

# common notions

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### part I: workers-inquiry, co-research, consciousness-raising

Throughout contemporary history, it is possible to trace a persistent distrust, on the part of movements for social transformation, towards certain forms of knowledge production and distribution. On the one hand, a distrust towards those sciences that aid a better organisation of command and exploitation, as well as distrust towards the mechanisms of capture of *minor knowledges* (underground, fermented in uneasiness and insubordinations, fed by processes of autonomous social co-operation or rebelliousness<sup>1</sup>) on the part of those agencies in charge of guaranteeing governmentality. On the other hand, in many cases, there has been distrust towards those supposedly “revolutionary” ideological and iconic forms of knowledge and a distrust of possible intellectualist and idealist mutations of knowledges that initially were born at the heart of the movements themselves. This distrust has led to impotence in some occasions. In those processes of struggle and self-organisation that have been the most vivid and dynamic, there has been an incentive to produce their own knowledges, languages and images, through procedures of articulation between theory and praxis, starting from a concrete reality, proceeding from the simple to the complex, from the concrete to the abstract. The goal is that of creating an appropriate and operative theoretical horizon, very close to the surface of the ‘lived’, where the simplicity and concreteness of elements from which it has emerged, achieve meaning and potential.

Today, in the dawn of the third millennium, where the reality of our mothers and grandfathers seems to have burst into pieces before us (with the defeat of the anti-systemic movements from the post 1968 period, the end of the world defined by Yalta, the disappearance of the subject “workers’ movement”, the end of the industrial paradigm, informatic and technological innovation, automation, the deterritorialisation and reorganisation of production, the

financialization and globalisation of the economy, the affirmation of a state-form based on war as a vector of normative production)<sup>2</sup> and when the only thing that remains constant is change itself -dizzying change-, certain actions acquire a sense of urgency and necessity. The necessity of getting rid of fetishes and ideological backgrounds, too concerned with Being and essence, and the necessity of building operative maps, cartographies in process, emerging from dynamics of self-organisation, in order to be able to intervene in the real, and maybe to transform it. They are maps to orient and move ourselves within a landscape of relationships and devices of domination undergoing accelerated mutation. But they are also maps that can help us to situate ourselves in this hyper-fragmented landscape, to identify a point of departure and a link where the production of knowledge and subjectivity converge in the construction of the common, shaking the real.

This necessity is being reinforced, even further if possible, by the centrality that ‘knowledge’ and a whole series of generic human faculties (language, affects, communicability, social skills, playfulness and co-operation...) have achieved in determining the economic value of any business. In more general terms, they have acquired a centrality in competing in the upper echelons of the global economy, becoming strategic resources - from the capitalist point of view- for profit making and an interface of a flexible, delocalising and networked economy. Linked to all these transformations (at least in what concerns labour) is the figure of the *virtuoso*: that worker, until now taken as unproductive, that does not leave behind him a tangible product, but a task based on execution or *performance* -favouring and managing the flow of information, networking and harmonising relationships, producing innovative ideas, etc. The figure of the *virtuoso* challenges by its own actions traditional divisions between

Labour, Action and Intellect (Hannah Arendt): the intellect, put at the service of labour, becomes public, mundane, and its character as a common good rises to the fore. At the same time, labour, embedded in the intellect, becomes activity-without-end product, pure *virtuosity* executed in relationship to the *other*, to the *others* that compose the networks of production. Finally, in the merging of intellect and work, and since both of them adopt properties that until now were specific to action, action itself is left completely eclipsed, after its specificity has been erased<sup>3</sup>.

Related to all of this (not as a univocal or direct consequence, but rather as a complex and paradoxical relationship), a peculiar proliferation of experiments with -and search among- the realms of thought, action and enunciation is found within social networks that seek to transform the current state of things (and within a social formation that is already, in itself, virtuous, since it is forced to be so in order to survive). They are initiatives that explore: 1) how to break with ideological filters and inherited frameworks; 2) how to produce knowledge that emerges directly from the concrete analyses of the territories of life and co-operation, and experiences of uneasiness and rebellion; 3) how to make this knowledge work for social transformation; 4) how to make operative the knowledges that already circulate through movements' networks; 5) how to empower those knowledges and articulate them with practices... and finally, 6) how to appropriate our intellectual and mental capacities from the dynamics of labour, production of profit, and or governmentality and how to ally them with collective (subversive, transformative) action, guiding them towards creative interventions.

Certainly, these questions are not new, although the context in which they are asked may be. In fact, many of the current experiences/experiments that are asking these questions, have looked back, searching for historical references. They are searching for those examples where the production of knowledge was immediately and fruitfully linked to processes of self-organisation and struggle. In this sense, four inspirational tendencies are possible to identify in recent history: worker inquiries and co-research, feminist epistemology and women's consciousness-raising groups, institutional analysis, and participatory action research or

PAR. All of these examples, deserve (due to the wealth of accumulative experience) at least a brief overview, in the style of a historical *excursus* that allows us to situate current discussions and trajectories of militant and/or action research. We will dedicate large part of this prologue to this historical journey.

## SOME SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

### Worker Inquiry and Co-Research

The worker survey, where workers themselves use the techniques of academic industrial sociology (a sociology that was developed and used in order to have better command over factories and neighbourhoods), begins at least with Karl Marx himself. In 1881, *Revue Socialiste* asks Marx to elaborate an inquiry about the conditions of the French proletariat. Marx accepts this assignment immediately, because he thinks it is important for the French worker movement and its sects, so given to empty language and easy utopic thinking, to situate their struggle in a more realistic terrain. So, Marx writes up a peculiar inquiry with more than one hundred questions, thousands of copies of which will be distributed throughout the factories of the country. Why peculiar? Because this inquiry denies a neutral approach to the world of labour, it is against an approach exclusively looking for the extraction of useful information, or for the verification of certain facts. This inquiry situates itself, openly, on one side (the side of the workers' reality), with questions that would be judged as biased by an empiricist sociologist. It is not about pulling facts out from direct experience, but rather, it is in the first place oriented to make the workers think critically about their concrete reality<sup>4</sup>.

The idea of "co-research," that is, a form of research that tears down the division between the subject-researcher and object-researched will not appear until the fifties in the United States. This appearance is linked, on the one side, to the effervescence of industrial sociology and the focus on human groups as a specific field of sociological inquiry (i.e. Elton Mayo's "human relations" sociology<sup>5</sup>); and on the other side, to the *worker's stories*<sup>6</sup>. However, these insights were considered exclusively from an academic sociological point of view. The Italian Alessandro Pizzorno, after importing it to Europe, helped to develop its

politicised dimension. Pizzorno, together with a group of Italian militant-intellectuals, (including Romano Alquati and Danilo Montaldi<sup>7</sup>) would begin to transform and radicalise these methods between 1966 and 1967 applying them practically to struggles in the province of Cremona.

During the sixties and the seventies, the use of worker inquiry and co-research spreads under different formats: it is used as a device to analyse forms of exploitation in the factory and neighbourhoods, as well as a mechanism to track forms of insubordination by teams from journals such as *Quaderni Rossi* and *Quaderni del territorio* (Italy) or groups such as *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (France). However on many occasions, these techniques were driven by workers' spaces themselves, in a more or less flexible way, without the intervention from theoreticians or "experts" external to the processes of self-organisation. These techniques were used as methods to construct platforms for struggle<sup>8</sup>. In the Spanish state, the journals of *Teoría y Práctica*, and *Lucha y Teoría* would develop their own forms of worker research, conceived to write the history of class struggle "narrated by its own protagonists" (as the subtitle to *Teoría y Práctica* put it).

From our point of view, it is worthwhile paying special attention to the uses of the worker-survey employed by Italian *operaismo* (*workerism* a section of the Italian workers' movement)<sup>9</sup>. The young *operaisti*, gathered in initially around the journal *Quaderni Rossi*<sup>10</sup>, attempted to explain the crisis of the workers' movement during the fifties and the early sixties. For the *operaisti*, it was not possible to interpret this lived crisis merely as a result of either the theoretical errors, or betrayals by the leadership, of leftist parties (an argument repeated by those orthodox elements of the communist and anarcho-syndicalist sections of the workers' movement). In contrast, the *operaisti* argued that the crisis had taken place because of the intense transformations, in the productive process and the composition of the labour force, introduced by the Scientific Organisation of Work. Thus, the use of the inquiry was intended to reveal a "new worker condition". Looking at the condition of these new subjects, how they could reopen spaces of conflict and reinvigorate workers' demands to become a central theme for the *operaisti's* practice and discourse.

However, divergences around the procedures and focus of the inquiry emerged from the beginning. As Damiano Palano tells us "a rather basic fracture emerged around the form and the goals of the survey, since the formation of the first *Quaderni Rossi* group. On the one side, there was the faction of "sociologists" (lead by Vittorio Rieser)<sup>11</sup>, and at that time the most numerous. This section understood the inquiry as a cognitive tool in order to understand a transformed worker reality, and oriented towards providing the tools for producing a theoretical and political renovation of the worker movement's official institutions. On the other side, we find Alquati and a few more (Soave and Gaparotto), who, based on factory experiences in the US and France, considered the inquiry as the basis for a political intervention oriented towards organising workers' antagonism. It was a considerable difference from the point of view of the concrete goals of the survey. The distance was even greater though in terms of method: in fact, while the first faction was actualising Marxist theory with themes and methods from North American industrial sociology, Alquati was proposing a kind of strategic research in the study of the factory"<sup>12</sup>.

What was this strategic inquiry about, proposed by Alquati, the one who had developed the method of co-research together with Danilo Montaldi, and who is remembered for using his bike to travel to the Fiat and Olivetti factories? What was the basis of this epistemological and methodological turn that was present in the most interesting uses of the worker-survey within the Italian *operaismo*? To put it shortly, the basis was a *theory of class composition*, which later on would be complemented by a *theory of worker self-empowerment* (or *auto-valorisation*). These concepts meshed with the Lukacs' inspired 'workers' theory', and with the 'Copernican revolution' inaugurated by Mario Tronti, another *operaista*. Tronti's implicit basis was that of *worker autonomy*. That is, a potential autonomy of the working class with respect to the capital. But let's go step by step.

The notion of class composition refers to the subjective structure of needs, behaviours and antagonist practices, sedimented through a long history of different struggles. The first development of this concept appears in the first writings by Alquati

published in *Quaderni Rossi*. However this first (“organic”) formulation will have to wait to be introduced in the *operaista* vocabulary. This happened when the journal *Classe Operaia*<sup>13</sup>, in its second year, decided to include a specific section with this same name (class composition), directed by Alquati himself.

But, what are the fundamental elements of the theory of class composition? Basically, they are three: 1) an idea of the existence of an underground and silent conflict continued on an everyday basis by workers against the capitalist organisation of labour; 2) the notion that the hierarchical organisation of business is in fact just a response to workers’ struggles; 3) an intuition that all cycles of struggle leave political sediments that become crystallised in the subjective structure of the labour force (as needs, behaviours and antagonistic practices), and that demonstrate certain quotas of rigidity and irreversibility.

Very soon, the theory of class composition would become more complex, drawing the distinction between “technical composition” and “political composition”. The first one refers to the situation of the labour force in an internal relation with capital during a concrete historical moment, and the second one to a set of (antagonistic) behaviours that, in that moment, define the class. However, some sections of the *operaisti*<sup>14</sup> killed the theoretical richness of this distinction and even the notion of class composition itself. They reduced the technical composition to a simple economic factor, and identified political composition with the party (and with worker movement’s ideologies and organisations). Nonetheless, the theory of self-empowerment as a process of class composition (developed by Antonio Negri in the seventies), helped consolidate a more complex interpretation: the definition of political composition as the product of conducts, traditions of struggle and concrete practices of refusing work (all of them exclusively material) developed by multiple subjects in a given historical moment and in a specific economic and social context.

The theories of class composition and self-empowerment have crucial consequences for worker inquiry. The group of “young socialist sociologists” writing in *Quaderni Rossi*, did not take them into account. For them, the inquiry was limited to considering the “effects” generated by the productive transformation over workers, over their physical and

psychological conditions, over their financial situation and over other particular aspects of life. However, the other segment working on the *operaista* survey, was encouraged by the idea of class composition as the product of historical sediments of preceding struggles, and at the same time, being constantly renewed by the process of self-empowerment rooted in the materiality of rebellious practices by multiple subjects of production. The inquiry then was conceived as departing from the consolidated levels of social antagonism in order to trace the underground, and frequently invisible, trajectory of everyday life uneasiness and insubordinations<sup>15</sup>.

This version of the worker inquiry implied a further step from the simple questionnaire towards a process of co-research: on the one hand, inserting militant-intellectuals, who were pursuing research into the object-territory (almost always the factory, and some times, neighbourhoods), transforming them into additional subject-agents of that territory. On the other hand, actively implicating the subjects who inhabit that territory (mainly workers, and sometimes, students and homemakers) in the research process, at the same time, would transform them into subject-researchers (not merely objects). When this double movement worked well, the knowledge production emerging from the research process mutually nurtured a self-empowerment process and the production of a rebel subjectivity in the factory and neighbourhoods.<sup>16</sup>

### Consciousness-Raising Women’s Groups and Feminist Epistemology

Although the antecedents could be traced back centuries -such as women’s informal meetings and experiences such as the *Black club women’s Movement* after the US war of secession (1865)<sup>17</sup> -consciousness-raising groups, in the strict sense, were born from the radical feminist movement in the US during the late sixties. Kathie Sarachild baptised the practice of collective analysis of oppression emerging from sharing women’s feelings and experiences in a group, as *consciousness-raising*. This was in 1967 in the framework of *New York Radical Women*.

Since their inception, consciousness-raising women’s groups aimed to focus on the self-awareness that women have about their

own oppression, in order to promote a political reinterpretation of their own life and establish bases for its transformation. Following radical feminist terminology, they aimed to “wake the latent consciousness.” Through the practice of consciousness-raising it was hoped that women would become experts in their own oppression, building a theory from personal and intimate experience, and not from the filter of previous ideologies. Besides that, this practice looked for recognition of the voices and experiences of a collective, which has been systematically marginalised and humiliated through history.

The slogan “the personal is political” was born from the same practice. It was through this slogan and others that recognition was demanded for consciousness-raising practice, based on historic struggles and revolutions, as a “scientific method”. As Kathie Sarachild herself said: “The decision to emphasise our own feelings and experiences as women and to test all generalisations and reading we did by our own experience was actually the scientific method of research. We were in effect repeating the 17th century challenge to science to scholasticism: ‘study nature, not books,’ and put all theories to the test of living practice and action. It was also a method of radical organising tested by other revolutions. We were applying to women and to ourselves as women's liberation organisers the practice a number of us had learned as organisers in the civil rights movement in the South in the early 1960's.”<sup>18</sup>

The promoters of consciousness-raising groups were certain that the only way to build a radical movement was starting *from the self*. This was yet another slogan popularised by the feminist movement: “It seemed clear that knowing how our own lives related to the general condition of women would make us better fighters on behalf of women as a whole. We felt that all women would have to see the fight of women as their own, not as something just to help ‘other women,’ that they would have to see this truth about their own lives before they would fight in a radical way for anyone.”<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, consciousness-raising groups were a mechanism to simultaneously produce truth and organise, theory and radical action against an oppressive gender reality. It was not a previous analytical phase limited in time, nor a goal in itself:

Consciousness-raising was seen as both a method for arriving at the truth and a means for action and organising. It was a means for the organisers themselves to make an analysis of the situation, and also a means to be used by the people they were organising and who were in turn organising more people. Similarly, it wasn't seen as merely a stage in feminist development which would then lead to another phase, an action phase, but as an essential part of the overall feminist strategy.<sup>20</sup>

Initially, the creation of consciousness-raising groups caused a big scandal, both from within the women's movement and from without. They were pejoratively labeled as “meetings for tea and cookies,” “gossip sessions,” or “gatherings of witches” (depending on particular tastes, misogynous traditions or prejudices). These spaces were the target of all kinds of accusations, and especially of not being political, but rather therapeutic and remaining at the individual level. The very slogan “the personal is political” was coined in response to these critical “torpedos” coming from all directions. This response had an affirmative and defiant spirit that questioned the bases of what until then was counted as “political.”

Despite the initial conflict, the practice of consciousness-raising spread like a wildfire: women's groups and organisations from all over the world, including those that initially were infuriated with the apolitical character of these “witches gatherings” (such as the National Organisation for Women), began to use the practice of consciousness-raising, adapting it to their needs. This occurred to such a point that a tendency towards the institutionalisation and formalisation of consciousness-raising emerged around 1970. This process changed the practice of consciousness-raising into a set of abstract methodological rules distanced from the objectives and concrete context of the movement in which they were born. In that regard, Sarachild would insist firmly that consciousness-raising does not constitute a “method,” but a critical weapon, adaptable to the goals of each struggle:

The paraphernalia of rules and methodology -the new dogma of ‘C-R’ that has grown up around

consciousness-raising as it has spread- has had the effect of creating vested interests for the methodology experts, both professional (for example, psychiatrists) and amateur. There have been a number of formalised 'rules' or 'guidelines' for consciousness-raising which have been published and distributed to women's groups with an air of authority and as if they represented the original program of consciousness-raising. But new knowledge is the source of consciousness-raising's strength and power. Methods are simply to serve this purpose, to be changed if they aren't working. [21](#)

In conclusion, the basis of consciousness-raising was only one, as simple as it was difficult to put into practice: "Analysing our experience in our personal lives and in the movement, reading about the experience of other people's struggles, and connecting these through consciousness-raising will keep us on the track, moving as fast as possible toward women's liberation." [22](#)

However, this excessive emphasis on the level of pure consciousness and the idea that a "latent consciousness" existed in all women about their oppression as women, ready to be made visible, made some groups believe in a "true consciousness." It was conceived as a pre-existent object instead of something to be generated. Following this notion, some groups focused more on the interpretation of oppression rather than in the dredging of underground practices of rejection and rebelliousness, less explicit and maybe, less "true" for those times. All things considered though, the practice of consciousness-raising was one of the central motors of the feminist movement of the seventies and allowed for the design of plans of action and demands directly connected with the experience of thousands of women: from the spectacular public burning of bras through which the *New York Radical Women* came to light, to the clandestine networks of family planning and self-management of health that flourished in many European countries and in the US. On top of that, many of the intuitions present in the formulation and practice of these meetings "with tea and cookies" would generate a whole feminist epistemology developed by

intellectual women from different disciplines since the seventies up until the present.

Tracing the trajectory of the different trends of feminist epistemology is beyond the scope of this paper. Sandra Harding though would attempt tracing just such a trajectory in 1986, with all the simplifications and reductions that such a classificatory operation implies. She distinguishes between theory from the feminist point of view, post-modern feminism, and empiricist feminism [23](#). On the other hand, it is a history developed mainly in the academic sphere, although with important effects in many scientific disciplines. All things considered though, we believe that it is worth mentioning, even if in a brief fashion, some of the common notions among those feminist trends. Especially the implicit intuitions in the practice of consciousness-raising that actually serve as inspiration for current initiatives of critical social research, militant research or action-research linked to movements' self-management dynamics.

In the first place, it is important to mention the thorough critique developed by feminist epistemology against the eye of current positivist science "that can see everything" and it is situated in "nowhere:" an image that, in reality, it is just the mask of a subject of knowledge that is largely masculine, white, heterosexual, and from a comfortable class position, who as such, occupies a dominant position and has concrete interests in controlling and ordering (over bodies, over populations, natural, social and mechanistic realities). The supposed neutrality from this kind of gaze is lead by a dualistic paradigm that solidifies the mind/body dichotomy completely, where mind dominates the bodily "deviations" and its affects, always associated with the feminine. In an effort to blast apart that disembodied subject of knowledge, without falling into relativist narratives, feminist epistemology proposes the idea of a subject of knowledge who is *embodied* and *rooted* in a concrete social structure. It is thus a subject who is sexualised, radicalised, etc. who produces *situated* -but no less objective- *knowledges*. On the contrary: as Donna Haraway writes "only partial perspective promises objective vision." This partial perspective demands a politics of localisation and an engagement with a concrete territory from which to speak, act and research [24](#). Directly related to this critique towards the

dominant scientific gaze, feminist epistemology makes special emphasis in the power relations at play in every kind of research, and in the consequent need for a social organisation of research based on the paradigm of *reflexivity* and criteria of transparency and democracy.

Finally, by recuperating an underground practice of all subaltern groups, practices and interrelation and narrative are valued as part of the processes of knowledge production and transmission.

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<sup>1</sup>Primary translators: Maria Isabel Casas-Cortés and Sebastian Cobarrubias. Editing translation team: *Notas Rojas Collective*, in particular Nate Holdren. This text was published under *Creative Commons* license which allows non-copy righted distribution or non-commercial use, and asks for authorship attribution. With the author's permission the translators have incorporated some complementary material in some of the sections (e.g. PAR) and additional references in the footnotes. About the notion of minor knowledges, see works by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, especially, *Mil Mesetas. Capitalismo y Esquizofrenia*, [A Thousands Plateaux: Capitalism and Schizophrenia] PreTextos, Valencia, 1997

<sup>2</sup> See Sánchez, Pérez, Malo and Fernández-Savater, "Ingredientes de una onda global", unpublished manuscript written in the framework of a research project called *Desacuerdos*: [www.desacuerdos.org](http://www.desacuerdos.org)

<sup>3</sup> Paolo Virno, "Virtuosismo y revolución. Notas sobre el concepto de acción política", in *Virtuosismo y revolución. La acción política en la era del desencanto, Traficantes de Sueños*, Madrid, 2003, pp. 89-116 [Available in English as "Virtuousity and Revolution," online at <http://www.16beavergroup.org/mtarchive/archives/000941.php>.]

<sup>4</sup> Yaak Karsunke and Gunther Wallraff, *Karl Marx. Encuesta a los Trabajadores*. Castellote ed., Madrid, 1973. [See in English, "A Worker's Inquiry," online at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/04/20.htm>.] In the first three sections of the survey, the questions are focused on analyzing the characteristics of exploitation itself, while the last section, is oriented to encourage workers to think about oppositional modes against their own exploitation.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Elton Mayo, *Problemas humanos de una civilización industrial* [Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization], Buenos Aires, Nueva Visión, 1972

<sup>6</sup> They are first person stories about the everyday experience in the factory. A beautiful example is the text by Paul Romano and Ria Stone, *El obrero americano*, about workers' conditions and the class-factory-society relationship (The American Worker, Bewick Editions, Detroit, 1972; originally published as a pamphlet by the *Johnson-Forest Tendency* of C.L.R. James and Raya Dunayevskaya in 1947, and translated to Italian by Danilo Montaldi. For more on this text and its importance, see Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically*, AK Press/AntiThesis, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Far from the figure of Gramsci's organic intellectual, these militant-intellectuals have a long trajectory of political involvement, including the formation of a group called Gruppo di Unitá Proletaria (Cremona, 1957-1962), active participation (especially by Alquati) in journals such as *Quaderni Rossi*, origin of Italian *operaismo*, and development of strong international relationships, (especially by Montaldi), with groups such as the French *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. Alquati, younger than Montaldi, would learn from him and from his international references (e.g. authors such as Daneil Mothé, Paul Romano or Martin Glaberman) to concede special importance to the everyday underground antagonisms coming from the networks of material communication built by workers against increasing factory control and "against working" (the foundations for more visual and explosive conflicts).

<sup>8</sup> See "Entre las calles, las aulas y otros lugares. Una conversación acerca del saber y de la investigación en /para la acción entre Madrid y Barcelona" ["Between the streets, classrooms and other places. A conversation around knowledge and research within and for action between Madrid and Barcelona"] in this same publication, (pp.133-167).

<sup>9</sup> (The best English language sources on *operaismo* are Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*, Pluto Press, 2002; and Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically*, AK Press/AntiThesis, 2000.)

<sup>10</sup> Funded and directed by the anomalous socialist dissident Raniero Panzieri. Publication period: 1961-1965

11 Alquati called them “young socialist sociologists”: besides Vittorio Rieser, other intellectuals participating in this trend were Dino de Palma, Edda Salvatori, Dario Lanzarno and Liliana Lanzardo.

12 Damiano Palano, “Il bandolo della matassa. Forza lavoro, composizione di classe e capitale sociale: note sul metodo dell’inchiesta,” en <http://www.intermax.com/temi/bandolo.html>. Translation and notes are author’s.

13 Publication period: 1964-1967. The editorial committee was formed by a good part of the *Quaderni Rossi* group (Mario Tronti, Romano Alquati, Alberto Asor Rosa and Antonio Negri). They had abandoned it because of disagreements with the faction of Raniero Panzieri.

14 For example, the one led by Massimo Cacciari who later on will become part of the Italian Communist Party.

15 See Damiano Palano: “Il bandolo della matassa”, cit.

16 For more information about the use of the inquiry and other aspects of Italian *operaismo*, from a point of view internal to the experience, see, among others: Guido Borio, Francesca Pozzi and Gigi Roggero, *Futuro anteriore. Dai “Quaderni Rossi” ai movimenti global: ricchezze e limiti dell’ operaismo italiano*, DeriveApprodi, Roma, 2002, y Nanni Balestrini and Primo Moroni, *L’Orda d’oro. 1968-1977: La grande ondata rivoluzionaria e creativa, politica ed esistenziale*, Feltrinelli, Milán, 1988. [See Steve Wright, “Children of a Lesser Marxism?”, <http://info.interactivist.net/article.pl?sid=04/12/16/1529237&mode=nested&tid=2> and Enda Brophy, “Italian Operaismo Face To Face”, <http://info.interactivist.net/article.pl?sid=04/11/23/156200&mode=nested&tid=9>

17 Blackclubwomen’s Movement was formed by association of mutual support, composed exclusively by women. They provided emotional and logistical support to slave women recently liberated.

18 Kathi Sarachild, “Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon”, in *Feminist Revolution*, Random House, New York, 1978, pp. 144-150. Digital version at <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/wlm/fem/sarachild/html>.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

23 Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1986. Authors such as Nancy Hartsock, Hilary Rose, Patricia Hill Collins and Dorothy Smith would represent the theory from the feminist points of view. Donna Haraway and Maria Lugones would contribute to postmodern feminism, and Helen Longino and Elizabeth Anderson to the critical empiricist feminism. With the passage of time, the borders between these three trends have become blurry as Sandra Harding predicted herself. For a brief (although encyclopedic) compilation of the state of question about feminist epistemology, see the beginning of “Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. See also Sandra Harding, *Is Science Multicultural?: Postcolonialisms, Feminisms and Epistemologies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1998.

24 Donna Haraway, “*Conocimientos situados: la cuestión científica en el feminismo y el privilegio de la perspectiva parcial*” en *Ciencia, cyborgs y mujeres. La reinención de la naturaleza*, Ediciones Cátedra, Madrid, 1995, p.326



## part II: institutional analysis, participatory action-research, militant research

### Institutional Analysis

Contemporaneous to feminist consciousness-raising groups[1], institutional analysis was born in France. It emerged from, while at the same time overcoming, both “institutional” pedagogy and psychotherapy. This birth occurred in the midst of great social upheaval and a generalized crisis of institutional power. According to institutional analysis, the “institution” is the form (at first, hidden) adopted by the schemes of production and reproduction of dominant social relations. The crisis of the institutional form opened a space which institutional analysis intended to explore. This sort of analysis starts from the institution itself in order to discover and analyze its material base, its history and that of its members, its role in the technical and social division of labor, its structural relationships, etc. How? Firstly, by recognizing the false neutrality of the (psycho)analyst or pedagogue, and the fact that any and all analytical or educational projects imply an intervention. Second of all, liberating the “social word,” collective expression and the “politics” (or even better, *micropolitics*) of desires, by implicating each and every one of the members of the institution in the process of analysis. As Felix Guattari writes in this regard:

Neutrality is a trap: one is always compromised. It is more important to be aware of this in order for our interventions to be the least alienating as possible. Instead of conducting a politics of subjection, identification, normalization, social control, semiotic management of the people with whom we relate, it is possible to do the opposite. It is possible to choose a micropolitics that consists in pressuring, despite the fact that we've been conferred little strength, in favor of a process of de-alienation, a liberation of expression, using ‘exits,’ or rather ‘lines of flight,’ with regards to social stratifications”. Also, “In order to develop an authentic analysis

[...] the main problem would not be interpretation, but intervention. ‘What can you do to change this?’[2].’

However, this is not the only way of linking politics to action by institutional analysis. Given its origins in pedagogy and psychotherapy, this analysis focuses on institutions such as the school and the hospital (especially psychiatric). But, from the start, these institutions are understood not as isolated spaces; rather, the entire institutional system is seen as communication and articulated with the State. This leads to a direct relationship between institutional analysis and political militancy: in the last instance, the state will always resort to violence when the stability of the institutional system is threatened. This makes “discovering” or analyzing the institution impossible unless this implies some type of “confrontation” at a particular moment, and *experience* in the strong sense of the term -that is, the experience of action, of militancy.

Even if some literatures tend to exclude Felix Guattari as a member of the institutionalist movement, this anomalous and prolific thinker, analyst, and militant was the one that coined the term “institutional analysis” around 1964/1965, during a session of a study group that focused on institutional psychotherapy[3]. Guattari coined this term due to the necessity to differentiate this new trend from two others: on the one hand, against the school led by Daumezon, Bonafé, and Le Guillant (who coined the expression “institutional psychotherapy” during the French Liberation in World War II) that limited analysis to an internal question within the walls of the psychiatric institution. This focus understood the institution as an isolated entity with no relation to society in general, believing that it was possible to de-alienate the social relations of the hospital by limiting research to the institutional territory itself. On the other hand, institutional analysis also distanced itself from the increasing specialization of [psycho]analytical practice, that gave exclusive responsibility to an “expert” person or group,

who then gained an extraordinary amount of power.

Analysis will only be useful when it ceases to be the task of a specialist, of an individual psychoanalyst or even of an analytical team, all of which constitute a formation of power. I believe that a process must be produced that emerges from what I've called *agenciamiento* -organization making-an-agent-of/empowerment of analytical enunciations [From the French 'agencement,' which is sometimes translated as 'assemblage']. This empowerment process is not composed solely of individuals, rather it depends on particular social, economic, institutional, micropolitical, ... workings.[4]

In this same vein, institutional analysis would consider social movements as agency-makers/empowerments of privileged analytical enunciation. Examples of this would be found in the feminist and free-radio movements.[5]

The practice of institutional analysis would proliferate and feed off of the experience of the magazine *Recherches* and the Federation of Institutional Research and Study Groups (FGERI), both of which brought together psychiatric groups interested in institutional therapy, groups of teachers from the Freinet movement[6], students connected to the BAPU[7] experience, architects, urbanists, sociologists, social psychologists. This enriching input would lead to the incorporation of two vertices in the analytical process: on the one hand, a "research on research," that is to say, an analysis that takes into account "the fact that researchers cannot comprehend their object except under the condition that they themselves are organized, and that they question themselves about things that on the surface have nothing to do with their object of study"[8]; on the other hand, the idea of "transdisciplinarity" in research, which allows one to unblock false problems.

Additionally, it was in this context that key notions were proposed that would later be incorporated into the critical social sciences: analyzer, institutional transfer, transversality. In particular, transversality would be the keystone concept of analysis: "Analysis, in my opinion, consists in articulating, in producing

coexistence -not in homogenizing or unifying, to provide a principle of transversality, to succeed in making different discourses communicate transversally... discourses of distinct orders and not only general theoretical discourses, rather micro-discourses as well, more or less babbling, at the level of everyday life relations, interactions with space, etc." [9]

Confronting the faith in the practice of consciousness-raising (and much of marxist theory and practice), and the importance of making what lies latent emerge into consciousness, institutional analysis, due in large part to its roots in psychotherapy and pedagogy, insists in the potential of the molecular level, in the value of micro-discourses, in collective work on the economy of desire. In this sense, much emphasis would be placed on the importance of the "analytical vector" of social struggles to the extent that this vector could help unblock those same struggles. In this respect Guattari would write:

I'm convinced that class struggles in the developed countries, the transformations in everyday life, all the problems of molecular revolution, will find no solution unless, apart from traditional theorizing, a very particular form and practice of theorizing is developed, at the same time individual and of the masses, that in a continuous manner, leads to a collective re-appropriation of all that concerns the economy of desire. ... At the same time that one formulates what one considers just, or one gets involved in a struggle that one sees as efficient, the development of a type of 'passage to the Other' becomes necessary, an acceptance of heterogeneous singularity, a militant anti-process, that coincides with the analytical process.[10]

The history of the institutionalist movements would have two phases and May '68 would constitute the turning point between them. The first phase would be fundamentally French and its concrete practice would be carried out within the interior of a particular institutional framework (a school, a clinic). After May '68 we find, on the one hand, in France a tendency that re-inscribes institutional analysis in the terrain of specialist

(whether university-based or professional social psychologists). Institutional analysis would thus convert itself into largely either a commercial or university product, under the auspices of figures such as Georges Lapassade, René Lourau, and Michel Lobrot. The problem here would not be the recuperation of a practice that emerged in the heat of dynamics of social self-organization and critique, rather again- as in the case of consciousness-raising- the transformation of institutional analysis into a formalized and abstract "method," or directly in the antipodes, of the concerns, problems and worries from which the analysis was formulated. On the other hand, outside France (especially in Italy and the United Kingdom) the institutionalist movement would completely exit the institutional framework in order to attack the very principles and bases of the institution. Together with the intercultural movement of the seventies this branch of institutional analysis would help to found anti-psychiatry and school-free education. Ivan Illich, David G. Cooper and Franco Basaglia would be figures of reference in this regard.[\[11\]](#)

### Participatory Action-Research (PAR)

Action Research or A+R (which later on will be complemented with a P for participation) was born as a reaction to the productivist and technicist model proper to R+D (research and development). Action Research is the result of a confluence between critical schools of social research and pedagogy (such as popular education, especially the theories and experiences inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*). These pedagogical experiences gain an important presence in Latin America, being linked to processes of adult education and community struggles for improving everyday life conditions.

PAR attempts to articulate research and social intervention with local communities' knowledges, know-hows and needs. It considers "action" as the main criterion to validate any theory, prioritizing practical knowledges. The objectivity of these knowledges is generated through the degree to which they were collectively produced, through interpersonal dialogue together with a procedure that goes from concrete elements (or realities) to the abstract totality, returning afterwards to the concrete. By the time this knowledge returns

and is reapplied to the concrete, it is in a crystallized condition ready to generate action (thus the paradigm of objectivity is transformed into reflexivity and dialogical engagement, embracing two principles similar in ways to feminist epistemology). However, not every action is valid in and of itself: the action that is expected to emerge from a PAR process has to be collective and contribute to the transformation of reality, generating a new and more just reality. This is one other key aspect for the validation of the knowledge produced. Therefore, for PAR, social (and transformative) praxis are at the same time, object and result of the study.[\[12\]](#)

Another key element distinctive of PAR is its rupture with traditional relationships between subject (researcher) and object (researched), which had been characteristic of classical sociological research. From the moment one recognizes that every social subject holds potential for action, there is a search for a process of *co-research*, in which different subjects, with diverse know-hows or knowledges, relate to each other according to ethical criteria. Those subjects that are from outside of the community or the social reality under investigation should function as *catalyzing elements*, but never over determining the situation. This requires an absolute transparency towards all the participants in the research process. Also, it demands a constant articulation and feedback between the technical/scientific knowledge (which normally comes from outside) and the "popular knowledges" already existing in the community. This allows for dynamics of formation and dynamics of self-confidence and (discursive and reflexive) articulation of those knowledges that are usually not recognized. This additionally requires permanent attention to the diverse planes of subjectivity (researchers such as Tomas R. Villasante divide them into manifest, latent, and deep/profound planes of subjectivity[\[13\]](#)).

PAR emerged as a strong trend during the mid sixties linked to popular education and grassroots activism in the midst of anti-imperialist and anti-colonial revolutionary movements[\[14\]](#). While most often associated with Latin America and its connections with Freirian popular education, it soon becomes clear that PAR was a Third World wide tool for radical organizing[\[15\]](#). Besides Latin America, South Asia becomes an extremely important

site for experimentation with PAR (in particular India and Bangladesh), with PAR processes occurring as well in different parts of Africa. Some of the most prolific and militant figures to follow in tracing this genealogy include: Fals Borda from Colombia, Mohammad Anisar Rahman from Bangladesh (currently director of the Society for Participatory Action of Asia, in New Delhi); and Sithembiso Nyoni from Zimbabwe[16]. It is at this moment when it is claimed that "PAR has demonstrated itself to be an endogenous intellectual and practical creation of the peoples of the Third World" (Fals-Borda 1985:2). The culminating moment for the consolidation and internationalization of PAR was the World Symposium held in Cartagena, Colombia in 1977[17]. Since then, the umbrella tradition of PAR has grown in internal diversity.

It was during this time of effervescence of anti-imperialist struggles throughout parts of the Third World then that PAR would sink its roots and challenge the epistemological bases of the colonial social sciences (sociology, anthropology, etc.). In particular, PAR became a tool to empower social struggles in rural areas and to build strong "*campesino*" movements. Though rural areas were where some of the most impressive work took place, PAR also became a process of experimentation to empower marginalized urban communities and their struggles over the spaces of everyday life. It was this mixture of a PAR process and urban social agitation that facilitated experimentations with PAR in parts of the global North. From the late sixties on, PAR will reach Europe[18] and North America[19].

Action Research arrived in the Iberian Peninsula during the eighties, through what was called dialectical sociology developed mainly by Jesús Ibanez, Alfonso Ortiz, and Tomas R. Villasante. Introduced into this (Spanish state) geographical and historical context, PAR would very rapidly, upon its introduction, be appropriated as a tool of governmental co-optation. It is true that PAR, as a formalized process of action-research which is often contracted by local administrations and innovative companies, would become on many occasions a tool for consensus making. Channeling and calming down any trace of social unrest, especially during the 80s, in a context where the "silent majorities" started to look disturbing, and it was necessary to make them speak in order to

better govern them. It is also certain though that many elements of PAR constitute a source of inspiration to make research a tool of transformation[20]: PAR's initial approaches, some of its techniques and certain experiences of articulation of modes of collective action coming from the analysis of the practitioner's own situations, and the combination of technical, theoretical knowledges with other minor knowledges (especially when these participated not due to an "invitation" by state institutions, but out of the "irruption" of local communities -this distinction is made by Jesus Ibanez).

## MILITANT RESEARCH YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Inquiry and Co-Research. Class composition, self-valorization. The personal is political. Departing *from* the self. Transversality. Micropolitics and the economy of desires. Liberation of expression. Lines of flight. Action-Research. All of these concept-tools will reappear in the contemporary initiatives that are seeking to articulate research and action, theory and praxis. The same will happen with many of the concerns, themes and problems that we just traced in these historical examples. They resonate with current initiatives but in a strange way, especially due to a radically different context. While the experiences just reviewed were born in a climate of huge social effervescence, linked to massive social movements, the current terrain in which the majority of contemporary initiatives of militant research are inserted, appears more mobile, changing, dispersed, and atomized. What do these then have in common, the 'old' and the 'new', apart from a series of expressions that the last ones borrow from the first ones, though in unorthodox ways, thus becoming their illegitimate daughters?

Let's see. First of all, both share a strong *materialist* inspiration. Against all idealism and all ideology, this inspiration looks for the encounter between the thing and the name, between the common thing and the common name. This is to say: instead of relying only on interpretations from books or pamphlets (usually frozen), it is about contrasting these with elements coming from a concrete reality, and starting from there, to proceed from the concrete to the abstract, always to come back to the concrete and the possibility of its transformation. Thus, action

and practice will be granted absolute primacy in all of these research experiences. It is no longer that we have been interpreting the world for a long time and now is the time to change it (Marx *dixit*), but rather that the very interpretation of the world is always linked to some kind of action or practice. The question will be then, what kind of action: one that conserves the *status quo* or produces a new reality.

Second of all, apprehending the concrete elements as well as intervening on them are produced through that sensitive machine that we know as the body, a surface where the inscription of a subjectivity, that lives and acts in a concrete social reality, occurs. That is why we can say that another common element is the critique of all disembodied theory, that pretends to speak from a neutral place of enunciation from where everything can be seen. No, sirs: thought, by necessity, passes through the body, and therefore, thought is always situated, implicated, taking *a side*. The question then is: on *which side* should we position ourselves/are we positioned? Or, in other words: *with whom* do we think? With workers' struggles, with dynamics of social conflict and cooperation, with women, with "crazy people", with children, with local communities, with subjugated groups, with initiatives of self-organization.

The third of the common elements is the certainty that all new knowledge production affects and modifies the bodies and subjectivities of those who have participated in the process. The co-production of critical knowledge generates rebellious bodies. Thinking about rebellious practices provides/gives value and potency to those same practices. Collective thinking engenders common practice. Therefore, the process of knowledge production is inseparable from the process of subject production or subjectification and vice versa. It is of little worth to go around telling (commanding) people what they should think, how they should interpret their own lives and the world. One cannot be certain that this type of transmission of information from consciousness to consciousness might produce something, or liberate in any sense. That form of transmission is too superficial, and holds disdain for the potential of encounter between different singularities and the strength of thinking and

enunciating in common. It is from this concern that an interest in an articulation between collective forms of thought and research emerged: the practices of co-research, self-consciousness and transversality all go in this general direction.

Finally, the last common element that we can identify is the priority being granted to goals and processes over any kind of formalized method. Method, when abstracted from the context and concerns from which it was born, can become a corset that prevents a genuine connection between experience and thought, analyses and practices of transformation. It becomes a kind of ideological screen that blocks any displacements that can occur due to new problems and concerns that emerge in the midst of a research process. Actually, we could say that processes of militant research are capable of putting *real operations* into place that are above all methods. Militant research is, in this sense, always, an open trip, in which we know the origin and how it started, but we do not know where it will finish.

Effectively, all these common elements between experiences of the past and current initiatives are appropriated by these last ones in hybrid, babbling, stumbling, and new ways. As mentioned before, the context is different. Many of the forms of militant research or action-research of the present are formulated, in fact, in an effort to break with some of the identitarian and sectarian logics of the 80s and the 90s, especially in the global north, that could freeze real conflicts. It also tries to break with the voluntarist activism that characterized those "years of winter," as well as its counterpoint, a dispassionate vision of knowledge distanced from the vital, productive, affective and power-based contexts. In the context of an atomized social reality, where even strong communities seem to have disintegrated forever and the large mobilizations appear and disappear without leaving apparent solid traces, the issue of the "passage to the Other," the relationship with "Others" becomes central in order to generate a common thought-action which does not remain in the small "us" of a discrete group or grupuscule.

In this new context, and beyond possible affiliations with the past, it is possible to identify three current tendencies of articulation between research and militancy, with multiple points of connection and

resonance among them, as well as specific problems to each one. As a finale to this prologue, let's try to introduce them in a summary (being, of course, very reductive), in an effort to draw a small cartography of militant research today[21]:

1) On the one hand, we find a series of experiences of knowledge production about/against the mechanisms of domination, combining a critique of the experts' systems, with a fostering of minor knowledges. Thus, they are able to initiate collective processes of knowledge production, instead of the dominant tendency of individualizing and privatizing knowledges (through legal mechanisms of patents and copyrights or the necessity to build up a curricular trajectory [CV] in one's own name). Within this framework, we can identify the collective construction of cartographies linked to processes of mobilization[22]. There is also the combination of expert and minor knowledges produced by experiences such as Act UP[23] and more classical but nonetheless important initiatives, based on research for critical reporting purposes developed by activist groups that intervene in those social terrains that are submitted to especially crude forms of structural violence[24]. The international conference celebrated in Barcelona in January 2004, under the title of *Investigació. Jornades de Recerca Activista*, constituted an important encounter of this kind of experience.[25]

2) On the other hand, it is possible to identify a set of initiatives that pursue the production of thought from the very practices of social transformation, from its internal dynamics, in

order to boost and promote those same practices. How?: through a virtuous procedure from practice to theory to practice, sometimes kicked off by the singular encounter between dissimilar subjectivities[26], and other times initiated by a people that participate in the same practices that they intend to reflect upon[27].

3) Finally, we could talk about those initiatives that take research as a lever for interpellation, subjectification, and political re-composition. How?: using the mechanisms of the survey, interview, and discussion group as an excuse to talk with Others and between themselves, to challenge the distances produced in a hyper-fragmented social space. Those mechanisms can be used to speak of one's own reality, in search of common notions that describe it; in search of forms of resistance, cooperation, and flight that pierce it, providing a metropolitan materiality to the Zapatista proposition of "walking while asking"[28].

The gross and still clumsy traces of this cartography need to be submitted to the critical eyes of multiple militant-researchers. These lines are being drawn on a very concrete sheet of paper: a context of a rich, hybrid, and *virtuoso* social composition, with a strong demand for transformation, and in search of re-appropriating its own capacity to create worlds. With this goal, this cartography invents and fine tunes tools with which to interrogate itself and others, interrogate the reality in which it is inscribed, fastening itself to this reality's surface and maybe shaking it. Some of its basic raw materials are the word, the image and the practice of relating oneself.

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[1] See *Common notions, part 1: workers-inquiry, co-research, consciousness-raising*, <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0406/malo/en>.

[2] Jacky Beillerot, "Entrevista a Felix Guattari" in Felix Guattari et al. *La Intervención institucional* [Institutional Intervention] Mexico: Folios, 1981, p. 113 y 111.

[3] Specifically, the GTPSI-Groupe de Travail de Psychologie et Sociologie Institutionnelles, facilitated by Francois Tosquelles between 1960 and 1965.

[4] Jacky Beillerot, "Entrevista a Félix Guattari", op. cit., p.103

[5] About these forms of organization, see Félix Guattari, *Plan sobre el planeta. Capitalismo mundial integrado y revoluciones moleculares*, Traficantes de Sueños, Madrid, 2004.

[6] A pedagogical movement of cooperative and experimental schools. It was founded by the French communist teacher Célestine Freinet at the end of the twenties. The movement would reach international dimensions.

[7] Bureau d'Aide Psychologique Universitaire-University Centers of Psychological Assistance

[8] Jacky Beillerot, "Entrevista a Félix Guattari", op. cit., p.96

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 105. The articulation of the molecular revolutions with an authentic mass social revolution would become the question that most preoccupied Félix Guattari after May '68.

[11] On the history and some experiences of institutional analysis one book of reference (in Spanish) is the edited volume by Juan C. Ortigosa (ed.) *El análisis institucional. Por un cambio de las instituciones*, Campi Abierto Ediciones, Madrid, 1977. In that same volume see the articles by Félix Guattari and the CERFI.

[12] As an interesting aside, Action Research developed clear connections with French institutional analysis, especially with the 'formalized' version developed by Lapassade, Lourau and Lobrot, and key concepts such as 'analyzer' and 'transversality' were shared

[13] See Tomás R. Villasante, "Socio-praxis para la liberación". Also see Fals Borda, Villasante, Palazón et al. *Investigación-Acción-Participativa*, Documentación Social, 92, Madrid, 1993.

[14] Note of the translators: the two following paragraphs were not in the original text.

[15] The movement of PAR in the global South has been interpreted as counter power constituting an "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" by Arturo Escobar (1984) "Discourse and Power in Development: Michel Foucault and the Relevance of his work to the Third World" en *Alternatives* X:377-400

[16] For more information see Orlando Fals-Borda (1985) [1988] *Knowledge and People's Power: Lessons with Peasants in Nicaragua, Mexico and Colombia*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute; Orlando Fals Borda and Aisur Rahman (1991) *Action and Knowledge: Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action-Research*. New York: The Apex Press.

[17] See Comité organizador del Simposio Mundial de Cartagena (1978) *Crítica y Política en Ciencias Sociales. El Debate Teoría y Práctica*: Bogotá: Editorial Fundación Punta de Lanza (two volumes)

[18] As two expressions linked to PAR in Europe consider the Science Shop movement started in the Netherlands (See Michal Sogard Jorgensen 2004 Science Shops. Thinking the Future and Twinning Old/New Shops: Science Shops vs. Universities. Electronic document: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/scientific-awareness/\\_shops\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/scientific-awareness/_shops_en.html);) and the movement of *Universidades Populares* in Spain (See Colectivo loé. 2003 *Investigación Acción Participativa: Una propuesta para un ejercicio activo de la ciudadanía*. Paper presented at Activist Research Conference, Barcelona, Online document at [www.investigaccio.org](http://www.investigaccio.org))

[19] Two main centers dedicated to participatory action research currently active in North America are the International Council for Adult Education based in Toronto, directed by Budd L. Hall. It is also the publisher of *Convergence* a quarterly journal in the broad field of adult education and PAR in general. In the US, Highlander Research and Educational Center in Tennessee is one of the oldest (1932) and most active, with renowned figures in the field of PAR as John Gaventa. For a comprehensive overview of initiatives and centers in the US see *Community-Based Research in the United States* a report by Loka Institute released in 1998, pdf document on line.

[20] For an excellent review of the basic features of PAR see Elena Sánchez Vigil, "Investigación-acción-participativa" in TrabajoZero, *Dossier Metodológico sobre coinvestigación militante*, Madrid, September 2002, pp.3-8. For a more exhaustive analysis of the context in which PAR emerged, as well as a review of its epistemological and methodological bases, including interesting examples see Luis R. Gabarrón and Libertad H. Landa, *Investigación Participativa*, Cuadernos Metodológicos, n.10, CIS, Madrid, 1994.

[21] This cartography is the same as that presented in Sánchez, Pérez, Malo and Fernández-Savater, "Ingredientes de una onda global", cit. This was produced in Madrid, thus its tentative, partial and provisional character. Some have read this cartography as if it were a taxonomy of militant research, that highlights a series of models of this sort of research from which one would have to pick. This piece was never intended to be understood that way. Rather this chapter was meant to be a kind of orientation diagram that can bring one into contact with the practices (each one quite different from the others) that participated in the book *Nociones Comunes*, of which this text is the Prologue. The desire of this chapter remains precisely that then, a prologue that introduces the reader to the various practices contained therein.

[22] Some examples of this type of practice are: maps about multinational networks produced by Bureau d'Etudes and Université Tangente (<http://utangente.free.fr>); maps about resistances by the Buenos Aires-based Street-Art Group (<http://gacgrupo.ar.tripod.com>); the map of and against the Barcelona Forum of Cultures in 2004 ([www.sindominio.net/mapas](http://www.sindominio.net/mapas)); or the cartography of the straits of

Gibraltar ([http://areaciega.net/index.php/plain/cartografias/fadaiat/cartografia\\_del\\_estrecho](http://areaciega.net/index.php/plain/cartografias/fadaiat/cartografia_del_estrecho)) produced by Straits Indymedia (<http://estrecho.indymedia.org/index.php>) and the Red Dos Orillas (the Network of the Two Coasts- <http://www.redasociativa.org/dosorillas>).

[23] This organization of people with AIDS was formed in the US after the 'explosion' of the "AIDS crisis". It has a strong presence in France as well. In this organization medical knowledge is combined with the knowledge of the organized members with AIDS, as well as their networks of family members and friends. For more information see <http://www.actupny.org> and <http://www.actupparis.org>. In the Spanish state, we can find similar examples where different kind of knowledges are combined. The experience of *Laboratorio Urbano* is focused on the urbanists' and architects' knowledge is combined with from neighborhood knowledge and squatter knowledge, all making alliances in order to build an urbanism from the bottom-up, in contact with the direct experience of inhabiting the city (<http://www.laboratoriourbano.tk>). The experience of *Grupo Fractalidades en Investigación Crítica* combines social-psychological knowledge, migrant knowledges and activist knowledges in order to develop projects of social research (<http://psicologiasocial.uab.es/es/node/193>)

[24] Some examples in the Spanish state: *Ecologistas en Acción* (<http://www.ecologistasenaccion.org>) or the collective *AlJaima*, that is working in the area of the straits of Gibraltar.

[25] See <http://www.investigaccio.org>.

[26] A very interesting experience is the one developed by Colectivo Situaciones, through their workshops in collaboration with different counter-power realities in Argentina. [This chapter is available in English online at <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-4/5-4index.htm>. Other experiences are the workshops or roundtables organized by the *University of the Poor* in the US (<http://www.universityofthepoor.org>) and the inquiries and interviews by *Derive Approdi* magazine (<http://www.deriveapprodi.org>).

[27] This has happened in a non-systematic way within the Social Centers -squatters' and community centers- in Italy and in Spain.

[28] The multiple experiences of *inchiesta* and *coricerca* developed in Italy are located in this framework. See magazines such as *Derive Approdi* and *Posse*, as well as the initiatives by the German collective *Kolinko* which has engaged in interviews in telemarketing ([http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/kolinko/engl/e\\_index.htm](http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/kolinko/engl/e_index.htm)). In Spain, several examples could be understood under this framework: the incipient trajectories of *Precarias a la Deriva* in its process of action-research from and against precarious labor/life, see <http://www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias.htm>; *Colectivo Estrella*, with its interviews about precarity and anti-war mobilizations (see [http://www.nodo50.org/tortuga/article.php?id\\_article=2939](http://www.nodo50.org/tortuga/article.php?id_article=2939)); and *Entrásito*, with its work of inquiry and agitation with migrants and the precarious (see <http://estrecho.indymedia.org/newswire/display/7778/index.php>).

This text is the prologue of the book *Nociones Comunes. Experiencias y Ensayos entre Investigación y Militancia* [Common Notions. Experiences and Essays at the Intersections of Research and Militancy]. 2004. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños (pp. 13-27).

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