstly, because of the idea of foregoing any "plan B", since in the unsure, shifting terrain of historic forecasts, one cannot predict with absolute certainty what tomorrow's most productive sectors will be, nor the needs that will arise.

Secondly, interpreting in an over-reductive way the model of techno-scientific knowledge (which is, in fact, increasingly merely technical and limited to industrially-applied development), and the new information and communication technologies. Moreover, this model is fragmented and specialised to such an extent that the global perspective of what it really does is beginning to disappear again, as occurred previously, and paradigmatically, with the workers on the *Fordist* and *Taylorist* production lines

Thirdly, forgetting that, when societies lean too much toward one single solution (called "monoculture"), they lose their adaptive flexibility, with catastrophic consequences over the medium and long-term. In such cases, it is highly likely that in many sectors excessive concentrations take place that the markets cannot absorb, together with parallel gaps that are hard to fill because, among other reasons, of the lack of flexibility resulting from constricting the population, without any alternatives, in one single direction.

Among the absolutely acritical principles that define the anthropological side of the current consensus or *pensée unique*, there is one that stands out for the naive unanimity it arouses, and which lead to a marked anthropocentrism (Davidson *et al*., in Berger *et al*., 2002: 399 and s). It is even more notable for its intrinsic dangerousness and its incompatibility with virtually all traditional cultures (which it throws off balance very easily). It concerns presupposing egoistic individualism as being the great life force which, presumably, is structured in accordance with a rational calculation reduced to two totally opposing elements: future production (as the great cost and sole option) and consumption as the sole desire. In a forceful piece, Edward Luttwak (2000) dedicates separate chapters to the key points of modern-day turbo-capitalism: free trade as a form of ideology; protectionism as a form of sin; money as a form of religion and shopping as a form of therapy.

A division reduced to production as the sentence, and consumption as the only compensation. In this way, life itself is radically and inalienably divided up, as employment insecurity and the accelerated obsolescence of contracts prevents compensatory human and collective links from being formed. And so, class consciousness disappears, but also professional connections, and even the camaraderie of work. The citizen becomes completely isolated, without any kind of group feeling or community background.

It should come as no surprise that a radical reduction to the simple duality of production/consumption, and totally immersed in hyper-individualisation, should result in the failure of all community or collective commitment, as well as creating an imbalance in people that is almost impossible to heal, and which fuels a desperate search for help in self-help books or *new age* teaching, *coaching* or different therapies or, as a last resort, what are known as "PSI disciplines".

In this regard, it is important to understand the following paradox: even those sectors of advanced societies that are swimming in consumer abundance experience deep frustration and chronic anguish that can undermine their critical equilibrium. Tibor Scitovsky (1986) brilliantly predicted some of the mechanisms that explain such consequences, and more recently, Gilles Lipovetsky (2007) constructed his vision of hyper-individualistic advanced societies on this dialectic.

Culture, besides that knowledge?

We avoid the unjustified and gratuitous apocalypse which is a mistake, but we cannot negate the productive, economic and technological effects of the knowledge society. Nor (though they might be less obvious) its various social, political and cultural effects, because the post-industrial knowledge society decisively determines both individuals' life expectations and the vicissitudes of nations' political, economic and cultural hegemonies.

All this is undeniable, and has become particularly visible from the end of the Cold War up until the current economic-financial crisis. Beyond the cost of labour or of the need (or not) to cut back on the welfare state, knowledge is the path of culture and, for now, it is the principal key to hierarchisation in individuals and in states. In today's post-industrial knowledge societies, it is vitally important to succeed in the productivist, pragmaticist, techno-scientific model, as well as in that of the international financial game and the ICTs. As I have noted, it is here –for the present– that the big profits and added values are being produced.

Right now, it is pointless to deny such obvious facts, but this cognitive model does not incorporate nor do justice to all the complex human capacity to produce knowledge, nor does it satisfy all its *cultural* needs. We must ask, therefore, whether in the post-industrial knowledge society, does culture (in its broadest sense, as the sum of all human cognitive capacities) possess –and will it maintain– the same importance as it has done until the present?

We are plagued by many doubts in this respect, and the threat exists that, over the medium and long-term, the only cultures that will survive are the ones that can adapt themselves totally and in a disciplined manner to the strict productive, technological, financial and even communicative conditions that characterise the current knowledge society. Therefore, that restrictive version of knowledge that is today hegemonic is one of the most powerful dangers to cultures, and to the part of knowledge that is not limited to this hegemonic model, nor bend before it.

A new source of barbarism and ignorance is concealed within the *pensée unique*, as everything that does not fit in, or goes beyond its strict instrumental and productivist version of knowledge will find it hard to survive over the medium and long-term. It is a barbarism born (basically) from a cognitive victory, but which generates a kind of culture that, apart from being very simplistic and unilateral (Marcuse, 1991), crowds out and negates all the others.

This is the ignorance that the *pensée unique* threatened us with in today's turbo-globalisation, spurred on by the so-called Washington Consensus and the general panic over the crisis. Therefore, in spite of the highly unfair refinancing of the mortgage-finance bubble and the very painful cutbacks in the welfare state, it continues to block any critical reformulation of the existing economic model.

As a result of all this, the cognitive model that is imposed on post-industrial societies will be, over the medium-term, the most decisive factor not only for people and nations, classes and social groups, etc., but also for cultures and languages, the global environment and specific ecosystems. In short, and over the medium term, the knowledge society will be of key importance for all of humanity, for everything human. The planet and life as a whole depend today, to a great extent, on the decisions that humanity takes with respect to the full imposition of the *pensée unique*.

Thus we should ask ourselves: what will the cost be to the idea of culture? To what extent can it make it humanly unrecognisable? What risks does this radical reduction represent for humanity? What cultural paths will no longer be passable, and which paths will replace them? Will they be paths of culture or of ignorance? How can we guarantee that the future path of humanity will be a path of culture and not one of barbarism and ignorance?

Cultural empowerment: the medium

The only way to create a positive alternative regarding the previous issues is if humanity can effectively empower the key cultural points of today's society. Because only this effective and democratic empowerment can legitimise and give a certain rationality to the profound transformations which –on the basis of the above– appear to be looming over the existing cultures, and even over culture in general as we understand it today.

Right now, the cultural tends to be considered a mere product in the hands of the market, and is only valued according to its productive effect. It seems that no other perspective is being imposed, given the current state of the people's empowerment over their cultural bases. At present we are contemplating the minimisation of the political against the economic to the point that the democratic will of the people has much less effective power than the *markets*.

Some might think that with the aforementioned fears, we are limiting ourselves to the old educational ideal that goes from the Greek *paideia* to the German *Bildung*. But we are not in any way forgetting the

Right now, the cultural tends to be considered a mere product in the hands of the market, and is only valued according to its productive effect

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great contributions made by the society of the masses and its media, by the Internet society and its new technologies. To take a case in point, the Arab spring and the 15M movement and the *indignados* have all shown that ICTs can also be technologies for liberation. They enable new forms of mobilisation and social empowerment, and facilitate the move towards fairer, more democratic, horizontal, online (etc.) political and cultural institutionalisations. Such possibilities should not be scorned in the least.

Meanwhile, we also have to get over paralysing dichotomies such as opposing a *Kultur* that is interiorised and only lives in people's ideas, behaviours and minds, with an objectified *Zivilisation*, made out of technology and material infrastructures. We are becoming increasingly aware of the deficiencies of such dualisms and, in the debate between Panel IV, some interesting arguments were given for this.

For instance, David Tshimba shows us that ancient myths and ancient practices, under the colonial logic of *divide et impera,* can be kept alive in people's minds and social practices for decades, and that they can finally emerge with infinite violence and cruelty. On another level, Yanko Moyano –in line with Lakoff and Johnson (1999)– shows us how deeply *frames* (or mind-body frameworks) underlie political discourses and determine them decisively, both in the way they are produced and how they are received. Both analyses should be praised for their interdisciplinary focus and transversality, for their "macro" approach and because they tend to go beyond the dichotomies that oppose mind and body, culture and society, *Kultur und Zivilisation*, suprastructure and infrastructure, etc.

To achieve effective citizen empowerment today requires that we should overcome these dichotomies. For example, we must avoid the tendency (which is, to a certain extent reasonable) to favour what has been effectively interiorised by people, while ignoring the institutional and infrastructural conditions that make it possible and promote it. And even though it might cause some concern to humanism, the fact is that the knowledge available on the Internet and in libraries is not effective if nobody interprets it or absorbs it, since knowledge today is constructed and maintained collectively and that, therefore, there is what is known as an "intelligence of institutions" that effectively mediates between its human members. No-one today can ignore the fact that a suitable "intelligent institution" can collectively reach places that cannot be reached individually by any of its members (the cognitive capacities of whom it potentiates enormously) (Innerarity in Mayos *et al.*, 2011a), though it always requires the personal intelligence of its members.

Empowerment: capability rather than not-being-prevented

Beyond these dichotomies, the philosophical theories of alienation, interpretation and reception show how social empowerment can be strongly blocked, by cultural or mental prejudice, and by material and infrastructural conditioning factors. None of these aspects can be ignored, as deep down virtually none of them are entirely separate.

It will be difficult for an autistic multiculturalism to succeed in domesticating and mobilising its passions "with a democratic intention, and to create collective forms of identification around democratic objectives"

Emancipation has determining factors that are inseparably mental and material, supraestructural and infrastructural, cultural and social, linked with narrativities and linked with social practices. It is also necessary to overcome the duality between: the power to do or the power not to be forced to do (what Isaiah Berlin called "negative liberty") and, on the other hand, the freedom to want or the power to make one's wanting effective. That is, the so-called "positive liberty" of being able to want, of possessing the ability to conceive and generate a project for action that unites the mental with objective ability. For some years, Amartya Sen (1999) has been decisively highlighting the importance (for effective justice and empowerment) of *capabilities* (specific abilities) above the formal and merely abstract *rights*.

Without question, negative liberty is a condition of all true empowerment, but this is only fully achieved and realised when it is expressed as positive liberty, when it possesses the indispensable *capabilities*. Hegel (who, let us not forget, was Marx's teacher) had already noted and highlighted the importance of alienation mechanisms.

Old and new forms of alienation

Meanwhile, we have painfully learned that in spite of their intuition and unerring analyses, Hegel, Marx and their contemporaries were not able to conceive of all the terrible forms of alienation, barbarism and ignorance. Today I feel that, unfortunately, they were guilty of a seriously underestimation in their assessment of the ability to obstruct human empowerment. The most brutal aspects of colonialism and imperialism were beyond their imaginations, as was the *total* violence of the world wars, fascist holocausts and genocides, the Stalinist gulags and the Khmer genocide, and the increasingly sophisticated mechanisms that made them possible. They also surprised Horkheimer and Adorno, Hannah Arendt, Karl Jaspers, etc. In the second decade of the 21st century these mechanisms have become so dangerous and generalised that –more urgently than ever– we need to understand and empower ourselves as to the conditions by which they can become possibilities.

Even when we uphold valuable ideals of tolerance and respect, threatening mechanisms may underlie a certain "autistic multiculturalism". In this case, communities and cultures are separated, their most violent clashes are carefully avoided, the aggressions to their survival are minimised, and certain particular folkloric touches are even visualised. It represents an attempt to pacify society but (as Kant put it) it is confusing desirable, lasting peace with the "peace of the graveyard". In this respect, autistic multiculturalism also sacrifices many interesting human potentials, concerns and passions.

Thus, the following proposal by Chantal Mouffe (2010: 9 and s; 2007) seems much more real and, at the same time richer and with more potential; she proposes transforming antagonism into an *agonism*, in which the agonistic struggle "is the very condition of a strong democracy". It will be difficult for an autistic multiculturalism to succeed in domesticating and mobilising its passions (linked with cultural narrations and *frames*) "with a democratic intention, and to create collective forms of identification around democratic objectives".

As I will explain further on, I believe that it is of vital importance to go beyond autistic multiculturalism and the temptation to forget differences (even though at some point they might have produced paths of barbarism), to build a true democratic pluralism. Therefore, an interculturalism that is impassioned (though obviously peaceful and dialogue-based) proves to be a proposal that is at the same time more demanding, more real and more effective than a mere multicultural juxtaposition.

Autistic multiculturalism does not prevent the practice of *ghettoisation*, it does not foster true interculturality, it does not recognise the nature of full citizenship, nor does it promote the relevance of these communities and cultures for the present and future. Deep down, its dynamic consists of keeping the multiple cultures and communities that share a society artificially separated. Very often, it is hoped that they just spontaneously disperse, or this idea is promoted (implicitly but systematically) through shameful policies. And after the apparent multicultural tolerance, almost always even the tiniest dynamics of mixture and interculturality end up being blocked, in a thousand different ways, by all the mechanisms offered by today's society.

In cases of "social and cultural autism", even after many years of apparent coexistence, very serious conflicts may unexpectedly break out again (to the hypocritical outrage of the authorities). We have seen similar dynamics in Afro-American neighbourhoods in the USA, and also in the indigenous areas of South America and Africa. Behind the differences, there were very similar mechanisms behind the conflicts in the French *banlieues* in 2005 and in the English suburbs in 2011. In the most extreme cases, mechanisms linked with that dangerous social and cultural autism exploded into the cruel wars of the old Yugoslavia between 1991 and 2001, and in the African Great Lakes region.

Undoubtedly, in the latter case, peace, coexistence and tolerance were always minimal and very unstable. But genocide and war also sprouted (Tshimba, 2012) from the perpetuation of ghettoisation, denying the Other's full citizenship, blocking all interculturalism and understanding of the Other. In this way, even the smallest common project cannot come into being, let alone forgiveness or reconciliation. Everything is blocked by social practices of colonial origin applied onto mythical narrations that hierarchised the different waves of settlers. That is precisely what explodes into genocide and war, which in turn increase social blocking in the future. As we can see, bad, autistic management of multiculturality (which prevents all interculturality between the affected parties) makes a society unviable – if not explosive.

Indeed, in the case of the Great Lakes, there was an unacceptable ethnically-based social hierarchisation, though this also existed in other places (for example, *apartheid* in South Africa). This critiqued autistic multiculturalism simply delays the problems and hampers any part of culture that might be acceptable to the groups involved; it also allows mutual distrust and suspicion to grow like a *cancer*, along with an interwoven victimisation and proof of superiority, the irreconcilable narrativities that each community hurls at the other.

Where interculturality has become impossible, there cannot be any paths of culture, but instead, only paths of barbarism; this means that

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accepting some of the conflicting perspectives inevitably entails the incomprehension of the others, and even condemning them to an intolerable cultural inferiority. Furthermore, in such cases of entrenched confrontation, the old mythical narrativities become "hypercodified" (Umberto Eco) by others, as according to new circumstances, other *frames* are added onto them which increase the path of ignorance. As Tshimba (2012) shows, the old narrativities are hypercodified by other, new ones: the Tutsi who is exiled, an immigrant, dangerous to the state and Rwanda, etc., or the Hutu who is inferior, violent and criminal, and who has victimised the Tutsi, etc.

Thus an apparently endless vicious circle is created, where new events, circumstances and hypercodifications are integrated into the old narrative *frames*. In the extreme case, the result can only be to maintain a duality that is centralised, naturalised, linked to race and to "rigid ethnic distinctions", and which prevents any detailed critical, ethical analysis and which addresses specific individualised actions that concern specific individualised actions.

Given such paths of ignorance and inhumanity, we should ask ourselves: what must we do?

Forget? Hide narrativities? Hide diversity?

As I have mentioned previously, very often (and continuing with the idea of autistic multiculturalism) there has been a naive tendency to choose an apparently obvious, effective solution: to try and forget the narrations that have turned into paths of barbarism and ignorance. Presupposing many of the dualities that I have decried, we erroneously believe that we can eliminate the mental, supraestructural, cultural and everything linked with narrativities, despite the fact that that the material, infraestructural and everything linked with social practices are allowed to persist. But that is not the case, and instead it makes invisible part of the virulence that the phenomenon preserves.

Moreover, it bears a cost that history often reminds us of: simply drawing a heavy veil across yesterday's mistakes usually involves repeating them again with astounding ease. Attempting to forget the paths of ignorance, no matter how desirable it might be, usually entails a major decrease in the social antibodies that are vitally important to prevent their repetition, particularly when this forgetting is more fictitious than real, and much of the society still lives under practices linked with that supposedly forgotten narrativity.

We have also learned that actions simply carried out on material and infrastructural causes, though it is an indispensable condition, is not sufficient in itself. Because the interpretive narrativities or *frames* manifest a surprising prevalence and capacity to connect themselves through hypercodification to new events, circumstances and practice. And thus, they promote (almost by themselves) paths of ignorance that are tremendously dangerous.

As a consequence, citizen empowerment, overcoming entrenchment and creating possibilities for interculturality can only take place on a last-

ing basis if one acts jointly on the narrativities and the social practices, on the supra and the infrastructural, on the cultural and the social, on the mental and material. But even so, forgetting (despite being gratifying and desirable) continues to be dangerous if it is not accompanied by the production and majority acceptance of a meta-narration of reconciliation and mutual forgiveness (as Hegel had already intuited), as well as of the social practices and infrastructures that strengthen it.

Constructing meta-narrations of reconciliation

The aforementioned vicious circles that become paths of ignorance are not simply broken by a false forgetting. In addition, they must be re-channelled into a new, true and potent path of culture: a new, common path, one that includes reconciliation, pacification and forgiveness. A path which, furthermore, facilitates the creation of a positive interaction, an honest interculturality and, even, a democratic agonism (Mouffe, 2010).

For that purpose it is essential (Onghena, 2011: 18-22) to champion "interaction through 'complexity' and 'transculturality'" that enables important contributions to be made: to avoid essentialist binary oppositions; to de-ethnisize difference and see difference not solely as a problematic phenomenon, but as a positive resource; to accept dissension, crisis and difference as part of the process of dialogue and participation, and to honestly take on board the plurality of participants and the multiplicity of different ways of life.

Nevertheless, all the above presupposes –precisely– avoiding forgetting, avoiding acting as if nothing had happened, both avoiding the "peace of the graveyard" and imagining an impossible immaculate beginning –unblemished, totally innocent, totally apart from evil and ignorance. A brave new beginning cannot be based on a supposed forgetting, instead it has to face up to its own spectres, the real conflicts and, on that basis (but without lingering on them) to construct a meta-narration and a new path of culture that effectively recognises them, forgives them and redresses them.

It is only then that the societies involved will give up walking along that entrenched path of ignorance (albeit culturally induced), to set off along a new path of culture. Or rather, a continuation that bears in mind the conflict and part of it (but without remaining trapped in it) to offer new possibilities to a society that otherwise would be condemned to an infinite vicious circle.

As Hölderlin wrote, "where there is danger, a rescuing element grows as well[3]". What is more, if the salvation does not begin with acknowledgement of and redress for the dangerous conflict, then it will be born in a falsified state and will not succeed in minimising the evil suffered, or in deflecting the hatred produced. Only by starting from the conflict that became the path of ignorance can one construct a better, fairer path of culture.

To achieve such emancipating empowerment, we need to criticise and comprehend nature, the forms of hypercodification and the possibilities of dismantling and deconstructing the narrativities and social practices in which the hatred is rooted. To that end we will need, for example, to

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[3]. In his poem «Patmos», vv. 3-4.

show the historic and social meaning (that is, neither divine nor natural), constructed between everyone under the influence of a "fatal strategy" (Baudrillard) that ends up enslaving the entire world, even those who drove it forward most energetically.

We have learned painfully that cultures, ideas and words have a significant performative effect (Austin, 1982) which tends to bring into being what they formulate symbolically. But we need to understand the mechanisms that turn paths of culture into paths of barbarism, and which mean that (as Walter Benjamin denounced) all monuments to culture are also monuments to barbarism and ignorance. We need to find the path back to culture, to paths where it is possible to have an intercultural and political dialogue (in the sense of Hannah Arendt) that is at the same time democratic and agonistic, fair and frank, constructive and courageous, forgiving and sincere, with *re-conciliation* and walking together once again. Only in this way will the empowerment be able to move beyond the permanent influx, the *entrenched* seduction and the *vicious circle* impulse toward violence and exclusion.

A reconciling narration (and narrativity) must not hide the conflict and, therefore, it must start from it. The narration must continue, but it must continue… properly! It has already been said many times: ignorance and barbarism can only be effectively combated over the long term through culture and humanity. Though sometimes, culture and the human can be the source and path of barbarism.

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THE 'OTHER' AS A THREAT: BEYOND THE 1994 RWANDA GENOCIDE

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Introduction

The country of Rwanda can best be considered to be an exceptional African Great Lakes country, supposing that all the others remain rather normal. Rwanda as a state thus remains an unusual nation-state borne out of complex as well as deep-seated ethnological realities. Studies in social anthropology and mythical history on Rwandan society reveal that there exist differing narratives between the three major "ethnic communities" of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. They show that Rwanda's past is recollected, memorised, and passed on with some sentiments of both victimhood and heroism.

History testifies to conflict having persisted in Rwanda since time immemorial, yet the challenges to a peaceful coexistence in this country continue to manifest themselves in an even escalating manner. Over time, the country has experienced a vicious circle of tragedy and victimhood, from unlived memories, through constructed memories and narratives, to lived narratives and memories. The roots of this conflict are basically grounded in the failure to acknowledge the humanity of the 'Other' and by looking at variances that come with others' communal narratives as a threat to one's future prosperity, thus leading to the alienation of 'those who do not belong', who belong across the borderline of relations. Perhaps, this country's horrors are chilling examples of what people are capable of doing to one another when memories from a given ethnic community are lived in an antagonistic manner vis-à-vis another ethnicity.

There exists, in Rwandan society, a strong connection between the individual self's capacity to think and the representation of a reality different from the self; the basis for conflict therefore lies in a firm belief in the sociological truth contained within community stories (narratives), which actually formulate community identities, largely based on past memories. Communities in Rwanda are perceptibly shaped by the different categories of memories influencing the convictions and actions of the people living by them. In its subsequent parts, this paper will explore the power the past has on both the present and the future, through the mechanism of collective memory. The paper succinctly reflects upon stories that communicate ethnic mem-

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bership that is separated from another group by historical realities which are passed from one generation to the other through memories. Both lived and inexperienced memories are looked into as to how they shape and influence the current status quo of ethnicity in contemporary Rwanda.

The social anthropological project at work

Ngabirano (2010) rightly pointed out that the existence of a mythical theory of origin of Rwandan society did not stop western scholars from making what they called "scientific studies" in social anthropology to reveal that Rwandan society is a complex of relational differences that are a result of differing social identities between the Tutsi, Hutu and Twa. These studies show that this society emerged through a complex process of immigration and economic difference that took place over several centuries (Vansina, 1962; des Forges, 1969; Markowitz, 1973; Linden, 1977; Berger, 1981; Newbury, 1988; Staub, 1989). The anthropological tradition holds that the Twa were the original inhabitants, Hutus came second in a wave of migration from the west, and Tutsis came later from the northeast (Ngabirano, 2008). Archaeological and anthropological research, however, indicates that in fact patterns of migration were much more complex, as populations moved into Rwanda over many centuries. Each new group of migrants adopted the local language and most local customs, although they also added some beliefs and practices to the local culture.

Anthropological theories classify people (Rwandans) along lines of origin: the so-called *hamitic hypothesis* (Speke, 1863). The hypothesis added to the differentiations that had already existed before to create a new line of differences. This line is parallel to origins of ethnicities and time frame of arrival, thus making the ethnic factor racial, creating 'evaders' and those who could be the 'originals' of the land (Ngabirano, 2010). Thus, three terms were developed to emphasize these differences, a landmark that was to largely affect the Great Lakes' socio-political life: the Hamites, Bantu and Pygimoid. The hypothesis boldly underpinned the policy of 'divide and rule' in the Belgian colonial territories, including Rwanda after the first imperial war (World War I). One acute instance is that of the census conducted in Rwanda between 1933 and 1934 that culminated in the issuance of racial identity cards in 1936 (African Rights Report, 1995).

This hypothesis translated itself at the local level by giving the Hamitic (Batutsi) an assailable self-congratulatory ego as the wise ones among the indigenous peoples, closer to the 'superior race' of the white colonisers as opposed to the Bantu (Bahutu) and Pygmoid (Batwa), upon whom the hypothesis bestowed a sense of self-hate and inferiority complex, with such propensity following the respective order (Ngabirano, 2008). Ironically and perhaps unavoidably, the very hypothesis made the foreign Belgians colluding with the Hamitic (Tutsis) foreigners.

The 1959 social uprising and *Huturisation* of power

The crucial part of the conflict that could seen and analysed in today's Rwandan society can still be traced to the 1959 revolts that essentially led hundreds of thousands of Rwandans (mainly Tutsis) into exile. With the events unfolding toward the end of colonial rule (1962), Hutus in Rwanda

were seeking emancipation from the Tutsi monarchist regime. Formation of political parties was precisely to be effected under the influence of ethnic divide along the Tutsi-versus-Hutu alliances. To this effect, an educated Hutu group (comprised of nine Hutu intellectuals) published a text, in March 1957, called "Notes on the Social Aspect of the Racial Native Problem in Rwanda", so often referred to as the *Bahutu Manifesto* (Prunier, 1995). This is what essentially underlined a Hutu-led social uprising in the previously aristocratic segregationist Rwandan society.

The Hutu Manifesto sought social emancipation to initiate a renewed political progress that was to take place in the future of Rwanda. Grégoire Kayibanda, a Hutu trained in Belgium and a close associate of members of *Parti Social Chrétien*, and its supporting trade unions, the *Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens*, started the political party *Mouvement Social Muhutu* in June 1956. Kayibanda's party had Hutu lining and support, and later had the backing of the Catholic Church as he used the Catholic lay movement of Legion of Mary for his political activities (Ngabirano, 2010). Another figure, Joseph Gitera, created the *Association pour la Promotion Sociale de la Masse* (Association for the Social Promotion of the Grassroots), a movement which had the blessing of the majority of Catholic Hutu sympathizers. Linden remained sceptical about these political innovations, stating that these two national movements (with both anti-monarchy and anti-Tutsi tendencies) had two major plans: first, to inaugurate a plan for independence from Belgium, and second, to liberate the Hutus from Tutsi leadership, who according to them had dominated Rwandan society for too long (Linden, 1977). Belgian colonialists considered Tutsis (14%) and Hutus (85%) as two distinct *races* and not two different ethnic groups; a third racial group, the pygmoid Batwa who numbered about 1% of the population, played no part in shaping politics (Newbury, 1988).

The 1959 social 'revolution' affirmed itself within Rwandan Hutu society and the Tutsi political fortunes dramatically faded as the Hutu counter-elite were determined to steer the direction of the Rwandan state. Soon, the post-independent Rwandan society became characterized by a new political order established by the Hutu elite; hence, the *huturisation* of political power at the onset of the Rwandan Nation-State. Arguments about whether the newly-established political order could exclude the Tutsi elite or accommodate such political differences constituted the bone of contention within the new Hutu political elite. The *huturisation* of politics claimed that the Rwandan nation is legitimately Hutu and, therefore, all affairs pertaining to its governance must be the prerogative of the Hutus. Seriously challenged by their counter-political elite (Hutu), the Tutsi political elite lost power and moved into exile, and began to prepare for an armed return to power (Mamdani, 2001). The opposition Tutsi minority thus shifted its mode of operation, from home to exile alongside a shift from mere political (ideological) opposition to an armed struggle.

Post-1994 Rwandan society and the *Tutsification* of power

Following the Hutu-led 'revolution' from 1959 to 1962, Verwimp pointed out that the percentage of Tutsis in the Rwandan population declined sharply from 17.5% in 1952 to 8.4% in 1991, and only drastically changed after the 1994 genocide (Verwimp, 2006). The balances in numerical

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strength and weakness seem to be governed by political changes and can be traced through major memorable events that continue to govern the way the military might is arranged, and the political trend through which society is governed.

In October 1990, the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded their home country of Rwanda, an incident that kick-started the civil war between the Tutsi minority (essentially composed of exiles) and the Hutu-led government alongside its Rwandan Armed Forces. Musekura (2010) wrote that the RPF was formed in 1987 by the Tutsi refugee diaspora in Uganda whose parents had fled to Uganda during the Hutu social 'revolution' of 1959. The war was circumstantial as it brought the Rwandan community (largely Hutu) into a state of emergency and turned a focus on the Tutsis and the exiles into the enemy of the state.

After being denied their right to return to Rwanda by the Hutu extremist political leaders, these refugees (some of whom had already become Ugandan citizens) took up arms to fight for their return to Rwanda; hence, the Tutsi-led invasion of the 1990 that culminated in the 1994 genocide and the *tutsification* of power in post-genocide Rwanda. In the case of the contemporary Great Lakes region of Africa, and more so Rwanda, the refugee identity is one major identity accrued primarily from the consequences of dramatic conflicts that had happened in the region since time immemorial, and due to either old oral mythology or modern constructions. Refugees in the context of Great Lakes narrative conflicts gain an identity of being separate from both the people of their old narration and from among the people in their place of refuge. The inception of the RPF, said Otunnu (1999), was based on these grounds and it is this conception of reality through identity that enabled these predominantly Tutsi refugees form a strong force by recruiting, unifying, funding and providing structural as well as ideological assistance to their armed struggle.

Following the official halt to genocide, the RPF victory in Rwanda set off a massive exodus of Hutus from Rwanda to the eastern Congo (the Kivu provinces). Reyntjens stresses that 1994 Rwandan genocide remains a fundamental reference not only because hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and moderate Hutus got killed, but its aftermath has consisted in the violent restructuring of the whole Great Lakes region, glorifying one group's victimhood (Tutsis) while despising another's flawed guilt (Hutus) [Reyntjens, 2009].

A conditioned interpretation of the past

Conflict has been a driving force in the history of Rwanda, both socially and politically. As we have already seen, this conflict reflects antagonisms which originate from different interests between and among the parties where elites on each side involve the masses for certain ends. Paraphrasing Reyntjens (2010), interpretation of what has already taken place is also crucial in shaping both the social and political lifestyles.

The less conspicuous but more pernicious problem, in terms of people's suffering in Rwanda, is that conflict in this country is deep-seated in different narratives (life stories) that form people's particular memories and identities. Ngabirano consistently echoed that people are born within a community

<div style="color:purple">Conflict has been a driving force in the history of Rwanda, both socially and politically</div>

that possesses a past. This past certainly becomes the past of the newly-born as well as the past of the one yet unborn (Ngabirano, 2008). Therefore, the story of the individual affected by the narrative conflicts is embedded in the story of the community from which they derive their identity.

Scott Appleby further reiterated this reality in the following words:

"Time has not allowed dissolving the animosities; the cords of memory are preserved with an anxious vigilance and kept taut with ceremonies and rituals that reinforce the relevance of the past. Events centuries old recapitulate themselves in … imaginations, bolstering a sense that the future holds no surprises that might require either community to re-examine its beliefs or attitudes".

(Scott Appleby, 1999, p. 173 *in* Ngabirano, 2010)

This interpretation of the past and definition of animosity in the context of Rwanda largely depends on the way each group's community narrative is memorised and the way such narrative frames members belonging to the parallel narrative as "others," of a totally different origin and identity. Thus, the enemy in this regard, as Ngabirano (2010) notes, is the neighbour *Other* or even the domestic *Other*, provided s/he belongs to a specific identity group parallel to *my* identity. Further exclusion and intolerance from the recent wounded past (following the aftermath of the 1994 genocide) have only worsened the already long-standing bad situation. The recollection of unhealed memories and re-construction of poisonous narratives do rejuvenate antagonism in terms of a fight for recognition of narration (chiefly Tutsi) on the one hand, and that against victimisation (predominantly Hutus) on the other hand. The armed struggles for power in Rwanda are but the result of a history that locates and identifies both the enemy and the friend in the context of communities' narration. The whole process has turned out to be locked in endless cycles of victimisation, a kind of pendulous movement from perpetrated victims to victimised perpetrators.

Historical selectivity in this way projects the present through established rigid ethnic distinctions between "those who are the victims", and "those who are offenders". It thus sets precedence to a culture of inter-ethnic suspicion and inter-ethnic mistrust. This means that there is an already-created owner and custodian of history against those who do not know nor even understand what really happened. Perceiving historical facts, therefore, does not only evade the objectivity of history per se but also plunge society into inter-ethnic conflict over what had possibly been experienced together.

A perilous pluralistic society

It is not a facile task to envision a common social memory to which all Rwandans would adhere. Social memories tell of both happiness (shared happiness) and pain (community suffering). They create a community identity that binds members to the past and turn the affected to focus on the future. The past has thus created in Rwanda two groups of seeming enemies with justified political dominion. As most Hutus used the past monarchical state to justify their exclusion of Tutsis from state governance, in the same way the Tutsis view the 1994 genocide as a political resource designed to protect the Tutsi hold onto power.

The enemy in this regard is the neighbour Other or even the domestic Other, provided s/he belongs to a specific identity group parallel to my identity

Historical selectivity in this way projects the present through established rigid ethnic distinctions between "those who are the victims", and "those who are offenders"

Thus, inasmuch as the Hutus interpret their history and justification for power from a social liberation perspective, the Tutsis interpret the genocide as a point to get rid of those with genocide ideologies, to frame their enemy. In so doing, social life in post-genocide Rwanda is seen by the Hutus as somewhat of a replica of the old monarchical society, in the same way the Tutsis fear that if Hutus get hold of power, the Hutu power will be brought in play again. In order to maintain a balance, each group exonerates its favoured regime by shifting blame and guilt to the other. In this case, the past is read by categorising the other as enemy.

The very basis of ethnicity, which is actually the most important component of social identity, is embedded in community stories and memories through which communities crystallise their sense of belonging and their pursuit of common good. Such stories are to be compared with a thread binding together a given group of people of a shared past (community). Eventually, antagonisms between the two predominant ethnic groups in Rwanda –framed in their parallel narratives and differing memories– have manifested high levels of hatred, torture, massacres, and genocide, among many other evil scenarios. In fact, Carr (1986a) rightly put it when he stated that as for individuals, obviously many of their personal conflicts may arise from conflicting loyalties to the different communities they may belong to.

Echoing Volf (1996), Ngabirano (2010) reiterated that a glorified victimisation tells, what Volf calls, "a self-congratulating narrative", where former victims consider themselves to be superior to their neighbours and consider their victimisation to be the result of envy because of their greatness (Volf, 1996, p.93). Victimhood thus becomes a condition for excluding others. The perpetrator is condemned and the victim is wholly good and completely innocent (Girard, 1987). The perpetrator is believed to be inherently evil, wholly guilty of the crime and from *him* springs a culture of evil people. Some other characteristics can also be attributed to the offenders as being murderers, extremely ungrateful, crude and cruel (Pollefeyt *in* Roth, 1999). Because of their inhuman behaviour they are considered to be inferior, fit to be cast out and there is no room on earth for these oppressors (Ngabirano, 2010).

It seems that community affinity in the case of post-genocide Rwanda has created, on the one hand, a sentiment of spiral vengeance as well as a generalised feeling of mistrust, and shaped a socially accepted behaviour for the victimised as well as an impetus for exclusive change, on the other hand. By alluding to this, victims take up a position that raises them above the offenders. Similarly, being a victim can be extended to posterity: 'we' are hated because of what 'we' are and have; 'we must always be careful in our dealings with 'them'; 'they' threaten 'our' existence. By carrying this into posterity, the crime of the offender will define a people and create a rift between descendants of 'us' and 'them' (Ngabirano, 2010).

Given this kind of attitude resulting from *othering* (the we-ness versus they-ness), positive victimhood thus becomes self-destructive since it cannot offer solutions to violence but rather sets in motion a whole process of escalating violence and rivalry. The other's claims are characterised as lacking legitimacy and so any concerns from the 'out-group' [framed enemy] are quickly rendered null and void by the in-group [perceived victim]. That people from different communities of belonging have behaved barbarically in Rwanda is undeniable. Actually, this country's horrors are chilling exam-

ples of what people are capable of doing to one another when a collective memory from one ethnic group is lived in an antagonist manner vis-à-vis the another ethnicity. Hence, the promise of the future is often hidden by the trials of surviving in the present, which justify the extermination (annihilation) of one group by another as the only presumed way to prosper and live longer.

Forging the Rwandan miracle: a conclusion

Do memory and historical realities in Rwanda have the capacity for social unity? This question has truly remained at the centre of our concern throughout our reflection on ethnic conflict and power struggle in Rwanda. Fortunately however, Lederach (2005) has noticed that any peace-building frameworks do not suggest solutions; at best, they pose a series of questions useful for thinking about and developing responsive initiatives and processes in settings of deep-rooted conflict. Such processes must definitely be connected with the situational contexts in which they are to be applied. Prunier (1995) rightly put it that what was witnessed in Rwanda in 1994 is a historical product, not a biological fatality or a 'spontaneous' bestial outburst, and hence, any attempt at trying to study the history of a genocide must begin in the scholar's mind with a basic choice about the moral propriety of their endeavour.

Suggesting solutions for the ongoing conflict in Rwanda is not an easy assignment, especially as both the causes and the outcomes of the conflict go beyond Rwandan national boundaries. While it is important to look at the different conditions that have generated conflict in Rwanda, the influence posed by memory in this country remains central to a deep understanding of the nature of the conflict in Rwanda. While learning from the past can help us to tackle present violent conflicts among communities, the same past can still provide dangerous memories. In fact, community narratives recounted between the two major ethnicities (Hutus and Tutsis) in Rwanda have been much poisoned and so loaded with collective memory of each ethnicity with much bitterness.

Although out of any suffering (communal or individual) there will always come a healing power, a bitter memory that has not been healed or peacefully dealt with will always come back in an even more violent manner than ever. More precisely, the two major different ethnic groups in Rwanda always link their present actions and/or states essentially to their past (narratives/stories) framed by their collective memory which also serves as an anticipation of their future. Consequently, the very antagonist stories that are so well stocked in people's memories could only lead to tragic human violence. Just as meteorologists could predict rainfalls or drought in the coming time, Rwanda might remain a case where social scientists are given an opportunity to predict yet another violent outburst in the near future, should things continue with the same dynamics. But as Prunier (1995) pointed out, humanity can no longer afford to think that Tutsi and Hutu have been created as 'cats' and 'dogs', predestined from all eternity to eviscerate each other!

Perhaps the biggest challenge of living together differently starts with the appreciation of difference as such, and then proceeds with the recognition of otherness. The healing of memory demands elimination of all forms of

Tolerance, the ability to see the humanity of others and to recognise humanity for what it really is, will enable Rwandan people and all other ethnic communities in the region to rise above egoistic ethnic interests as well as self-interest

resentment or violence left by the inherited past. Certainly, the past must not be forgotten, it is rather to be remembered, as Wiesel noted: "To remember is to live in more than one world, to prepare the past from fading and to call upon the future to illuminate it… to combat oblivion and to reject death" (Wiesel, 1996, p. 150). To limit these crises of political or military manipulations as well as economic adventures is missing the point of what is actually at the base of the country's conflict. Tolerance, the ability to see the humanity of others and to recognise humanity for what it really is, will enable Rwandan people and all other ethnic communities in the region to rise above egoistic ethnic interests as well as self-interest.

First and foremost, the Rwandan government, civil society organisations and many other non-state organisations working in the country should be charged with a new mandate, which is to pass onto local communities the message concerning the teaching of tolerance. Seligman (2006) wrote that toleration is not born out of dialogues in which people of different backgrounds (ethnic and/or religious) seek to find harmony by identifying their similarities (seeking common ground). Rather, as Seligman believes, people achieve tolerance by seeking the unfamiliar and the uncomfortable, then learning to live with it. Getting people to find their similarities remains an easy task. The hardest task and the most promising approach to social harmony is in getting people to show their differences, then asking if they can still live and work together. Therefore, confronting and accepting uncomfortable differences between ethnic groups is the key to resolving problems and tensions between different antagonist ethnic groups.

On the other hand, much as we acknowledge many similarities between Hutus and Tutsis (and Batwa), these major two ethnic groups are different in essence by way of their beliefs, stories, and art, among other details. It is, therefore, through a deeper comprehension of these cultural variations and dynamics that the case for stability and peaceful co-existence in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region of Africa as whole can be placed within the realms of possibility. The risk of a narrowed and shallow understanding of differences in various cultures is very often the potential for what Haas (1988) calls the "genocide ethic," seeing nothing humanly good in the people of the other ethnic group, and the option left is to eliminate them. Given that no individual can properly grow if their culture is tampered with, therefore, respect and promotion of other people's cultures is not an option but indeed a moral obligation.

Secondly, with reference to the Rwandan refugee predicament, and more especially the Hutus exiled in the Democratic Republic of Congo after the 1994 genocide, we propose to the current regime in Rwanda an "Inter-Rwandan Dialogue for Pacifist Repatriation of Rwandan Refugees" under the auspices of the international community through its institutions of the United Nations Organisation (most especially the UN Higher Commissioner for Refugees) and the African Union (most especially the AU Peace and Security Council), which will serve the country of Rwanda a huge deal in terms of social harmony, peace and security. The rationale for this move is that repatriation, according to Turton (1996), still represents one of the most important solutions to the refugee problem.

Besides, many peace scholars of the Great Lakes region will agree that Rwanda remains the epicentre of conflict. Since land, at least in the African understanding, is sacred and that everyone ought to live peacefully on the

soil of their ancestors, it follows that Rwandan Hutu refugees in eastern Congo and elsewhere should return to the land of their ancestors, and in this regard the current leadership in Rwanda ought to welcome their fellow citizens with no any dehumanising hidden agenda whatsoever. And so, the Rwandan forces will have no reason to cross the Congolese or any other national borders in search for those who otherwise constituted a threat to Rwandan security and territorial integrity. In the same way, Congolese government forces as well as any other militias will be devoid of any motive or rationale for war.

Thirdly, the current Rwandan government should realise that the need to build a much stronger tyranny-free state that renders power and service back to the grassroots, for democracy per se (at least in its conventional definition) may not be that good or particularly promising (especially for a country like Rwanda), but the alternatives will always be worse. For social harmony to prevail in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region at large, political leaders to a great extent should abide by the fundamental principles of good governance. What is most especially needed in this regard is that form of government in which the national sovereign power resides in the hands of and exercised by the whole body of citizens directly or indirectly, through a system of representation, including the formulation of laws and policies and their implementation, and where legal protection of their fundamental human rights and due process under the rule of law are profoundly guaranteed. Peace, we believe, is a people's agenda pursued through a soul-searching dialogue to overcome the effects of violence and to end hostilities. Confidence-building is, however, important in peace process to overcome what Curle (1990) calls the three poisons of human relations: "ignorance, hatred, and greed." These ills, says Curle, have to be countered by proper knowledge of the 'other', mutual respect, and a novel attitude of sharing.

Fourth and perhaps most importantly, Rwanda might still be the most highly Christianised nation in Africa, as Katongole (2005) echoed. Indeed, religion (Christian tradition and faith) still remains one of the strongest social identities to which people (many Rwandans) of different ethnic backgrounds adhere. That is why religion as a tool for peace-building is a unique opportunity that communities cannot afford to trade off, and not using it to promote peaceful coexistence is the greatest incalculable risk. Religious leaders (including non-Christians) are thus called upon to present their interfaith message of peace for a better future to the broken-hearted.

Being a highly Christianised region, the Christian Church in a very special way has a crucial role to play in the search for peace among these ethnic communities in Rwanda. The message expected of the Church is that of conciliation with one another. Equally expected of the Christian Church is the message of hope. This kind of hope is what Freire (1992) refers to as an ontological need, a reflection of the not-yet but what ought to be got, through practical action. Such a hope widens people's horizons by accepting to enter into dialogue with diverse histories, memories and experiences, views and beliefs.

However, in order for religion to effectively and proactively respond to the lifestyle challenges of peaceful coexistence, there is great need for it to overcome its own challenges of division, indifference, and lack of a comprehensive as well as coordinated response to the ills of society. Ultimately, the

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Church along with the Nation has to interiorize the grandeur of humanity as designed in accordance with God's will: a panoply of human beings who, in their essence, are of equal dignity, and therefore not to struggle for power and wealth at the expense of life.

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AN ARTS COUNCIL: WHAT FOR? AN HISTORICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC REVIEW OF THE ARM'S LENGTH PRINCIPLE FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE INTERNATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

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In 2009, the Consell Nacional de la Cultura i de les Arts (National Council for Culture and the Arts, or CoNCA) was founded in Catalonia. Much of the cultural sector, together with a number of political parties had been calling for this arts council to be created since 1999. However, in 2011, the Catalan government, which was made up of a different party to the one that had created the body, changed the law to strip the council of its executive capacities and reduce the number of council members, thereby distancing it from its initial intentions. This organisation – imported from the Anglo-Saxon system, and inspired by the "arm's length" principle – had not succeeded in surviving the government's first change of party. It had represented the first organisation of this type not only in Spain but also in the South of Europe, where public administration was organised in a more vertical, centralised manner. For some authors this represented a change of model in the public administration of culture (Bonet, 2011; Villarroya, 2010).

The different actors involved in the process of creation had carried out different studies on the "arm's length" principle to determine the characteristics the council that they were fighting for should have. But did they fail to take into account certain theoretical or historical issues, which could have resulted in the premature failure of CoNCA? Was there something about the foreign model that should have been better adapted to the context of Catalonia? Were the criticisms that have been made of this principle in its place of origin, or in the places where it has been implemented taken into account? Does the fact that this type of organisation has existed in the Anglo-Saxon context for 50 years mean that it can also exist in different international contexts, or contexts with another political tradition?

The aim of this text is to present – what is rarely found in Spanish – a theoretical and bibliographic summary of the origin of the "arm's length" principle, on which the mainly Anglo-Saxon tradition of arts councils is based. This with the aim of being useful for analysing cases such as CoNCA, other international cases on a national or subnational scale and for new cases of implementing this type of institutions in other contexts.

Foundations and origins of the principle

The aim of the "arm's length" principle, which has inspired the creation of arts councils, is to separate the body from the political decisions of both party interests and those of cultural and artistic elites. It seeks, therefore, to give these decisions greater legitimacy, both in the adoption of specific cultural policies and in the funding that is given to arts events, through citizen participation. The principle's theoretical approach involves avoiding where possible any interference or influence by the political classes, the elites and the specific interests of the cultural sector, while these organisations continue to be funded by the government. In order to integrate all these factors, citizens with recognised merit and track records in the field are chosen to intervene in public policy through a collegiate body, in different ways and at different levels according to each case. Thus they are independent persons, outside the sphere of politics, neutral as far as possible and who, representing the artistic community, must attempt to ensure that the decisions they take are the fairest and most democratic (see, for example, Battersby, 1979: 11; Chartrand and McCaughey, 1989: 43-44,71; Inkei, 2001: 2; Lowell and Heneghan Ondaatje, 2006: x; Mucică, 2005: 1; Sweeting, 1982: 6). These arguments, even though being still theoretical at this point, represent the rhetoric used to defend the implementation and existence of these councils. Finally, the main objective of the policy is legitimacy, or at least paying lip service to it.

Arts councils were first established in the context of mid-20th-century Britain, with the creation of the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) in 1945 (Quinn, 1997; Upchurch, 2004 and 2011). Since then, several articles and volumes have analysed and discussed these councils' suitability, advantages and inappropriateness in contrast with other models, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. This model has spread from the United Kingdom to countries under British influence, such as the United States and the Commonwealth nations (Battersby, 1981; Sweeting, 1982). Subsequently, they have also spread to national and regional governments in countries with different traditions, including nations from the Nordic region, Asia, Oceania and countries with a Hispanic influence. As a result, the literature concerning the evolution of these councils in contexts within the British sphere is much more abundant than in countries with other traditions. Subirats *et al.* (2008: 7) highlight the predominance of Anglo-Saxon traditions in the management and analysis of public policy in Europe in general and the Spanish-speaking world in particular. In the case of Ibero-America, it is hard to find any research that deals directly with the subject.

Nevertheless, while this principle has been implemented into governmental action in different locations, from one place to another, its practice diverged, transforming it and distancing it from the original theoretic purpose lying behind the creation of this type of institution. Therefore, it is important to study specific cases of the principle's application in order to question them and to determine whether these bodies fulfil the function they were originally designed for. Because, as has been noted by Mucică (2005: 1), implementing the "arm's length" principle entails major problems for legal and administrative spheres that are completely different to the Anglo-Saxon world.

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The meaning of *arm's length*

"Arm's length" is an idiomatic English phrase which refers to a metaphor that uses the human body (i.e. the length of the arm) as a measure: the hand is separated from the body by the length of the arm. That is, while the hand is joined to the body, but at the same time it is not attached directly to it; it maintains a certain distance, the equivalent of the length of the arm. In this sense, the metaphorical meaning of being *at arm's length* means to be "at a certain distance", or "at a prudent distance"; that is, neither too close nor too far away. Not so far away that the hand is unconnected to the body, nor too close as to be stuck to it directly. In economics, this phrase is used to define commercial transactions carried out on equal terms between buyer and seller, as well as for prices set by the market laws, or rather, independent from the two parties, in which each is kept separated by the same difference.

The difficulty of translating this expression into Spanish lies precisely in the fact that it is a commonplace term in the English language and no equivalent phrase exists in Spanish, in such a way that if translated literally, it would lose its metaphorical meaning. In articles in other languages it is very uncommon to find the term translated and, in any case, it loses its quality as a literary device. Mucic (2005: 1) states that the concept is "primarily used to designate a typical Anglo-Saxon mechanism and public body, indeed so typical that in many other languages it is even difficult to come up with an adequate translation. And evidently if the mere translation of the word is difficult, the implementation of the concept in a totally different legal and administrative environment poses far greater problems."

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A few definitions

The "arm's length" principle has been defined by many authors, almost always in English and, initially, writing from the context of Britain. Of these, Sweeting (1982: 6) describes it as "the distancing of the government from direct intervention in activities, organisation and managing of the arts". Chartrand and McCaughey (1989: 71), in their oft-cited article that became the point of reference and basis for many subsequent authors, claim that the principle "is the basis of the general system of 'checks and balances' that are considered necessary in a plural democracy to prevent undue concentration of power and conflicts of interests". Hewison (1995: 32) defines it as "the state's relations with the institutions that it has not only created, but which it also funds", adding that "though this principle has not been codified in relation to cultural policy until the 1970s, it has operated for a long time as a practical means of distancing politicians and civil servants from the activities they wish to promote".

Quinn (1997: 127-128) states that the principle

"...is based on the idea that arts councils should exist and operate with relative autonomy from central government. It is believed that political influence over council activities should be kept to a minimum. [...] This distance is believed to allow an arts council to organise its own issues by liberating itself from undue influence/ interference by political forces".

Meanwhile, Madden (2009b: 12-13) defines it as a combination of two elements: 1) an independent funding agency; and 2) decision-making processes based on peer review.

The influence of John Maynard Keynes and the first arts council

The idea of creating an arts council originated in the United Kingdom, more precisely in London, when the economist John Maynard Keynes devised a model for funding arts through the organisation he headed, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), created during the Second World War. This organisation provided funding for artists to carry out tours of performing and visual arts events to "raise morale" (Upchurch, 2004: 203) and Keynes came up with the idea of turning it into the ACGB. All the authors agree that Keynes was the creator or "father" of arts councils, and that the ACGB was the first such council and the inspiration for all subsequent ones. The councils were created with the aim of "shaking loose the monopoly of official patronage, of allowing experts rather than officials and politicians to decide how support should be given, of protecting the interests of artists and giving them a public advocate" (Battersby, 1981: 11-12).

The ideas that motivated Keynes to think about transforming the CEMA, thus intentionally giving shape to a new organisation that would, conscientiously and flexibly meet the needs of the country's professional artistic community, were inspired by what was known as the "Bloomsbury Group"[1], of which Keynes was a central figure. This was a circle of artists, writers and intellectuals who represented a potent intellectual force in England from the beginning of the 20th century, and whose influence extended throughout the century and beyond (Upchurch, 2004: 203-205). Keynes took two institutions in particular as models. Firstly, the University Grants Commission (UGC), created in 1919 as a "non-elected organisation, comprised of university men, nominated by the treasury minister, and under whose counsel the government of the day would call on parliament to vote every year on the distribution of money, without ties or obligations, to each university" (Redcliffe-Maud, 1976: 24; Hewison, 1995: 32 and Upchurch, 2011: 74). And secondly, the British Broadcasting Corporation[2] (BBC), which operated using an organisation similar to the UGC, but whose main aim was to guarantee freedom of expression (Elridge, 1996).

Keynes was attracted to the two organisations because they took the power of decision away from bureaucrats and elected officials and ensured that the work of those receiving the support would be distanced from possible political intervention. Among his proposals for after the war was the idea that the arts council should be provided with equipment and subsidies and should stop being a producer of art. It would operate as independently as possible from political forces and governmental bureaucracy to provide facilities, advice and funding to artists and arts organisations. It would not compete with the market; it would work cooperatively with public and private sectors in a flexible, responsible manner. Its public funds would have a limited, very specific role in the cultural life of the country; a role that would support artistic endeavour

1. Other members included Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, Clive and Vanessa Bell, Roger Fry, Edward M. Forster, Desmond MacCarthy and Duncan Grant. They began meeting in 1905 to debate a number of issues including pacifism, feminism, freedom of expression, creativity, reason, etc., using an approach that was critical of Victorian conventions (Upchurch, 2004: 203-205).
2. First founded as a company in 1922, it subsequently became a non-commercial public corporation in 1927.

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in a critical manner in a way that private funding had not done previously and probably would not do in the new welfare state. However, Keynes died unexpectedly in 1946, before the royal decree of the ACGB was ratified (Upchurch, 2004: 203-205).

Until the 1970s, this method of distancing an institution created and funded by the state would be known under the name of the "arm's-length principle", particularly after Redcliffe-Maud (1976), who wrote the following, firstly with respect to the system adopted by the UGC since 1919 and afterwards regarding the ACGB:

> This system has survived, with modifications, for more than fifty years. […] Politicians have thus acted, unconsciously perhaps, on the principle that we get full value from the taxes taken from us for university education only if we leave each university free to decide educational policy, with a measure of guidance from the UGC but without vestige of dictation from either politicians or the bureaucrats who serve them.

This is the principle on which on which the Arts Council, since its creation in 1946, is voted public money […]. By self-denying ordinance the politicians leave the Council free to spend as it thinks fit. No Minister needs to reply to questions in Parliament about the beneficiaries - or about unsuccessful applicants for an Arts Council grant. A convention has been established over the years that in arts patronage neither the politician nor the bureaucrat knows best.

It would be madness to destroy the Arts Council or to abandon this arm's length principle. We can, of course improve our use of it" (Redcliffe-Maud, 1976: 24-25).

Criticism

As a result of his intellectual profile and his life and achievements, Keynes' idea was to appoint minds similar to his own for the administration of these funding systems. That is to say, he proposed that the individuals involved in decision-making in these organisations should belong to a certain social class, with ideological and moral principles similar to his own (Upchurch, 2011: 75). A study by Gray (1998) on the members of the ACGB from its founding until 1998 revealed an average profile of males, mostly with similar social origins, of middle age, with a good education (often Oxford or Cambridge graduates), highly professional and very often with some connection to the arts prior to their appointment to the ACGB. The socially closed world to which the members of the arts council are subjected to, and the fact that simultaneously belonging to other arts organisations underpinned the values and views that membership carried with it were, in Gray's opinion, factors that strengthened the argument that a self-replicating oligarchy existed within the world of the arts. Thus, Keynes' original ideal contained an implicit, intrinsic classism which, while it was no more than a reflection of his age, without any doubt impregnated the evolution of the arts councils, starting with the ACBG and extending with it to the other contexts in which it was being propagated.

Keynes' legacy has produced much criticism and debate owing to his explicit preference for "high culture" (opera, classical music, ballet, theatre and art galleries)

His ideal also implied a search for excellence, by supporting the work of professional artists, with an emphasis on improving standards and encouraging the most talented individuals by means of loans, guarantees and subsidies. Thus, amateur artists were not considered deserving of public subsidy; only those who had professional training. Keynes' legacy has produced much criticism and debate owing to his explicit preference for "high culture" (opera, classical music, ballet, theatre and art galleries) (Upchurch, 2011: 77, 69) and for the classism that did not benefit the great majority of society, but only a sector that was professional, well-educated and socially well-positioned.

However, I do not wish to disparage Keynes' intentions owing to his marked classism and elitism, but to contextualise the fact that his stances reflected the ideals of the age, when culture was considered to be an expression of the Fine Arts, unlike the concept which, after several decades up until the dawn of the 21st century, has evolved into a more inclusive meaning. In this respect, Williams (1979: 166) criticises the idea that the intermediary organ (the council) is managed following an essentially different principle, i.e. by a class that is dominant, relatively informal, – but agreed upon and adequate – and whose members do not come from the field of practice or management of arts, but from a vague category of "persons with experience and goodwill", which is the official euphemism for this informal dominant class.

Chartrand and McCaughey (1989: 50) note that the elitism of the arts councils through the boosting of artistic excellence existed both in the sense of the type of artistic work produced, and the audience or public at whom it was aimed. This might result in support for a kind of art that was not accessible to or appreciated by the general public or by their democratically elected representatives, who might *wash their hands* of the decisions made by the council. These criticisms of elitism of the arts council are also mentioned by Mangset (2009: 278-281). In the opinion of Quinn (1997: 153), its imprecision has allowed for situations in which it has been distorted and applied to situations that are often contrary to the way it is understood theoretically. He also claims that more proof exists which contradicts the arm's length principle in the British context than there is evidence to support the view that the council has protected itself against undue influence from the political spheres. In this sense, he seconds the ideas expressed by Williams (1979: 159) regarding the idea that "characteristically, the body guides the arm", and that all that is obtained from the application of the arm's length principle is a certain sense of removing controls that are directly traceable.

The ideals of the principle and their minimum ingredients

Mangset (2009: 285-286) categorises the ideal contents of the arm's length principle according to the literature, though he warns that these can only exist as an effective rhetorical reality, given that they cannot be found directly or specifically anywhere. Namely, these are:

1. All allocation of public funding for the arts should be carried out by independent persons possessing artistic competence, and they should be appointed for a limited period of time.

2. These persons should be as independent as possible from all policy lines.
3. They should not be appointed by, or dependants of artists' unions or any other type of interest groups in the cultural sphere.
4. The organisation operating under the arm's length principle should not be obligated by very specific statutory or politically decided support schemes.
5. The organisation operating under the arm's length principle should, in contrast, possess substantial freedom to allocate its resources within the framework of its budget.
6. The allocation of funds should be carried out solely and exclusively in accordance with criteria of artistic quality, and not, for example, with criteria of welfare or equality.
7. The allocation of funds should be impartial; for example, no nepotism and/or patronage must be involved.

Likewise, we could include here the minimum ingredients that an arts council should possess in order for it to be considered an organisation functioning under the principle of *arm's length*: (1) a council of "equals" in which, even though it might include politicians or representatives of public organisations, the members deriving from the cultural sector should be the majority; and (2) the capacity to award subsidies with public money to third parties, namely in the form of grants. These two ingredients should be interrelated: the council should intervene actively in the decision to award grants. It may decide directly or delegate the task to a group of experts. The fact of having a council made up in the main of non-politicians, and that this should participate actively in the grant awarding process guarantees a minimum of distance from politicians and from clients. The details regarding whether a particular arts council has more or less autonomy, political interference, relevance, decision-making capacity, distance from clients, etc., will continue to be the object of investigation.

The two strands

Although references in the literature in this respect are few, it is important to stress the two strands in which, according to this principle, distance must be maintained, as noted by Stewart (1987: 7), citing a lecture by Arnold Goodman (chairman of the ACGB from 1965 to 1972): (1) between the government and the arts council, in order not to receive guidelines from the former with respect to how the money should be distributed; and (2) between the council and its beneficiaries, so as not to impose guidelines regarding how the money should be used. Chartrand and McCaughey (1989: 61) also referred to this aspect in which the arts council should operate by distancing itself from both the government and from its clients. That is, it should not control or govern the activities of its beneficiaries. In this respect, even when these three claim that the second strand might attempt to prevent the council from imposing criteria with respect to how the beneficiaries should use the subsidy money, it should also be added here that it is used in the same way to prevent relations of patronage between the council and its beneficiaries.

Conclusions and open questions

Without any doubt, the idea of arts councils has spread to different Anglo-Saxon contexts, and from there on to other locations where this principle has inspired the implementation of the place's own versions. Now arts councils also exist in Nordic countries, in Asia and South America, for example. But does the fact that these councils exist in other places mean that they are also inspired by the arm's length principle? And furthermore, how and why has the trend to create arts councils reached these places, and under what logic do they operate?

The case of CoNCA could be a good example to analyse, on the basis of the historical and bibliographical perspective presented above, why it had such a short life as an organisation under the arm's length principle, and to determine whether those who promoted this change and those who carried out were aware of all of the aspects of this principle: its origins, the criticisms of it, its two strands, etc.

When we look at a model that is different from our own with the intention of integrating it and implementing it, we must do so using a broad perspective that considers all its advantages and disadvantages; a perspective that bears in mind other experiences, their failures and successes; a perspective which, using a critical eye, reviews the discussions that have taken place on the subject in academia in order to avoid repeating mistakes or copying models without adapting them to the context in which we wish to implement them. A reflection lacking in depth and understated criticism might result in failed implementation and represent a step backwards. In contrast, a comparative dialogue at the international level between professionals and experts seems to be a better alternative when importing good practices from other contexts, after having duly adapted them to the new location.

It still remains for us to reflect and investigate in greater depth the specific causes that led to the so-rapid failure of Catalonia's CoNCA, as well as to study the way in which arts councils have evolved in Britain over the past few decades. We should also analyse, just like in the case of Catalonia, the cases in Nordic, Asian, African, Oceanian and South American countries, using the same approach to determine whether they are organisations operating under the arm's length principle, or under another, different alternative. There is a need for a more dynamic, fluid dialogue at the international level, and not only between countries from the same region or with the same tradition, in order to compare and contrast models and experiences that can help to improve and make progress in the public management of culture; to that end, we need more research studies that can throw light on the subject and bring about this more intensive dialogue.

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Introduction

The visibility of political discourse on the Internet is a subject that is widely commented upon, given that the amount of information now in circulation has reached a volume that is becoming increasingly hard to encompass. In recent years, the speed at which this volume has grown has accelerated significantly (Hall, 2011), in a trend that is now beginning to generate concern. This growth is partly linked with the incorporation of technological innovations that have increased the mass media's capacity to produce and disseminate content. The same institutions that were already well positioned in the "information market" have managed to take advantage of the growth in Internet use, for instance, and have replicated or transferred their habitual contents into the virtual world. In other words, radio stations, television channels, magazines and newspapers have adapted to the technological innovations, and as a result they have extended their presence into new spaces in everyday life. Certain similar institutions (albeit with less capital) have also benefited from the extended use of the Net (I am referring to benefits such as the reduction in the price of publishing technologies and the simplification of dissemination operations over the WWW), though these benefits do not seem to have been sufficient to achieve a balance, as the proportion of attention they receive as compared to larger communication media has not altered significantly.

We can conclude that something very different has happened with the producers of the new type of information content. Much more important in socio-cultural terms is the explosion of content that has been put in circulation by those who, until very recently, were barely considered "users" or, to put it in another way, passive receivers of information (Beas, 2011). By this I am referring to all the content that has appeared in recent years in the form of blogs, forums, Tweets or comments on the social networks, as well as institutions that are fully established, but the functioning of which is completely subordinated to the new virtual dynamics, such as Wikipedia.

The optimists among us see this phenomenon as a change in the correlation of strengths, and claim that a new scenario is taking shape in which

We should be asking how far we can really cope with the explosion of information that is taking place, and at what point the proliferation of content starts to become an obstacle that will hamper agreement between political subjects

individuals have increased their independence over the traditional mechanisms of information distribution (the mass media). From this, they infer that the foundations are being laid for a revitalisation of political activity, horizontally, on a global scale, as part of a trend that will only increase and which will, sooner or later, result in a new form of citizen activity that is more active and inclusive. At the opposite extreme, however, we should be asking how far we can really cope with the explosion of information that is taking place, and at what point the proliferation of content starts to become an obstacle that will hamper agreement between political subjects who, paradoxically, initially made contact with each other thanks to that very explosion (Mayos, 2011). While an increase in content volume democratises communication and makes an increase in political participation viable, information saturation could hinder understanding, hamper the emergence of new interpretations, and it could even impoverish the quality of contacts, to the point of quashing their real effectiveness.

Intuition

Let us put ourselves for a moment in the shoes of Irineo Funes, the "memorious", from the story by Jorge Luis Borges, who was able to perceive everything that existed around him, as well as to remember it all. Irineo's ability (which was also his handicap) enabled him to recall all the details of any day in his life, but if he did so it also took up an entire day. Borges says of Funes that "it was not only difficult for him to understand that the generic term dog embraced so many unlike specimens of differing sizes and different forms; he was disturbed by the fact that a dog at three-fourteen (seen in profile) should have the same name as the dog at three-fifteen (seen from the front)".

An infinite capacity for *perception*, for accumulation of experiences, involves an equally radical suppression of the cognitive tools of selection, whether they are rational or not. This is the function fulfilled by what Kant called the "synthesis of perception" and which, with different names and details, is still the nucleus for many of the controversies in philosophy. Independently of whether or not the capacity for storing experiences can be infinite, without a suitable synthesis, it is impossible to use all the information that has been recorded. In other words, synthesis of perception (or any of its later equivalents) is the basis for the entire framework of categories on which rational thought is founded.

This very framework can be extrapolated to a more general sphere. Until only a few years ago, certain institutions fulfilled a similar selective function, functioning as filters at a cultural level. They decided which information should not be considered important, according to an authority principle granted to them by tradition, accumulated prestige or, simply the pre-eminence conferred by the network of political-cultural institutions. But precisely because they simplified this selection, they also restricted the individual action of selecting information, and thus made it more difficult to disseminate original solutions and creative innovations. Customs, ideologies or simply all the suggestions by social actors of *greater weight* began to accumulate in these institutions, and through these they exerted an influence over people's everyday practices, such as what book to buy, what newspaper to read or what station or channel to tune in to.

The critique of the discourse of modernity that began over two centuries ago has undermined the legitimacy of institutions such as science academies, renowned publishing companies and newspapers with the highest circulation, and has revealed the interests that are inevitably involved in any selection. At the same time, the importance of specific approaches has increased, and with it the interest in preserving spaces for individual and circumstantial decision. As a result, the real and everyday individual has to a great extent been liberated from the general criteria that predisposed his or her decision, but precisely because of this, s/he has been left a little more isolated.

Finally, the explosion of content I mentioned previously and the transformation of the general model of information dissemination have made the previous assessment criteria anachronistic. The tastes of the old information users (now the Internauts) have completely transformed and a new communication paradigm is beginning to grow. In this scenario, immediate contacts and person-to-person contact are receiving increasing attention, and this means that traditional institutions have been losing the little influence they had managed to hold on to. There is no doubt that as a result of this, information selection practices have been freed up and democratised, though also the solutions have been homogenised and the network of communication references made more complex.

In its current state, the Information Society is about to change (if it has not changed already) into a kind of Irineo Funes, filled with *memories* through which we travel at an amazing speed, and which we are not quite sure how to keep. Thanks to the development of technological tools we can, admittedly, *store* memories with amazing accuracy, but we only know how to do it like Funes did. At the moment we do not possess tools that can adapt to the new forms of communicative experience and, even though work is being done in this area, the contents still exceed our scientific abilities to describe them, hierarchise them and operate with them. Or rather, we accumulate the contents separated from a hierarchical categorisation system that enables us to operate efficiently with all *the dogs* in the world as the individual elements of one single concept, *dog*.

So, does this mean that we are no longer selecting information? Not at all. If that were true, we would also have to accept that all the content we have to cope with every day reaches us in a totally random manner. Obviously this is not true, and it is easy to demonstrate this in practice. Bearing in mind all of the above, however, what it does suggest is that selection is not carried out by using rational criteria. My hypothesis is that it is carried out intuitively.

In the absence of a new, legitimate and generalised tool for hierarchising content, we carry on *selecting* content because that is inevitable, and we do it *however we can*. That is, by applying (intuitively and without any critical mediation) some of the principles that were already in existence in the age of information written on paper. As a result, the selection criteria and the selections themselves are increasingly difficult to assess in terms of good or bad, true or false. Nor is it feasible to *predict* which content will be important and valuable in each case, beyond the elaboration of suppositions based on statistical analysis carried out *a posteriori*.

Nevertheless, what I do think would be useful is to describe general trends that characterise our modern-day way of thinking, and to track their presence in specific cases, in an attempt to verify their importance and to justify a less exact but more accurate idea of the mechanisms used for selecting political content on the Internet.

Political practice in the virtual space, just like any other dimension of web-surfing, represents a constant, hurried exercise in content selection

Visibility

Unquestionably, the need to maximise efficiency in the distribution of new content has become a priority topic. One very important factor in terms of the evaluation of every discourse that comes into circulation is the level of visibility it is able to reach and maintain. As has been said countless times, the most highly-valued resource nowadays is time, and that applies especially to Internet users. In the case of political action on the Internet, the need to capture users' attention becomes extremely pressing. Political practice in the virtual space, just like any other dimension of web-surfing, represents a constant, hurried exercise in content selection. Internauts successively discriminate what they believe does not deserve attention, and they keep just a few of the contents, which are the ones that really have a bearing on the formation of political representations. At a very elementary level, the Net could be filled with political initiatives with the best of intentions, but only a few ever truly enter the consciousness of society.

In a situation of intuitive, acritical information selection, as I have described above, some contents separate themselves from the rest and achieve a higher profile. The general condition that brings about this separation is what we call the "visibility" of content. As one can imagine, if we attempt to emphasise contents –to make them visible–, they tend to adapt to the conditions that facilitate their reception and provoke their redistribution (Aced, 2009). This especially includes political contents. Anyone wanting to understand the conditions for this selection should not restrict themselves to studying the effects of technological innovations and their impact on the transformation of the communication model; instead, they should try to understand better the general framework that determines the existing communication model, or rather, the general suppositions of intuitive selection which are, when all is said and done, the ones that favour certain choices over others.

This is precisely what we aim to do in this article. We will describe some of the conditions for the intuitive choice of content, or what could be called the conditions for "visibility" on the Internet. These conditions are: novelty, publicity and social prestige, all of which were originally described in the general context of the contemporary everyday experience. I will attempt, furthermore, to show how they are integrated into a general dynamic of reproduction of political experience on the Internet. To that end, we will be looking at two political phenomena that are very closely linked with the global communication model: the Zapatista movement in Chiapas and the Cuban bloggers movement.

We will not attempt to demonstrate that these conditions for visibility must be considered to be the *causes* of the degree of attention and dissemination achieved by both proposals. What we are interested in is verifying that these conditions are included in the discursive corpus of

two political phenomena and that, in turn, they have been considered as being among the foundations of modern-day everyday experience. The question to be answered is the following: if, as we have already stated, we start from the hypothesis that a direct link exists between intuition and visibility, what conditioning factors of contemporary experience are implicit in the two political proposals to which we refer?

It is interesting to note that although the Zapatistas and the bloggers are symbolic groups that are virtually divergent, politically and culturally speaking, they both end up fulfilling the same general conditions for visibility we have mentioned. Thanks to this, they capture the attention of Internauts from very distant spheres, geographically and culturally, and involve them to such a point that it is they who, in the end, guarantee the survival of the content producers. It is said that in the harshest years of South America's military dictatorships, when the police came to take them away, people would try to yell out their names, as loud as they could. They did so in the hope that others might hear them, and thereby reduce, even slightly, the regime's impunity and perhaps prevent it from making them disappear. What with tweets, e-mails, forums, blogs and websites, if they manage to make themselves visible, there is no doubt that today's virtual yells are much more likely to be heard, and by more than just a few neighbours in the same street.

Zapatistas and bloggers

My decision to include these two experiences in one single article will probably be disconcerting to some. I am well aware that they have been used repeatedly, each on their own particular side, by agents of political rhetoric that are almost always opposed. In the case of the Zapatistas, their emergence onto the political stage in the 1990s inaugurated a trend towards a new style of *leftism* that has gradually created its own discourse. In spite of its newness, in this, just as in any other emerging political imaginary, recent symbols are mixed with other, older ones, such as the Cuban revolution. The most widespread representations are constructed through simple oppositions; thus, in the same way that terms such as the United States, neoliberalism and the World Bank are all situated on one side, on the other, terms such as Zapatismo, Fidel and revolutionary are unthinkingly overlapped. This also means that the authors of the Cuban blogs, all of whom are discontented with the island's political system, are all *imagined* to be in opposition to Subcomandante Marcos, regardless of any details that might suggest other, more reasoned analyses.

 This is not the right place to give close examination to the way these connections are produced, or to discuss their consequences. Without trying to determine the veracity and scope of this framework, I simply consider it to be *valid*. On this basis, I am interested in showing that beyond their differences (in this case produced by the common political representations of *left* and *right*), both share very similar visibility conditions.

We would also like to highlight another difference that makes the common features we will be describing even more striking: the two cases spring from very different moments of the development of the Internet.

The question to be answered is the following: if we start from the hypothesis that a direct link exists between intuition and visibility, what conditioning factors of contemporary experience are implicit in the two political proposals to which we refer?

The Zapatista phenomenon appeared in its early stages: the movement was *discovering* the Internet's potentials while the Net was growing. In January 1994, the time when the Zapatista movement burst on to the Mexican political scene, virtually none of the features of Net surfing we are now familiar with existed. Remember that it was not until 1998 that the Internet really began to take off in terms of its widespread use; it then achieved 200 million users by the year 2000, 1,000 million by 2006 and 1,800 million today. Meanwhile, the type of message sent followed traditional models. Regarding the general format of the messages (letters, communications, narrations), no major innovation took place in relation to other practices that were by now common. The Internet became an important tool for another reason – because of the immediacy it offered, the ease to produce its own information and the capacity to evade information walls and spread its content throughout the world.

The group known as the Cuban bloggers have a completely different dynamic. The best-known of these blogs, "Generación Y", began in April 2007. The very blog support is linked with the ease with which, nowadays, we can create our own spaces for distributing content. Even in the Cuban context, where major restrictions exist on Internet access and the connection speeds rarely exceed 56 Kbps, the blog support enables them to maintain a platform that is functional enough to maintain the attention of the most technologically *advanced* Internauts. Some years ago, the impossibility of carrying out monetary transactions from Cuba and the precariousness of the Internet connections would have seriously hampered the emergence of a web space such as the ones that have appeared in recent years. Subsequently, other tools have become important, which are also linked with this second phase of the Internet. Twitter use has become widespread, and this has provided a dose of immediacy that has allowed users to contain major reprisals by the Cuban government.

Novelty, publicity and social prestige

The first of the visibility conditions we mentioned concerns the increased attention received by the contents that break with the continuity of the generalised model for the representation of reality. These contents could be described as possessing an informational *novelty* and producing an impact that forces us to reorganise our way of thinking. They produce a surprise that makes the *usual* interpretation impossible. This impact derives from the difficulty in connecting the new content with the other informational landmarks that surround it and, in order to understand it, the links between the different types of information that previously existed must be reviewed and reshaped. The mechanism of the effect is similar to what Paul Ricoeur (1980, 2003) described in the metaphor. Based on the interpretative innovation that is enforced by metaphor (understood as a tension between contradictory meanings), the accounts *create* an interpretative range that stimulates a hermeneutic process which, in turn, leads to a reconsideration of the connections between the reader and the world. In our case, the tension is produced by the incompatibility between what one expects to have happened (as the first meaning), and the difficulty of the new data that provide the *new* information. This also leads to a reshaping of the meanings and political representations derived from them.

Gilles Lipovetsky (2002) refers to this influence of novelty as a general condition for post-modernity. While many authors have described the connection that exists between the capitalist form of production and the need for a permanently renewed consumer supply, this does not fully explain the importance that novelty has acquired with respect to demand. Lipovetsky himself reminds us that Baudrillard and Bourdieu attempt to explain this link by incorporating an analysis of the phenomena of the symbolic distinction of class identities. However, in *El Imperio de lo efímero* [The Empire of the Ephemeral] he adds an extra level. Lipovetsky champions the profound nature of the phenomenon of fashion and explains the relationship that exists between the almost obsessive drive towards the new and the processes of the development of modern subjectivity and of the personality in general. Ultimately, it is a subject that carries the idea of freedom to its ultimate consequences, based on a permanent recomposing of the images of itself that it chooses to project on a daily basis.

In the context of Cuba –where the state exerts significant control over the media– the emergence of a *different* source of informational content, as if self-made, represents in itself a novelty that distorts the representations of the socialist political model. It is surprising simply because of the fact that it exists. It arouses curiosity and provokes debate, prior to any analysis of the specific content of its proposals. This leads to a reconsideration of the value that has traditionally been given to the audience in absolute terms. Clearly, the dissemination of content achievable by blogs, analysed from a purely quantitative point of view, cannot compare with what the official media can achieve. The blogs' capacity to gain a *numerous* audience is fairly small, especially if we bear in mind the fact that, in a society such as Cuba's, the state restricts Internet access and controls *all* the content of *all* TV channels, radio stations and publications. Even if we accept the Cuban government's accusation that the bloggers receive support from the United States, in the most extreme case this would involve sums totalling hundreds of thousands of dollars, a risible amount in comparison with the resources that any state has available, no matter how ruinous its situation. It is clear, therefore, that the definition of "impact" must be reformulated, and should make way for an evaluation that considers the increased repercussions that are produced by exceptional instances, differences, newnesses.

In this respect, moreover, we can clearly see how interest in novelty progresses in tandem with the reaffirmation of individual freedom. Choosing what is different asserts the independent stance of every one of the people involved in broadcasting new content and new interpretations of the sociopolitical environment. On the opposite side, there are those who continue to be *shackled* to the past, or rather, who reproduce the messages issued by the official information media. While they continue to reproduce the conventional discourses –bound to their categories and, above all, bound to the prevailing model of broadcasting– those who stand up for their independence *liberate* themselves by affirming their difference, their individuality, to the extent that they make use of the expressive opportunities they find in using new technologies.

The Zapatista guerrilla also surprised the world. Their emergence at a time that was so close to the collapse of Soviet socialism posed a puzzle in itself. How should we identify them? Narcoguerrilla? Old-fashioned

In the context of Cuba the emergence of a *different* source of informational content, as if self-made, represents in itself a novelty that distorts the representations of the socialist political model

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The abundance of personal details that appear in the communications of Subcomandante Marcos fosters the creation of an attractive intimacy between the reader and the broadcaster of the political proposals. The same applies with Yoani Sánchez, the best-known of the group of Cuban bloggers

communism? Post-modern guerrilla? They created doubts because, first and foremost, they represented a new reference point which contrasted with the announcement of the end of global confrontation, of the great stories of modernity, and of the ideologisation of everyday experience. In this new proposal, furthermore, the classic *personalities* of liberation reinvented themselves. New details appeared in their *uniforms*, which broke with the monotony of military discipline and highlighted an abundance of technological *artefacts*, signs of being rooted in a different age. Finally, in their writings, while they showed clear affinities with classic South American authors such as M. Benedetti and E. Galeano, the transferral of this style into the field of realpolitik and its self-assurance in terms of combining registers represented a clear break with the Marxist-Leninist manuals, and even with Fidel Castro's conversational, direct style – which was also self-assured, but much less symbolic and fun.

A second element that also invigorates the visibility condition is one that could be associated with *the seduction of publicity*. John B. Thompson describes this process very well in two of his pieces (Thompson, 1998 and 2002). In his view, the long process of the development of modernity is (without contradicting other, more traditional analyses) a long process of publicly exposing the old sphere of private life, of publicising personal life. In the new contemporary public space, elements that were not previously of interest are now connected, and end up influencing the decisions of citizens. One paradigmatic example is the Clinton-Lewinsky case, which had an unforeseeable impact in the United States. The most fleeting comparison between the debates that took place as a result of this case and, for example, those that resulted from the Bush administration's *mistakes* just a few years later, indicates a major change in the nature of political scandal, and reveals which content has the greatest influence in forming public opinion. This is the change Thompson refers to, the seduction it produces throughout society and the transformation of the political discourse it stimulates.

The abundance of personal details that appear in the communications of Subcomandante Marcos fosters the creation of an attractive intimacy between the reader and the broadcaster of the political proposals. The same applies with Yoani Sánchez, the best-known of the group of Cuban bloggers. She writes her political critiques in the form of chronicles that reproduce the intimacy of her personal experience of Cuba. In each case, the personal representations quickly become a shared representation of the social reality. The identification between the public and private experience ends up being so *natural*, that it turns out to be counter-productive to attempt to describe the correspondence between a representation of them and a general representation, as there is no epistemological condition involved that claims to constitute itself as a guarantor of the veracity of the discourse.

This occurs because intimate discourse, as a public fact, does not respond to the dichotomy of true-false. It only needs to be accepted as close, possible, credible. And it achieves this when it produces a sensation of affinity between the perception of the reader's private life and what s/he expects the other perceptions and other private lives in his/her environment to be like; in other words, when the reader justifies a general conception of the public space that is solely based on a general projection of one's own, personal perception.

However, not all of the power of the Internet's contents is derived from the autonomous capacity for social legitimacy being achieved by the world of new technologies. The interest aroused by phenomena related to political cyber-activism should not lead us to forget the strengths and prestige that traditional institutions involved in the dissemination of information still have. We should remember, for example, that the first contact between Zapatismo and the world took place via traditional channels, thanks to the coverage the movement was given by renowned information media, including the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada*. Gradually, Zapatismo established a direct platform for communication over the Internet, but by that time the interest had already been consolidated.

Something very similar took place in the case of the Cuban bloggers. Despite the fact that their starting point was the World Wide Web, the group gained strength and capacity for dissemination through the support they received in the form of international awards and thanks to periodic references to them by the more established media organs. The strategy that the Cuban government has used to try to cancel out the activists' influence is highly significant (albeit lacking in newness). Instead of directly attacking the content of the blogs, the government concentrates on delegitimizing the awards they receive, revealing allegedly antipatriotic sources of funding and publicising their links with those political institutions that are easiest to stereotype, in ideological terms. Though well-known, this strategy fails to highlight the relationship that still exists between activism 2.0 and the traditional institutions, on which a sizeable dose of their legitimacy still depends.

By way of conclusion

Up to now, we have described two phenomena in the dissemination of political contents over the Internet, starting from the supposition that a direct link exists between the *intuition* and *selection* of information. We have attempted to show that at least three of the conditions that favour selection have been previously postulated to explain more general mechanisms, linked with the contemporary experience as a whole. After highlighting their presence in the two cases described, we conclude that an analysis of the new scenario of an information society cannot be limited to the study of the effects of technological innovations; it also requires a study of the general assumptions of the experience, or what we could also call the composition of a model of contemporary subjectivity. In this respect, we should examine the link between the determining factors of visibility described and what we could call the "non-conscious structure of political understanding".

In one of the most contemporary models of political communication, George Lakoff examines the state of US political debate based on the evidence that there are mental processes that precede rational thought and predefine many of our everyday decisions (Lakoff, 2008). In his model, a central role is given to non-conscious cognitive mechanisms that are culturally deeply-rooted (frameworks, conceptual metaphors and prototypes) from which he postulates an interesting link between emerging rhetorical experiences (such as the ones covered in this article) and the political interpretations that are most widespread throughout the population.

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Now that we have completed the initial examination stage, this analysis will only be complete if we also explore the function of tradition in the selection and interpretation of content. For instance, subjects that we have not yet touched on, such as the comparison between Subcomandante Marcos and Che Guevara, or the symbolic role of Don Durito (the character from Zapatista stories), which corresponds to Don Quixote in the political discourse of the South American left, and which can only be dealt with on this non-rational level. The same applies with the blog "Generación Y" and the rupture it has caused in the traditional duality of revolutionary vs. counterrevolutionary, a view that is fundamental to an understanding of Cuban political dynamics over the past 60 years.

If we apply Lakoff's proposal to the aforementioned two cases, the analysis carried out here leads to a more complex level, where we not only have to examine visibility conditions, but also the link between these and the cognitive cultural model that it is supposed to have. In fact, in an even more ambitious phase, we would have to try and understand the relations that are established between the different symbolic scenarios that *collide* on the Internet (bearing in mind the cultural diversity of the individuals that surf it), and raise the possibility that a model of exclusive political understanding is being created in the virtual political community.

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CLOSING REMARKS

- DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL
  RESEARCH: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL
  REFLECTIONS THROUGH VIRTUAL ETHNOGRAPHY

  Elisenda Ardèvol and Edgar Gómez Cruz

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS THROUGH VIRTUAL ETHNOGRAPHY

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When technologies were new

> "We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us"
> **Marshall McLuhan**

On the platform YouTube –perhaps the best-known social network for distributing and showing videos on the Internet– there is an old black-and-white advertisement dating from 1927 that was screened in US cinemas and which explained how to use rotary dial telephones (previously telephones had worked via a system of operators). This *little* change, which for those watching the video today seems simple and insignificant, completely transformed the relationship that people had had until that that time with the telephone as a communication device. The tools and technologies with which we coexist on a daily basis, and which we often take for granted were, at some point in time, innovations that were slowly incorporated into people's everyday practices. This anecdote serves as an ideal introduction to the reflections we would like to present here concerning the role that is played by information and communication technologies in different areas of our everyday activities, including scientific work. Technology has always been linked with the production of scientific knowledge, as part of its process and as a product of its activity, but its role has tended to be minimised and made invisible in the social sciences (and especially in qualitative methodologies), not to mention in the humanities. Far from envisaging technology as a revolutionary innovation or as an invisible, epistemologically neutral tool, we propose to reflect on the role of the technological in the process of social research and, very particularly, to rethink the relation between method and object of study in the creation of knowledge, based on our experience of ethnographic field work in the social and cultural study of digital technologies, or the *new media*.

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We, the two authors of this article, belong to Mediaccions[1], a research team in which for some time we have been developing a proposal that could be visualised like a Moebius strip: on one hand, the subject of our research has been digital technologies (of mediation, communication and cultural production), and their interrelationship with the social, and on the other, we have been intensive users of those same technologies, and have used them as tools for generating knowledge (for gathering data, disseminating results, etc.). Our need to provide ourselves with new analytical techniques and methods to collect data on the cultural and social study of digital technologies represents part of our reflective concern for the development of social scientific knowledge and, specifically, the way in which method and object of study articulate new forms of knowledge production (Hine, 2005; Wouters and Beaulieu, 2009). The qualitative approach of our research and our production of empirical data is fundamentally based on the case studies and intensive ethnographic fieldwork.

The potential of this methodological approach lies not so much in the generalisation of specific results as in the possibility of extracting common elements of reflection through a comparison of various research projects that apparently belong to different thematic and disciplinary fields. In this way, we accept the multidisciplinary, and plurifocal nature of our research study, and this can be appreciated from the variety of the different studies that have been carried out within the group; for example, work has been done on collaborative practices in audiovisual production (Roig, 2009), audiovisual self-production and the transformations of the home video (Ardèvol and San Cornelio, 2007), body and personal and gender identity in digital environments (Gómez, 2003; Enguix and Ardèvol, 2011), social movements, political action and digital technologies (Grillo, 2008; Estalella, 2011; Lanzeni, 2012), practices in digital photography and sociality processes (Gómez, 2012), etc. In this way, we organise the construction of different objects of study through the development of methodological reflection and the search for new theoretical perspectives for contemporary social research. What follows, therefore, is based on a joint experience of the need to understand technology as an tool of research and transformation of the actual practice of research. Regardless of the *novelty* of a particular technology, methodological *innovation* stems from the way in which we integrate it into our practices, and what we expect from it.

Expanded research

The use of information and communication technologies transforms the field of scientific production in very different ways, and a number of authors have suggested that we should use the terms *e-science* and *e-research* to signify these changes. For instance, in the opinion of Wouters and Beaulieu (2006), the consolidation of an *e-science* in natural sciences is owing to the increasing central importance in its processes of the use of technological tools for obtaining results, and that this is a result of the convergence of three technologies that are different but interrelated: large-scale communication networks, mass databases and distributed computation.

In the case of social research, to date, we are not talking about large-scale equipment, but of the formation of international scientific networks, online publication, interconnected libraries and increasing

[1.] Mediaccions is currently focusing on the study of digital culture and the transformations of social and cultural practices through technological mediations, especially those related to the Internet and the new media. The study of digital culture, as we understand it, includes a heterogeneous collection of actors, practices, material apparatus and narratives related with contemporary cultural production, which we explore from an empirical, qualitative and interdisciplinary perspective (Ardèvol (coord.), 2011).

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access to open source information, as well as the gradual introduction of digital tools into a technological ecology that ranges from notebook and pencil to audio and video recorders, and includes computers, the Internet, mobile phones and computer applications for processing data and organising information, by which we refer rather to *e-research* as research that is extended or enlarged through the new digital media (Estalella and Ardèvol, 2011). The *e-research* also includes new academic practices such as bibliographic search[2] (*Google Scholar*, for instance), collecting qualitative and quantitative data through surveys, interviews, network analyses, focus groups, etc. over the Internet, or using the Internet as a new way of presenting research results (Dicks, Soyinka and Coffey, 2006), as well as an essential tool for participating in academic networks. What is striking is the exponential rise in the number of social research "applications"; these have succeeded in establishing new ways of carrying out scientific work and creating "personal research portals" (Peña, 2008).

The underlying issue raised by these new terms is to what extent we are witnessing a *revolution* in the new ways of conducting science. But once again, we would like to distance ourselves, right now, from these significations of a science that is *new* thanks to new devices and infra-structures, to move towards the more day-to-day practice of research into social sciences, and to ask ourselves how we have acknowledged the role of technologies in our epistemic forms. In short, we are suggest-ing that a clear link exists between the technological tools we use (and, in some cases, analyse), the narratives we develop about them (and with them) and the theoretical approach that we devise, and furthermore that it is through this link that technology can help us to transform our scien-tific practices (and not in a uniform way).

We will now proceed to analyse ethnography's progress as a method of research applied to the study of the Internet as a paradigmatic case, where we can explore this connection between technologies used, objects of study constructed and theories developed. We will do so, firstly, by showing how the ethnographic approach to studies on "life on screen" emerged and adapted, and how it transformed over time, and in close relation to data-gathering technologies and the platforms used for the interaction; and secondly, by reflecting on the Internet as object and method.

From virtual ethnography to digital ethnography

We will now go on to focus on the case of how communication and information technologies have been dealt with as objects of study from an ethnographic standpoint, and how the different approaches to this object of study also correspond to subsequent technological transforma-tions and developments, as well as the advent of a whole wide range of new online methodologies.

Ethnography, as the descriptive knowledge of a people, nation or ethnic group, has its roots in the travel journals of the first explorers and other documents of a colonial nature (Pujadas and Comas, 2004; Hammersley, 1990). Many of these documents were later systematised by the earliest anthropologists[3], but it was not until the work of Malinowski and Boas,

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2. To give just one simple example. Since Google Scholar has been incorporated into the electronic libraries of different universities and databases, bibliographic search has become much easier. The same applies with press and documen-tary searches or, in other areas, the use of blogs for presenting scien-tific results. Quite simply, the use of electronic mail has meant that scientific practice without technolo-gical tools has become unthinkable.

3. James Clifford notes: "before the late 19th century, the ethnographer and the anthropologist, the descrip-tor-translator of customs and the constructor of general theories on humanity were different persons" (1991: 46), in reference to the way in which anthropologists did not gather their data by themselves, but by using reports, documents and interviews carried out by others.

in the early 20th century, that fieldwork was specified as such, featuring the presence of the researcher on the ground and the development of the technique of participatory observation.

Ethnography is a method that involves the researcher immersing him/herself in the world he/she is studying, and attempting to describe it, bearing in mind the viewpoint of the people who live there. It became the main tool of anthropological knowledge in the study of non-industrialised societies. Later on, during post-colonialism, it began to be used not only to study hunter-gatherer and agricultural cultures and peoples, but also modern, western societies[4]. Guber notes that "the history of ethnographic fieldwork is associated, in anthropology, with the study of exotic cultures, and in sociology, with the marginal segments of the actual society" (2001: 23). However, other disciplines such as psychology and education have incorporated ethnographic methods into their studies, and today anthropology carries out ethnographic studies on all types of societies and social groups, whether majority or minority, hegemonic or marginalised. At present, ethnography is a trans/interdisciplinary method in social sciences with an epistemological approach based on three perspectives: the holistic (that is, it seeks to understand the culture using a global, complete view); the cultural (basing its analysis on the manifestations that give a particular collective the sense of being a group); and the approach of the actor (Guber, 2001). This panorama has become even more diversified with emerging objects of study in the Information Society.

Since the emergence of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and the boom in Internet use, academics and institutions have also become interested in studying the social processes that go with the aforementioned technologies[5]. The establishing of discourses on these objects of study and the growth in interdisciplinary interest also prompted a methodological and epistemological reflection on how these phenomena should be studied.

One could say that there have been three different stages in the connection between ethnographic methods and Internet research, which we could call Cyberspace Ethnographies, Internet Ethnographies and Ethnographies of the Digital. Though these stages could be differentiated into short time periods (the 1990s for the first, from the year 2000 onwards for the second, and more or less since 2005 for the third), the fact is that the three coexist, even today. What is hard to contest is that they represent three consecutive stages in the link between ethnographic methodology and the objects of study related to digital technologies.

Cyberspace Ethnographies

Some of the first theoretical concepts for understanding and researching Internet-related phenomena stemmed from the literature and informative texts. This point is important given that, in some way, such concepts methodologically guided the type of research –both qualitative and ethnographic– that was developed in the early years of Internet research. In another text (Gómez Cruz, 2007), an analysis of the creation of these "metaphors" as theoretical concepts is made. One of those concepts was particularly used as the basis for the others: cyberspace. The defini-

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4. For a reflection on the ethnographic object of study of contemporary anthropology, see Guber and Rosato (1986).

5 For an historical analysis of the methodologies used to analyse the objects of study related to CMC, see Wellman, 2004; Silver, 2000; 2004; Silver & Massanari, 2006.

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tion of cyberspace given by its creator, Canadian novelist William Gibson, was as follows:

"A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts […] A graphical representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer and human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the non-space of the mind, clusters and constellations of data […], the actual land of the virtual, where all the media join (flow) together and surround us" (1984: 30).

The consequence of this concept (which was later used by activists such as John Perry Barlow and academics like Michael Benedikt to refer to the "space" made possible by connecting to the Internet) was that it began to be used almost as a synonym for the Internet in both the popular imaginary and among academics interested in the phenomenon of the Internet,.

Along the same lines, in 1994 the ex-hippie journalist Howard Rheingold published a book that brought a second powerful metaphor into being: *The virtual community*. Given that there was a (cyber)space in existence, it was logical to think that (virtual) communities could be generated within it. Meanwhile, Sherry Turkle (1997) coined a third concept, that of *virtual identity*. If there were communities that shared a space, and if people generated an identity there that was their own and distinct, then it seemed that there was a clear need to study these communities ethnographically. But above all, the idea was prioritised that, as the nature of these communities was specifically "virtual", it was enough to study them by only considering "on-screen life". That is, it was sufficient to analyse the interaction that was originated in cyberspace and to participate in the forums, chats, etc. that were studied.

In those days, communication by computer was textual and, therefore, anonymity seemed to be an intrinsic characteristic of the systems which were also very limited in terms of their technical possibilities. Steiner expressed it well in his famous (and much-cited) cartoon that shows two dogs in front of a computer, one saying to the other: "On the Internet nobody knows that you're a dog". The combination was obvious; if connecting to Internet was like "entering a cyberspace", and alternative identities could be generated (the socialisation of which would create virtual communities), then it was logical to consider that these new communities could be studied, just like primitive peoples had been studied in the early days of anthropology. This was mainly for two reasons: firstly, it was a field of research of which anthropologists knew nothing, a "virgin culture" (just like the jungle peoples were for the first explorers), and secondly, because the mediated interaction seemed to give rise to new "genres" of discourse (Mayans, 2002). Thus, there was a whole series of texts that advocated and proposed mechanisms for creating "virtual ethnographies" (Paccagnella, 1997[6]; Ward, 1999; Hamman, 1997, etc.); ethnographies which proposed that observing textual communication on platforms such as BBS, chats and forums was the appropriate method for describing and explaining the manifestations of these "cyber-cultures". And what is more important, thereby demonstrating that those communities were *real*, even though they did not possess a physical location.

[6] Pacagnella's text, titled "Getting the Seats of Your Pants Dirty: Strategies for Ethnographic Research on Virtual Communities", represented a nod toward that famous phrase by Robert Park from the Chicago School, who proposed visiting whorehouses, shantytowns and luxury hotels: "In short, go and get the seat of your pants dirty in real research".

However, the proposals concerning ethnographic research on cyberspace seemed to be far removed from the discussions on ethnography as a method and the difficulty of constructing the field of research that were being debated in anthropology in the late 1980s; for example, the problematisation of the concept of community (Amit, 2002), or the emergence of multi-situated ethnographies (Marcus, 1995). And all this in spite of claims that placed reflections on cyberspace in relation to the disciplinary discussions ongoing at that time (for example, the anthropologist Arturo Escobar (1994) published a text in which he proposed a thorough reflection on the transformations that computer, information and biological technologies were bringing with them in terms of culture in its broadest sense). Even though this text was widely cited, it did not appear to fuel a debate on the validity of studying a technological platform and what happens *there* as a society in itself. Another text that proposed something similar, also produced by an anthropologist, was by David Hakken (1999: 3), who propounded the idea of the study of cyberspace not as "invented discourses on these new "natives", but based on extending the participation and observation of new ways of life to introduce an intelligible order into the conversation".

Meanwhile, and in line with the above, in anthropological research studies the idea of fieldwork in a community linked to one single territory had been under question for some time with the proposal of multi-sited ethnographies (Marcus, 1995; Hannerz, 2003). This disconnection, among the pioneering proposals for a virtual ethnography and the broadest debates within the discipline, could be largely a result of the fact that the first studies carried out on the Internet (using that approach of researching a space that was "separated" from the physical one) were carried out by young academics, particularly graduates in the discipline of communications[7] (Jones 1995; 1997). Meanwhile, one could also say that, in that period, significant importance was granted to technologies and their possibilities. Thus, Slater (2002: 534) pointed out that, in this type of research, four of the technologies' properties were established in relation to the capacity of these technologies to create social spaces: virtuality, spatiality, disintegration and decorporealisation. That is to say, few anthropologists and sociologists seemed to be interested at that time in "cyberspace", as many of them were even questioning whether it represented a true anthropological object of study. This was, to a great extent, the result of the scepticism with which this communication medium had been received in many academic spheres, mainly because no-one could see how it would be possible to apply the ethnographic method, based on personal contact and prolonged stays, to these virtual environments, which were characterised by anonymity and opposition to the physical world. But it was precisely the ethnographic method that was applied, to show that interaction mediated by computer was just as authentic and filled with meaning as face-to-face interaction could be.

In this way, the link between the emerging subjects and the theoretical-methodological position used to study them resulted in the consequence that the technologies necessary for collecting data were those of computer screens and textual analysis, given that the interaction took place through textual mediations and in specific socialisation spaces that were *independent* from the physical space. Ethnographic studies showed that it was possible to speak of a culture that had emerged in cyberspace which had its own forms of social regulation and had developed its own codes of conduct, in such a way that its participants found meaning and

7. Murphy (1999), in a reflection on the use of the ethnographic method in cultural studies of media, suggests that even though a significant corpus of ethnographic works was created in studies on audiences, "theorisation exercises" were preferred to the carrying out of field work.

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developed collective identities and feelings of shared belonging similar to those that took place in physical communities. Cyberspace and cyberculture had been established as an object of study, as well as the different forms of virtual identity. The problem, however, was that the users of these spaces did not believe that the virtual world they inhabited would radically transform their way of being in the world and, in fact, many studies from that period showed that the differences and inequalities of the real world were being reproduced in cyberspace (Nakamura, 2002).

Internet ethnographies

Since the year 2000, and especially following the publication of *The Internet: an ethnographic approach* by Miller and Slater, and *Virtual Ethnography* by Christine Hine, a shift has taken place in the conceptualisation of the Internet as a "world apart". These three researchers, with their experience of research into the material culture, economic processes and social science studies, started to abandon the idea of a homogenous cyberspace, independent of local cultural contexts. In the case of Miller and Slater, the unit of analysis is not a virtual community, but the island-nation of Trinidad and the use that its citizens make of the Internet in different areas of their social, individual and collective lives. The object of study is enlarged to include the intersections and interrelations between the Internet and everyday life, thus rejecting the idea of a de-territorialised Internet and a globally homogenous cyberculture. Meanwhile, Hine takes a specific case with a transnational resonance as her unit of analysis – the trial in the USA of an English nanny accused of murdering a child. The object of study in this case is not the Internet as a culture, but the Internet as a tool of social communication. These and other studies give rise to the idea that instead of a culture that is autonomous and separated from *the physical*, we are now beginning to speak in terms of *online/offline* as a way of acknowledging the multiple connections and close links between the two spheres of interrelation. Thus the term *virtual* is replaced by that of *online,* and any reference to the physical world as the *real one* is avoided, describing them instead as *offline* interactions. However, even after all this, it still proves problematic (Slater, 2002). Meanwhile, the demography and uses of the Internet also changed: there was a significant increase in participation by different groups and societies in the Net following the Internet's incorporation into the most mundane, everyday activities, and this coincides with the fact that it has become known as the Web 2.0 (Wellman and Haythornthwaite, 2002; Bakardjieva, 2005). Academics then began to acknowledge that ethnographic fieldwork had to be carried out *inside* and *outside* the screen. Instead of assuming that *online* and *offline* were separate spheres, they searched for the interrelations between one and the other. As Bakardjieva (2008: 54) explains: "the Internet is precisely that place where the *online* meets up with the *offline*. Studying it should mean keeping sight of both sides at the same time, especially because every so often the Internet is only a bridge between one *offline* and the other"[8].

In this way, the technological tools necessary for carrying out research on this second stage went beyond the *online* interaction, thereby problematising the *screen* as the field of study. Internet ethnographies were no longer carried out *on* the screen, but *about* the screen and its relations with people in specific spheres and contexts.

[8]. It is interesting to note that in 1999, George Legrady, an artist and digital art theorist, proposed something very similar: "In the process of interacting with the digital world, we can consider the real space as the place where our bodies come into contact with technological devices through which we experience the virtual space" (cited by Lehmann, 2009: 37).

Digital ethnography

The third phase in the connection between the ethnographic method and research into communication technologies seems to have been established over the past few years. The link between the collecting of data *online* and *offline* is not only acknowledged, it is also theorised and seeks to integrate itself as a whole into ethnographic works (Sade-Beck, 2008; Leander and McKim, 2003; Jordan, 2009). Meanwhile, the technological panorama has also evolved, and is no longer a situation of computers connected up to the Internet and its platforms, but of new devices that have made the panorama even more complex: Wi-Fi networks, mobile phones, video game consoles and, in general, the "communicative ecosystem" has been almost completely digitalised. Thus, and especially from the use of the mobile phone (which represents a much more complex, liminal interface), it has become clear that the distinction between online and offline was not in fact ontologically constructed, but also discursively. As a result, ethnographies from this latter period seem to have been created "beyond the screen".

The concerns and subjects in this third stage have changed; for example, after initially focusing on questions about identity games in cyberspace, now the emphasis is placed on trying to understand privacy issues, content production and mediated socialisation. The topics are expanding, and technological mediation is used to try to understand the culture's broader phenomena and their links with digital practices.

What is striking is that the distinction between virtual and real appears to be reconstructed to the extent that ethnographies exist which appeal to it as an epistemological and methodological response to the challenges of "virtual worlds". Thus, we find new, exclusively *online* ethnographies (Boellstorff, 2008; Pearce, 2009) that are explained because the authors present the study of "virtual cultures" linked once again to "territories", both in Second Life and in mass, multiplayer online games. Corneliussen and Rettberg (2008: 1) clarify this position with a metaphor: "Being new in the culture of *World of Warcraft* can be compared to being an immigrant in a foreign culture", and some authors suggest that these phenomena can be studied as "subcultures" (Gelder, 2007). While in the beginning Internet was considered to represent a world apart owing to its "intrinsic" technological features, now it is argued that if this is the case, it is thanks to the efforts made by social actors to construct a world apart in such settings; the independence of cyberspace is not something that is given to us by technology, but something that people seek in technology. The independence and neutrality of the 'network of networks' represents today a struggle and championing of certain social movements based around the idea of a free culture, or that the market should not destroy the horizontal, anarchist and hacker principles that inspired the actual birth of the Internet.

Finally, at present, the use of the Internet is so widespread and complex that to attempt to describe one single platform (even a mass, multiple one, such as Facebook) would be risky, owing to the multiplicity of applications and overlaps involved in its uses, with the occasional exception such as "Tales from Facebook", located in one single country (Miller, 2011). We could say that nowadays, any social science object of study will involve the Internet, and that there are very few fields of study that

do not involve the Internet, given that it permeates almost every sphere of social, personal and collective life. This is true to the extent that the researchers specialising in such studies who belong to the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) stressed, at their 2008 conference, the importance of continuing to construct Internet as a specific object of study, in the same way that while at previous social science conferences there was a specific section dedicated to Internet studies, such as the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA), now, any research into media and audiences should include the Internet in its field of study. And the same goes for so many other research fields in the areas of the economy, politics, health, the study of migration processes and research into cities and urban development.

In this broad panorama, we no longer speak of virtual ethnography or cyber ethnography: Instead, other adjectival expressions are proposed, such as "collective ethnography" (Hine, 2007), given that what demarcates the field of study is the different connections that the subjects trace inside and outside the Net, or "digital ethnography", to refer to the specificity of ethnographic methodology when carried out on the Internet, even if it is not ended or exhausted in this.

On one hand, we can say that nowadays, Internet is no longer an actual object of study, well demarcated and delineated. It has now become one part of the objects of study used by any researcher of contemporary societies, even though, as we shall see, its conceptualisation continues to pose major challenges. On the other hand, the methodology developed for Internet studies can be extrapolated and widened to other objects of study; that is, it can be valid for studying on or through the Internet specific issues that intersect with it, such as the representation of youth cultures on the Internet, the current structure of the job market, alternative economies, and the knowledges that are exchanged over the Internet concerning bringing up children, home cooking or traditional fishing, etc. And so, while studies on the Internet seem to be seeking new conceptualisations of their object of study, the methods that have been initiated are still open to development, and have already come to be part of the methodological baggage that any social researcher should use, or at least, consider and bear in mind when it comes to planning their research. At present, it seems unlikely that any ethnography could be devised (and especially if it is on urban groups) without taking into account its technological forms of mediation (Díaz de Rada, 2010).

Digital methodologies

A different discussion, but one that is closely related to the reflection on objects of research and the technologies used for their study, is not about objects of study *on* the Internet but about the Internet's capabilities as a research method. Christine Hine (2000) suggests that the Internet, as an object of study, has been theorised and analysed in two ways: as a culture (the Internet's cultural forms) and as a cultural artefact (cultural practices on the Internet). By 'cultural form', we refer to "cultures characteristic of the Internet"; that is, autonomous, specific cultural forms on the Internet, *Second Life* being the paradigmatic example. Hine (2008: 11) herself notes that these ethnographies can be "about the mobility between contexts of production and use, between the *online*

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and the *offline*, and they can creatively deploy forms of attraction to see how these sites are socially constructed and at the same time social constructs". As for cultural practice, Hine propounds that just like any other creation, the Internet can be analysed as a "cultural artefact". That is, observable practices exist that are not necessarily feature of the Internet but which take on a different dimension online, such as making videos for screening on Youtube and photography on Flickr. In the latter case, the object of research are the practices, and what the researcher does is to follow the subjects in their practices and, in this respect, the Internet becomes just another element in the composition of its object of study, but not the main focal point.

Meanwhile, Annette Markham (2003) analyses Internet studies from another perspective. The author suggests that the Internet has been viewed on one hand as a "field of study" and on the other as a research tool. The former would analyse how the Internet and its platforms have been the "context" for observing different phenomena. Thus, studies have been carried out (and not only ethnographic studies but qualitative ones in general) on specific platforms: Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, etc. In this sense, Internet has become the "empirical field" that we ethnographers call the *fieldsite* (the place in which the fieldwork is carried out), and that to a great extent corresponds to the research context where the interactions with the subjects of study or *informants* take place. This was in fact one of the struggles for the first Internet ethnographies: to show that it was possible to engage with the subjects of study on the Internet, to establish a *rapport* or trust through computer-mediated communication, and even to carry out in-depth interviews by means of technologies such as chats. It was argued at the time that the data obtained in this way were not so reliable, given that the personal data of the interviewees (who usually acted under pseudonyms or virtual identities) could not always be compared and contrasted, and that furthermore the data lacked the information provided by physical features and non-verbal communication. These points are still called into question today, as the Internet is not fully accepted as a field and as a data-gathering tool, and especially by researchers who have not experimented with these techniques.

On the other hand, the Internet has also been used as a data-collection tool, though it has not been considered an "object" or a "field" of research; especially with non-ethnographic qualitative methodologies, given that in the case of ethnography, as we have said, the fieldwork is the basis for the data gathering. However, other researchers have also successfully adapted the techniques of structured or semi-structured interviews or group discussions (focus group) to the Internet. In this respect, the research context –that is to say, the "place" where the data are collected– does not enter directly into consideration for the research, rather, the information that we obtain through these techniques. To give one example, in one *focus group*, efforts are made to ensure that the location where the discussion takes place is as neutral and cosy as possible, given that the context itself does not enter into the analysis of what the subjects of the research are expressing, and the same goes for when an interview is set up using an instant messaging system. There are different publications that act from this perspective as guides for using the Internet and its possibilities as a research tool (Mann and Stewart, 2000; O'Connor and Madge, 2003; Jones, 2000; Hine, 2005; Fielding, Lee and Blank, 2008; Dicks, Mason, Coffey and Atkinson, 2005). That is why it is

important to stress that the methods and tools should be specific for the objects of study proposed. To what extent does the fact of *adapting* an interview to mediated communication *transform* our practice of conducting science? Our proposal is that the *transformation* takes place when we act reflectively, when we rethink our object of study and the way that we make knowledge.

Conclusion

A reflection on digital methodologies has become necessary due to the Internet's growing role as a part of academic research processes. Beyond the fact that interest has increased in the Internet as an object of study, mediation technologies increasingly form part of the research dynamics, and because of this we must consider their epistemic, ontological and ethical implications.

Until now we have seen that a specific method –namely, ethnography– has been adapted to different objects of study, and that the changes produced in their theoretical conceptualisation have also involved methodological readjustments. We have also stressed the importance at all times that the configuration of the Internet as an object of study should correspond to how it is imagined by its users; that is, how the ontologies of each historic moment in the development of Internet correspond to specific academic conceptions of same. Social researchers also take part in constructing the Internet, not only in the discursive, narrative, imaginary sphere, but also with proposals that have a correlation in technological developments that are incorporated into their actual object of study. As we have attempted to demonstrate in this article, what the Internet *is* does not depend exclusively on its technological features, it also depends on what it *is* at each moment in time for its designers, researchers and users.

The type of knowledge that we acquire depends on *how* we know. Social knowledge is a large part of experiential knowledge. At least, it sets the epistemological basis for ethnography and, specifically, for the method of participatory observation, which invites us, specifically, not only to observe a given cultural system from outside, but to *feel it* from within, to participate in it, thus socialising the researcher in the cultural environment that he/she wants to understand. This represents a high level of self-reflexivity, given that we have to learn a specific cultural logic from our participatory experience, and this usually also implies a reflection on the technologies of the environment being described. For ethnography, the research context is not a neutral field or a laboratory, instead it forms part of its data and, therefore, the way of knowing a technology involves having to use it, even if one does not aim to achieve *expertise*. It is here, therefore, where different ways of knowing in social sciences bifurcate, and even within the actual qualitative methodologies that have been analysed. We must be reflective, as the methodological decisions we take help to develop not only our object of study, but also what we manage to say about them. This reflexivity also extends to the field of ethics, which does not only consist of following a few deontological guidelines, instead it is a question of attitude and of understanding what the challenges are that are presented by technology-mediated interaction (Estalella and Ardèvol, 2007).

To what extent does the fact of adapting an interview to mediated communication transform our practice of conducting science? Our proposal is that the transformation takes place when we act reflectively, when we rethink our object of study and the way that we make knowledge

Social researchers also take part in constructing the Internet, not only in the discursive, narrative, imaginary sphere, but also with proposals that have a correlation in technological developments that are incorporated into their actual object of study

While the example of digital ethnography might seem specific to a series of particular objects of study, we decided to present it here for debate because Internet has become such an indispensable tool for social research. And so, as with the example of the rotary dial telephone with which this text began, digital ethnography has become "invisiblised" in the everyday practice of making calls, and now our young people are rediscovering it; thus the proposal of this text is to maintain a constant reflectivity, not only toward our objects of research and the theories we use to explain them, but also toward the tools we employ to research them.

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