MALTA REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Volume 18, No. 1, 13-29
Faculty of Education©, UM, 2024

Ethnographic research and activism: A critical, feminist, and sensory approach to Moviment Graffitti

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Abstract: In many fields today, there is a call for educators to move out of their 'ivory towers' and into public spaces (Sandlin et al., 2017, p. 825). This critical turn toward public pedagogy, emancipatory research, and participatory (action) research has become increasingly crucial within academia. But what are the risks when educators and researchers move into public spaces where activist communities gather? This paper discusses some methodological concerns with researching activism. In this paper, I attempt to counter these concerns by employing a critical, feminist, and sensory methodology to research activist communities and their lived, embodied, and affective experiences.

Keywords: Political activism, multi-sensory ethnography, educational research, critical feminist methodology, Moviment Graffitti

Introduction

My doctoral research concerns an ethnography of Maltese left-wing activism as a form of public pedagogy. As a philosopher, I was quite new to educational research and ethnographic methodologies. As an activist, I wanted to ensure that I conducted research that did justice to the people and communities I was working with.

In this paper I recount the trajectory of this qualitative and ethnographic research project on left-wing activism in Malta. It is born out of a particular academic and activist frustration with the ways in which ethnographic research takes shape in academia. Getting closer to understanding ethnographic research meant getting closer to the contradictions, historical power imbalances, and epistemic injustice within this field of study. In this trajectory, I was frustrated by the methodological gap between research that is *about* activism and research that is *constructed* in an activist way.

This frustration has led me to an exploration of different multi-sensory and critical feminist approaches to ethnographic methodology and methods. This paper illustrates how ethnographic fieldwork in left-wing activism can shape the design, direction, and contribution of qualitative, educational research. Its aim is to think of, design, and practice feminist and critical approaches to activist research and to expand on the possibilities of researching activism whilst at the same time doing activist research.

The first part recounts an exploration of the field and an introduction to Moviment Graffitti (hereafter: Graffitti). Based on these ethnographic encounters, I outline in the second part, two concerns to conducting ethnographic research within activism. In the third part, I suggest a critical and feminist ethnographic methodology to counter these concerns. For this, I will discuss different ethnographic and multi-sensory methods, including a critical reflexive approach, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, photography, participant photography, and sound recordings. Lastly, I consider at least one limit to multi-sensory methods, before ending with the conclusion.

Exploring Moviment Graffitti

During my first weeks in Malta, I attended one of Moviment Graffitti's meetings. I remember quite vividly taking the bus to Malta's capital, walking through Valletta's warm, yellow, and bustling streets to arrive at Graffitti's red doors. I went up the small stairs and into the premises. The first room that I entered included a bar, a small library with radical authors, a plant (barely) hanging on to life on top of the bookcase, a painting of a sunset, a flag for the liberation of Palestine, children's games, a small poster that said 'Queer solidarity SMASHES borders' and many feminist and anti-racist stickers. In my fieldnotes I wrote: 'I remember looking through the door at the small library in the room. I was surprised by my own feelings. It felt like coming home, breathing. It was messy, queer, political.'

Throughout my exploration of and participation with Graffitti, I got to know Graffitti as a unique organisation in these Mediterranean Islands for a multitude of reasons. Some of the more important ones are its engagement in left-wing, non-hierarchical, and grassroot practices, constituting Graffitti as a prominent assembly of activists and a vibrant activist community in Malta. In their own words, Graffitti is 'a left-wing Maltese organisation set up in 1994. It is active against the oppression and exploitation of people, the environment and animals; with a vision of freedom and radical democracy' ("What is Moviment Graffitti?" 2024).

For Graffitti, to work in a non-hierarchical way, means that the organisation is horizontally structured. There is no formal hierarchy, no leader or president. Graffitti is not a union, nor a political party or a company, but an assembly of

activists tackling a multitude of issues from fighting against privatisation, raising awareness on migrants' rights, protecting trees to organising discussions on social justice, collaborating with other NGOs, and organising communities such as resident groups.

Its autonomy from economic power and political parties, constitutes Graffitti's credible status in the eyes of the public. It will critique and pressure anyone; any group, organisation, or political party, based on the issue that is at stake. As a grassroots organisation, Graffitti supports communities in organising themselves and building resistances within their communities. To get to the roots of a political issue, one needs to work together with the people most affected by that issue. In this sense, Graffitti's success is quite dependent on 'people power' or communities' political engagement.

Taking this into consideration, it is important to remember that communities, such as Graffitti's, are not monolithic or homogeneous (Johnson, 2017, p. 3). The community, as argued by Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Benedict Anderson (Mohanty, 2003), is constituted by those who see or imagine themselves as part of the group. The bases for coming together are not essentialist notions such as colour or sex, but the political ties between those coming together, 'it is the way we think about race, class, and gender – the political links we choose to make among and between struggles' (Mohanty, 2003, p. 46). In other words, Graffitti is a left-wing organisation that actively negotiates different left-wing values with its members and therefore remains, to some extent, ideologically diverse.

Bridging academia and activism from an ethnographic perspective

In many fields today, there is a call for educators to move out of their 'ivory towers' and into public spaces to engage with the public in meaningful ways (Sandlin et al., 2017, p. 825). This critical turn toward public pedagogy – and related areas such as public engagement work, emancipatory research, and participatory (action) research – has become increasingly crucial within academia. But what are the risks when educators and researchers move into public spaces where activist communities gather?

When it comes to ethnographic research, one must analyse the ways in which ethnography as an academic discipline and practice is rooted in a colonial legacy (see Asad, 1973), the repercussions of which carry through to today. Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes that,

> From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. (2012, p. 1)

Research that aims to emancipate oppressed people, should work towards understanding the ways in which Western, institutional research and its pursuit of knowledge is rooted in different colonial and imperial practices (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 2). The voices of oppressed people are often 'mediated through those of academics or researchers whose representation of the other is necessarily interpreted and understood through their privileged and powerful veils' (Galea, 2008, p. 15). Sandlin et al. (2011) argue that, despite emancipatory research endeavours, researchers run the risk of being embedded in a history of epistemic injustice. This raises questions about the ethical-political responsibilities of the 'emancipatory' researcher. Sandlin, Burdick, and O'Malley ask:

> "What does it mean for research to be constructed by and within grassroots struggles and activism?" and, disquietingly invoking the possibility of damaging the very projects this inquiry seeks to understand, "What does betrayal of our activist collaborators look like?" (2011, p. 362)

Research that focuses on activism is not necessarily constructed – epistemologically, methodologically, ethically – in an activist way. In other words, researching activism is something entirely different from activist research. Similarly, Tuhiwai Smith asks, when working with indigenous communities, 'Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interest does it serve? Who will benefit from it?' (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 10).

These questions attend to the possibility of enforcing oppressive, colonial epistemologies and epistemic injustice when working with activist and/or indigenous communities. Even when research has emancipatory intentions, it still risks working with a cognitive, institutional, formal, and possibly elitist lens. This means that attention needs to be paid to the position of the researcher within academia and within the activist community, including their epistemic privilege, their modes of representation, ethics, and methodology (Sandlin et al., 2011, p. 362).

These limits to ethnographic research illustrate the problem of power and translation in academic institutions. They can arise from a top-down view where agency and subjectivity are hierarchically located in the researcher and/or pedagogue (Sandlin, O'Malley, and Burdick 2011, 356). This brings us to the second concern: what can remain out of view is the experiences of those participating in and co-creating the educational processes. As such, Sandlin et al. (2011) discuss how 'scholars should engage more in empirical research focusing on the process of public pedagogy and on the experiences of learners should be expanded' thereby 'exploring *what public pedagogies mean and do from the viewpoint of their intended audiences*' (pp. 359, 361, original emphasis). They

call for different interpretations and understandings of public pedagogy to better reflect its rich, complex, and informal processes (Sandlin et al., 2011, p. 362). This invites one to think about the phenomenological aspects of public, activist educational processes, addressing what it is like to participate in public educational activities and how it feels to be part of an activist community that practices public pedagogies.

Designing a critical, feminist, and sensory ethnography

Taking these concerns into consideration, I turned toward an ethnographic methodology that allows for a critical attentiveness to activist communities. More specifically, I wanted to adopt a critical feminist ethnography that acknowledges the intricate relationship between epistemology and politics, thereby concerning itself with a 'passionate interest in co-producing ethnographic knowledge, creating and representing it in the only way it could be, within a critical interactive self-other conversation or dialogue' (Tedlock, 2003, pp. 174–175). This entails an attentiveness towards the intra-active relations between the researcher, the participants, and the materials constituting the ethnographic encounter, constantly and critically reflecting on one's research process and inviting others to converse their ideas, critiques, and feedback.

In this feminist critical ethnography, the focus will not lie on individualised educational acts or forms of agency (such as in the case of public intellectuals, pedagogues or leaders), but turn towards the affective, embodied, and performative forms of pedagogy in activism that tend to be subtle and informal (such as interpersonal relations, community building through micro-moments of sharing a space, a conversation, or a meal). To better reflect activism's rich, complex, and ambiguous educational processes, I will turn to the phenomenological, lived, educational experiences of activist 'learners' through the use of multi-sensory ethnographic methods.

This sensorial turn is becoming more central in the social sciences and humanities and acknowledges 'that sensoriality is fundamental to how we learn about, understand and represent other people's lives' (Pink, 2015b, p. 2). Sensory ethnography is a critical methodology and a sociology of senses that incorporates the embodiment and multi-sensoriality of social encounters in its analysis. In this way, sensory ethnography departs from the classic understanding of ethnographic or observational empirical research and is open to different ways of knowing (Pink, 2015b, p. 3). It allows to approach the learning of knowledge as an embodied process by asking, how does the body sense, how does it come to know? (Pink, 2015a, pp. 3, 10). Sensory ethnography, in this case, takes the body and the senses seriously in its research endeavour to understand activists' experiences. As such, a sensory ethnography is able to productively engage with feminist, lived theory that thinks through the

personal and the political (Ahmed, 2017, p. 214), the lived and the theory (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxiii), the body and the mind (Butler, 2006, pp. 16–17).

Moreover, this attention towards senses, feelings, and embodiment also involves a material approach; turning toward the ways in which participants think through things, work with materiality, enact material practices and relations, and approach the temporality and spatiality of objects (Woodward, 2020, p. 2). The materials activists work with, such as speakers, placards, chairs, paints, clothes, and so much more, do not just constitute the background of an action, but are part of an assemblage, a network of human and non-human relationships that allow agency and resistance to emerge. This is not to decentre humans, but to recentre the relations between humans, physical environments, and the materials that make-or-break activist assemblages. Geographers Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy have called this sensory engagement with the material world a 'visceral politics,' suggesting a radical relational view between social structures and bodily sensations whilst acknowledging the 'chaotic, unstructured ways in which bodily intensities unfold in the production of everyday life' (Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2008; Pink, 2015b, p. 10).

Fleshing out activists' lived experiences

In what follows, I present how this feminist, critical, and multi-sensory ethnography can be translated into specific research methods. The aim of these methods is to flesh out activists' lived experiences through a feminist, critical, and sensory lens. These methods include a critical reflexive approach, observation, interviews, visual and sound methods.

On the use and limits of critical reflexivity

This research is intimately entangled with my personal life and the fieldwork with Graffitti has been incredibly transformative for my being a researcher (McDowell, 2010, pp. 3, 6). Given my activist background and active involvement with Graffitti it is important to observe and reflect on my own involvement as a researcher/activist. This means that the critical awareness that I have towards my research, I should also turn toward myself. This critical approach suggests that 'the class, race, culture, and gender beliefs and behaviors of the inquirer be placed within the same historical moment, or critical plane as those of the subject of inquiry' (Tedlock, 2003, p. 183).

That is why I chose to methodically integrate a critical reflexive approach, especially one that focuses on feminist reflexivity. Integrating this as a form of writing into a qualitative and empirical study comes with its own challenges and limits. Within academia one faces personal and professional risks when exposing vulnerabilities and one also risks being perceived as privileged or

indulgent (Maddrell, 2021, p. 122) by centring oneself in the research or constantly relating the research to one's own experiences. This kind of reflexivity takes shape then as a confessional device providing catharsis only to the researcher herself (Burdick & Sandlin, 2010, p. 5).

Whilst taking these challenges and criticisms into consideration, I must at the same time acknowledge that the relations that I have with my participants and others within Graffitti's community and beyond, and the agency that I perform during those moments of encounters, shape the empirical processes of the research and its results significantly. To not reflect on the intra-active emergence of these relationships or on the ways in which my agency is distributed – made possible by others – would be epistemologically naïve and dishonest. Instead, I choose to critically engage with the 'productive potential of intimacy' (Maddrell, 2021, p. 122) and to practice a feminist auto-ethnographic form of writing by doing and speaking 'otherwise' (Tedlock, 2003, pp. 189–190). Feminism then refers to a particular positionality and to the way one creates and writes about knowledge (Ahmed, 2017, p. 14). To write in a critical and feminist way, means to engage with lived theory, that is, to develop theory from the flesh (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 19), and to develop theory of the flesh by thinking through and about lived, embodied experiences.

Participant observation becoming observation of participation

Participant observation has been used to refer to a simultaneous attitude of 'emotional involvement and objective detachment' wherein 'ethnographers attempted to be both engaged participants and coolly dispassionate observers of the lives of others' (Tedlock, 2003, p. 180). Tuhiwai Smith suggests that this concept of detachment or distance in research is used to ensure neutrality and objectivity on behalf of the researcher, and could be seen as research 'through imperial eyes,' where researchers are expected to practice Western ideas about the legitimacy of research (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 58).

During my first two years of observation and participation, I regularly took fieldnotes and kept track of any activity I participated in. I knew how important it was to justify my empirical research by presenting these numbers, as they are the only quantitative proof of my work. In a sense, I wanted to be able to meticulously present every participation, hoping naively that this would give more academic credit to my ethnographic research.

However, by the end of the second year, I noticed I was taking less fieldnotes and had stopped keeping track of my observation almost completely. One of the reasons for this is that tracking and taking fieldnotes made me feel emotionally detached from Graffitti. Trying to adhere to a balance between emotional involvement and objective detachment contributed to feelings of

alienation. By performing this distant and detached role of the researcher, I felt disengaged from the community I was becoming part of and the relationships I had developed over time. By then, Graffitti had become much more than the 'ethnographic space of encounter.' It is where I went to do my activist work, where I met my friends, and where we thought and created together.

It remains unclear to what extent an attitude of objective detachment and dispassionate observation is possible and preferable. Rather, 'participant observation' should be understood as 'observation of participation,' wherein ethnographers 'both experience and observe their own and other's co-participation within the ethnographic scene of encounter' (Tedlock, 2003, p. 180). 'Observation of participation' allows for more ambiguity in ethnographic encounters, especially when one is intimately involved with the community one is researching.

In those first months of exploratory fieldwork, I familiarised myself with Graffitti through observation of participation, taking on the role of an informal observer/participator. Observation as such is not a neutral or indifferent activity, but relational, as I can only observe because I find myself in a physical or virtual proximity and in a relation to whom or what I am observing. In the act of observing others, I am also observed. Even when I am sitting at the back, taking everything in without engaging verbally, my mere presence can change the space of an encounter. 'Observation of participation' in other words acknowledges the reflexive and intra-active experiences within the ethnographic space of encounter.[i]

Interviewing activists about their educational experiences

After months of observations, the lived experiences of some of Graffitti's members were explored more in-depth through semi-structured interviews. Most of the interview questions attended to the participants' broad involvement with Graffitti and their views on education. Throughout the interviews, participants would confront me with my own presumptions. I had entered this study believing that Graffitti has an educational role to play in the Maltese society. I just had to find out what kind of role it played.

However, during my interviews and other encounters I realised this was less straightforward than I previously thought. For example, the questions regarding education in my interviews elicited some ambiguous responses. Some participants expressed caution and were rather careful not to say that Graffitti's intention or main aim is to educate. Graffitti does seem to be educating the public or should do so, but in a very specific way. Several participants related education to preaching, saying that education has a patronising connotation. They do not want to tell people, that is, other adults, what to do nor do they want to 'parent' others. Graffitti educates, some

suggest, not intentionally nor formally, but through their engagement, interaction, personal contact, and community organising.

Interestingly, when I asked the participants about their own learning as a member of Graffitti, the responses were less ambiguous, more intuitive, and confident. Through listening to their stories, how they personally relate to Graffitti, and how they have grown as activists and humans, it become clear that education was deeply valued within Graffitti, maybe not as a formal pedagogy for the public, but definitely as a vital part of their community. The pedagogy that emerges from Graffitti's activist relations within the community, could be called a form of 'community pedagogy.'

By fleshing out the lived experiences of Graffitti's activists during fieldwork and interviews, the direction of this study and the contours of my contribution to the community changed. Most notably, the notion of the 'public' in 'public pedagogy' deepened. Now, this research departs from the educational experiences and practices within the community – and traces how these educational practices translate into the endurance of the community, the performance of solidarity, and the education of a public. In this way, the relation between community pedagogy and the pedagogy of a public becomes more apparent, drawing attention to the vital role that activists' own educational processes and growth play in the continuity of their community, the education and radicalisation of a public, and the radical performance of solidarity.

Bringing in/ bringing out the senses through visuals and sounds

Besides observations and interviewing, this study also engages with other sensory methods that bring in (or 'bring out') the senses through visuals and sounds. In this study there are at least two reasons to engage with visual and sound. Firstly, in an attempt to counter the primacy of language, discourse, and representation over and above matter (Coole & Frost, 2010), this study explores the human body as active, vital matter, and not a 'passive product of discursive practices' (Barad, 2007, p. 151). Human bodies, relations, and lived experiences remain the point of departure for this study, but it engages with material and sensory methods to acknowledge the complex web of human-nonhuman relations.

Secondly, I would dishonour this research study on lived, embodied, affective experiences by only writing about it in a distant and formal way. In a sense, I want the reader to be affected by the reading, to feel how the participants experience activism. To facilitate this, I want to attend to the reader's different senses. This attunement to the different ways in which people move through their experiences, also comes from a concern for accessibility and neurodivergence. Not everyone learns, reads, or feels in a similar way and

diversifying one's methods, might be one of many ways in which one can hold space for the diversity of people's bodies and minds.

With regards to visual methods, photography and participant photography have been used. With participant photography, also known as 'photovoice' or 'photo-diary,' the participant visualises their experiences and 'identify, represent, and enhance their community' (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). By taking pictures, participants choose, in a visual way, what matters to their lived experiences in relation to the research. It captures how self-representation and identity informs their actions and their emphasis on different places and people.

The importance of this technique does not only lie in the physical quality of the pictures themselves, but also in the meaning, interpretation, or story the participant attributes to it. In this way, it is about the physical pictures and at the same time about the 'accompanying narratives that teach others about participant concerns and strengths' (Sutton-Brown, 2014, p. 176), which draws attention to the storytelling inherent in the physical act of taking a picture and interpreting it.

Besides from visualising participant's experiences, this study also uses photography as a research method to emphasise the important role that images play in activism. These pictures and videos do not 'complement' the written and spoken data as such but constitute valuable knowledge in and of itself. Although it is tempting to think that pictures and videos only visualise or otherwise represent aspects of activists' lived experiences, these materials are part of the relational and embodied aspects of activism.

To be affected by the relational and embodied aspects of activism, means not only to 'see' but also to 'hear.' By sound-recording Graffitti's activities, this research engages with the important role of sound in activism. Slogans, speeches, or protest songs are not only written down, but voiced, often by a group or crowd of people. Even more, sound-recordings allow for a more-than-human research process that acknowledges the ways in which the sound of the surrounding (the environment, the sound of drilling, the sea, the wind) impacts and affects activist gatherings.

Sensory fragments from the Kemmuna direct action

The direct action on the Maltese Island Kemmuna (Comino) in the summer of 2022 was sparked by the ongoing commercialisation of Kemmuna, which is leading to its ecological destruction. Blue Lagoon has been suffering from mass tourism, facilitated by large boats, kiosks, and deckchair operators occupying the public space with deckchairs and umbrellas before people even arrive, suffocating the shore and forcing people to pay for a spot on a public space.

Figure 1: Walking up to Blue Lagoon in a long row of people. Some are wearing hats, carrying beach bags, or floatable devices.

In the morning of the direct action, we got up around 4 am to get to Ċirkewwa and be on the earliest ferry to Kemmuna. On Figure 1, one can see us marching towards Blue Lagoon, just minutes before we start our singing and shouting. In the first sound fragment, which can be found online, one can hear the protestors walking down to the beach and the shore, approaching Blue Lagoon and shouting 'Il-bajja, ix-xatt, Kemmuna ta' Kulħadd,' which means 'the bay, the shore, Kemmuna belongs to everybody.'[ii]

When we arrived at Blue Lagoon, we started peacefully folding the deckchairs, removing them from the beach and the shore, and putting them aside (see Figure 2). When most of the deckchairs were folded, Graffitti held a press conference and assembled in front of the Blue Lagoon with their placards and banners high in the air, visibly taking up space (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: Activists are removing the deckchairs from the shore.

Soon after the press conference, the direct action transformed into another gathering of people. We collected our placards and started emptying our beach bags. We took out our towels, swim wear, sunscreen, water bottles, and our food to enjoy the public space we were fighting for (see Figure 4). Some even brought guitars and started singing. Others went to play in the sea. The second sound fragment captures these moments right after the direct action, weaving together the sounds of the waves of the sea, children running around, people singing and playing the guitar, others clapping along.[iii]

Figure 3: Graffitti protestors are holding up one large banner with the text: 'Kemmuna ta' Kulħadd.'

By recounting these affective activist moments and engaging with sensory methods in this study, I attempt to explore the lived, embodied, and affective educational experiences of activists and to experiment with different ways of knowledge co-creation. This attempt is made to counter some concerns relating to the practice of ethnographic research and to explore the ways in which one can research activism in an *activist* way.

Figure 4: Beach towels are out, placards are lying on the ground, shoes have been taken off. Time to soak in the sun and enjoy the beauty of Kemmuna's public space.

This raises the question 'what does it mean to do research in an *activist* way?' I suggest that activist research should go beyond the mere performance of having emancipatory intentions, not only because an activist approach should entail more than a certain awareness or intentionality, but also because the question of who is being emancipated and how, remains unanswered. Ethnographic, activist research then also means to critically analyse the roots of activist struggle and the ways in which ethnographic research risks being embedded in colonial practices.

Without being able to fully answer this question, I suspect it has a lot to do with a useful and pragmatic distinction between empowerment, emancipation, liberation, radicalisation, and community organising. Admittedly, the methods discussed in this paper are necessarily limited and convey something from my point of view – as I am holding the recorder whilst walking, and as I am writing these moments down for you to understand. Which brings us to the considerations of this study.

Considerations

In this paper, I attempted to counter some concerns within ethnography, whilst acknowledging the embodied, relational, and affective aspects of activism. These attempts are heavily rooted in specific temporal, spatial, and ideological contexts, and are to some extent bound to fail. In what follows, I want to discuss at least one significant way in which these methods fail to fulfil its promise.

Most importantly, a multi-sensory methodology risks romanticising the senses by creating an ethnographic dream of immediacy. In this study, I attempt to do research through an attentiveness to the body, tuning into 'the somatic and the quality of immediate experience' (Dewsbury, 2010, p. 10). But approaching participants' lived, embodied, and affective experiences, might conceal processes of appropriation and translation. Recording sounds and using pictures might create the illusion that these methods give researchers a privileged, transparent, and immediate access to people's lives. It is important to remember, however, that researchers shape those experiences 'through the unequal power relationships present and by our own exploitative research agendas and timelines' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009, p. 2).

More specifically, this ethnographic dream of immediacy might conceal that 1) these methods are physically enabled and disabled by the environment, technology, and other materials, 2) I chose these methods and gave the participants directions and prompts, and 3) I will also interpret these experiences in a specific way and for a specific audience. As a researcher, one finds oneself in a paradoxical position. Immediate access to lived experiences is practically impossible, yet every translation, every mediation carries the risk of appropriation and abuse. I agree with Ahmed when she writes,

> 'I would not want to argue that such a translation is inherently wrong – such an argument would assume we could gain pure unmediated access to the lives of strangers. Rather, what is at stake is the concealment of the translation itself' (2000, p. 69)

If translation and mediation is inevitable, it matters in which ways these forms of transformation take place. Ironically, as Ahmed writes, 'there is nothing more mediated than immediacy' (Ahmed, 2015, p. 212). The apparent immediacy and transparency of bodily sensations and reactions are shaped by histories not our own (Ahmed, 2015, p. 212). And this is where pedagogy comes in: 'the most immediate of our bodily reactions can thus be treated as pedagogy,' through pedagogy one learns how certain senses, reactions, and ideas become 'quick and unthinking' (Ahmed, 2015, p. 212).

However sudden and unexpected sensations might move through and beyond bodies, they remain mediated. It is not my task then to try to access unmediated

sensations and lived experiences, but to try to make sense of the lived experiences activists go through, to accept the limits of this sense-making, and to endure the feeling of being haunted by unanswered questions that accompany it.

Conclusion

In these last years, I have had the privilege of working with Graffitti and getting to know its members, which made me realise quite early on that I could only research their activism in an activist way. So, through these ethnographic and intimate encounters, and in dialogue with feminist and critical literature on qualitative, ethnographic research, I employ a methodology that attempts to addresses the affective, embodied, performative, and communal forms of pedagogy in activism. The methods arising out of this methodology include a critical reflexive approach, observation of participation, semi-structured interviews, photography and participant photography, and sound recordings. The Kemmuna direct action illustrated the possible usages of visual and sound methods.

The knowledge that has been co-created through these methods, deepened the educational direction of this study. Now, this study departs from the educational needs and practices of Graffitti's community – and traces how these educational processes nurture the endurance of the community, the performance of solidarity, and the education and radicalisation of the public. I ended this paper by articulating one significant limit to multi-sensory methods, drawing attention to the ways in which this research still risks concealing appropriation and translation.

Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude to Simone Galea, Angele Deguara, and Katy Bennett for their invaluable supervision, as well as to Maïté de Haan and Eline De Jong for their critical and candid comments, and Amy Marie Abela and Rafel Grima for their compassionate camaraderie. I am also exceptionally grateful to Moviment Graffitti and its members for welcoming me into their community of activists and giving me the courage and energy to do this work. Lastly, this doctoral research is made possible and funded by the European Training Network 'Solidarity in Diversity' (MSCA ITN 2021-2024).

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End Note

[i] I refer here to Karen Barad's usage of 'intra-action,' which is different from 'interaction.' Whereas interaction assumes the existence of independent entities that subsequently act with each other, intra-action acknowledges that entities come into being always already in relation to each other (Barad, 2007, p. 128).
[ii] For some protests, I take my Zoom recorder and analogue camera with me. Sometimes, I rely on pictures published by Graffitti (such as the ones in this paper), my own or participants'. The referenced sound fragments can be found at juliaalegremouslim.com.
iii See previous endnote.