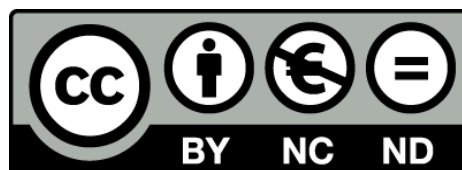




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Navigating the eventful space of learning: Mobilities, nomadism and other tactical maneuvers

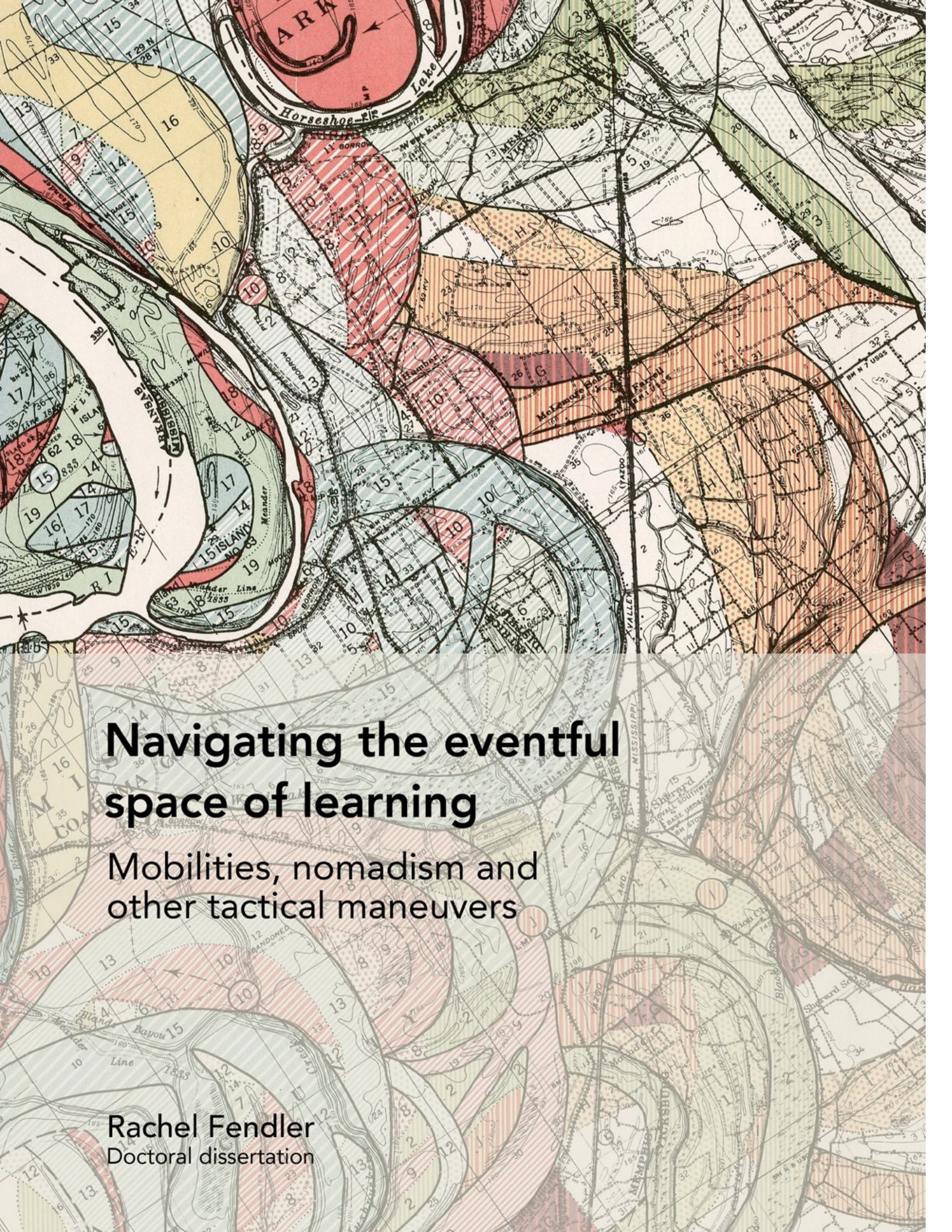
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Navigating the eventful space of learning

Mobilities, nomadism and
other tactical maneuvers

Rachel Fendler
Doctoral dissertation

Navigating the eventful space of learning: Mobilities, nomadism and other tactical maneuvers

Rachel Fendler, M.A.
Doctoral dissertation

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Graduate program:
Arts i educació
Facultat de Belles Arts
Universitat de Barcelona



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Abstract

This qualitative study draws on the results from a participatory ethnography carried out with 6 secondary students in their last year of compulsory education, during the academic year 2012-2013. The impetus for this research was the national study *Living and learning with new literacies in and outside secondary school: contributions to reducing dropout, exclusion and disaffection among youth* (MINECO. EDU2011-24122). Working with young people in weekly sessions, our group project explored the notion of learning and its meaning in their lives, both in and outside school, a process which is framed as contributing to the social imaginary of learning.

Resulting from the study of how learning was discussed and practiced in the group project is the development of a theoretical framework that questions the assumptions implicit in the binary phrase “in and outside school.” Theory from Lefebvre, de Certeau, Deleuze and Guattari, as well as input from the emerging mobilities paradigm, frames learning as contributing to the production of (social) space. This conceptual shift asks not what learning occurs, but how it emerges; not what learning *is*, but how it *takes place*. Unfolding around and within this study is an interrogation of the representational strategies made available within poststructural ethnography. Nomadic thought is embraced as both a concept and a method in an effort to mobilize ethnographic research into acting as an eventful space of learning in its own right.

This dissertation addresses a blindness in the field of education that renders some learning practices invisible. By problematizing how learning is both thought and reported on, this study attempts to engage with those pedagogical experiences that fall outside the realm of assessment.

Resumen

Esta investigación cualitativa se basa en los resultados de una etnografía participativa que se llevó a cabo con 6 alumnos de 4º de ESO durante el año académico 2012-13. La investigación contribuye al proyecto nacional *Vivir y aprender con nuevos alfabetismos dentro y fuera de la escuela secundaria: aportaciones para reducir el abandono, la exclusión y la desafección escolar de los jóvenes* (MINECO. EDU2011-24122). En una serie de sesiones semanales de trabajo, con los jóvenes, indagamos sobre la noción del aprender y el significado en sus vidas, tanto dentro como fuera de la escuela, un proceso que interviene en nuestro imaginario social del aprendizaje.

A raíz de cómo se representaba y hablaba del aprender en este proyecto se construye un marco teórico que cuestiona la geografía imaginaria implícita en la frase “dentro y fuera de la escuela”. Se introducen autores como Lefebvre, de Certeau y Deleuze y Guattari, además de aportaciones desde la perspectiva de las movilidades, para estudiar el aprender como una práctica que produce el espacio social. Este giro conceptual se aleja de preguntas sobre el qué se ha aprendido, para pensar en cómo el aprendizaje emerge o bien, cómo tiene lugar. Alrededor de esta argumentación se despliega una reflexión sobre las estrategias representacionales posibilitadas por la etnografía postestructural. Se adopta el pensamiento nómada como concepto y método para movilizar la investigación etnográfica, convirtiendo la tesis en su propio espacio-acontecimiento.

Al final, la tesis aborda una ceguera existente en el campo de la educación, la cual hace que ciertos aprendizajes sean invisibles. Con la intención de problematizar modos de reconocer el aprendizaje que se adscriben a una lógica representacional, este estudio investiga aquellas experiencias pedagógicas intangibles que se encuentran más allá de las prácticas educativas tradicionales.

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1. Navigating learning imaginaries

It feels appropriate to start at the beginning, but even something so innocuous introduces doubt—the origin story, after all, tends to be the fodder of myth. Perhaps that is appropriate; a story-tale format will force us—the writer and readers—to acknowledge early on in this endeavor that what follows is part truth and part fiction, the result of a subjective representation and interpretation of a series of events. In this light, what is unsettling about the so-called beginning is not the fictionality this notion introduces, but the fact that it is a narrative device associated with heroic tales or grand narratives, and is therefore out of place in this project, which has other intentions. Therefore, rather than locate a fixed point of origin, I will take Marcus Doel's (2000) cue and conceptualize the point as a verb, not a noun. To introduce the current project, I will begin in what can be arbitrarily identified as 'the middle', and proceed to point out or point toward the context from which this research emerges, and to which it contributes. In doing so, this dissertation becomes a rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004), a diagram that doesn't fix the object of research but calls it into being, produces it, allowing it to emerge through the act of inquiry. The rhizome is a map. However, this map has an important characteristic; it does not represent but rather produces a given milieu: “[t]he map does not depict the unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields” (p. 13). This generative, performative quality is implicit in the study that follows; navigating the eventful space of learning is not merely an exercise in representation but, rather, involves a performative engendering of the object of study.



Figure 1. Self-portrait, the author in a smooth space. Photograph of *Cloud gate*, by Anish Kapoor, taken by the author. Chicago, 2014.

Yet if one were to insist on retaining the notion of a point, then it would be more consistent to think of it not in nounal terms of position without magnitude, but in verbal terms of direction and orientation. Like the vanishing point in perspectival painting, such a point points into that which it vanishes. And since a point, no less than a space, is folded in many ways, this directional aspect takes on an infinite complexity and intensity. Point-fold. Point-schiz. Point-tag.

– Marcus Doel, 2000, p. 128

1.1. Forming part

One of the most important characteristics of this dissertation is that it is not a stand-alone project but rather *forms part*; it is one contribution among many that discusses the results of a national project, which in turn was carried out by a team of researchers and several groups of youth participants. Positioning the dissertation within a multiplicity of research events undermines fixed concepts such as the field or the eye of the researcher. Instead, the project is produced within a network of relations, a complex assemblage that I will address in this section.

The research group

The research group *Esbrina – Contemporary subjectivities, visualities and educational environments* (2014 SGR 632)¹, with 12 members and an additional cohort of 5 graduate students, brings together researchers from the Faculty of Fine Arts and the Faculty of Education from the University of Barcelona. The national project that sets this project in motion represents a continuation of prior research carried out by Esbrina, which has developed a line of research that studies the trajectories of young people through formal education and through their transitions into adulthood. In particular, the group looks critically at what supports or limits young people's ways of learning and becoming, paying particular attention to what characterizes young people's relationship to knowledge (Charlot, 2007) and they are configured as learning subjects (Hernández-Hernández, 2007).

Stemming from its commitment to questioning the stigma that is often placed on young people who don't easily fit into the narrative of formal education, Esbrina is committed to researching *with* young people. Developing meaningful collaborations with young people is an ethical stance that is imbedded into the methodological approach adopted by the group (Hernández-Hernández, 2011). Esbrina develops qualitative inquiries that invite young people's collaboration, using methodologies that dialogue directly with youth perspectives. This body of work is situated with the line of qualitative inquiry influenced by an interpretive framework and the narrative turn (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and research projects carried out in the last 7 years have employed different methods, including life histories, autoethnography, narrative inquiry, video narratives, or collaborative ethnography, among others. It is worth mentioning that the group is not complacent about the problem of representation, and is strongly committed to innovating methodologically according to the needs of the research project (Hernández-Hernández & Sancho Gil, 2015).

1 See the website: <http://www.esbrina.eu> for more information on current and past projects, publications and other information about Esbrina.

Esbrina thus provides an important foundation for the work described in this dissertation. Working in a collaborative environment meant that the perspective from the group is infused into these pages and it was within this collective that the dissertation began to adopt its formal characteristics. Methodological decisions related to the fieldwork were taken in group meetings, then changed and modified in the field. These changes were then discussed, analyzed and incorporated into the overarching narrative of the research project. Team meetings, held bi-monthly for the duration of the project, were a site for ongoing reflecting and sharing of results, to the extent that individual contributions often reflect and draw on conclusions developed within the group project, as we constructed the meaning of the research together. At the same time, the theoretical framework and analysis presented within this dissertation has until now remained isolated from the group discussions. In the end, I believe that having the space to respond to the original research questions within the parameters of the research team has allowed this dissertation to extend further, giving it permission to act as a site for experimentation that pushes beyond what was anticipated by the research group.

The national project

This dissertation discusses the fieldwork carried out in the national project *Living and learning with new literacies in and outside secondary school: contributions to reducing dropout, exclusion and disaffection among youth* (MINECO. EDU2011-24122)², which involved groups of students in five different secondary schools in the metropolitan area of Barcelona. This research project aimed to increase our understanding of how young people learn in order to take into account these strategies in formal teaching and learning processes. This project characterizes learning not as an (internal) cognitive procedure but as a process that involves building a relationship between the self and the outside world (See: Charlot, 2000; 2007). Re-framing the study of learning in this way means that the concern is no longer student achievement in a particular subject or activity. Instead, it entails reflecting with young people on their relationship with knowledge, both in and outside school. In other words, their project—and subsequently this dissertation—are interested in redefining learning not as a school activity but as the process a learner-subject is involved in while deciphering and making meaningful connections with the world around her.

To explore this issue, the national project was divided into three parts. First, using critical discourse analysis, we explored the regional and national curriculum to study how

2 The project website is found at: <http://esbrina.eu/en/portfolio/vivir-y-aprender-con-nuevos-alfabetismos-dentro-y-fuera-de-la-escuela-secundaria-aportaciones-para-reducir-el-abandono-la-exclusion-y-la-desafeccion-escolar-de-los-jovenes-3/>.

young people are represented as learners and students within formal education. Second, five ethnographic studies were conducted with five distinct groups of secondary school students (34 total), located in five schools. Using a participatory approach, this phase examined how young people conceptualize learning, how and where they learn better, and how they use different literacies in and outside school. Third, team members (myself not included) conducted focus groups with secondary school teachers to contrast the results of the ethnographic studies with their conceptions about how young people learn, and generated a discussion on the best possible ways to engage students in school learning.

As stated, the fieldwork was carried out in five different secondary schools in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, and took place during the academic year 2012-13. In each school, two members of the Esbrina research team worked with a group of students (with 5-11 youths) who were in their last year of compulsory education (aged 15-16 years old). In each school, the researchers typically met on a weekly basis. Our aim from the outset was to introduce the young people to ethnographic methods such as observation, interviews and the use of the field diary, so that the youth participants could report on how and where they engage in learning. Of course, each group progressed differently and there was variation in each group's approach to the original research prompt.

While the project requested that groups be made up of youth “who did and did not meet school expectations,” the schools interpreted this phrase as they saw fit and it was the schools that were ultimately responsible for recruiting young people to participate. Some schools invited students to volunteer, whereas in other centers participants were assigned to the project. While we had originally stipulated that student participation would count toward the final research project that 4th year students carry out, this was not possible in all cases.³ Three schools recognized student participation and allowed it to take the place of, or contribute to, their final research project. One school only recognized student participation, but did not assess the results, and one school invited students to participate as an extracurricular activity. In each case, the presence of the teacher and the degree of control the school maintained over the project was different. In three of the five groups, a teacher participated directly in the process and formed part of the core research group, while in two groups the teachers' presence was more perfunctory, following the project's progress

3 This research project is defined in regional curriculum guidelines as “a series of activities of discovery by the pupils regarding a subject chosen and marked out, partly by themselves, with the guidance of the teaching staff” (Department of Education, 2010, p. 251. Author's translation.). Effectively, the university team wanted a selection of students from each school to earn their research credit by participating in the project. We hoped that linking the project with the curriculum would provide a strong incentive for the young people, as well as make more resources available to them (namely, in the form of time and space during school hours). It turned out that not each school requires an individual research project and thus the integration of the project into the schools varied.

via informal meetings with the university researchers.

Ultimately, in each school the university researchers, young people, and teacher participants negotiated the tensions that emerged when attempting to carry out ethnographic research in a school setting. This generated a challenge for the research team as it followed the complexity of working in five separate institutional contexts. Still, this challenge was less than that posed by the task of negotiating how to do research with young people, as we invited them to become researchers of their own learning. During the fieldwork, each group struggled to maintain an approach to inquiry that was open-ended and exploratory, rather than proscriptive. This was unsettling for some of the young people who sought clear guidelines and expectations, however as the project progressed participants gained a critical distance from their identities as students and become more confident within the research framework.

At the end of the fieldwork, the schools gathered for a final presentation at the University of Barcelona (taking place in April, 2013), where each group of young people presented their work to an audience of teachers, researchers and university students. This concluded our active relationship with the young people, and further actions within the project included the development of the focus groups and dissemination activities.

The partnership

As has been stated, each of the five school groups included two university researchers. In my case, the fieldwork that contributes to this dissertation was presided over both and Xavier Giró and I. Xavi is a fellow member of Esbrina, and like me had no prior experience doing ethnographic field research at the time the project began. The development of the project sessions and our interaction with the young people was always carried out in partnership. While the fieldwork was ongoing we would confer regularly about our progress and afterwards we wrote the ethnographic account together. Oftentimes, our interpretation of the fieldwork events differed, as did our ideas about how to advance in the project. This meant that each project session involved a certain degree of negotiation before even meeting up with the youth.

This is an important point regarding my positionality in a project that was never “mine,” but in which I formed part. This position breaks with the myth of the lone ethnographer, and places collaboration at the heart of the project; the figure of the researcher in the group project was always already plural, even before the young people joined. Therefore, while the nature of this collaboration does not receive explicit scrutiny in the following pages, it is a foundational element for understanding how the project progressed.

Situating the author

Finally, it is pertinent to situate how my own experiences form part of this research project. In keeping with the narrative approach developed by Esbrina, our first action for the national project consisted of writing a brief personal narrative that reflected on our own relationships to learning in secondary school. Each team member shared their own text, and these narratives both situated our perspectives as well as provided a starting point for identifying interests, themes or other issues that may come up in the fieldwork. I found this action particularly revelatory and therefore include the text here, as evidence of my own experience with school disaffection.

Reflection on my relationship to school disaffection

(2012-02-12)

My relationship to high school was characterized by a great ambivalence. I was a successful student. First in my class, I participated in my courses and did all my homework, as well as a number of extracurricular activities (namely, sports and music). However, I abandoned high school after my junior year, leaving without complete the degree. This wasn't a traumatic experience; I simply attempted to get into college a year early and succeeded. This decision wasn't motivated by a strong rejection of my school, *per se*, but inspired more by the feeling that I had no need to stay there. To be sure, I never would have left high school if it were not to continue my education at the university level. However, once that opportunity provided itself, I jumped at the chance to leave. I felt little connection between what the school had to offer and my own goals, interests and life path. In order to explore this ambivalence toward school further, I will share three scenes. These moments are representative of two deceptions I experienced at school that have stayed with me, as well as a more positive experience. These scenes inform my understanding of my learning experiences in secondary school.

1. In the fall of 1998, when two brothers from Egypt enrolled in the school. One day in Geometry class the teacher, who doubled as the assistant football coach, addressed one of the brothers using the term "Camel Jockey." In response, the boy turned bright red and laughed, the first reaction seemed involuntary and the latter one forced. After witnessing this exchange, my friends and I commented that it sounded like a racial slur and I brought up the incident at home. Among my peers, we agreed that the comment was offensive and disrespectful. Yet, looking back on this incident, what I am most struck by is the lack of response and the acceptance it implies. Rather than complaining publicly we were content to be scandalized by the backward thinking of some of the school faculty, knowing that "this is the way things are here." That year I never spoke to either of the boys from Egypt.

2. In my junior year the school hired a new math teacher, which was exciting; it was hard for a poor rural town like mine to attract and retain faculty (and still is). The teacher

made a strong impression among the students because he compiled our worksheets himself and in class he would work out the problems on the board for us, actually doing the math rather than dictating. He was smart, dedicated, respectful, and passionate—making him an anomaly. At the end of the year he announced he was leaving, a fact the students accepted given the low opinion we had of our school. However, news travels in small towns and I soon learned that the teacher was leaving not per his own choice, but because the school didn't renew his contract. Confronted with this fact, I made an appointment with the head of school and shared with her the unheard of enthusiasm the teacher provoked in the student body. She told me that the school needed him to teach the introductory math class for first-years and that he refused to use the dedicated textbook. I'm not sure why the head of school shared this information with me, whether it was an indication of her sympathies or a justification of why he would not have been a good colleague. At any rate, this information furthered my disillusion and sense of disaffection.

3. In my sophomore year, the Humanities teacher created an elective and invited a small group of students to join. The project took place outside the formal school curriculum so those participating missed one class each week to attend. We met in the library instead of a classroom, seated around a large table. The proposal was to research the new millennium (it was the academic year 1998/99) and as a group we began to read different texts, had conversations on different topics, and invited members of the community to give talks on topics of their expertise. It was my first time undertaking something that resembled a research project. In retrospect I consider this elective to be the most rewarding *academic* experience I had at high school.

The teacher who started this initiative only stayed one more year at the high school and the project was discontinued after his departure. The project demonstrates that there are spaces of negotiation within the institutional framework yet it also reveals the considerable effort and commitment needed to take advantage of them in an innovative way, and the difficulty with sustainability.

Thus, as I reflect on my relationship to learning in and outside school, I find that it is useful to distinguish between what I learned *in* school, and what I learned *from* school. The first refers to the subject matter that was covered while the latter draws on the accumulated experiences of attending school. It is within this second category where I locate all of my meaningful learning experiences, 15 years later.

As far as our upcoming research project is concerned, I recall the sensation I had at 16 that I was just killing time, waiting to move on. It's hard to communicate this without misrepresenting my teenage self; I was not angst-ridden, I was frustrated. I wished that high school could have been something else, something better, something so much more than it was. And perhaps one of the reasons I'm participating in this research project is because I still feel the same way.

* * *

The drafting of this narrative represented the first time in many years that I reflected on my decision to leave school early and I was almost surprised to rediscover my experience as a disaffected one. When the project started I felt that I didn't have any particular associations with the term "school disaffection," yet by revisiting my decision to leave school before completing a degree (albeit to continue my studies elsewhere) I realized that perhaps that wasn't the case. The narrative opened my eyes to the fact that I had previously associated the term disaffection with the idea of someone struggling with school, whereas in my case school wasn't something I struggled, even though I was more than happy to leave it behind. Thus, based on the experience of writing this narrative I developed a more nuanced understanding of disaffection. By distinguishing between the curriculum space and social space of learning (i.e., what we learn *in* versus *from* school), I also began to approach disaffection not as a failure to meet school expectations, but as a wider issue that addresses where school fits into the everyday lives of young people. Each of these realizations are carried over into my reflection on the events of the fieldwork.

Variations on a theme

In this project it is hard to keep track of the pronouns. The writing switches between both first person singular and first person plural, and oftentimes the use of 'we' requires a qualifier—referring in turn to the university research team, to the group project with the youth, or to the partnership between Xavi and I. This blurred I/we subject position hints at other overlaps that occur throughout the project; while developing across multiple learning communities (Watkins, 2005), the project continually collapses the distinction between learning and researching.

In the research design we find the following: at the center, a group project which works with young people who were both learning to research and researching learning (the partnership between Xavi and I could be given a very similar descriptor). Meanwhile, when the fieldwork was underway the university research team at the university was analyzing the group work, and we were attentive to both the young people's contributions (how they reported on their learning in discussion, and with texts and images) as well as how they learned within the project (or, how the group inquiry was in itself a learning process). Finally, this process was presided over by the more independent work related to my doctoral dissertation, which provides yet another layer of analysis.

The synchronicity that develops between the object of study and the way in which the research is carried out gives the dissertation a particular shape and feel. Rather than progress in a linear fashion, the following work is best thought of as variations on a theme. Here the theme may be broadly identified as *becoming pedagogical*. This process is, as Carl Leggo and Rita Irwin (2013) describe, a reflexive act of "learning to learn," and connotes "a

state of embodied, living inquiry whereby the learner is committed to learning in and through time” (p. 4). Framing this investigation in such terms evokes a contiguous movement. On one hand, the researcher transforms by coming to recognize herself as a pedagogical subject and on the other, learning about learning provokes changes in very way we understand this process. There is no specific definitive end point, and the results emerge on a continuum rather than appear at the finish.

Because this project is interested not only in the process of learning, but in the idea of learning sites (or learning *across* sites, in *and* outside school), rather than speak broadly of becoming pedagogical I attempt to situate this process within a series of assemblages (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004). Borrowing the term from Gilles Deleuze and Fèlix Guattari, I identify three overlapping territories, each of which serve inform on the understanding of learning practices developed here. The three main assemblages that I identify are:

1. *becoming-learner*: constituted by the youth contributions regarding their learning practices, shared throughout the fieldwork (See: chapter 5);
2. *becoming-inquirer*: which considers the group project itself as evidence of how learning emerges, in this case within a living inquiry process (See: chapter 4);
3. *becoming-researcher*: which reflects on how to represent and discuss learning drawing on a poststructural ethnographic paradigm (See: chapter 3).

Configuring these overlapping assemblages is a way to avoid fixing the object of study, given that “an ethos of assemblage eschews thinking in terms of essence or fixity by holding onto the possibility that entities are continuously being formed and deformed” (Anderson, Kearnes, McFarlane & Swanton, 2012, p. 180). This process allows the study to engage the concept of learning from different vantage points, using each assemblage to respond to the different ways the term learning emerged and became meaningful within the research project itself. The result is a dissertation that is composed of several layers, which rather than present themselves as a unified whole, is best understood as a multiplicity, an expanding exploration of the process of becoming pedagogical.

1.2. Learning imaginaries

The social imaginary

This project interrogates how learning is represented, a project that I frame within the so-called social imaginary of learning. According to Charles Taylor (2004), the social imaginary describes the broad conceptualization people have about themselves, their collective life, and society. An imaginary is not reality as such, but rather our way of comprehending reality; it references a common understanding that can become so

entrenched as to appear self-evident, such that “we have trouble seeing it as one possible conception among others” (p. 2). While Taylor uses this term to interrogate modern society, it is a concept that can be activated in the current investigation into learning in and outside school. One useful distinction Taylor makes is to differentiate between theory and the imaginary. Taylor argues that an imaginary is not a redundant concept and provides a different perspective than, say, attempting a theoretical approach to social issues. Unlike theory, which tends to be the currency of the few, a social imaginary is shared by many, and places the emphasis on “the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings, and this is often expressed in images, stories and legends” (p. 23).

As will become apparent, this dissertation focuses more on how to discuss and identify learning practices; rather than how to assess or determine what learning occurred. In a project that asked youth to reflect on and represent their learning practices, it quickly became clear that the discussion was not working on a theoretical level. In an inquiry that progressed through anecdotes, Facebook pictures and off-topic discussions, what was woven together shares a greater affinity with Taylor's concept of the imaginary than any specific theoretical construct.

What I'm calling the social imaginary extends beyond the immediate background understanding which makes sense of our particular practices. ... This wider grasp has no clear limits. That's the very nature of what contemporary philosophers have described as the "background". It is in fact that largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation, within which particular features of our world show up for us in the sense they have. It can never be adequately expressed in the form of explicit doctrines, because of its very unlimited and indefinite nature. That is another reason for speaking here of an "imaginary", and not a theory. (Ibid, p. 25)

The fact that the imaginary will never be reduced to a clear set of characteristics, such that it remains *unstructured and inarticulate*, makes it an appropriate framework for understanding how the fieldwork addressed the object of study. The group project with young people works as a contribution to the research topic, in as much that it destabilizes the social imaginary, rather than draw specific conclusions. If disaffection can be read as the result of a restricted imaginary of what learning is, or what it should be, than this project uses the fieldwork to think differently about learning, in an attempt to change the conversation surrounding it.

To this end, this section explores how the social imaginary is worked into the project, theoretically and methodologically. The following three key concepts: invisible learning, representational boundaries and the eventful space, articulate the *background* that this research works within, and which have the effect of drawing the research into a conceptual

terrain that dialogues more the imaginary than with the theory of learning.

Invisible learning

How and where young people learn are two pressing questions in educational research, and today they seem irrevocably intertwined. The blurred boundaries between school and non-school, virtual and physical sites, or formal, non-formal and informal education contribute to a wide body of literature on the relationship between place and pedagogy (Leander, Phillips, & Headrick Taylor, 2010; Schubert, 2010; Brooks, Fuller, & Waters, 2012; Vadeboncoeur, 2012; Sefton-Green, 2013a). However, while research in this field has diversified and ventured outside the classroom, it still struggles with finding ways for discussing learning without falling back on normative assessment frameworks used to evaluate school effectiveness (Sefton-Green, 2013a).

Educational discourse emphasizes the role of lifelong learning, which acknowledges the increasing access young people have to mobile technologies and open educational resources, as well as the demand for constant participation in today's knowledge society. However, in spite of the perceived multiplication of learning opportunities available to young people, in the context of Catalonia, Spain, there is a serious problem with early school leaving. Nationally, the amount of students who do not continue their studies beyond compulsory education hovers around 25%, which is double the European average (Eurostat, 2012). The disconnect between possible learning practices and real student engagement reveals an uneasy relationship between formal and non-formal learning. David Buckingham (2007) suggests that certain types of digital competence are not formally recognized in the traditional school curriculum, giving rise to a class of activity that some have come to label *invisible learning* (Cobo Romani & Moravec, 2011).

Of course, "invisible learning" is not an entirely unfamiliar concept. In the 1960s Phillip Jackson (1968) argued that schooling entails a 'hidden curriculum' and later on, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (2000, pp. 46-47) would make a comparable distinction between implicit and explicit pedagogies. Most notably, Basil Bernstein (2003, p. 68) discusses both visible from invisible pedagogies in his analysis of the educational context. However, there is a difference between this discussion which focuses on the implicit values—or discourse—that is put into circulation in educational contexts and what the term "invisible learning" is trying to address. According to the analysis put forth by Cristóbal Cobo Romani and John Moravec (2011), the focus is not on power relations but on the diversity of learning practices that young people productively engage in outside of school. The concept does not focus on the ideological dimensions of schooling, and instead sheds light on a blindness, an inability within education to recognize learning outside of the curricular space. For the current project, therefore, I approach invisible learning as an

invitation, an opening which enables me to consider the ineffable, and potentially subversive, characteristics of learning itself. In attempting to trace those learning practices that are made invisible can only enhance our social imaginary of learning.

Representational boundaries

While the term *invisible learning* was introduced by Cobo Romani and Moravec (2011) to describe a range of practices involving Web 2.0 technologies, the description captures a wider pedagogical problem regarding the difficulty educational institutions (and researchers) have in recognizing the rich experiences of learning that young people engage in. The rendered invisibility of certain learning practices encourages this project to address the problem of representational boundaries. Representation is both an epistemological and methodological issue, leading this dissertation to ask: how can we come to know about learning and how can we share and disseminate these findings?

Julian Sefton-Green (2013a), in dialogue with the work of Rupert Wergerif (2012), affirms that “learning is only really enabled, constituted, produced, or made visible—there is no simple verb to choose here—through dialogue” (p. 17). By asking young people to report on their own learning practices, this project welcomes this type of dialogue. Of course, the conversations that evolved were unscripted and the young people responded to the research prompt in a number of ways, all of which were unexpected. As I will explain further along, the group I worked with produced the least amount of tangible results in comparison to the other four groups participating in the national project. This rather ambivalent contribution of the fieldwork is a catalyst for the great deal of emphasis placed on the act of representation and interpretation, bringing methodological decisions to the fore. As I pondered how to bring the fieldwork into the framework of a doctoral dissertation, I grappled with how the expository format of the dissertation could respect the representational boundaries established by guarded participation of the young people. Because the fieldwork had been anything but clear-cut or self-evident I was disinterested in using the dissertation to make it more transparent.

To this end, the following interrelated representational strategies are used to trouble how this dissertation discusses the events of the fieldwork. First, the methodological approach is situated within a poststructural ethnographic paradigm that disrupts the relationship between the fieldwork, data and text. As I discuss at length in chapter 3, this locates the dissertation in a tradition that acknowledges the crisis of representation, whereby “writing ethnography as a practice of narration is not about capturing the real already out there. It is about constructing particular versions of truth” (Britzman, 2000, p. 30), and embracing the fictive elements of the ethnographic text as *partial truths* (Clifford, 1986). Given this approach, the research focuses not on *what* the young people in the

project learn but on *how* learning emerges (and how to capture this process).

Roland Bleiker (2014) indicates that when addressing complex phenomena, questions about how or why something happens are usually impossible to answer:

No method can, for instance, retrace casual or constitutive links between the representation of [an event] ... To understand the political dimensions of this process, methods other than those based on social scientific models of causality are needed: strategies that acknowledge the multidirectional and multifaceted dimension of events. (p. 80)

If social phenomena always exceed our representational capacities, the most we can hope for is transparency in our methodological decisions. To interpret the research event, I apply Alicia Jackson and Lisa Mazzei's (2012) process of *plugging in* to think through data with theory. This strategy recognizes that data and theory are mutually constituted and makes explicit the way in which questions are articulated throughout the inquiry, as data and theory are brought together. Within this paradigm, the research event is not beholden to some external notion of truth, but comes to speak within the consciously constructed framework of the project.

In order to work within this gap between the research experience and ethnographic representation, I use several narrative strategies. First, the ethnographic account is presented in a series of disjointed vignettes (Humphreys, 2005; Denzin, 1989) and woven throughout the chapters and interludes. There is no defined presentation of the field that is treated as prior to, and thus separate from, the analysis; rather the fieldwork emerges in relation to the issues being discussed. This reduces the independence of the vignettes, attempting to break away from the idea that the "data" is external to the questions being asked by the research project. The second narrative strategy takes the form of five gestures—framing, wandering, sifting, layering and spiraling—which are placed in between the chapters, as interludes. The interludes provide an alternative narrative regarding how a research project develops and reflect on the process of meaning making that supports the research project. Each gesture brings together artworks, narratives and events from the fieldwork to question the transitions from field, to data, to text. These first-person spaces in the dissertation are also used to document the learning process the dissertation represents, as I highlight particular challenges faced while tasked with making sense of the fieldwork, documented as the process of becoming-researcher. Both the vignettes and the interludes play with the concept of space that is in foregrounded in the project. The different narrative threads allow intermediate spaces, or gaps, to emerge within the layered text. I imagine these fissures as providing multiple points of entry into the text, leaving a space for the reader(s).

Finally, the issue of representational boundaries is developed theoretically, not just methodologically. Taking the phrase *learning in and outside school* as a provocation, the project unfolds by conceptually mapping learning onto relational space. This project considers the spatial practices advanced by Michel de Certeau (1984), the geophilosophies of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004), as well as a mobilities perspective (Cresswell, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006), to ponder how learning may be conceived as a movement, one that draws its own assemblage rather than settling into pre-existing sites. Movement is directly related to questions of representational boundaries. As per Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004):

[m]ovement has an essential relation to the imperceptible; it is by nature imperceptible. Perception can grasp movement only as the displacement of a moving body or the development of a form. Movements, becomings in other words, pure relations of speed and slowness, pure affects, are below and above the threshold of perception. (p. 309)

Shifting the observation from sites of learning to spatial practices enables the dissertation to look at learning as a process of navigation—a movement that establishes connections across sites, practices and subjects. It generates a focus on how learning produces space through practice, rather than fits into preexisting sites. This interpretation recuperates the improvisational tactics, peripheral activities and other borderline behaviors that learners engage in as they negotiate their relationship to schooling.

The eventful space

Having established that learning brings about space and not vice versa, the project comes to ask, how can we discuss a space characterized by invisible learning? Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (2000) introduce a way to address space determined by social activity, a so-called “eventful space” which “is less a limit than a creation of what it encircles, more to do with doing than knowing” (p. 6). This term enables the project to name a terrain that encompasses the relational activities of becoming-learner, the observation of which allows us to attend to the manner in which affinity and action generate learning landscapes.

In charting a foundation for a research project that emphasizes the process of becoming, there is a risk of getting caught up in an uninhibited notion of flow. What punctuates this ceaseless form of movement is the notion of the event.

[The event] is not defined by a fixed beginning and end, but is something that occurs in the midst of a history, causing us to redistribute our sense of what has gone before it and what might come after. An event is thus not something one inserts into an emplotted dramatic sequence with its start and finish, for it initiates a new sequence that retrospectively determines its beginnings, and which leaves its ends unknown or undetermined. (Rajchman, 1991, p. ix)

The key characteristic of the event in this project is the idea that it *initiates a new sequence*; it works as an interruption that introduces change. Building on the Deleuzian notion of the event, the event is understood as the site of the production difference, because it is a potentiality that is more than a pre-emptive set of possibilities. Marcus Doel (2010) discusses the notion of event in Deleuze by relating it to difference:

What does this eventfulness mean in practice? It means that the world is not given in advance. It is not always already suspended in reserve as a set of countless possibilities or eternal and ethereal Platonic forms, which simply await their successive realization in the course of everything that happens.

The world does not take place as the serial realization of possibilities and forms, which would make of the world and its occurrence nothing but an impotent repetition of the same and a dutiful re-presentation of the identical... The world that takes place is not simply the addition of reality to a prefigured possibility... The world that returns is never the same world. What returns with the taking place of the world is neither the same, nor the identical, nor the possible – but the event. (pp. 120-121)

An event is a change of course, a displacement, the pre-emption of a line of flight that prompts change from one ontological state to another. In terms of assemblage thinking—where everything is already on the move—the event is a theory of how change occurs in relation to the ongoing formation of the social.

Dennis Atkinson (2011, 2012, 2015) has written extensively on how a theory of the event can influence our understanding of learning and his work is influential to the current project. This is in spite of the fact that I am working from a Deleuzian perspective and Atkinson is primarily informed by Alain Badiou's work on the event, which is considered (perhaps infamously so) incompatible with how Deleuze uses the same term (See: Badiou, 2007).⁴ The point of contact between both Atkinson's and my own use of the event is our shared interest in framing learning as an ontological shift. Atkinson (2012) posits that “[r]eal learning involves a movement into a new ontological state; it defines a problem of existence, in contrast to more normative learning and its everyday norms and competences” (p. 9). Here, learning is not the event, the event is:

that which happens to precipitate learning. That which is precipitated can be

4 At the same time, Atkinson (2011) rewrites Badiou's theory of the event onto a smaller scale, imagining a “local event of learning,” that focuses on “less prominent spaces (but not for the learner) of learning where an event is an event of real learning through which a subject-as-learner emerges and is transformed, even though for others beyond this local space this particular local event is not an event and would not be considered as an event by Badiou” (p. 37). In scaling down and populating the event with more minor practices, his use of the term becomes closer in form to the event that appears in Deleuze and Guattari's lexicon, and which is employed in this dissertation. Perhaps an eventful space is another iteration of this so-called local event.

conceived in terms of a truth procedure that remains faithful to the event of learning. ... Thus I am concerned more with opening up pedagogic spaces to the truth of learning encounters and events rather than analysing (normative) subjects of knowledge. (Atkinson, 2011, p. 9)

Looking at how learning is actualized within the eventful space, this project does not revert to studying how learners acquire knowledge. Like Atkinson, it attempts to imagine how learning is precipitated through pedagogical practice that encourages difference. From a Deleuzian perspective, I would frame Atkinson's position by arguing that learning is not the event, rather the event is immanent to learning:

As the product of the synthesis of forces, events signify the internal dynamic of their interactions. As such, on Deleuze's interpretation, an event is not a particular state or happening itself, but something made actual in the State or happening. In other words, an event is the potential immanent within a particular confluence of forces. (Stagoll, 2010, p. 90)

Within this formula, the eventful space of learning emerges as an imagined geography, bridging a reflection on social space and the social imaginary. Because the event is not captured as a *happening*, it suggests "a moment at which new forces might be brought to bear" (Stagoll, 2010, p. 91), in other words, an *immanent potential* that drives change. Engaging with the nomadic thought of *A thousand plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004) is a way to imagine such a site, which is brought to bear through practice (i.e., built on trajectories instead of fixed points). Here, the objective is not to create the concept *learning-as-event*. As Carl Stagoll (2010) observes, the point is not to "think in terms of events, but rather to make thinking its own event by embracing the rich chaos of life and the uniqueness and potential of each moment" (p. 90). The construct of *the eventful space of learning* is a reference to how the current project allows thinking to be its own event; it is both the imagined territory within which this dissertation takes place, and a catalyst for how I begin to think learning differently.

1.3. Focal points

Having mapped the main concerns this dissertation addresses, the following section introduces three focal points that orient the inquiry toward the social imaginary of learning. Each point (understood as a verb not a noun) is a trajectory that guides the analysis. As such, the focal points do not summarize the dissertation chapters, which follow a different organizational logic, but instead point out the concepts that are in play when thinking about—and with—learning imaginaries. To this end, using focal points to order the dissertation is a way of responding to the question: what does this research experience allow us to think? Following each conceptual assemblage through the research process,

these three points represent how I have structured my exploration of the fieldwork in ways that are generative rather than reductive.

Taking place

It is a basic understanding that actions occur in space and time, a fact that is neatly captured by the phrase *taking place*. This phrase becomes a catalyst for approaching the concept of learning as a spatial practice. The starting point in the geographic milieu that permeates this research is Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning and the pedagogical model of communities of practice. With this theory Lave and Wenger introduce a powerful imaginary that situates learning in social space. While this perspective provided a starting point for thinking about how young people develop relational learning landscapes, the investigation of learning taking place became more complex as the fieldwork developed. Theories about the social production of space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991), and in particular the spatial tactics theorized by Michel de Certeau (1984), introduce a critical perspective, asking how the figuration of the learner-traveler is able to interrupt the normative space of the curriculum. Chapter 2 lays the groundwork for this reflection, where I look at the relationship between participation and site, while considering youth perspectives and practices that deconstruct the binary *in and outside school*. In chapter 4 this theme is revisited in greater depth, where the act of taking place becomes an affirmation of some of the more tense and frustrating parts of the fieldwork. This perspective frames moments experienced as getting stuck, losing track or drifting, and resignifies them. Reading learning through a consideration of tactics (de Certeau, 1984) or Lefebvre's (1974/1991) conceptualization of differentiated space does not remit to a subject-oriented notion of empowerment. Instead, young people emerge within this framework as actors who do not need space to be conceded to them, because they are always already involved in constructing their own spaces of agency.

At the same time, the gerund *taking place* advances a notion of space that is in process of construction. This introduces an important perspective within a study of learning in and outside school, placing the emphasis on the transition between sites. Greg Dimitriadis (2008) has observed “it is the 'in-between'—the moving back and forth between sites and texts—that increasingly defines our children's lives and cultural landscapes and must, therefore, define our research agenda” (p. 99). Focusing on the in-between enables the research to ask how learning emerges, framed as a practice that of navigation and becoming.

Nomadism

Nomadic thought, appearing here as the middle focal point, is the keystone of this

dissertation; it acts as the point of convergence of the many tensions circulating within this research project, bridging both theory and methodology. In this sense, my appropriation of Deleuze and Guattari's thought has been influenced by Elizabeth St. Pierre (2014) who, when reflecting on the turn to Deleuze and Guattari in her own research, observes that "their concepts... can be methods that enable new research practices that can neither be described in advance of a study nor easily described at the end" (p. 14). In this light, Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2004) elaboration of nomadology is a framework that allows me to speak of the research experience in its complexity, providing both a way of doing and a way of thinking the study in question.

Nomadism localizes learning within a processual, performative ontology of becoming, transitioning from the notion of learner-traveler to the figuration of the nomadic subject. On one hand, developing this framework is a response to the empirical events of the fieldwork, which unfolded such that they always felt just outside my grasp. Using notions such as the smooth space, deterritorialization and lines of flight, nomadic thought names the way learning practices have the ability to create tension within educational space and adopts an affirmative approach toward the transgressions that characterized the group project. On the other hand, nomadic inquiry works as a methodological experiment that questions how to engage with the meaning making processes of qualitative research. Using the assemblage as method is a way of keeping the treatment of learning practices in motion.

It is important to recall that nomadism is a specific type of taking place, characterized as a "perpetual displacement" (Kaplan, 1996). Nomadic practice is not a continual, uninterrupted flow but a disruption of the norm; in chapter 3 this plays out as an examination of the practice of inquiry, and in chapter 4 it reflects on the power of disruption within the group work. Embracing the topic more broadly, nomadic practice is also a way of thinking of the dissertation as an eventful space. David Cole (2013) argues, "nomadic analysis acts as a kind of magnetism, drawing out the elements of the data with the greatest speeds and potential for transformation" (p. 235). In an asynchronous, non-linear fashion, this dissertation develops nomadically, assembling and reassembling theory and data while reflecting on the social imaginary of learning.

We find that the assemblage is not only a mode of inquiry, it is also a way of relating the act of becoming to the practice of learning by positioning the learner as a nomadic subject. This is an ethical project is not a romanticized vision of young people as vagrant, interconnected and highly mobile. Instead, following Rosi Braidotti (2006, 2011, 2014), tracing the nomadic subject is a task that attempts to understand the network of power relations which constitute it. Regarding the nomadic subject, Braidotti (2006) positions

this figuration “at the intersection with external, relational forces,” the study of which:

is about assemblages. Encountering them is almost a matter for geography, because it is a question of orientations, points of entry and exit, a constant unfolding. ... The border, the framing or containing practices are crucial to the whole operation; one which aims at affirmative and not nihilistic processes of becoming. In other words, joyful-becoming as *potentia*, or a radical force of empowerment. (p. 160)

Developing a politics of location, Braidotti suggests that the work of the assemblage is “a way of embedding critical practice in a specific situated perspective, avoiding universalistic generalizations and grounding it so as to make it accountable” (Braidotti, 2006, p. 79). In the current project, the study is attentive to those *orientations, points of entry and exit*, and *constant unfoldings* that sustain and support learning, mapping learning as a practice of nomadic pedagogy.

A mobilities perspective

The third focal point centers on the mobilities paradigm, an emerging perspective that studies the effects of displacement and stasis. Tim Cresswell (2006) makes the analogy that mobilities are to movement, as place is to space; in other words, mobilities are practices that signify or contextualize movement. As such, mobilities invite a close examination of what it means to argue that learning is a form of becoming.

The world may be in constant movement, flux and becoming, but this does not mean that those movements are flat, linear and uniform. Movements and becomings may be approached as qualitative multiplicities, and they are clearly underpinned by diverse political strategies. (Merriman, 2012a, p. 5)

Chapter 5 looks at such *qualitative multiplicities*, arguing that learning practices are complex mobilities, the nuances of which are sometimes overlooked in literature focusing on formal/informal or in/out binaries. Working closely with data from the fieldwork—in what amounts to a more empirical turn within the dissertation—a mobilities perspective focuses on the construction of the social space of learning. It also poses the question: is school disaffection itself a mobility, and if so is it uni-directional or are other forces in play?

A mobilities perspective, while prioritizing movement over space and time, remains fundamentally invested in geographic concerns. In this case, it works to reframe learning in terms of at how it configures space, rather than vice versa. This perspective engages the questions: What are the mobile characteristics of learning practices that help us better understand the relationship between learning in and out of school, and across contexts? Going back to the work carried out in the group project, learning mobilities represent

learning in a way that counters the traditional, uni-directional imaginary of learning as being taught. Thinking about how notions of *in and outside* are established and maintained through learning practices, this perspective adds nuance to the initial proposal of the national research project. What is revealed is a high degree of permeability among sites of learning, which are best addressed by activating a logic of the AND (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004), where neither in nor out are closed categories, but exist in dialogue with one another—in AND out. A mobilities perspective captures this putting into relation of sites through an ongoing practice of negotiation and navigation.

A non-totalizing approach

While this section has not introduced the content of each of the following chapters and interludes, it remains a faithful representation of what will be found in the pages that follow. The focal points presented here are a non-totalizing description of the dissertation, advancing three interrelated approximations to the social imaginary of *learning in and outside school*. If we recall that this project is set within the eventful space, configured as a site of a potentiality, then the focal points interrogate on how this space is constructed, through mobilities, nomadism or other tactical maneuvers. A tension appears to arise in this presentation, as movement seems to overtake space in the theoretical framework, however this is a false tension. In conversation with Antoni Negri, Deleuze comments on the spatial practices at work in his philosophy:

A Thousand Plateaus sets out in many different directions, but these are the three main ones: first, we think any society is defined not so much by its contradictions as by its lines of flight, it flees all over the place, and it's very interesting to try and follow the lines of flight taking shape at some particular moment or other. ... There's another direction in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which amounts to considering not just lines of flight rather than contradictions, but minorities rather than classes. Then finally, a third direction, which amounts to finding a characterization of "war machines" that's nothing to do with war but to do with a particular way of occupying, taking up, space-time, or inventing new space-times... (Deleuze & Negri, 1990)

The *war machine* of nomadic thought is often written as a movement—a line of flight, a deterritorialization, the creation of a smooth space—but Deleuze points out that it amounts to a form of taking up space, a practice of inventing a space-time that also allows a new mode of existence to emerge. This dissertation follows the lines of flight introduced by the fieldwork, and attempts to infuse a situated notion of educational research—one based on the “classroom-as-container” discourse (Leander, Phillips, & Headrick Taylor, 2010)—with a more open-ended, performative understanding of how learning emerges.

1.4. Becoming pedagogical

This project is an inquiry into learning. However, it does not ask what or how young people learn, focusing instead on the process of learning taking place. This shift introduces a deviation, moving away from the mechanics of knowledge acquisition toward a consideration of the social imaginary of learning and its representational boundaries.

The project is the result of complex research design, amounting to a study of a research group that studies learning. Unsurprisingly the layers composing the project—those of becoming-learning, -inquirer and -researcher—make it difficult to separate the notions of learning, inquiry and research. Each layer frames how the participants (the author included) come to reflect on our learning selves (Ellsworth, 2005), in a process defined here as becoming-pedagogical. The research takes seriously the claim that “[b]ecomings belong to geography, they are orientations, directions, entries and exits” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007, p.2). In other words, while the geographic frame brought forth in this project is both conceptual and physical, it is never merely an aesthetic affectation. To address the study of learning *in and outside school* both the methodological and epistemological approach borrows heavily from nomadic thought, while following the everyday practices of learning—those tactics that “act performatively, rather than representationally, and resituate the events of places... within a different structure of relations” (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 146).

Ethnography seems poised to engage this topic, bringing together notions of place and practice, as well as inquiry and learning. On one hand, using ethnography to study learning sites invites the research to act as “place-making” (Pink, 2008), by acknowledging that the site under consideration does not exist prior to the study, but emerges through practice. George Marcus' work is also relevant here, drawing on his research imaginary of a multi-sited ethnography. Marcus (2007), reflecting on ethnographic practice two decades after the publication of *Writing Culture* (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), clarifies that:

the multi-sited challenge of ethnography ... does not lead to a merely mobile ethnography following processes through sites, but evokes ethnography itself as composed of networked, rhizomic, viral knowledge processes. Yes, it is following out connections and relations, but of ideas and maps or topologies that are not given, but found. (Marcus, 2007, p. 1132)

Embedded within contemporary ethnographic work is an understanding of the ontological shift from being to becoming in the world. This shift allows the ethnographic project to contribute to the construction of spaces of learning.

Tim Ingold (2014) has reflected on the relationship between ethnography and learning, by insisting on an ontological commitment to becoming as the foundation of

ethnographic practice. He advances the following argument:

I want to insist, rather, on anthropology as a *practice* of education. That is to say, it is a practice dedicated to what Kenelm Burridge (1975: 10) has called *metanoia*: “an ongoing series of transformations each one of which alters the predicates of being.” Though Burridge argues that *metanoia* is the goal of ethnography, to my mind it much more appropriately describes the goal of education. (p. 388)

Ingold situates the work of ethnography as a process of transformation. It is this process that is recognized as the project of education. He goes on to suggest that inquiry, at its heart, is an educational endeavor, perhaps more so than what takes place in today's classrooms:

... anthropology is a quest for education in the original sense of the term, far removed from the sense it has subsequently acquired through its assimilation to the institution of the school. Derived from the Latin *educere* (from *ex*, “out,” plus *ducere*, “to lead”), education was a matter of leading novices *out* into the world rather than, as commonly understood today, of instilling knowledge *in* to their minds. Instead of placing us in a position or affording a perspective, education in this sense is about pulling us away from *any* standpoint—from any position or perspective we might adopt. (p. 389)

By imagining inquiry as a quest, a form of moving out into the world, Ingold neatly ties together the issues raised in this introduction. Learning, mobility, inquiry and becoming: all are processes that unfold together within the perpetual displacement that is fieldwork.

To practice participant observation, then, is to join in correspondence with those with whom we learn or among whom we study, in a movement that goes forward rather than back in time. Herein lies the educational purpose, dynamic, and potential of anthropology. (p. 390)

Ingold advocates thinking about ethnography as a learning process in order to change how we understand method. Rather than *apply method* in an attempt to document and transform experience into data, he envisions a mutual correspondence taking place, a lived experience of learning and becoming in relation.

Ingold's exposition resonates with the project that occupies the following pages. Here, an inquiry takes place, but the site it creates has a ripple effect, affecting both an epistemological and ontological approach to learning, each of which evolve as the dissertation develops. As it progresses, the study examines and attempts to name those pedagogical experiences that fall outside the realm of assessment. It will, on one hand, weave together a pedagogical framework that draws on a perspective of learning as a mobility, or process of becoming and, on the other hand, ponder how to mobilize ethnographic research to

capture, represent, and share these nomadic learning practices.

I. Framing



Eve Hesse, *Hang up*. 1966.
© The Estate of Eva Hesse. Hauser & Wirth Zürich London.
On display in the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA.

The negative space

Today we had the final event for the national project, and each group from the five participating schools met at the university and presented their work. Seeing everyone together, the young people were able to get a sense of the scope of the project, perhaps for the first time. There were approximately 80 people in the audience, including the young people, some of their family members and teachers, as well as other researchers and teachers who came to attend the public event.

The presentations went well in spite of the nerves, and during the question and answer session many of the young people felt compelled to speak up. From my group, the two girls spoke, feeling emboldened as they urged the teachers in the audience to take heed of some of the comments that had been shared today.

Afterwards, Jordi came up to us and asked if this presentation was going to take place somewhere else, "maybe in Madrid," he offered as an example. Xavi and I weren't sure where this question came from, and we tell him that the next step would be to write down what happened, explaining that the articles would be a way of sharing what had happened.

"It's just, I think people need to hear about this," he says. We were surprised by his conviction, but readily agreed with him.

When it was time for them to leave, the young people from our group came up to Xavi and I to say a formal goodbye. We assure them that we'll keep in touch as the project progresses.

Once the crowd had drifted away, I was leaving the building with the PI of the project and we were commenting on how the young people had done, and how the event had gone. Amused, he said: It's funny, your group probably had the best presentation even though, we all know, it did the least amount of work.

* * *

Drawing on a concept from the arts, when I set out to analyze my fieldwork I saw it as a negative space; by that I do not mean that it was considered a failure, nor did it feel like one at the time. Yet, it is undeniable that within the national project, the group I worked with was the outlier, producing the least amount of tangible results when compared to the other participating schools. While this exceptional case served as an interesting counterpoint within the larger project, it posed a more ambiguous problem when the fieldwork officially ended and I began to consider the experience as an isolated case, for the dissertation. Faced with the lack of concrete contributions from the young people the experience, when taken by itself, seemed empty.

Thus the project begins at this impasse, when I began to consider how this experience becomes meaningful within the framework of the dissertation. Having discovered

that the project did not necessarily answer, not neatly at least, the research questions posed by the national project, I tried inverting the process by asking what themes emerge from the experience, not vice versa. In doing so, I have come to see the blankness not as a lack of meaning, but rather as a signifier of the gap between what took place in this collaborative research experience, and what I had originally been looking for. The project thus begins with a re-framing, an action that does not refer to a fixing of the experience within a set of boundaries (like we imagine a camera lens doing). Instead, it describes a process of fixing the subject (not the object) of the gaze. The frame becomes a reflection of my own localization within the project and is specific to my own articulation of the research questions.

Like Hesse's sculpture evokes, framing is a way of casting my gaze out from a specific vantage point, thus allowing it to interact in the relational, three-dimensional space of the collaborative project. In doing so I imagine that a negative space is delineated, drawing a site ripe with potential and open to interpretation. It is this site that becomes the object of study, which I call the *eventful space of learning*.

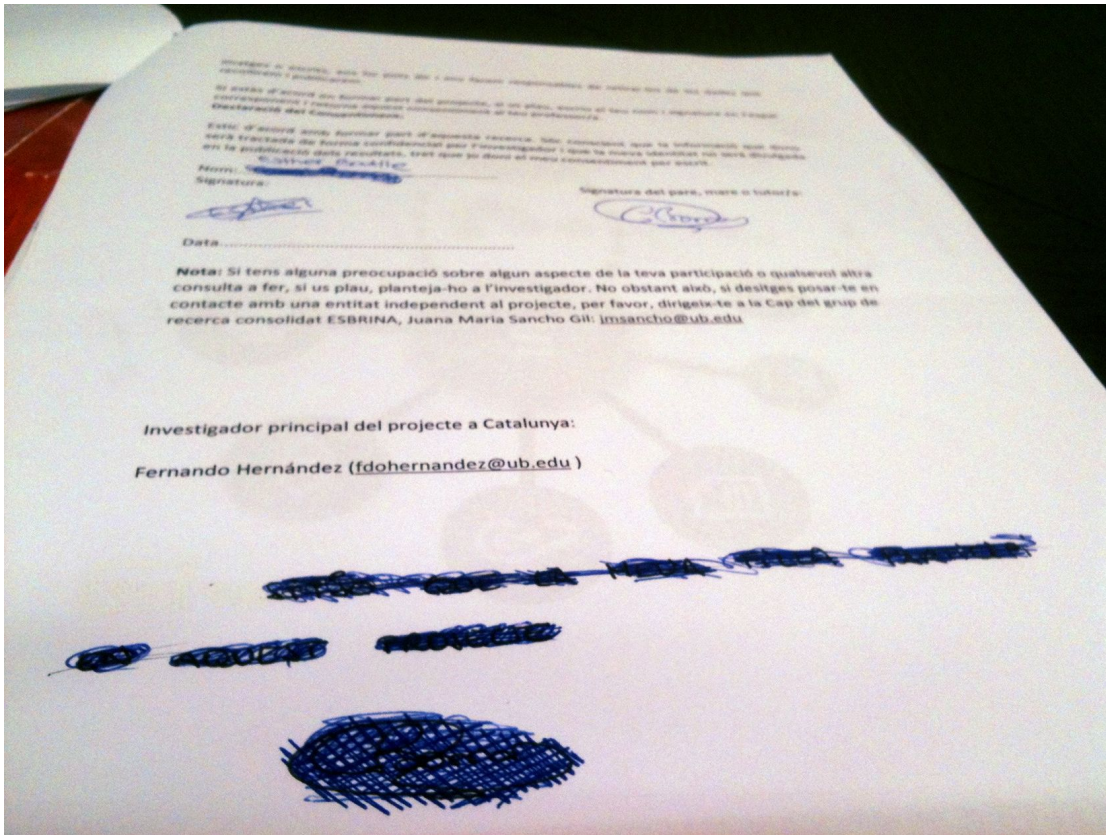


Figure 2. Photograph of Roser's signed consent form, which originally states that she does not want to participate (text scratched out).

Are you in or are you out?

When we arrive at the school for our second session Mari is waiting for us. She quickly leads us to the Principal's office—explaining on the way that a parent called the Principal last week and said that her daughter didn't want to participate in the project. Both the Principal and Mari explain to us that the girl is a serious student and is worried that missing her elective (the Physics class that Mari teaches) will affect her performance. Last week Mari assured us that she didn't anticipate any problems with the scheduling, but this week she doesn't seem surprised by the development. For the first time since joining the project, Mari opines that the university research team under-represented the difficulty entailed in the project requirements—i.e., the need to work with students on a weekly basis during school hours. She explains to Xavi and I that this requirement is very demanding, more so than what the university team seems to acknowledge, and wonders out loud if the PI is out of touch with the day-to-day school life. In spite of this pointed criticism, Mari seems more hassled than upset.

Mari and the Principal are determined to come up with a new candidate for the project. Mari already has someone in mind, and suggests a new girl right away, referring to her by her last name. Because the Principal doesn't recognize her name, he begins

looking her up on the school's database to see if her picture will jog his memory. While he's searching, a small conversation ensues regarding the group. The Principal casually mentions one of the boys, saying he should really add something to the project. He then muses that the girls in the group are more "academic" and are probably not really up for new experiences like this one, where they will be required to participate more. Mari seems to take offense at the subtext of these comments, which imply that the "book smart" girls are less outgoing, and somehow less apt for the challenge of this project.

(Like Mari I bristle at this assumption, even while the experience from last week haunts my memory: I barely registered the faces of the two girls who showed up but didn't make eye contact, blushing and looking down, without offering a whole sentence between them...).

Mari counters these observations by saying that the boy the Principal mentioned has trouble thinking outside the box, and she then forcefully advocates for the new candidate's participation. While the Principal's comments upset her, she justification for the new girl seems to coincide with his suspicions that the girls that were selected may not be great candidates. She points out that the new candidate isn't the typical "good student," but she believes that she will add something to the project, emphasizing the fact that she is outspoken. The Principal pulls up her picture, confirms with Mari who her mother and brother are, and then agrees with the choice. Thus concludes the brief meeting with the Principal.

Once outside the office, Mari addresses Xavi and I and directly acknowledges the conversation that had taken place, she frankly states that she has to be militant about defending girls in the school, before rushing, harried, off to class.

Xavi and I wait in the teacher's lounge until it's time to begin the session. Mari asked us to come early every week so that we could make ourselves available, or just present, in the lounge for the duration of the project. This appears to be a strategy to make us more available and present at the school while the research is taking place, even though we have almost no contacts with the teachers each week while we wait in the teacher's lounge. Early on, one tutor asked us, with trepidation, if we would be doing in-class observations and we said no. We never saw this teacher again.

When it's time for the session we go to our designate room. The boys arrive, and then Mari appears at the door and gestures for Xavi and I to come out to the hallway. She is there with three girls, the two from last week (Clara and Roser) and a third, who we assume is the possible replacement (Laura). Although it was Roser who had contacted the school about opting out, to our surprise it is clear that while talking with Mari just now, both girls from last week have declared that they would rather not participate. Laura and Roser stand next to each other, leaning against the wall, and Clara is facing Mari, a bit removed from the group, as if she's already leaving. Mari is addressing Laura, telling her that she could join the group if she wanted, while tactfully explaining that she wasn't

invited initially because there were already two people from her Physics class that were involved, and therefore her participation would disrupt the balance of two people per elective.

The three girls are very indecisive and unsure how to proceed. Mari addresses Roser, and promises to help in Physics class, saying she will ensure that she is able to keep up. To Clara, who is worried about missing Latin, Mari says she can't make the same promise, and that she needs to check with her Latin teacher. Mari seems to be trying to keep Roser in and let Clara go, to be replaced by Laura. Xavi and I don't know who the Latin teacher is and what relationship he/she has with the project, but Mari discourages from talking to him when we say we'd be willing to do that, for Clara. Instead, she puts the onus on Clara and says that she needs to talk to her teacher about missing class once a week.

Clara is torn, standing in the middle of the hallway, caught between leaving and staying. She wonders out loud if the project is important, trying to understand what she has been invited to do, and perhaps trying to understand what she may miss out on by not taking part. Seeing her so conflicted it occurs to me that she probably doesn't make a lot of decisions about schooling on her own; this situation seems overwhelming.

Mari, Xavi and I attempt to explain what is on offer but the answers are vague and unconvincing. At this point Mari tells the girls that they need to make a decision. Laura speaks up, and confirms that she'd like to participate. She speaks with confidence and seems more self-assured than her classmates. Roser is still indecisive, and Laura turns to her and says "don't leave me by myself!", grabbing her arm and pleading with her in a good-natured way. Mari asks Roser why she doesn't want to do it, and again she repeats that she's worried about missing class. Mari is exasperated, "you won't have any problem!", dismissing her concerns by insinuating that Roser is such a good student, she'll do fine.

Mari then turns to Clara and says, "you can go." Clara is frozen, nervous and upset, appearing almost as if she's about to cry. I remind Clara that she has my email address (which I passed out the previous week) and I tell her that if she speaks with her Latin teacher this week and decides she wants to participate, she may simply come back next week and rejoin our group. With that information, Clara turns and leaves, without committing either way. Xavi and I won't see her again.

Mari uses her authority as the teacher to close the meeting. She smiles at Laura and Roser and indicates that our discussion is over. She doesn't confirm with Roser whether she has finally decided to participate, and instead indicates that we can all go into the session now. She hurries off to her Physics class, which should have started nearly twenty minutes ago. Xavi, Laura, Roser and I go into our classroom, where the four boys have been hanging out on the sofa in the back of the room. We gather at the square table in the front and start the session.

* * *

Between the first scene and this one, what I refer to in the dissertation as the “group project” took place. Group is a generic and insufficient term, belying the heterogeneity of the group and overshadowing the decisions made, hands forced, and uncomfortable alliances that brought the project into being. Rather than outright dissent, the tensions captured in this scene come across through raised eyebrows, rolled eyes and shrugs; small expressions that result from the chaffing that is left over when slightly distinct worlds come slightly into contact: the university and the school; the teacher and the administrator; the student and the decision...

The scene points to how the group is a fragile concept from the outset, both in theory and in practice. Furthermore, within the research group, a slippage occurs. The shift between discussing young people's learning in and outside school and considering the learning process that develops when researching with young people is hard to control. Within the research team we continually moved back and forth discussing how this research informs about youth learning on two levels: drawing on young people's contributions about their learning practices and observing how learning emerged in a participatory ethnography between youth and university researchers. Perhaps this distinction is difficult to make because there was no separation between when we were working on the project and when we were working together and when we were interacting (here I refer only to my own group). Xavi and I would ask: What is in? What is out? What is learning? And the answers we received were never direct, but insinuated, as our interaction with the young people developed over time.

* * *

Here, a cautionary tale about study learning, offered by Sefton-Green (2015):⁵

I have explored how a range of research into learning in informal, semiformal, and non-formal learning situations—particularly in after-school and community-based settings—is hamstrung in theorizing and defining the kind of learning that might go on in these sectors by a conceptual inability not to frame learning in school-like terms (Sefton-Green, 2013). At the same time, the very nature of academic research itself plays a part in this process, as the phenomena such research defines as learning and the methods it uses to characterize such learning also define and determine learning outside of the school context. The more we are interested in finding out about other kinds of learning beyond the school, the more we risk formalizing the informal as we subject everyday practices to the basilisk stare of the academic gaze. (p. 301)

Faced with the ambiguity of the fieldwork, and Sefton-Green's skepticism of just what

5 This text was originally published in 2013 (Sefton-Green, 2013b) and therefore I had access to it while developing the methodological approach.

academic research has to contribute to this field, at some point this research project underwent significant change. Robert Helfenbein (2010), commenting on the site of curriculum in school, pays attention to “those spaces that speak, those spaces that leak, and those spaces of possibility” (p. 309). His observation captures the incapacity of the frame, the field, and the group, and so on, to stay put; it also gives permission for this research to set things in motion, rather than pin them down. Thus, allowing the fieldwork to deterritorialize the research design, the negative space opens up a site of possibility, a site of experimentation for thinking differently about the practice of studying learning, and the work of representing it.

2. Learning in the eventful space

How and where young people learn are two pressing questions in educational research, and today they seem irrevocably intertwined. In this case, the title of the national project already presents a spatial construct (learning in and outside school), and a learning problem, the issue of school disaffection. To confront these issues, this research explicitly addresses the imagined geographies of learning. The following chapter provides a roadmap to the theoretical framework supporting this study, which looks at learning as a practice that produces social space, enacting *the eventful space of learning*. The aim of this chapter therefore is to look at the spatial discourse prevalent in discussions around school disaffection, and learning in and outside school, before considering how to reimagine space as produced through learning practices..

2.1. In-Out learning

This dissertation takes up the problematic of learning, *per se*; I qualify this statement because the issue at stake is the representation of learning, and does not attempt to determine learning as an outcome or result. From this angle, what is at stake here is the vocabulary developed around learning, in the literature, in this dissertation, and by the young people who participated in the fieldwork. By posing the question: How do we learn in and outside school?, a number of theories, experiences and anecdotes are brought forth, which I attempt to conceptualize as a learning assemblage (or a territory under construction). The following section sets the groundwork for this research, by considering the role of place and space in educational research. I also review the question of learning in and out of school, and its relationship to both theories of space as well as theories of learning.

This project addresses learning following a sociocultural tradition that recognizes: first, that learning is separate from schooling and occurs inside and outside of formal education; and second, that learning is a relational (mediated) process shaped by the context—including social interactions—in which it occurs (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). This approach is noncognitive (Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, et al, 2012). If internal cognitive factors refer generally to the substance of what is learned in school—namely a student’s grasp of content knowledge and academic skills such as writing and problem-solving—than noncognitive factors include strategies, behaviors or attitudes that promote learning, which take into account such influences as “the environment, perception, action, affect, and sociocultural systems” (Barsalou, 2010, p. 325). In a research project written

into a context of school disaffection, and located at the crossroads between in and outside school, the aim of this chapter is to explore representational strategies for noncognitive learning practices by focusing on the eventful space that learning enacts.

School disaffection

This research is written against the problem of school disaffection, which is on the rise in Western industrialized nations (Smyth & McInerney, 2012). This trend is consistent in spite of the presence of well-funded national research initiatives attempting to address the issue, notably in Europe where this research is carried out. Today, reducing the rate of early school leaving is a high priority in the Horizon 2020 strategic initiative in Europe, having set the target goal for early school leaving at 10% for the European Community (modified to 15% for Spain) by 2020 (Europe 2020). Within the European Union the initiative to reduce school disaffection spans decades. In 1984, fifty-eight pilot projects were carried out in the framework of the EC-funded European Community Action Program, which were developed to “help with the transition of young people from education to adult and working life” (Paxton, 1992, p.140). This initiative generated evidenced-based policy initiatives, such as the “transition education principles” produced in Ireland that aimed for national curriculum reform (See Table 1).

| | Traditional Design | Transition Design |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Emphasis on | Cognitive skills | Skills related to future work environment and noncognitive skills |
| Organized around | An educational model common to the whole age group in which ranking according to scholastic achievement is the major objective | A wide diversity of courses tailored to a variety of needs of specific groups of young people |
| Learning Experiences | Based on established disciplines and subjects of knowledge | Subject matter is integrated and focuses on practical areas |
| Student/Teacher Relationships | Tend to be formal and hierarchical | More informal and democratic |
| Teaching Methods | Transmission of knowledge from teacher to student | Student-centered, activity-based, and experiential learning methods used |
| Focus | Learning mainly confined to school and the classroom | Extensive use of out-of-school environment as a place of learning |
| Cooperation and partnership | Involvement of the community is limited and dominated by the educational partners | Developing methods of real cooperation and partnership locally or regionally, in which other schools, other institutions, community groups, parents, and employers play an equal role in facilitating the transition of young people to adult life |

Table 1. Transition Design Principles. Scheme developed by Jim Gleeson, 1990. Reproduced in: Williams & McNamara, 2003, p. 369.

Unfortunately, the problem of disaffection persists today. In the most recent statistical analysis (Eurostat, 2012), Spain reported that 24.9% of its student population is early school leavers, which is nearly double the European average (currently at 12.7% or a total of 5.5 million people).⁶ In findings published by the European Parliament, early school leaving is seen as “typically caused by a cumulative process of disengagement” (Nevala et al., 2011, p.3), which is attributed in the report to both a young person’s “external and internal problems” including personal or family problems as well as issues that originate or are related to the educational system. For example, Nevala *et al.* (2011) claim that “teacher(s)—through their teaching methods and also their relationships with students—can have a significant and direct influence on a young person’s decision to drop out” (p. 3),

6 Early school leavers are defined “young people between the ages of 18-24 who have only completed lower secondary education.” This definition notably does not include drop-outs, and therefore these data do not reflect early adolescents who have abandoned their education. Drop-out prevention and disaffection are two separate policy issues—the first requires prevention and the later spurns efforts focused on remediation and reintegration—and therefore these figures are reported separately.

while adding:

a significant part of the problem can be attributed to lack of support and guidance, disengagement from schooling and to secondary-level curricula which too often do not offer enough options for varied courses, alternative teaching pedagogies, experiential and other hands-on learning opportunities or sufficient flexibility. (Nevala et al., 2011, p. 3)

The 2000 PISA results report on disaffection rather than early school leaving. In response to the statement “My school is a place where I feel like I belong,” students from several countries answered unenthusiastically, including France (44%), Spain (52%) or Belgium (53%), compared to Austria (85%), Finland (86%) or Hungary (89%). The wide variation between results has been interpreted as a sign that individual school practices do have an effect on feelings of disaffection (See: Willms, 2003),

Kevin Williams and Gerry McNamara (2003) cite an unpublished conference paper by John Elliot (2000) that summarizes the situation:

alienation and disaffection among many of those remaining in school constitute the biggest single problem facing the education system. [Elliot] dubbed such students *rhinos... on the roll but here in name only*. He suggested that, despite some 30 years of research, there is no sign of improvement. (p. 368)

It is clear that in spite of ongoing research and attempts at curriculum reform, schools have not adopted effective measure to address disaffection, which is most likely a symptom of the inadequacy of state-run initiatives for implementing real change at the school level (Lynch, 1999). In fact, Joe Kincheloe (2005) argues that some efforts can actually exacerbate the problem. He demonstrates that state initiatives for curriculum reform in the USA increase standardization, which in turn leads students to become progressively disengaged from the process of learning.

Despite working in different regions, both Kincheloe and Williams and McNamara report on the failure of evidenced-based reform policies to have an impact on reducing school disaffection. Williams and McNamara (2003) conclude that the disconnect between research and state-directed school initiatives provokes its own type of disaffection among scholars:

[T]he current state of curriculum inquiry, in the broad context of school failure, alienation, and disaffection, is one of considerable alienation and disaffection. There is a feeling among curriculum thinkers and researchers that the process of curriculum reform has been heavily politicized in recent years. This process has enabled limited change, particularly the updating of subject syllabi, but has effectively restricted reform and even serious debate on the bigger questions of curriculum values, purposes, goals, and

structures. (p. 372)

Among scholars who have disaffected, so to speak, from state initiatives on school disaffection, there is broad recognition that the answer lies not in curriculum reform (which tends towards standardization) but should instead be directed at young people's sense of belonging to the school, the community, and to rethink their relationship to learning.⁷ Research within this framework addresses the pedagogical relationship established with students, and looks beyond the school when identifying meaningful learning practices that young people engage in.⁸ Educational theorists have long held that learning is a social activity and that understanding is constructed through interaction with others (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978) and research shows that having a sense of belonging in a school or classroom improves a student's academic performance (Watkins, 2005). For example, Cronk (1987) observed that an egalitarian relationship between pupils and teachers is key to avoiding conflict and disaffection. He asks teachers:

to recognize pupil-persons as trustworthy and to work with them in an egalitarian person-to-person relationship, rather than in teacher-pupil relationship founded upon the exercise of formal power. (p. 198)

The results from a longitudinal study (Rudduck, Chaplain & Wallace, 1996) also highlight the importance of the pedagogical relationship. After tracking pupils during their last four years of secondary schooling this project articulates six principles that have an impact on learning outcomes (p. 174):

1. respect for pupils as individuals and as a body occupying a significant position in the institution of the school;
2. fairness to all pupils irrespective of their class, gender, ethnicity or academic status;
3. autonomy—not as an absolute state but as both a right and a responsibility in relation to physical and social maturity;
4. intellectual challenge that helps pupils to experience learning as a dynamic, engaging and empowering activity;
5. social support in relation to both academic and emotional concerns;

7 The body on literature on disengagement is extensive and covers a range of topics, including classroom practices—i.e., classroom management; socioeconomic factors; school expectations and accountability programs, and so on. However, this review looks specifically at research oriented to *knowledge building practices* which will be elaborated on further on. This decision was made in order to keep the focus consistent with the theoretical framework in which the national project was designed (Hernández-Hernández & Padilla-Petry, 2013).

8 The similarity between the conclusions cited here and Gleeson's "transition design" principles are self-evident, making more obvious Williams and McNamara's claim that the fault has not been in how research addresses the problem, but in states' inability (or disinterest...) in implementing it.

6. security in relation to both the physical setting of the school and in interpersonal encounters (including anxiety about threats to pupils' self-esteem).

These results are supported by a UK study, *Positive Alternatives to School Exclusion*, which after carrying out a series of case studies identifies several characteristics that most effectively work towards inclusion (Cooper et al., 2000, p. 193):

- a sense of being valued as a person
- a sense of belonging and involvement
- a sense of personal satisfaction and achievement
- a sense of being accepted and listened to
- a sense of congruence between personal and institutional values
- a sense of the personal meaningfulness of the tasks of teaching and learning
- a sense of efficacy, of power to influence things for the better

Both studies support the argument that students need to feel as though they belong to a community of learners where their “academic self” is a recognized and respected (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2002; 2006). Chris Watkins (2005), drawing on studies from Europe, North America and the Far East, has reviewed the role of community in schools, proposes a scaled model with three typologies: classrooms as communities, classrooms as communities of learners and, finally, classrooms as learning communities. Each works, in an increasingly collaborative and contextualized manner, to support young people in their individual achievements both in and outside school. He concludes that there is:

adequate evidence to support the idea that the development of learning communities should be a key feature of twenty-first century schools. The connectedness of outcomes—social, moral, behavioural, intellectual and performance—is a particularly important feature. (p. 59)

These findings are corroborated by the voices of young people, who report on how their interests—such as friends, leisure activities and a sense of autonomy—are consistently disregarded by parents and teachers (Ball, Maguire & Macrae, 2000). This experience of disaffection means that the decision to leave school is not casual, but “made consciously and often amounts to the perceived cultural irrelevance of the school and an absence of respect by the schools for the lives, experiences and aspirations of young people” (Smyth, 2005, p. 121).

In an effort to rethink the curriculum project, William Pinar (2003) advocates for:

a shift in the center of gravity of the field; from an exclusive and often bureaucratic preoccupation with instrumental interventions in the school as institution to the intellectual project of understanding. (p. 30)

In an effort to engage in this intellectual project of understanding, John Smyth (2006) recommends incorporating students' perspectives and opinions. In an environment where students are “making choices not to learn,” he sees a solution in creating “spaces of leadership from which young people can speak back regarding what they consider to be important and valuable about their learning” (p. 292). Smyth's work has been key in orienting this project's participatory approach to researching with young people. The proposal to research *with* young people (Sharpe, Beethan & de Freitas, 2010) is an attempt to develop new conceptualizations of learning while also fostering the type of pedagogical relationship that counteracts disaffection.

Learning in and outside school

The topic of disaffection introduces a process through which young learners can become marginalized and pushed out of school. However, a large body of educational research addresses this space outside school, beyond the boundaries of the formal curriculum. In this field, the terms informal or non-formal learning are commonly used to describe the learning activities that result from young people's engagement in a range of non-school different activities. However, in recent years these terms have come under criticism in light of the difficulty the research community has had in not only defining them but also approaching them appropriately (in other words, without repeating formal assessment frameworks in “informal” or “non-formal” contexts). Two comprehensive reviews that have taken up the topic include Jennifer Vadeboncoeur's (2006) chapter for the American Educational Research Association, and Julian Sefton-Green's (2013a) report published for the MacArthur Foundation. I will use their work to consider some of the difficulties posed by researching learning outside school, and will consider what Vadeboncoeur terms the “participation framework,” which is a useful tool for researching and evaluating informal and non-formal learning.

The most pressing problem for research in this field is how general that terminology is; learning “outside school” incorporates an impossibly wide range of activities, from “structured informal” (Vadeboncoeur, 2006, p. 240) learning activities—which are similar to the classroom but are provided by youth programs or museums and science centers—to less formal contexts such as work environments, home life or hobbies and leisure activities that young people engage in. In what is almost a paradoxical problem, the wide breadth of the field results in “data scarcity” (Sefton-Green 2013a, p. 29), an issue that speaks to the difficulties that exist in creating meaningful comparisons in a field composed of such heteroge-

nous sites. Both Vadeboncoeur and Sefton-Green attempt to narrow the focus of their inquiry considerably by only reviewing publicly funded youth programs whose aim is to promote learning. However, even then variables including staff training and preparation, variances in curriculum and a range of factors related to the diversity of student experiences allow Sefton-Green to observe that:

there does not seem to be a long-standing consistent academic tradition about ways to characterize the qualities of learning in out-of-school settings (Sefton-Green, 2013a, pp. 9-10)

This ambiguity in the scholarship related to the difficulty in defining consistent criteria for what informal and/or non-formal learning consists of is compounded by an oversimplification of the notion of in and outside school. Regarding context, a common sense understanding of in and out often results in research grouping “outside school” contexts together when in fact, the landscape is much more complex than this simple binary representation allows. For example, the home, work, cyberspace, sports, extracurricular courses, Internet forums, video games, and so on all form part of *not-school* even though the way learning is construed in each context has different implications for how we may study learning. The terms formal and informal/non-formal are too broad—meaning different things in different studies—and they have traditionally been applied to dissimilar pedagogical concepts; Vadeboncoeur demonstrates how seminal entries in the field refer to education (Greenfield & Lave, 1982), learning (Resnick, 1987), and teaching (Maarschalk, 1988) (See: Vadeboncoeur, 2006, pp. 244-246). Usually informal or non-formal has referred to the separation between schooling and everyday life, yet the terms for formal or informal (and non-formal in Maarschalk's case) are used differently. Vadeboncoeur highlights these differences to demonstrate how such categorizations are relative to the parameters of an investigation, while observing that perhaps the greatest similarities within these terms lies in how they have been subjected to generalization.

[E]ducational researchers have taken up these “idealized” categories, in many instances, with little attention paid to anything other than location: in school or not in school... What they converge upon is, in fact, the way they have become stereotyped: as naively contrasting the location of education, learning, or teaching, which is just one feature of a context. (Vadeboncoeur, 2006, p. 246)

One may conclude that while the terms remain useful it is not the mere distinction of in or outside school that makes them so; they are at best umbrella terms.

The terms in- and non-formal learning aren't in themselves straightforward or easy to define. Are we talking about the quality of the learning—the nature of what is learned—or its context—where the learning takes place? Or the

pedagogic process at work within learning transactions—how the learning takes place in practice? (Sefton-Green, 2013a, p. 16)

Finally, both Sefton-Green and Vadeboncoeur are careful to point out these terms are not the only expressions characterizing learning outside school. The concepts funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), affinity spaces (Gee, 2004), communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), visual culture learning communities (Freedman, 2015), connected learning (Ito et al, 2013), are just a few of the terms used to discuss non-school learning without defaulting to using in- or non-formal characterizations.

The implication of Vadeboncoeur and Sefton-Green's reviews is that the association of informal and non-formal learning with a context is not specific enough. Vadeboncoeur suggests what she terms a participatory framework as a way to better approach (and assess) informal learning, going beyond a fixation on location. In her proposal, a participatory framework considers the: location, relationships, content, pedagogy and assessment (Vadeboncoeur, 2006, p. 264), these five elements become a way for discussing structured informal learning environments, hopefully avoiding over simplification.

What is needed is an approach to identifying and describing a context, or a participation framework for mapping the context of learning: a frame for identifying patterns of relationships and interactions constituted in discursive and social interactions. (Vadeboncoeur, 2006, p. 248)

Vadeboncoeur's participation framework focuses on the qualities of interaction that emerge in a learning context, rather than prioritizing the context itself as implicitly tied to learning practices. Like the earlier discussion of disaffection, the conclusion encourages a description of how learning emerges in a social space, rather than an over emphasis on the space itself.

Being, becoming, learning

There are a number of theories that can help us contemplate the social space of learning. This research project began by taking up Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's (1991) description of situated learning and their notion of communities of practice (CoP), as a starting point for framing learning as a spatial practice. Rather than focus on internalized cognitive processes, situated learning looks at the environment in which learning occurs, categorizing this environment as a social terrain formally known as communities of practice. Arguing that learning occurs through social interaction, Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasise a shift “from the individual as a learner to learning as participation in the social world, and from the concept of cognitive process to the more-encompassing view of social practice” (p. 43).

With the introduction of communities of practice, Lave and Wenger describe an imag-

ined geography of learning. The notion of borders, in particular, emerges in the key concept *peripheral participation*, a process that refers to the way a person establishes membership within a CoP, by first observing and learning from more knowledgeable and established community members, while their role evolves over time in relation to their experience and level of implication. It is through practice that people establish their role in a community, which in turn is a metaphor for learning: “for newcomers the purpose is not to learn *from* talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn *to* talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 108-9.). The foundation of CoP characterizes learning as a conceptual movement (from the periphery to the center) that is achieved through practice (social engagement).

Situated learning uses metaphors of social space to think about learning as a process of community building, portraying the learner as a learner-traveler. Wenger (1998) developed this idea further when discussing the tension between marginalized and peripheral participation within each community of practice. In his elaboration, we find that, for Wenger, these borderline activities appear to be the most dynamic area of a community of practice, where changes are more likely to be introduced and (less indoctrinated) members 'cross borders' or maintain partial engagement with a number of different communities. This description highlights the ways in which learning is “an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations” (p. 50). In some areas of educational research, this has led to the acknowledgment that:

'situatedness' is not a theoretical breakthrough nor a policy option; it is a members' practice (or, rather, a vocabulary of practices)... What is required analytically, then, is not the correct theoretical formulation of the relationship between learning and its social context, but more adequate description of the particular and varied circumstances which constitute 'acquiring knowledge', be it in classrooms, museums or anywhere else. (Hemmings, Randall, Marr & Francis, 2000, p. 243)

Using communities of practice as a frame to understand learning contexts shifts the question from *what* learning occurs to the social practices that allow it to take place.

Ultimately, however, this research did not use communities of practice as a pedagogical model against which the field experience was compared or analyzed; the dissertation does not discuss how a community of practice was (or was not) formed by the group, nor how communities of practice supported group members' learning in and outside school. On one hand, the young people did not describe practices from their own lives that resonated with the CoP model. On the other hand, the experience of researching with young people, which could have perhaps been interpreted as the

construction of a CoP, never fit neatly into the characteristics described by Lave and Wenger. This is perhaps not surprising, communities of practice have always existed in tension with schooling; Lave and Wenger (1991) themselves cautioned that their theory “is not itself an educational form, much less a pedagogical strategy or teaching technique. It is an analytical viewpoint on learning, a way of understanding learning” (p. 40). However, CoP work was an important starting point, providing a template for a close consideration of the role of both movement and identity work across learning contexts.

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that:

learning is not merely situated in practice—as if it were some independently reifiable process that just happened to be located somewhere; learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world. (p. 35)

Situated learning is not grounded so much as contextualized; it provides a framework for addressing the process of learning and living in the world. Adopting a sociocultural approach to learning (See: Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave, 1988) is more ontological than epistemological, it brings to the fore the extent to which the process of learning is a way to become a different kind of person. Lave and Wenger (1991) observe “learning involves the construction of identities... One way to think of learning is as the historical production, transformation, and change of persons” (pp. 51–52). It is this focus on the ontological implications of learning that are most relevant to this dissertation. By assuming that not all learning takes place at school, studying the process of becoming learner is a way to expand our imaginary of learning beyond the role of “student,” and provides a different perspective for approaching school disaffection. This shift is tracked by the type of information generated in the fieldwork, when the discussion turned toward what modes of being were permitted or restricted in different learning environments.

Martin Packer and Jessica Goicoechea (2000) approach the ontological implications of situated learning, and in doing so offer insight into how to approach the question of learning in and outside school. In their analysis, school is the site where young people become students, and where young people learn to adapt to an impersonal and communal learning space, which is different than the experience at outside of school.

The shift from family member to student is already an ontological transformation. The new kind of individual does not replace the old—the children return home at the end of each day—but neither is it simply added on. The child assumes different modes of subjectivity in the two different contexts. Where the family is lived as natural necessity, in relationships among particular concrete individuals, **in school the child becomes one of a type.** (p.

235-36. Emphasis added.)

If school is a conduit for a certain type of learning, which privileges a certain type of identity, than the outside space becomes one of differentiation.⁹ The idea that learning is associated with the accumulated process of becoming contextualizes schooling within a wider learning landscape that young people inhabit. Other theories that contribute to our understanding of situated learning offer other types of learning spaces that contribute to this landscape. From literacy studies, the concept of “funds of knowledge” (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) or Paul Gee’s (2004) reformulation of communities of practice, as affinity spaces, there are a number of studies that provide a blueprint for thinking about the “situatedness” of connected youth, who seek and create various communities based on shared interests. Mapping these landscapes is a way to chart what Vadeboncoeur’s participation framework, giving an account of where learning emerges in young people’s lives. It is this approach to learning that avoids falling back on modes of assessment, seeking an alternative to how to discuss and represent learning practices.

Atkinson (2011) understands that the ontological implications of learning introduce a potentiality.

If we conceive of learning as a move into a new ontological state, that is to say where learning opens up new possibilities, new ways of seeing things, new ways of making sense of what is presented to us in our different modes of existence, then this movement involves, “that which is not yet.” (p. 14)

This focus on what is yet to come is a way to think of a learning process that is non-standardized; it allows learners to avoid being *one of a type* (as they often are in schools). Atkinson observes that becoming is a *movement*, but this movement does not imply a linear progression—as represented by the curriculum, for example. Instead is a movement that describes a form of engagement with the world. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) summarize learning as becoming—drawing on a non-dualist ontology—as a process that follows six steps: “the person is constructed, in a social context, formed through practical activity, and in relationships of desire and recognition that can split the person, motivating the search for identity” (p. 239). Situated learning is therefore not a simplification that equates learning with socializing; instead, as evidenced by the steps Packer and Goicoechea share, it encompasses the complexity of *becoming* in the world. This multi-directional interaction overwrites notions of in/out or formal/informal that collapse into simple binaries.

⁹ Interestingly, this observation is echoed in the project, when one of the youth participants, Adrià, commented: “People are all doing the same things inside, while outside, everyone makes an effort with things they like to do, which are probably completely different. So, you can tell who a person really is outside, instead of inside.” This quotation will be revisited later in this section.

Thus far, the discussion on learning in and outside school has established that focusing on specific sites of learning limits not only the parameters of the inquiry, but also conceptually links learning to place, which results in an oversimplification. Shifting the discussion to the practices and processes of learning is an attempt to move beyond a focus on the epistemology of learning to consider its broader ontological implications, contributing to social and personal transformation. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) have argued that this ontological shift explains the relationship between constructivist and sociocultural learning processes:

The former is always an aspect of the latter. What constructivists call learning is only part of a larger process of human change and transformation, the process called learning by socioculturalists. Whether one attaches the label “learning” to the part or to the whole, acquiring knowledge and expertise always entails participation in relationship and community and transformation both of the person and of the social world. (p. 239)

To this end, the orientation towards learning as a sociocultural process situated in an ontology of becoming tries to capture how learning develops spaces of agency outside of the curriculum. In this dissertation, learning is a way to understand how young people connect different social and physical spaces, brought forth the wanderings of today's learner-traveler.

2.2. The learner-traveler

Framed within a study that investigates learning “in and outside school,” this dissertation originated as an inquiry into the relationship between site and learning. This perspective is reinforced by the context of school disaffection which, with its focus on the school and the “outside,” brings a geographic narrative to the fore. However, rather than consider how learning is configured by context, a position that Sefton-Green (2013a) and Vadeboncoeur (2006) demonstrate is hard to maintain, the following section inverts this equation, asking how learning practices perform (social) space. Looking at social space as the terrain for the learner-traveler our attention shifts to the spacial practices enacted by learning. The participation framework developed by Vadeboncoeur addresses a concern that lies at the heart of this project; it is an attempt to address learning practices that reside beyond the realm of formal (educational) assessment. When reconciling this approach with the topic of learning in and outside school, a different understanding of space emerges, one that is the result of social practices and not an *a priori* container of them. This section looks at spaces that emerge out of practice, rather than condition it.

Encounters in a differential space

The spatial turn refers to an increased interest in space within the social sciences, that

borrowed from yet extends beyond the discipline of Geography. Taking up topics concerned with globalization, urbanization, migration, or others related to space-time configurations, this framework is evidenced by the expanding use of the phrase “new geographies.”¹⁰ A cornerstone in the development of the spatial turn is Edward Soja's (1989) *Postmodern Geographies*. In this book he recognizes the contemporary “politicized spatiality of social life” (p. 2), and attempts to “recompose the intellectual history of critical social theory around the evolving dialectics of space, time and social being: geography, history, and society” (p. 3), effectively bridging geography with cultural studies, critical theory and poststructuralism and consolidating the spatial turn. It is the work of one theorist who we will examine in this section, who is one of the thinkers accredited with inspiring this focus on space and place. Henri Lefebvre's *The production of space* (1974/1991) was published in English in 1991, instigating what Andy Merrifield (2000) has called “*the event within critical human geography over the 1990s*” inciting “a thorough reevaluation of social and spatial theory on both sides of the Atlantic” (p. 170).

Just as Vadeboncoeur (2006) traces an oversimplification of informal learning to a (non)concept of the “outside,” Lefebvre (1974/1991) is similarly critical of the assumption that things are merely *in space*:

instead of uncovering the social relationships (including class relationships) that are latent in spaces, instead of concentrating our attention on the production of space and the social relationships inherent to it... we fall into the trap of treating space ‘in itself,’ as space as such. We come to think in terms of spatiality, and so fetishize space in a way reminiscent of the old fetishism of commodities... (p. 90)

Within his body of work that spurred an interest in the production of space, Lefebvre's theory is not about space, *per se*, it is not concerned with the ordering of material objects. His analysis could be said to set space in motion by casting it as continually produced and reproduced through social-spatial practices, which are ordered as: material production, the

10 Take, for example, a JSTOR search for publications containing the phrase “new geographies.” From 1900-1949 JSTOR provides 43 results all within Geography periodicals, all of which refer to Tarr and Murray's (1912) textbook with the same title. From 1950 – 1979 there are 13 results, and only one breaks ranks with Geography, offering a poststructuralist literary criticism (Stuart & Scoggan, 1977), while the rest of the results introduce the term in reference to a debate within the field of Geography. From 1980-1999 there are 97 results, within Geography there is now a general recognition about emerging new geographies, and starting in 1991 texts using the term begin to appear regularly in journals from other disciplines (Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Sociology, among others), which appears to coincide with the publication of Edward Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* (1989). From 2000-2015 there are 305 results, with the term firmly taking its place as framing a device for addressing social-cultural issues in an increasingly globalized world. Within Geography the term remains as a reference for the old/new geographies debate while also appearing much the same way as the anthropologists and sociologists employ it, i.e., “the new geographies of the global economy;” “the new geographies of childhood;” and so on.

production of knowledge and the production of meaning. At the intersection of these three modes of production, his work imagines a space under construction, allowing the “image of immobility [to] be replaced by an image of a complex of mobilities, a nexus of in and out conduits” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 93). When discussing the act of learning-traveling, it is this nexus of conduits that is invoked.

Lefebvre’s project is concerned not only with the forces of production and the social relations that are organized around them, but also how spatial practices move beyond to new, unanticipated possibilities. Expanding on his Marxist roots, Lefebvre works toward a more expansive idea of production in order to account for the multiple ways in which ideas are produced, humans are created, histories are constructed and minds are made (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, pp. 70–72). Thus for Lefebvre,

(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity—their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. **It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object.** (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 73. Emphasis added.)

Converted into a multiplicity (*the outcome of a sequence*), space is always undergoing a process of formation. This spatial imaginary feeds into the description of *learning across contexts*, and anticipates the development of learning assemblages, as per the geophilosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004), which we will consider in the following section.

Lefebvre’s influence in ushering in the spatial turn, and by proxy an understanding of the dialectical relationship between space and practice, provides a foundation for thinking about the relationship between learning and space. What is particularly relevant for the present discussion is Lefebvre’s discussion of a *differential* space. Differential space emerges in contrast (and in resistance) to abstract space.¹¹ The later is a *space of consumption* that is quantifiable, geometric and codified, while the former emerges within the *consumption of space*, thus based not on reproduction but built through the practices of everyday life; i.e., a differential space that is “traversed, and hence used and consumed, by *flows*” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 354). While abstract and differential spaces exist in tension, they are intricately interwoven. Lefebvre (1974/1991) observes, “abstract space... relates negatively to something which it carries within itself and which seeks to emerge from it: a differential space-time” (p. 50) and he continues:

11 Of course, Lefebvre also introduces a third option—*absolute space*—but given the nature of his analysis, which tends to focus more on the critique of abstract space through differential space, here I stick to this binary comparison.

abstract space carries within itself the seeds of a new kind of space. I shall call that new space 'differential space', because, inasmuch as abstract space tends towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences. (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 53)

The way the youth participants in this project consume space—both in their learning practices and in their participation in the research project—provides insight into this tension between abstract and differential space.

The tension (and interrelation) between abstract and differential space resonates with concepts that are taken up in chapter 4 where I develop an analysis of the spatial practices the young people employed during the group project. Michel de Certeau's (1984) analysis of spatial appropriation echoes Lefebvre, notably with their shared use of the term *consumer*. Both authors introduce a figure who is positioned as a disruptive force, and whose actions embody the unpredictability of the practices of everyday life, situating within the subject the capability of executing subversive acts. The spatial tactics employed by de Certeau work as a metaphor for the movements of today's learner-traveler, a subject embodied by the youth participants. This figure ingeniously interacts with and yet also deviates from the formal school curriculum (not to mention the procedures of the research project).

Provided what we have seen so far, I argue that the differential space appears as the space of the “outside,” in as much as this latter term reveals itself as a broad concept that is less a location than a reference to the “not-school.” But just as learning practices are at risk of pedagogization (Sefton-Green, 2013a), than so too are the sites of informal learning. What this research project attempts is to engage with this space without rendering it *abstract*. The following discussion borrows from the fieldwork to look at just how complex the in/out becomes throughout the duration of the project.

Youth perspectives

This inquiry began with the assumption that there is a difference between learning inside and learning outside school. However, the young people did not take this division for granted and the separation became increasingly problematic as the project progressed.¹² Take, for example, the following conversation that developed when Xavi

12 This section uses data from all five case studies, making it the only moment in the dissertation that draws on the contributions of all five groups that participated in the national project. After performing the initial analysis using just my own case, I received an opportunity to adapt this analysis for an article (Fendler & Miño Puigcercós, 2015, in press). For this undertaking I incorporated the input from the other schools in order to better reflect the results of the national project as a whole. Having thus performed a wider analysis of the project's data, it seemed unnecessary to remove these voices from the dissertation. The schools which the young people attend are indicated in parenthesis to avoid

and I asked the youth where they wanted to carry out their observations on learning outside school. We had assumed that this would be straightforward, especially coming about mid-way through the project, but there was confusion about what that meant.

I open the discussion by asking, “So, let’s go over where you’re going to do the outside observations.”

Jordi, “Outside... So, like, outside of class? In the hallway?”

Adrià starts laughing at Jordi's comment and jumps in to correct him, “No! Outside, like in the street...”

At the same time, Xavi tries to provide Jordi a more general description, “It could be anywhere you associate with learning that’s outside school.”

Adrià, “... yeah, maybe at practice, or with friends, or while you’re at home...”

This isn't the first time we've had this conversation, so I intervene, attempting to jog people's memories by reminding them of what we have already discussed in regards to the out of class observations.

“Laura,” I ask, “weren't you thinking about writing about the dance?” I'm referring to the dance she is organizing for the upcoming school assembly. It caused controversy with some of her classmates because she arranged to rehearse during class time, and so when this topic came up in an earlier session we had suggested that it could serve as a way for her describe learning outside.

Laura, “Yeah but... what is that? Is it in or out?”

Roser, always the pragmatist, jokes, “It’s in AND out!”

Everyone laughs.

While Jordi and Laura’s questions are met with amusement, Roser’s concession that an experience can be at once in *and* out reveals an unresolved tension regarding the term “inside school.” We see in this conversation that *inside* refers to both the concept of formal learning and the physical site of the school. Laura’s question provides an example of an instance when informal learning takes place *in* school, while still remaining outside the curriculum. Jordi senses this ambiguity, and implicit in his question is the acknowledgment that surely what goes on in the hallway is different than what goes on in the classroom. Jordi's peers laugh at his suggestion that the hallway would count as “outside,” reinforcing the idea that “inside” clearly refers to a physical location. However, the slippage regarding the definition of inside occurs in other groups, and it is not as straightforward as it appears.

Sonia (El Palau): We learn a lot of things at school, but I think they could teach

confusion.

us more about stuff that isn't strictly academic. ... We also learn from our classmates, from the relationships we have with our friends and with adults, even if some of the teachers are more distant than others.

Sonia registers a complaint about the relevance of the school curriculum and in the same paragraph of her narrative, recognizes that other types of learning take place at school (in this case, the development of interpersonal relationships). Once again, the school is recognized as a social space and a curricular space, both of which entail learning.

Conversations about *where* learning takes place often overlapped with discussions about *what* is being taught in schools. It was quickly evident that, when given the opportunity to discuss the topic of learning, there was a strong tendency on behalf of the young people to critique the curriculum. Behind this critique we discover a deeply internalized association of learning with schooling. In an early conversation at La Mallola, for example, it became clear that some of the young people understood learning as something that takes place in the classroom:

Laura (looking at a graphic): Over here, listening and looking appear *in*. But you also look and listen *outside*.

Joan: Sure, but you don't learn!

Laura: Of course you do, maybe even more than inside! Outside you learn things you actually need, you know, from life experience.

Joan: Yeah, I guess...

While Laura expresses a different opinion, Joan's outburst indicates how closely tied together learning and school are in his mind. Working to overcome this assumption, and in an effort to move past merely critiquing the schools, the research team encouraged the young people to think about how the in and out are related. As I have discussed elsewhere (Hernández-Hernández, Fendler & Sancho, 2014), we were able to refocus the inquiry by asking *what inside learning travels outside and what learning from the outside travels in?*

The first part of the question is fairly easy for the young people to answer, and they easily provided examples of how school contributes to our basic competencies (math, literacy), professional competencies, and our ability to relate to the world (as an educated person):

Els Alfacs group (statement written by all students): Some things we learn in school are useful for our day-to-day lives, like knowing math, or understanding our history so that we can be careful not to repeat the same mistakes today or in the future. Also, learning about different cultures and being able to understand people from different places and communicate with them.

Roser (La Mallola): Well for a lot of careers, you need a degree. If you want to do something specific, and go to university, it's important to stay in school and keep studying.

Nestor (Ribera Baixa): Sometimes when I'm watching the news, they'll be talking about something that relates to what I've studied before, or that I am studying. And so sometimes I am able to better understand what they're talking about because of it.

The second part of the question proved harder to answer. Rather than focus on what outside learning travels into the school, the young people were more likely to discuss how and where they engaged in learning, on their own time.

Sergio (El Palau): School teaches us a lot of interesting things but outside you can learn different things. At school, maybe you take Physics but on the street you get more day-to-day knowledge... Older people know a lot about history and they have a lot of stories. My father's restaurant is a great source of information. My Dad says it's tiring when everyone is always telling stories about when they were in the military, or what things were like when they were younger, but I really like hearing about it.

The young people spoke and wrote about their involvement in sports and music, their foreign language classes, and the time spent on hobbies like drawing or photography. We learned that some of them travelled, some of them cooked and took care of siblings, and all of them are dedicated friends. We observed that when the young people described how they learn outside school, they constructed narratives about who they are and what is important to them.

Adrià (La Mallola): People are all doing the same things inside, while outside, everyone makes an effort with things they like to do, which are probably completely different. So, you can tell who a person really is outside, instead of inside.

The young people's contributions on learning outside school, and their reflections on how learning contributes to their lives, establish a spatial hierarchy, where *in* is a subset of *out*. This is evidenced by how easy it was for young people to identify how school contributes to their life (i.e., "outside"), while thinking in reverse was more difficult, illogical even. In this manner, over the course of the project the discussion around what goes in or out (and what doesn't) reveals an unexpected characteristic of school boundaries. We observed that they are not uniformly constructed; it is easier to go out than it is to get in.

Learning taking place

Social space *per se* is at once *work* and *product*—a materialization, of 'social being'. In specific sets of circumstances, however, it may take on fetishized and

autonomous characteristics of things (of commodities and money). (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, pp. 101-102)

The youth perspectives on learning in and outside school provide insight into how learning can be considered a spatial practice. These contributions are relevant particularly when we acknowledge that school space is sometimes *fetishized* in the sense that even though, as educators, we know that the classroom is a site of heterogeneous experiences, it exists in the social imaginary as one type of site, where learning equals being taught. While the discussion on informal and formal learning is frequently (and perhaps inelegantly) mapped onto an imaginary of the inside/outside, we find that by working on the level of everyday practices the in/out is renegotiated and boundaries are re-drawn. The way this fieldwork troubles the in/out is a strong reminder that both in and outside school are not cohesive sites. In reference to this remapping of the in/out, this dissertation transitions from talking about learning in and outside school to exploring *learning taking place*.

[E]ducation is an increasingly emergent phenomenon, unfolding across numerous sites and settings with and between multiple texts. It is the “in-between”—the moving back and forth between sites and texts—that increasingly defines our children’s lives and cultural landscapes and must, therefore, define our research agenda. (Dimitriadis, 2008, p. 99)

If learning is a process of *unfolding across sites and settings*, a focus on where learning occurs—the sites reported on by the youth in the project—falls flat. A more multi-dimensional tale is told when speaking to the emergent characteristic of learning practices. Attentive to transitions across contexts, Robert Helfenbein (2010) reminds us that:

[a]dding critical geography to this configuration would suggest that curriculum could be seen as not only origin and destination, figure and ground, but, in the pursuit of recognizing subjects in process and in multiplicity, curriculum is also the space-in-between. (p. 309)

What is the “in-between” that both Greg Dimitriadis and Helfenbein cite? It is a site that is a place of transition, better understood as the routes carved out by the learner-traveler; in other words, a trajectory rather than an enclosed location. For Helfenbein, “[t]hat space-in-between can also be thought of as those spaces that speak, those spaces that leak, and those spaces of possibility” (Helfenbein, 2010, p. 309). The relational character of such a site, its ability to reach beyond borders (leaking and speaking) is what makes it a site of potentiality, always already under construction. This is the space where *learning takes place*.

de Certeau (1984) and his work on spatial appropriation offers a theoretical basis for imagining the itinerant space of the learner-traveler. In his description of the grammar of movement, he demonstrates how transiting through the city is an embodied strategy, on one hand subverting power structures and on the other, creating new possibilities for

inhabiting one's surroundings.

The perambulatory gesture plays with spatial organizations, however panoptic... It is through the opportunity [*passages*] afford of storing up pregnant silences and inarticulate stories... that local legends create exits, ways of leaving and re-entering, and thus habitable spaces. (pp. 138-142)

de Certeau's spatial practices offer a permanent negotiation between the (panoptic) power of urban space and the spontaneous (and subversive) act of occupying it. His argument doesn't reject the potential of space to act as a dominant or normative force, yet he insists that everyday practices introduce new interpretations and meanings in any context. The act of *learning taking place* is an *enunciation* just like the perambulatory gesture de Certeau pays homage to. As the youth perspectives on in/out demonstrate, learning practices *create exits, ways of leaving and re-entering*, thereby retracing the boundaries of what may be conceptualized as in and outside school. At the center of this analysis is the notion of difference that de Certeau articulates by way of footsteps. On the act of walking through city:

Their story begins on ground level, with footsteps. They are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. ... They are not localized; it is rather they that spatialize. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 97)

The *myriad, qualitative, innumerable collection of singularities* that footsteps represent for de Certeau draw a parallel to the learning practices this project chases after. Their inability to be counted and controlled is what allows them to turn the urban landscape into a *space that speaks, a space that leaks, a space of possibility*.

Tim Cresswell (1996) argues that “places do not have intrinsic meanings and essences... the meanings of place are created through practice” (p. 17). The youth perspectives strongly reinforce this statement, in accordance with the literature looking at the difficulties in locating learning within a discourse that considers specific locations (i.e., in and outside school). If we imagine learning as itinerant, represented metaphorically by de Certeau's footsteps, then the place-making tactics of an eventful space of learning come together. Nigel Thrift and Mike Crang (2000) in discussing the “spatial turn” (p. xi) in contemporary social and cultural theory, identify different strategies for thinking space. They include in a typology of spaces the so-called “eventful space” (p. 6), or a space defined by practice. Thrift and Crang characterize this space as “an eventful and unique happening. Like Heidegger’s boundary, space is less a limit than a creation of what it encircles, more to do with doing than knowing...” (p. 6). This concept resonates even more when incorpo-

rated into the geophilosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004).

In *A thousand plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004), as Mark Bonta and John Protevi (2006) meticulously argue, a complex geographical foundation supports the philosophical work developed in the volume. Here, even *becoming* is given a geographical rendering, as when Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) describe it as “the production of a new assemblage” (pp. 257-8). It is fair, then to take the notion of event as a spatial construct, where it can be defined not just by practice but also, according to Deleuze and Guattari, as potential. In their mapping of geophilosophy, Bonta and Protevi (2006) comment that in Deleuze and Guattari's rendering:

Spaces are NOT constructed by discourse alone, and thus are not configured solely to be read. 'Haecceities' (places as events, for example) offer endless opportunities for the emergence of new materials that irrupt from multitudinous points and ripple outward across landscapes. These irrupting, smoothing forces need to be mapped and described, and even exploited (by the activists among us), for the State is never and should never be the last or only word in any landscape. (p. 40)

The notion of event in Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy is, as this quotation indicates, deeply political and central to their understanding of becoming. The following section looks at configurations of the eventful space which in this study represents both the condition and result of learning.

2.3. The nomadic subject

The *eventful space* is a term that captures a territory in the making, an assemblage defined by the trajectories of learning taking place. Thinking of place in terms of practice is a strategy for uprooting the inquiry and setting it in motion, in order to better follow the mobile and transitory learning trajectories of young people. In particular, this perspective aims to recuperate and show the transgressions that occur in relation to school space, generating representations that identify learning as something that permeates, escapes from, and occurs beyond school walls.

To capture this situation, the metaphor of the learner-traveler emerges, which transitions into the figuration of a nomadic subject. As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) have discussed, nomadic practices are conceptual and social manifestations that resist and challenge established power structures, emerging as truly Other to the logic of the State (or the School). *Nomadology* is not literally about traveling but about the subversive actions that defy, or at least resist, convention. Which is not to say that it does not involve movement; nomadic pedagogy frames learning as a process whereby learning is the change incurred when subjects enter into unfamiliar territory, in a process of discovery (becoming). As I

have discussed elsewhere (Fendler, 2013), this framework evokes a double movement: where learning practices are displaced (becoming mobile through the act of inquiry), and where learning itself is its own form of displacement (i.e., a change in one's worldview). In this context, learners as nomadic subjects are involved in becoming-other, engaging in a relationship with their surroundings in a process of (continual) deterritorialization.

The shift away from spatial practices generated by the learner-traveler toward a consideration of nomadism is not just a change in metaphors; it implies a transition from a humanist to poststructural perspective. In spite of some similarities in the treatment of space that can be identified among Lefebvre, de Certeau, and Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy, the subject at the heart of de Certeau and Lefebvre's analyses is dispersed and reconfigured within the framework of nomadic thought. This theoretical shift charts the development of the research project; the analysis in chapter 4 considers how the learner-traveler disrupts the space of the research project, yet in chapter 5 the subject is decentered as learning is taken up from a mobilities perspective. These complementary frameworks are not in opposition, but rather indicate the limits dictating what this project can say about the youth participants' learning practices.

Nomadology travels through this dissertation in several “variations on a theme.” Here, it introduces a pedagogical framework that positions learning as a nomadic drive (rather than an educational outcome). This perspective implies that the “learning” in question does not remit back to a subjective (humanist) process of cognition (or growth), embracing a vision of becoming that focuses more on the points of contact, the movements and qualitative shifts it initiates.

Becoming-learner

The nomadic thought of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) takes a central role in how learning is interrogated, interpreted and analyzed throughout this project. The poststructuralist ontology of nomadic thought is defined in terms of processes of becoming, characterized by forces, flows and fluxes that disrupt the unity of the subject. Braidotti (2014) has written widely on the topic, producing a body of work that she has defined as a “lifelong engagement in the project of nomadic subjectivity” (p. 163). Essential to her work is the difficult negotiation between the loss of the subject in poststructuralism, on the one hand, and the acknowledgment of the material, embodied condition that grounds our way of interacting with the world, on the other. While presenting the subject as a process of becoming is sometimes interpreted as a threat to individual experience Braidotti's work articulates the deeply ethical project that supports her poststructural perspective, by separating the discursive notion of subjectivity from *individual* experience:

It is particularly important not to confuse the concept of subjectivity with the

notion of the individual or individualism: subjectivity is a socially mediated process of entitlements to and negotiations with power relations. (Braidotti, 2014, p. 168)

Furthermore:

The flows of becoming rather mark a qualitative process of structural shifts in the parameters and the boundaries of subjectivity. This shift entails an ethical dimension, in so far as it makes the subjects into transversal and interconnecting entities, defined in terms of common propensities. They are intelligent matter, activated by shared affectivity. (Braidotti, 2006, p. 148.)

The figuration becoming-learner expresses a subject that undergoes *qualitative shifts* that transform the *boundaries of subjectivity*; this is not a process of losing the self, but of developing a subjectivity based on the connections with other bodies:

the formation and emergence of new social subjects is always a collective enterprise, 'external' to the individual self while it also mobilizes the self's in-depth and singular structures. (Braidotti, 2014, p. 168)

The idea of becoming-multiple expands our understanding of when and where the learning self (Ellsworth, 2005) emerges. In a framework of becoming the learning process is redefined, similar to what Elizabeth Ellsworth has described as knowledge in the making. Here, knowledge is not a commodity used to predict, control, and objectify, but rather acts as a catalyst for exploration, an agentic object that sets things in motion. These explorations are "invented in and through engagement with pedagogy's force" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 7), taking place in spaces where learning transcends schooling. As such, the concept of the learning self troubles the traditional conception of knowledge as a "decomposed by-product of something that has already happened to us" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 1). Here, the learning self posits that authentic learning results from our constantly changing self in relation to time, space, and experience; whereby the pedagogical force that drives knowledge in the making evokes the so-called flow of becoming.

Ellsworth's relational understanding of pedagogical space is one example of how the idea of becoming has been productively applied to the processes of learning. She transposes becoming into a spatial discussion by introducing an architectural element, the "hinge," which puts the "inside and outside, self and other, personal and social into relation" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 38). Returning to the performative ontology of becoming, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) experiment with the "logic of the AND" (p. 25) which is also a spatial organization, or a way to explore what Thomas Nail (2014) has described as "an expressive theory of assemblages" (p. 213). Marcus Doel (1996) locates the AND as a spatial and conceptual strategy that keeps the focus on the in-between: "[w]ithout the conjunctive 'and'... there would be neither space nor spacing. Quite literally, 'and' enables

everything to be put into general circulation” (p. 422).

Returning to the phrase “in and outside school” which is embedded into this project—and recalling Roser's exclamation, *It's in AND out!*—the conjunction is a mimetic device for the process of becoming; it is the hinge that manifests the transitions between school and elsewhere. Doel (1996) cautions that “whenever there is an 'and', there is never a clean cut separating distinct and immutable terms” (p. 422). Thus, the spatial strategies of the AND troubles binaries, or the oppositions that keep categories stable through comparison; it achieves this through movement (stammering), destabilizing fixed entities by drawing them into a connection with others.

This detour through the notion of becoming-learner sets the stage for contemplating the landscape set forth by Deleuze and Guattari, within which this study of youth learning practices takes place. Consistent with the geographical leanings of Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2004) work, expressed via a logic of AND (rather than *is*) *becoming* is a movement that conjoins entities, thus revealing an implicit relationship to spatial practices. Inna Semetsky (2003), for example, notes that when subjectivity is understood as a process of becoming, the subject can be understood as a “contextual, experiential and circumstantial **site**” (p. 213. Emphasis added.). Furthermore, Semetsky seems to suggest that becoming is an iteration of the eventful space, referring to the subject as a “qualitative multiplicity”, she goes on to argue that “the event itself, the human experience *per se*, is to be considered as a condition of possibility, or 'the inventive potential' (Massumi, 1992, p. 140), of becoming other than the present self” (Semetsky, 2003, p. 213). Semetsky situates the learning self within the event, defined as the act of *becoming other than the present self*.

Opting to approach learning in and outside school as a process of becoming, the study reframes the question of learning to study the event of *learning taking place*. Expressed in future-perfect, the event opens up a space for the what Atkinson (2011) describes as the *not yet*, a non-proscriptive ontological approach that makes possible *different modes of existence*. Therefore, the introduction of nomadology reveals itself as an ethical position, such that nomadic thought adopts an affirmative take on disenfranchised practices, “Nomadic theory prefers to look for the ways in which Otherness prompts, mobilizes, and allows for flows of affirmation of values and forces which are not yet sustained by current conditions” (Braidotti, 2012, p. 172). As such, a nomadic analysis is a way to engage with the fieldwork according to what could be considered an ethics of potentialities.

A geophilosophy of the eventful space

This section will introduce a series of concepts that provide a basis for studying the eventful space of learning. The proliferation of geographic concepts used by Deleuze and Guattari in *A thousand plateaus* (1980/2004) have been given extensive consideration by

Bonta and Protevi (2006). Many terms from this volume are appropriated as metaphors but, as Bonta and Protevi (2006) are quick to point out, the literal (not metaphorical) use of this terminology only enhances the arguments:

even terms as seemingly arbitrary and playful as 'striated space' have precise utilizations and reasons. ... The seemingly bizarre reference to striation evokes Louis Agassiz's discovery of glacial striations; hence *A thousand plateaus* likens the spatial effect of the State to the all-powerful suffocation and almost irreversible landscape modification of the continental glacier. This is no convenient metaphor but rather a challenge to think through the glacial effects of the State and perhaps vice versa. (p. 9)

Taking this into consideration, we may attempt to rethink the learning landscape, one that responds to the ontological implications of becoming, by introducing key terms from this geophilosophical lexicon. In this way, geophilosophy is used to develop a conceptual space for exploring learning practices.

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994), the creation of concepts is crucial in that they offer new ways of thinking about problems (p. 169), positioning them as intensive, fluid and transformative, thus vital to the process of becoming. In fact, concepts are said to "speak the event" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 21), and as such they should be understood as capable of acting on the world, rather than naming existing phenomena. To this end, the following concepts are introduced: nomadic thought, deterritorialization, smooth spaces, the assemblage, and mobilities. While I contextualize each term in relation to geophilosophy, based on Deleuze and Guattari's treatment of concepts, the aim is to not to define them, *per se*, but to provide a working understanding, enough to allow them to be put to use as we move forward.

Nomad – The nomad appears in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004) as a figuration that interrupts the rigid control of the state (and by extension, normative territories). Nomads are foremost associated with movement, which Braidotti (2011) identifies as an "in-betweeness," recalling a subjectivity that lacks an intrinsic whole:

Being a nomad, living in transition, does not mean that one cannot or is unwilling to create those necessarily stable and reassuring bases for identity that allow one to function in a community. Nomadic consciousness rather consists in not taking any kind of identity as permanent: the nomad is only passing through; he makes those necessarily situated connections that can help him ... but he never takes on fully the limits of one ... fixed identity. (p. 64)

It is this localization within the in-between that resonates with the representation of the nomadic wanderings of the learner-traveler, where the in-between is the process of

displacement from one site to another, the act of moving rather than the point of departure or arrival. By looking at nomadic trajectories the emphasis is on what something does, and how in its doing it establishes connections; retracing boundaries according to mobile practices. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) elaborate on the territorial practices of the nomad comparing the game of Go with the game of Chess. Noting the difference between the games, they state “Go pieces are elements... with no intrinsic properties, only situational ones” (p. 353) whereas Chess pieces have predefined, hierarchical identities and corresponding preordained capacities (e.g. the queen piece may move in only one particular way). Go pieces flow, swarm and occupy a territory, while Chess pieces must navigate existing norms inscribed onto the game board in which they operate.

Nomad science – Nomad science, used interchangeably with the term minor science (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 398)¹³, is another iteration of nomadology. This term is used in reference to a genealogy of scientific production, bringing together a series of practices which are antithetical to so-called state science. For example, nomadic science “follows a hydraulic model rather than being a theory of solids treating fluids as a special case; ... [it] is inseparable from flows, and flux is reality itself, or consistency” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p.398). This model “is one of becoming and heterogeneity, as opposed to the stable, the eternal, the identical, the constant” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p.398). St. Pierre (2000) has summarized the contribution of nomad science as “problematic rather than theorematic” (p. 277), in that it poses problems and is content to follow issues, rather than resolve them (keeping things on the move, so to speak).

In their representation of nomadic science, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) insist that the opposition to state science does not create a neat binary but rather establishes a tension; nomadic science is complementary to state science and each advance knowledge differently. To develop this distinction, Deleuze and Guattari reference the interaction between intuition and intelligence (borrowed from Bergson). Here, intuition emerges as a force that proposes problems rather than syntheses: “only intelligence has the scientific means to solve formally the problems proposed by intuition, problems that intuition would be content to entrust to the qualitative activities of... *following* matter” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 413). Nomadic science is portrayed as following problems, capable of

13 While “minor science” appears as a synonym for nomad science, it is interesting to note that the terms “minor language” and “minor literature” have a distinct meaning that is much closer to deterritorialization: “a becoming minor of the major language... it is not a question of reterritorializing oneself... but of deterritorializing the major language” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 116). This process is not the development of a nomad science in opposition to accepted forms of knowledge (making), but the ability to deterritorialize one's own knowledge, to become “bilingual or multilingual” in our native tongues. I point this out because it is a distinction that becomes important in considerations of agency and voice, in chapter 4.

contributing a *qualitative shift* rather than stake broad claims. “The state is perpetually producing and reproducing ideal circles, but a war machine [i.e., nomadology] is necessary to make something round” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 405).¹⁴ In this project, the difference between “circles” and “round” helps conceptualize the focus of this inquiry. Throughout the dissertation I use the composite term *learning practices* to distinguish from *learning*; in Spanish, this is achieved more elegantly by comparing the terms *aprendizaje* (a noun, an outcome) and *aprender* (a verb, a process). In either language, it is illustrative to understand this inquiry as invested in the process, or the conditions of emergence, and not the “result” of learning.

Deterritorialization – This concept is, like nomadism, a central tenet of *A thousand plateaus* and the terms are interrelated: “the nomad can be called the Deterritorialized par excellence” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 421). Deterritorialization is a spatial practice that entails the fundamental reordering of a territory, described as the “operation of the line of flight” or “the movement by which ‘one’ leaves the territory” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 559) to create a new assemblage. A vital movement that is neither negative or positive, the concept is key to understanding the volatility of territories which are always subject to “vectors of deterritorialization working [them] from within: either because the territoriality is suppl... in other words, itinerant, or because the territorial assemblage itself opens onto and is carried off by other types of assemblages” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 560).

Deterritorializations, by implying a movement elsewhere, are essential for understanding difference. “Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 10). A line of flight that *comes from the outside*, deterritorialization reconfigures established structures in what has also been called a process of decoding (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 243). Not only does this concept have methodological implications for the study of learning (decoding, taken literally, is certainly within the realm of a nomad science and is practiced in this project) but is also enables us to think about how learning itself reorders (deterritorializes) the in/out binary.

Deterritorialization is a concept that has a shadow: reterritorialization. These two forces exist in constant tension within existing assemblages and articulate the territorial

14 The distinction between *circle* and *round* is illustrative, the former is an *a priori* object and the latter is a characteristic that operates on the virtual level. “Deleuze uses the example of the circle as a ‘formal, fixed essence’ and objects such as plates, wheels and the sun as examples of ‘thingness’... roundness, in turn, suggests a process of becoming which has a circle as its endpoint. ... It is a materiality of becoming” (Cresswell, 2011, p. 247).

movements that characterize geophilosophy. According to Mari Tamboukou (2008), “we constantly move between deterritorialization—freeing ourselves from the restrictions and boundaries of controlled, striated spaces—and reterritorialization—repositioning ourselves within new regimes of striated space” (p. 360). If the notion of territorialization (territory as a verb) describes how energy is captured and striated in specific space/time contexts, then deterritorialization indicates when energy escapes (in a line of flight) or momentarily moves outside normative strata. This tension is revisited in this dissertation in several instances, looking at how learning, the fieldwork, and the inquiry process all deterritorialize and reterritorialize common assumptions about how young people learn in and outside school.

Smooth space – While deterritorialization (and reterritorialization) refer to the configuration of assemblages, smooth and striated spaces refer more to the characteristics of said spaces. In contrast to the striated space, “smooth space is a field without conduits or channels” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 409). It is “pure patchwork. It has connections, or tactile relations. It has rhythmic values not found elsewhere” yet importantly, “‘smooth’ does not mean homogenous, quite the contrary: it is an *amphorous* nonformal space” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 526); meaning that smooth space is populated by “nonmetric multiplicities,” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 534) in the sense that it produces irreducible, qualitative singularities, which cannot be divided into comparable parts. This is the space that emerges in the path of a line of flight.

Smooth space is inhabited by the nomad, and perhaps here we locate a foundation for an imagined geography of youth learning. Tamboukou (2008) observes that “striated spaces are hierarchical, rule-intensive, strictly bounded and confining, whereas smooth spaces are open dynamic and allow for transformation to occur” (p. 360). The relationship between curricular learning and the learning practices youth engage in on their own time draws a parallel between notions of striated and smooth spaces. This comparison has captured the attention of scholars looking at education from a Deleuzeoguattarian perspective. Inna Semetsky (2006) conjectures that:

youth themselves are nomads almost by definition. They express their desires in graffiti writings that are contained in their smooth *textual* space, and they even create their own smooth *mental* space by wearing headphones and hoods. And quite often they indeed practice *silence*. (p. 96-97)

A territory created by a line of flight, smooth space is, essentially, the eventful space: “it is filled by events or haecceities, far more than by formed and perceived things. It is a space of affects, more than one of properties. It is *haptic*... intensive rather than exten-

sive” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 528). The emergence of the smooth space, as an iteration of *learning taking place* directs our attention to the characteristics of the spatial practices of youth learning.

Assemblage – This concept is particularly difficult to address because it has been appropriated so frequently. This use has led to Deleuzian scholar Ian Buchanan (2015) commenting that the term is now used “as though it is merely another way of saying something is complicated” (p. 382). While the assemblage is broadly associated with the coming together of multiple parts—akin to a network—Deleuze and Guattari's concept maintains close ties with a Foucault's (1980) notions of power and governmentality (an aspect that is more evident linguistically in the original french *agencement* than with the English translation):

It is important here that in narrating processes of assembly, care is taken to attend to the forms of power through which particular relations are held stable, fall apart, are contested and are reassembled. ... to locate power as a contingent and multiple force in relation to which assemblages are made and remade. (Anderson et al, 2012, p. 180)

Buchanan (2015) carefully teases out the meaning of assemblage in Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy, separating it from work stemming from complexity theory (i.e., assemblage as network). The main point being, that while the term is used to describe a casual arrangement of elements or events, part of this concept's strength stems from acknowledging that they are *purposeful*.

the assemblage is purposeful, it is not simply a happenstance collocation of people, materials and actions, but the deliberate realisation of a distinctive plan (abstract machine); lastly, the assemblage is a multiplicity, which means its components are both known and integral to its existence, not unknown and undecided. (Buchanan, 2015, p. 385)

Buchanan is distinguishing the Deleuzeoguattarian assemblage from, for example, work coming out of more casual networks traced by Actor Network Theory (ANT) by arguing that if “there is nothing deliberate about it... strictly speaking, it is not an assemblage” (Buchanan, 2015, p. 387). This is a crucial point that gives the concept analytical significance; identifying an assemblage's constitutive elements is a way to better understand what the assemblage accomplishes, or how it exerts power.

Alecia Jackson and Lisa Mazzei (2012) provide a utilitarian definition: “an assemblage isn't a thing; it is the *process* of making and unmaking the thing” (p. 13). Behind this claim is a reference to the fact that assemblages are expressed through double articulation (See: Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, pp. 554-556) which describes a two-step process: an initial bringing together of bodies into a configuration, and a second step, the putting into prac-

tice of this configuration in a way that reaffirms or reiterates it. This process is interrupted by intersecting lines of flight which both unmake or remake the assemblage; submitting it to processes of de- or reterritorialization.

Recalling the affinity this concept has to Foucault's contemplation of power relations, identifying and studying assemblages is ultimately a political project. According to Bonta and Protevi (2006), Deleuze and Guattari's systems of assemblages "can be analyzed in political terms... along an ethical axis (the life-affirming or life destroying character of the assemblage)" (p. 10). Thus we may ponder what the affective (and agentic) capacities of any assemblage are, asking to what extent are they *life affirming* or *life destroying*? Or as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) ask, "do assemblages have affinity with the state or with the nomadic war machine?" (p. 444). By analyzing the constitutive elements of any assemblage, we should be able to gain insight into what practices they support, or what obstacles emerge, in the process of assembling, disassembling, and reassembling.

In the context of this project, there are three main assemblages that intersect: the research project (chapter 3); the group project (chapter 4); and youth learning practices (chapter 5). Configuring these overlapping areas as assemblages, in order to research *learning taking place*, the inquiry becomes a project of assemblage, depicting how the event of learning is both made and unmade in the processes of becoming-researcher, becoming-inquirer and becoming-learner.

Mobilities – The final concept considered in this section is not part of the geophilosophical lexicon. However, within this project it has grown out of the nomadic thought that guides the inquiry, and is central to the interpretation carried out in chapter 5. As a caveat, I should address that nomadism is not literally about moving, in a physical sense. Perhaps anticipating this facile correlation, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) caution, "[t]he nomad distributes himself in a smooth space; he occupies, inhabits, holds that space... It is therefore false to define the nomad by movement" (p. 420). However, it is through the occupation of smooth space that nomadism adopts the unrooted, displaced qualities with which it is associated. A smooth space acknowledges movement as its central logic—turning points on the grid into trajectories—and such logic is passed on to the nomad. Deleuze and Guattari offer an example: "the nomad moves, but while seated, and is only seated while moving (the Bedouin galloping, knees on the saddle, sitting on the soles of his upturned feet, 'a feat of balance')" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 420). At the outset of the dissertation, the question was raised regarding how to address *invisible learning*. As the research progressed this question evolved into an inquiry into practices, or the mobile processes of learning. The relationship between mobility and nomadic practices emerges as a paradoxical feat of balance; it creates a tension by framing learning as a poten-

tial mobility (which emerges in a smooth space), rather than a result (an end point).

To conclude this section, at this point it should be clear that the spatial practices of learning encompass both physical and conceptual sites, addressing the notion of learning as well as what it means to be a “learner.” Crang and Thrift (2000) conclude that discourses which disrupt the notion of the subject (and the space inhabited by the subject) have the effect of setting things in motion:

[T]he notion of experience as a self-evident ‘thisness’ clearly has to change to something more distributed. In modern philosophy and social theory, a number of streams of thought have been produced which, added together, constitute a determined assault on ‘thisness’, all of which, interestingly, relate in some way or another to issues of mobility. (Crang & Thrift, 2000, p. 19.)

They don't name it, but Crang and Thrift understand that there is no 'thisness' in the assemblage, we are left only with mobilities, a force of nomadic affects. Or in other words, desire (See: II. Framing, this volume). Working in a space that has *more to do with doing than knowing* (Crang & Thrift, 2000, p. 6), this dissertation uses geophilosophy to construct a landscape determined by movement, a process of becoming. This allows the current project to observe how learning emerges in the eventful space, as an articulation of assemblages, rather than identifying specific sites defined by practices of informal learning.

2.4. An ethics of the event

Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) observe that nomadic practices result in “the drawing of a creative line of flight, the composition of a smooth space and of the movement of people in that space” (p. 466). The composition of this space is the iteration of the eventful space, which is *less a limit than a creation of what it encircles*, is an assemblage that brings knowers, modes of knowing and knowledge into relation. Focusing on the assemblage allows the research to contribute by identifying those spatial practices that allow youth to inhabit spaces of agency. With that in mind, this section briefly considers the ethical implications of the theoretical framework.

Focusing on the improvisational or nomadic practices that emerge in the learning environment is an attempt to support young people's project of becoming. Braidotti (2006), following the work of Deleuze, argues that the act of becoming is an ethical project, moving away from an ontological “is” to consider the potentiality of change and transformation. Anna Hickey-Moody and Peta Malins (2007) locate this ethical position within Deleuze's insistence that “theory is practice:”

Deleuze's approach to ethics is thus concerned with evaluating ‘what we do, [and] what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved’, and in relation to the kinds of potentials and capacities that those ways of existing affirm.

Within such an evaluation, it is not what a body 'is' that matters, but what it is capable of, and in what ways its relations with other bodies diminish or enhance those capacities. (p. 3)

In order to understand what a body *is capable of*, within the field of education, a learner's potential must be supported rather than ignored. Atkinson (2011) has argued that changing how we conceptualize the pedagogical relationship has broad implications for learners' capacity for becoming:

within teaching and learning contexts it is quite possible for there to be learners whose ontological status of learners is not recognized so their potential for becoming is constrained and therefore they have no (or marginal) existence within the pedagogical space. (p. 13)

Nomadic practices emerge as an escape route, developing alternative *ways of existing*; to which end, this project is invested in documenting lines of flight that deterritorialize our preconceptions of the *ontological status of learners*. I argue that these productive deterritorializations manifest as learning in the eventful space.

The event emerges, in fact, as the key element of this ethical stance. Braidotti (2006) is careful to point out that “[t]o be active, intensive or nomadic, does not mean that one is limitless” (p. 156). Thus, while Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy can be characterized as affirmative, not all breaks from the system should be celebrated. In *A thousand plateaus*, the authors cite drug addiction as a negative deterritorialization; in the current project we could refer to school disaffection as a particularly strong reminder of the risks of falling off the grid. The risk lies in assuming that a constant state of becoming is inherently productive, when that is not the case. Reviewing the critical implications of this ontological position, Nail (2014) counters that multiplicity is, in an abstract sense, apolitical: “becoming as such, tells us nothing about what is in the present, or what should be, or what the consequences of a real event are: this is a political weakness” (p. 219). He goes on to argue that it is through the event—an interruption in a succession of transformations—that the process of becoming becomes political:

[T]here are events: *processes*, immanent to being, which give it appearance and order. Events should not be confused with pre-constituted subjects or objects themselves. Events are neither subjects nor objects; they are the processes that constitute both subjects and objects. Thus, if being were already wholly constituted, there could be no events. (Nail, 2014, p. 214).

Žižek (2004) has argued that becoming (interpreted broadly as flow) and deterritorialization are the conditions under which advanced capitalism operates, which leads him to question the political commitment in Deleuzian thought. However, Nail claims that the theorization of the event provides the conditions for *real change* by *immanently ordering*

the apolitical flow:

Insofar as they [Deleuze and Badiou] remain philosophically committed to the necessary contingency of being's multiplicity, they allow for the possibility of real change independent of human thought. Insofar as they remain philosophically committed to the actual and non-representational reality of events which immanently order being, they are able to conceptualize concrete revolutionary events... (Nail, 2014, p. 219)

At stake in this discussion is the question regarding how normative practices are disrupted, thereby allowing difference to emerge. Imagining the event as the way to open up the differential space is easier if we conceptualize it in terms of movement, where "being [is] obliquely swept away by the verbs" (Deleuze, 1993, p. 41; Cited in Doel, 1996, p. 427). Mark Doel (1996) returns to the logic of the AND, equating the event with a fold: "an event is not a thing but a disjointure in space-time, whose duration is that of the continuous future-perfect" (Doel, 1996, p. 425). The idea that the event is a moment in space-time, bringing the future into the present, positions it as a movement into *that which is not yet* (Atkinson, 2011, p. 14), opening up space for the new.

Doel (1996) has argued that becoming is its own assemblage. Regarding our earlier discussion about the purposefulness of the term, it is productive to think of the assemblage of becoming-learner and the actualization of learning through the event. Tracing this particular assemblage is a project anticipated by Sallie Marston, John Paul Jones and Keith Woodward (2005) who describe a practice of:

endeavouring to think of the complex potentialities that inhere in the actualization of event-relations in even the most banal of sites, to make them problematic, complex and dynamic. The virtual, or potentiality, draws the forces of a site into intensive relations that are actualized in extensity. It is thus through the event that we find the expression of the differential in the unfolding of space. (p. 426)

Martson *et al.* capture in their geographic imaginary the project we are grappling with. Rather than focusing on sites (in/out) they articulate space according to relations actualized in *extensity*, which is to say, an extension; there is no longer a separation between the in and out, only different degrees of intensity. Within this assemblage, event-relations can be traced to detect the expression of the differential, as the potentiality is actualized through a myriad of *problematic, complex and dynamic* practices associated with becoming-learner.

Ultimately, committing to a nomadic inquiry is a tactic for exploring how young people engage eventful spaces. Developing an investigation into *intensive relations that are actualized in extensity*, this proposal fundamentally changes the orientation of the research

project, moving away from a question of learning spaces and moving towards the process of navigation that brings together different sites. Nomadic thought provides a descriptive framework for depicting the smooth, *haptic* spaces that young people occupy when engaged in learning (and researching). As a result, within this project a trajectory emerges that connects Lefebvre's (1974/1991) differential space, de Certeau's (1984) improvisational tactics and Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2004) nomadology to configure a space characterized by *event-relations*; a portrait of *learning taking place*.

II. WANDERING



Esther Ferrer, *Se hace el camino al andar*. Performance (no date).
Photograph of a postcard taken by the author.
Original photograph by Allard Willense, the Netherlands, 2002. © Esther Ferrer.

Caminante, no hay camino se hace el camino a andar.

Wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking.

– Antonio Machado, 1912

Place-making

Sara Pink's work with sensorial ethnographic methods provides a model for how to approach mobile learning through ethnographic practice. By situating the ethnographer not as an observer but as an active participant who engenders her/his place of study, Pink (2008) suggests that all ethnographic research is a form of “place-making” (p. 176).

In terms of a research methodology, place-making entails the double task of, on one hand, understanding how a group of people signify space through practice and, on the other, demonstrating and giving an account of this signification through the work of ethnography itself. In this sense, place-making is a research practice that creates the place of inquiry, as it studies it. This proposal is relevant in the current project. First, because it acknowledges the active role of the researcher not only as interpreter, but as one of many actors in the place of study. Second, in a context where the goal of the research is to study learning spaces *with* young people, place-making explicitly shows that these imagined territories are not external to the research itself. Instead, the research process actively creates a learning space that is used to experiment with and experience the eventful space of learning.

One may question, however, what happens when we recognize the researcher's gaze as implicit in constructing the notion of place? How can we reconcile space as both subjective and collective? Pink (2008) addresses the problematic of studying place when it is at once a personal (i.e., one's *sense of place*), while at the same time, remains commonly identifiable by a group. She writes,

It is impossible to directly access the imaginations of others, to know precisely if and how an imagined ‘irreal’ future is shared by a ‘collective’... To gain a sense of the complexity that a ‘collective imagination’ might involve, I suggest thinking of entangled individual imaginations, inspired by the same verbal discourses, written texts, phenomenological contexts and material reality. (p. 183).

Pink uses Ingold's (2007) description of place as constituted through *entangled pathways* to think about how place is both experiential and identifiable. She reconciles this dichotomy by picturing how the social fabric influences and shapes the different interwoven threads of individual experience. As enacted by her own tour of Mold (UK) according to local inhabitants' adherence to the *Cittàslow* movement, by narrating different ways of passing through and interpreting a place, Pink deterritorializes it. This is not an exchange of one power structure for another, but rather the creation of an opening in a newly destabilized understanding of shared space, to allow for *entangled individual imaginations* to decode how we know a site. Pink thus points the way for doing ethnography on *learning taking place*.

Breaking down the social imaginary, she advocates a localization of collective imaginaries; the pluralization of space through practice(s).



Figure 3. Desire paths. Top left: Richard Long, *A line made by walking*. 1967. © Richard Long. Other images: collected from the dedicated sub-Reddit, www.reddit.com/r/DesirePath.

Desire paths

desire path. n. A term used in urban planning to describe those footpaths that are worn into the grass by the accumulative footfalls of people traveling over the same surface. As opposed to a formal provision, such as a sidewalk, desire paths are informal, emergent, and they seem to suggest metaphorically the “positive deviance” (Hyman, ND) of a collective.

Several authors have identified the use of the term *assemblage* in *A thousand plateaus* as an evolution of the concept of the *desiring machine* that appears in *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2004).

Desiring machines... are referred to as the assemblage in *A thousand plateaus*. The desiring machine is that which provides connections for a plugging-in of forces, flows and intensities. The machine, as such, with no subjectivity or center, is a hub of connections and productions—it deterritorializes and presents the possibility for transformation, proliferation and becoming. (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 88)

[A]ssemblages are seen as 'compositions of desire', a formulation that reinforces [Deleuze and Guattari's] constant claim that 'desire has nothing to do with a natural or spontaneous determination; there is no desire but assembling, assembled, machined [*agençant, agencé, machiné*] desire'. The main distinction here is between sedentary 'feeling' [sentiment] and nomadic 'affects'. (Bonta & Protevi, 2006, p. 77)

Characterized by a *plugging-in of forces, flows and intensities*, the working assemblage of this research project manifests as a territory of desire, written into being through the nomadic affects of (following) learning.

Just after starting my fieldwork, in my field diary I jotted-down Gregory Bateson's oft-cited phrase “the map is not the territory,” in reference to the disorientation I felt after moving from my carefully planned research proposal into the field. This phrase stayed with me, gaining more resonance after the fieldwork was complete and I confronted the task of bridging the gap between the experience and the narrative I would write. In this moment, the question becomes: what is the relationship between the map and the territory? I found myself asking, which comes first? Unarguably the fieldwork had a physical, tangible site, but that is not necessarily the “territory” in question. Instead, my own gaze and research, mapped onto the fieldwork experience as a desire path, end up being just as influential in delineating the space of inquiry as the physical parameters of the fieldwork.

Specific needs have specific objects. Desire, on the other hand, has no particular object, except for a space where it has full play: a beach, a place of festivity, the space of the dream. The dialectical link (meaning the contradiction within a unity) between need and desire thus generates fresh

contradictions - notably that between liberation and repression. (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 353)

Unmoored from any particular object, desire becomes a form of place-making, directing the research project and working toward an alternative mapping of the fieldwork event.

Observing the smooth space in the research project, I ask: what space is created in this research project for desire. How does a desire path emerge and come to be recognized? What happens when it is recognized, does official acceptance take away its subversive characteristics, and thus its reason for being? Bronwyn Davies (2005) expounds on desire:

It is not a choice between compliance and resistance, between colonizing and being colonized, between taking up the master narratives and resisting them. It is in our own existence, the terms of our existence, that we need to begin the work, together, of decomposing those elements of our world that make us, and our students, vulnerable to the latest discourse and that inhibit conscience and limit consciousness. (p. 13)

At stake in the assemblage, the research project, and in our learning processes, is how to act on our desire, in a negotiation with the striated space. Place-making in Pink's project seems to center on the researchers gaze; place-making the assemblage is something else (something other). Sites emerge, they are cut through by lines of flight. Which site do we preserve in the telling of the tale? Or do we look for something else, keeping our eye on the movement—the *speeds and intensities*.

A collaborative site

Smooth is both the object of a close vision par excellence and the element of a haptic space (which may be as much visual or auditory as tactile). The Striated, on the contrary, relates to a more distant vision, and a more optical space—although the eye in turn is not the only organ to have this capacity.

The first aspect of the haptic, smooth space of close vision is that its orientations, landmarks, and linkages are in continuous variation; it operates step by step. Examples are the desert, steppe, ice, and sea, local spaces of pure connection.

– Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 544.

* * *

Adrià said he would bring an example of “outside learning” today but he seems to have forgotten because we're already halfway into the session and he hasn't brought it up. Last week, he mentioned that sometimes his coach will film the indoor soccer games, and then the team uses the videos, commenting on where the mistakes were. He supposed that one of these videos could count as “evidence.”

In anticipation of receiving material like this, Xavi and I remind the group that we

need a space to work; now that we're going to start sharing material, we'll need somewhere to store and access it. Xavi asks if anyone is familiar with Dropbox or GoogleDocs, but the young people are not enthusiastic:

Joan, "Huh? I don't even know what you're talking about!"

Roser, "We had GoogleDocs, I think? But I don't really know what it is... Um, our school has it right?"

Adrià, "Yeah, but I don't remember it either..." He then adds that Facebook allows you to upload documents and videos, "It's not just photos."

Xavi resists this suggestion, saying that the issue of privacy with Facebook is complicated. However, the young people immediately reject this notion, "What? It's fine!" They argue that we can just create a private group, and that it's very easy, and no problem at all... In spite of our misgivings Xavi and I make a quick decision to prioritize using a space that the young people will actually log on to, knowing that we have little sway over their actions as is. So we concede. Once the decision is made the group dynamic shifts. Jordi pulls his laptop out of his backpack, logs on to Facebook, and starts setting it up. He's soon asking what we should name the group.

Up until this point in the session, Xavi and I had done most of the talking, introducing the notion of "ethnography." Any time we try to situate the project as a research project, using technical language, it feels like everything comes to a grinding halt. Pere and Joan start looking at their cell phones, Xavi and I do most of the talking, etc. However, as soon as the energy changes, it goes wildly off into different directions. As soon as Jordi is on Facebook, everything starts happening at once.

Suddenly, Joan asks Laura, "Hey, how is he connected to Facebook?"

Apparently the school WiFi has a firewall that blocks access to this social network. Roser jumps in to explain to Xavi and I that "There's a Firewall, but everyone knows how to get around it." (Joan doesn't contradict her.)

Xavi and I ask her why Facebook is blocked, "Is it so you don't log on while you're in class?"

But Roser responds with different information which intrigues us further, "Actually, we don't use our laptops in class anymore."

Xavi confesses how surprised he is to hear this, given that the school introduced a one laptop per student policy. In fact, the youth in our group are members of the first class to benefit from this policy, meaning they would have received laptops during their 1st year of secondary education (three years prior). In fact, our research team studied this school, looking at the effect of this policy (Sancho Gil & Alonso, et al, 2011) and therefore both Xavi and I are aware that the students should have laptops.

Roser assures us, emphatically, that the laptops were a disaster. "No one was paying attention, ever. We were all, you know, getting distracted, not minding the teachers... And it was new, so the teachers didn't really have any control."

While this conversation is taking place, a group has gathered around Jordi, who now has Facebook open on his laptop. Jordi has invited everyone else into the group. However, there is a catch, Jordi can't invite Xavi and I because we're not Facebook friends. Thus manifests exactly the type of privacy violations Xavi and I were worried about but, as infrequent users of Facebook, were unable to articulate just moments ago.

I announce to the group that someone will have to add me as a friend, and then invite me to the Facebook group, and then I can invite Xavi. This suggestion does not raise any concern among the young people, in spite of my misgivings. I use Jordi's laptop to search my profile on Facebook; he adds me as a friend, and from my cell phone (on a 3G connection, since I don't have a way around the Firewall on my laptop) I accept his friend request. He then adds me to the group. I then add Xavi.

I tell Jordi that he can stop being my friend now on Facebook, or that he can block me from seeing his profile. I say this twice and point out that if he doesn't, I will see when he posts things on his feed. He says, "It's fine." I later receive a Facebook friend request from Adrià, who I also accept, since I am already friends with Jordi. I remain their friend throughout the duration of the fieldwork, and then I terminate the "friendships."

When I took my phone out, this inspired the rest of the group to get their cell phones out and compare them. Only a couple of the young people have smart phone models and two of the six young people have a data plan, while all of them have phones and at least WiFi access.

Once the group is set up, Jordi, Adrià and Pere keep browsing Facebook on Jordi's laptop. Suddenly Adrià remembers that he was supposed to bring in videos from soccer practice! He looks up his team on Facebook, and shows the group his videos. Everyone gathers around. Then Pere wants to go, he takes the laptop and starts to search for something, which turns out to be the page for his Volleyball team. Everyone crowds around the team shots, trying to identify the other players and laughing at the action shots.

We weren't aware of it at the time, but this moment of sharing photos on Facebook became one of the only times in the project when the young people shared images relating to their "outside" lives. In later sessions we discussed the possibility of sharing images, we even imagined exactly which images could be used, but that did little to inspire the group to take action.

* * *

It is possible to observe a schism, a gap emerging where, on one hand, in scenes like the one described here. Such moments are rich with data, informing my understanding of how young people negotiate school boundaries. On the other hand, this same scenario leaves Xavi and I worrying that group hasn't gathered any evidence to date. The problem with sharing the photographs spontaneously like this is that there was no discussion about them, no way to refer back to them, no way to draw them into a larger research narrative.

When the young people engage actively in the group project, it becomes theirs. They

wander off, and generate a smooth space: a *haptic*, unordered site of *pure connection*. This space frequently deterritorializes the session Xavi and I had planned, challenging our ability to respond and 'stay on topic.' That's the point, however. It's when the group wanders off track, like here, that the most significant research moments takes place. This happens again and again, repeatedly. Words start showing up in my field diary, such as: tangents, tuning out, spacing out, improvisation... These words will later give rise to a project centered on nomadic practices and mobilities.

3. Plugging in nomadology

3.1. Building learning imaginaries

As stated, one aim of the dissertation is to trouble the social imaginary of learning by addressing the learning practices that fall outside the realm of assessment. This aim developed initially out of the understanding that formal education renders some learning practices invisible, and was then reinforced by the conversion of the fieldwork into a so-called *negative space*. Emerging out of and informing this conceptualization of the research project therefore is a methodological approach built around ways that allow me to pay attention to and capture learning that lies at the limits of representationality.

To develop the methodological approach, I use Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei's (2012) framework for thinking data with theory, which they term "plugging in," a term they borrow from Deleuze and Guattari. Plugging in as a method describes the productive event that is "reading-the-data-while-thinking-the-theory" as a process that recognizes that research is not a unidirectional progression, but instead evolves according to a series of "maneuvers:"

1. putting philosophical concepts to work via disrupting the theory/praxis binary by decentering each and instead showing how they *constitute or make one another*; (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 5)
2. being deliberate and transparent in what analytical questions are made possible by a specific theoretical concept... and how the questions that are used to think with *emerged in the middle* of plugging in; (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 5)
3. working the same data chunks repeatedly to "deform [them], to make [them] groan and protest" (Foucault, 1980, p. 22) with an overabundance of meaning, which in turn not only creates new knowledge but also shows the *suppleness of each when plugged in*. (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 5)

Jackson and Mazzei argue that data, method, theory, the research questions, and so on, are not a sum of parts that make up the research project but a set of elements that are mutually constituted by each other. Theory informs what "data" is; data informs the research questions; method answers to theory and vice versa, and so on. This is the foundation of the methodological approach that informs this research. In my case, by "plugging in" the concept of nomadology into the research field, different configurations of nomadic learning emerge—not as a result of the fieldwork but from within the inquiry itself. In

other words, the dissertation does not “prove” any essential connection between learning and the concept of nomadology, instead it uses nomadology as a way to plug into the fieldwork, in order to develop ways of thinking about learning in and outside school, or more broadly, in the eventful space.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) order their methodological approach around three fields: “field of reality” (data, theory, method); “field of representation” (producing different knowledge, resisting stable meaning); “field of subjectivity” (becoming-researcher) (p. 2). In turn, I will use these fields to order the overlapping moments that take place in the fieldwork, during my engagement with the fieldwork, and through the act of becoming-researcher, that this methodological journey has implied. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2003) remind us that “theory, method, analysis, ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Behind these terms stands the personal biography of the researcher” (p. 29). The following is a representation of the decisions I’ve made as the research journey unfolds, which is to say they could be different. I will discuss the decisions driving the development of the methodological approach in order to explore the thematic resonance of becoming-researcher that echoes throughout the project.

Parallel to the confrontation with methodology enacted while developing this dissertation is the methodological reflection that took place within the group project, when we grappled with questions related to the doings of ethnographic research. Therefore the following chapter interrupts the dissertation narrative with scenes from the group project, creating a productive tension (irruptions) that trouble the tale told about plugging in.

3.2. The “field of reality”

A research site/sight/cite

The fieldwork for this research, one of five case studies carried out within a national project, was carried out in La Mallola, a school located in Esplugues de Llobregat. This municipality falls within the metropolitan area of Barcelona and has a population of approximately 50,000. The public school provides comprehensive lower secondary education (*ESO*) in addition to offering both the Science and Humanities baccalaureate programs, and has approximately 360 students and 40 faculty members. The center is relatively new, having opened in the early 1990s to accommodate the growing population in Esplugues de Llobregat, and the building as well as the classrooms we had access to were in good condition. There was a sense of school pride in the building, the walls were decorated with class pictures from different excursions, the lockers were painted in bright primary colors, and the entire facility was neat and orderly. The school has two WiFi networks (one specifically for students, with a firewall blocked social networks) as well as other up-to-date

technology like smart boards and projectors in some classrooms.¹⁵

Esplugues is a middle to upper-middle class urban area, and this is reflected in certain aspects of the school. The student body is representative of the neighborhood, with a low immigrant population¹⁶ and a high rate of parent involvement. The youth participants in the project were a representative sample in many ways. All of them participated in some sort of extracurricular activity that included sports, music, language classes, gym membership or a private tutor, and all but one used Catalan as their primary language. During the time that the fieldwork took place, the participants took two field trips, one to a ski resort and one to Germany for a language exchange, which speaks to the amount of resources the school and its students have, and to the overall investment made by the community in its school.

This center was chosen for the project because the research team had collaborated with it previously, in a study carried out from 2007-2010 that looked into how secondary schools were using ICT (Sancho & Alonso Cano, 2011). Therefore, many faculty members at the school, most notably the principle Arcadi Cirera and the Science teacher Mari Bajo, had a prior working relationship with the research team. Mari Bajo took on the role of teacher liaison: she attended meetings with the research team prior to the start of the fieldwork and negotiated the entrance of the project into the school (by selecting the students and making the schedule). During our time at the school, Mari was also involved in an ongoing Comenius project and was also co-writing a Comenius grant for an upcoming project, demonstrating her familiarity with bringing research projects into the school. Although most of her work was carried out “behind the scenes,” it was clear that she single-handedly organized the integration of the research project into the school with great efficiency, navigating the internal politics of the school by engaging the 4th-year tutors in the selection of students, while also minding which electives students would be missing to participate in the project, so that the “burden” of the project was equally distributed among teachers and tutors.¹⁷ While she achieved this consensus before the fieldwork began, when problems arose during the project she was able to make unilateral decisions, like substituting a student when one girl left and allowing our group to meet twice in one week when

15 We found that the WiFi network that Xavi and I were given access to did not have the same Firewalls that the other network had—this we discovered when logging on to Facebook. The young people asked us for the password to the restricted network but we declined to give it to them.

16 According to the Catalanian Institute for Statistics, (*Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya*), the city is average in Catalonia for unemployment and immigrant population. (Idescat, 2014)

17 I use “burden” in quotation marks to indicate a perceived notion that teachers may have felt at the outset of the project. I imagine that once the project was underway it implied little to no extra work on the teachers' behalf. They did not need to follow-up on the project itself, and the young people said they caught on on the work they missed by asking their classmates for help, rather than asking their teachers.

we were preparing the final presentation.

The fieldwork took place during the 2012/13 academic school year beginning on October 29, 2012 ending with the final presentation on March 4, 2013. The project consisted of a total of 15 weekly sessions, which were only interrupted by the Christmas holiday, as well as a two-week period in February when the 4th year students had class trips that coincided with our scheduled time. The group met for the last time on April 10, 2013 for a presentation at University of Barcelona, where the young people repeated the presentation they given at their school, during the last session of the fieldwork (this meeting figures in the total count of 16 sessions with the young people). The sessions lasted 1 hour, and the youth participants missed an elective to participate. We met in the final hour of the school day, from 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm, a fact that we were keenly aware of as the young people dashed out of the sessions when the bell rang, tired, hungry (there is no lunch break during the school day), and eager to leave.

The project sessions were attended by two university researchers, myself and Xavier Giró, a fellow member of the Esbrina research team, as per the design of the national project. Mari managed the selection of the six young people. From the university we had stipulated that the group should have with four boys and two girls, with four students who “met school expectations” and two students who “did not meet school expectations. This selective sample was designed to have an even mix between male and female participants across the five participating schools as well as approximately 30% of participants suffering from or at risk of school disaffection, in accordance with the average of early school leaving in Catalonia.

*The selection*¹⁸

Mari leads us to a classroom that has been designated as our work space. It looks like a classroom, but it has few desks for the size of the space, and there are a few arm chairs in the back; it's also missing a desk for the teacher. Mari tells us it's used as the student center, but we're not sure what that means or if we're taking up space students would normally get to use. After we arrive, Mari leaves us as she collects the students who have been selected from their classrooms, bringing them in pairs before going off to get the others. As they take a seat, there is an awkward silence because Xavi and I introduce

18 The names used to identify the youth participants are pseudonyms. I asked the youth several times during the project whether they wanted their first names to be used when disseminating the research, and their response was consistently indifferent. Answers included: shoulder shrugging, “sure”, and “ok...” Because they did not say no, earlier publications—my own and others produced by the research group—include their names. However, shortly after the fieldwork finished, I became sensitive to the fact that while the youth did not say no, they did not give enthusiastic permission either. In deference to this ambiguity, and in recognition that the portrayal of the youth in this dissertation is not “real,” pseudonyms have been created and used throughout.

ourselves but we wait for everyone to arrive before explaining why they're here.

Finally the last two arrive, Joan and Pere. It seems that they assumed that Mari was pulling them out of class as a recrimination of some sort because as soon as Joan walks in he asks defensively, "so what is this, some group for people with bad grades?" With this comment, Joan immediately identifies Pere and himself as the two students who don't meet school expectations, by expressing his understanding that this project was in some way remedial. His question causes the two girls who are sitting together to look around, wide-eyed, at the rest of the group. They seem deeply uncomfortable with this suggestion, or perhaps with the idea of having to collaborate with these boys. Xavi and I tell Joan that this isn't the case.

After Xavi and I present the basic aim of the project the young people start to ask questions, and right away they want to know why they were selected. In spite of the entrance that Joan made, or maybe because of it, Xavi and I hesitate to mention the criteria regarding who "does or does not meet school expectations." We don't want to assign people roles early on in the project, before we even know each other, so we deflect; we tell them that the university was interested in having a mix of boys and girls with different interests, but that it was their teachers who made the final selection. We then explain that the goal was to have two students from each tutorial group (A, B, and C) and two students from each elective, to keep things balanced. This answer satisfies the group.

* * *

The national project was written with the aim of allowing student participation to be recognized within the school. We hoped that linking the project with the curriculum would provide a strong incentive as well as resources (namely, time and space during school hours) that would make it mutually beneficial for the young people taking part in the project. At La Mallola, we were given time and space within the schedule for our project sessions, but the young people's participation did not earn them any official credit. This was in part because the research credit was awarded through participation in a group project that all 4th-year students participated in together, at the end of the year. In terms of both timing and format our small group project wasn't a good fit for replacing students' collaboration in this large-scale production. Xavi and I also intuited from small-talk that both the principal and Mari were happy for the project to proceed without any "interference" from the day-to-day life of the school. Giving us free reign to collaborate with the students without teacher or administrative oversight seemed to be the result of the trust the school had in Esbrina (established in the earlier research project) and the intrinsic value both Mari and Arcadi placed on the research experience, prioritizing it over students' classwork. This freedom marked our group right away as an outlier. In the national project, the other four schools all had some form of oversight: either a teacher participated in the

project, or the student results were formally assessed by teachers external to the research project, or both.¹⁹

The elements constituting the formation of the group thus described: the school, the participants, the university research team, and the parameters of the national project, all could be seen as merely the pretext, the context in which our participatory ethnography unfolds. In theory, the ethnography described in the national project referred to the project that would be developed with the young people, where the field would have been those sites of learning in and outside school, that would be the focus of the young people's inquiring gaze. This separation was never truly established nor maintained. Together, as a research team we struggled with the blurred boundaries; we found that this ethnographic study was, in effect, double in the sense that each research group carried out participatory ethnographic inquiries with secondary students while from the university team we also studied and documented this process. This duplication seems to harken back to multisite ethnography, which Kristen Eglinton suggests "aligns itself with the contemporary experiences of youth living in and through ever-changing and increasingly interconnected socio-cultural contexts" (2013, p. 11). However the problem here is not an issue of multiple sites, but of different *sights*.

After this fieldwork experience, we could argue that in an effort to respond with integrity to our research topic we opted for a multi-*sighted* approach to the issue. The collaborative design imbedded in our project destabilized the eye of the ethnographer and redistributed the expertise in each group among the two university researchers, the six (or more) young participants and, in some cases, with the collaborating teachers as well. The group approach forced the university researchers to confront their underlying assumptions about learning while negotiating the terms of the inquiry with the younger collaborators (themes that we wished to develop didn't always resonate with them, for example) and created a more fertile environment for exchanging ideas, observations and analyses. In this context the site was not what lay in the line of vision of a single researcher. Instead, our work focused on a layered and polyphonic representation of learning, creating a virtual field based on the mobile practices of young people.

The field in this research is therefore imbedded with an unsettled understanding of place. For this reason I have introduced it with the term *site/sight/cite*, a homology Jan Jagodzinski (2008) introduces in reference to the Lacanian notions of the Real, Imaginary and Symbolic, respectively. This *site/sight/cite*:

must be understood *not* as a specific physical location, but a site of nomadic

¹⁹ This framework deeply impacted the way students were motivated (or not) to participate in this project. Chapter 4 looks at the nature of this participation.

singularity that harbors *a life*—nomadic in the sense that it is nowhere and everywhere... It presents the potentiality of the virtual, the non-place of multiplicities. Each of these registers is defined by a limit: what is feelable, seeable, and sayable (hearable), respectfully. (p. 156)

The site/sight/cite, like the space of invisible learning, is defined by the limits of what we can know (feel, see, say or hear). Like Pink's (2008, after Ingold, 2007) understanding of site as *entangled individual imaginations*, this figuration is not material but virtual—*not yet*—and therefore is defined by its potentiality. It awaits actualization in the form of individuated practices. What interests jagodzinski is that site is consistently “under-theorized at the level of desire.” He insists:

Unconscious desire is the place of “site” for me... the site of the unconscious virtual Real, which is the unsymbolized and unimagined kernel that “structures” the projective imaginary site in the first place—the sense-event. This is where difference is to be found that is not followed by a signifier to mark identity, or rather it is the site of the unknown known. (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2012, p. 74)

The folded nature and multiple entry points of the “field” in this project portrays a territory that is not necessarily physical. Instead, it is better understood as a locus of desire, where the methodological approach is essentially a *desire path* drawing the parameters of the research, defining the assemblage produced as a result. Thinking data with theory, in other words, is a methodological framework that actualizes the virtual field of the research; it sets the limits that *'structure' the projective imaginary site in the first place—the sense event*.

This is to say that while I can trace the methodological journey from the first to last day of the dissertation, the relationship between the data and the theory is constituted, not causal. As Jackson and Mazzei (2012) have commented on their own practice of plugging in:

as we read the data, the theory was in our selves, but something different happened in the moments of plugging in. We characterize this reading-the-data-while-thinking-the-theory as a moment of plugging in, of entering the assemblage, of making new connectives. We began to realize how plugging in creates a different relationship among texts: they *constitute* one another and in doing so create something new. (p. 4)

Keeping this in mind, this chapter attempts to retrace a desire path through the site/sight/cite of the fieldwork, with a clarity of vision granted from hindsight. Of course, the journey initially never felt as clear cut as it appears in these pages.

Generating and processing data

The fieldwork produced three classes of material (i.e., the data): textual, visual, and

what I term “contributions.”

The textual material refers to the transcriptions of the sessions, my notes and my field diary. The sessions were recorded with a digital recorder. After each session I wrote up a summary of the session in Catalan, which Xavi revised and added to if he felt it necessary, and which we then uploaded to the Moodle, an online space dedicated to the national project and accessible only to the research team. In addition to the “official” project summaries I also kept a field diary, in English, which was not shared with the research team but was instead used to explore themes that I would return to later for the dissertation. Once the fieldwork ended I transcribed the sessions (in Catalan), which greatly supplemented the session summaries I had written while the project was ongoing.

The visual material incorporates the photographs and video footage used to document the sessions. During the sessions I used my phone to take snapshots and Xavi also brought a camera and took photographs as well, which we then would upload into a shared Dropbox folder. Both Xavi and I agreed that the visual material we generated was poor; we often forgot to document the sessions because we were busy participating in them, and some days the only photographs we have are of the white board that registers just a trace of the discussion we had had with the group on a given day. The photographs we took were incorporated into the session summaries, along with screenshots from our Facebook page and screenshots from the video footage (which have the same function as our photographs, in serving to “illustrate” moments in the group project). The last five sessions (including the presentation at the school) were recorded with a video camera that was set up on a tripod in a corner of the room and then left unattended.

I used the video to support the audio recordings and it was the primary source material for the transcriptions when it was available. Transcribing from the videos made it easier to see who was speaking, and allowed me to include written information about the non-verbal actions not caught on the digital recorder. I also used the footage to capture screenshots that would supplement the still photographs Xavi and I had taken. The only public use of the footage is a short video clip I edited and shared with the young people once the fieldwork ended. The video clip is a “blooper reel” of the project. It brings together a selection of “funny” moments when we are captured on camera making faces, acting out, laughing, and so on, and is meant to be a spoof of our research process.²⁰ The video clip was used strategically to keep in touch with the young people during the month between the end of the fieldwork and the university presentation, and was also a response to their request that I show them the video material, which they had taken an interest in.

20 I discuss this clip in more detail in the chapter 4. The clip can be viewed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpe2kXhx0uw>.

The third class of material refers to contributions generated during the group project. This material is mostly created by the young people. The difference with the textual and visual material is that the contributions aren't meant to document our process, but instead try to respond to the research prompt regarding how young people learn in and outside school. This material includes diagrams, photographs, texts (observations made about in and out of school activities), and a Prezi (which incorporates most of the contribution material).

What is research?



Figure 4. 1st page of a handout given to the group in the 2nd fieldwork session.

Xavi designed a presentation titled "What is re-search" that we used in the first two sessions as a starting point in the project; after all, we had said we'd be doing research, but that term needed to be explained. The first page of the handout features an image of a woman in a white lab coat and plastic protective glasses, positioned in front of what appears to be lab equipment. Xavi starts the discussion by asking the group what research is? Jordi

mentions "testing" and Xavi asks if they think research is like what we see in the photograph, adding, "something that takes place in a lab." They say yes. We then say that we're interested in doing a different type of research, one that considers, for example, human experiences, experiences that cannot easily be measured. Adrià asks, joking, "So, are we going to be like, the lab rats?"

We say that there are a few steps involved in doing research, and begin to describe what we would like to do in the upcoming weeks.

Rachel, "So really, a research project with a question. We should ask, what do we want to know more about? What do guys think could be our research question, at this point?"

Roser, "What do we do in and outside school?"

Xavi, "Ok. So the next step is, gather evidence. By that we mean, we need material that tells us something about our question..."

Rachel, "So what we want to start doing, is this idea of generating evidence. It will be like documenting, as Roser said, how we're learning in and outside school. How about next week, we all bring something to the session, that tells us something about either in

or out?”

The group agrees and Xavi and I leave the session feeling like the discussion went well. It will take us about two months before any “evidence” is brought to the sessions, something we didn't anticipate at the time.

Testing methods

The method “applied” to this data begins to bifurcate after the fieldwork finishes. Given the layered nature of the project, this data serves as source material for: an ethnographic account of the project, co-authored by Xavi and I, and this dissertation. The report Xavi and I wrote served as source material for subsequent analyses based on the national project as a whole, including a series of articles and a (forthcoming) meta-analysis written by the research team.

The first output using the data was a co-authored report that Xavi and I wrote at the close of 2012 and was based on the session summaries and transcriptions, as well as my field notes. We used thick description (Geertz, 1973) to create a detailed account of the fieldwork sessions, with the understanding that the method “enables a more embodied account of young lives to emerge,” and supports a more holistic conveyance of “action as well as speech” (Nayak, 2003, p. 179). This report was written with the intent of conveying what took place during the fieldwork, knowing that the text we created would in turn become data for our research team. The long-form writing process was also an early analytical exercise, while I narrated the events of the field and began revisited scenes that had stood out during the project. Ultimately this text is not cited verbatim in this dissertation but it was an important step in my process of reading and writing the research.

I began to transcribe the session recordings once the fieldwork ended. Transcribing was incredibly informative, providing a much needed close reading and revisiting of the sessions. While I had been keeping a field diary throughout the project, writing and commenting on the events as they were taking place, revisiting these scenes while transcribing gave me a much closer look, and taught me a great deal about the life of a group project. I made many discoveries while transcribing, noting the lapses in understanding, the miscommunication, and the different positionalities that coursed through our group, which were difficult to pay attention to while ‘in the moment.’ I found myself in the center of several communication gaffes, which were partly due to a mild language barrier²¹ but mainly the result of the vastly different perspective I had, in comparison to the young people, of what we were doing in the project, which impeded hearing things clearly.

21 The fieldwork began one year after I began studying Catalan. While I had earned my “proficiency” degree (C-level) before working with the students, this was my first extended encounter with Catalan teens. Although I didn't realize it *in situ*, on more than several occasions I misunderstood what they were saying.

After transcribing I began coding the data. This was not a method I planned on using, having been comfortably working in the narrative tradition used by the Esbrina research team. However, after embarking on a 3-month visit to the Open University, under the tutelage of Gillian Rose, I was exposed to the opinion that coding was a necessary element for completing the doctoral degree. This opinion left me feeling unsure about my research methodology, and because I had recently finished my fieldwork and was casting around for a way forward, I decided to attempt coding, to see where it could lead.

I had had no prior exposure to coding at that point, it wasn't covered in the graduate program, and therefore I set out on my own. After reviewing different sources I chose to use an existing coding framework by John Lofland and Lyn Lofland (1995) designed for analyzing group dynamics; I chose this model because at that stage I had yet to *reframe* and pose new research questions. With my stated interest in group learning based on CoP, I adapted Lofland and Lofland's categories to explore the dynamics of the research group.²² This analytic approach was greatly at odds with my epistemological framework, which became apparent rather quickly. The coding did not make it easier for me to speak through the data, instead it seemed to make the evidence duller, tautological even. This failed attempt exposed two things. First, the focus on group learning was not a good fit; this topic had not captured my attention during the fieldwork and was more a remnant of an early project proposal, therefore the more I coded with this focus in mind, the more it clear it became that it had nothing to do with where my interest lay in the research. Second, this coding method seemed to ignore, or overwrite, the work I had been doing in my field diary. Unable to reconcile the interpretive approach in my field diary with Lofland and Lofland's analytical framework, I abandoned this approach to coding in search for something that would not lead me so far astray.

The coding journey was not abandoned entirely, however, but continued in a different direction. As I learned more about coding I became more articulate about the nuances and options available. Using Jonny Saldaña's (2013) book *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* to gain an overview of a wide range of coding practices, I was exposed to the diversity within coding and the choices it provided. From this text, I became more conversant in types of coding and I was able to identify where I had gone wrong originally. For example, I diagnosed my use of "simultaneous coding" as a symptom of not really knowing what I was coding for; I discarded the use of "descriptive coding," after Saldaña confirmed my suspicions about it being relatively useless for coding personal interactions, and so on. From this slightly intuitive approach, and based on trial and error, I experimented with different coding methods.

²² The coding was done using Dedoose, an encrypted cloud service for online qualitative data analysis.

I began to use “in vivo” coding, using as codes key words or phrases spoken by project participants. Given the recurrence of the terms “effort” and “experience” in the fieldwork, “in vivo” coding supported my interest in exploring the appearance of these terms throughout the project. In other words, this was a coding method that supported, rather than ignored, the interpretive method I had already been using. I also experimented with dramaturgical coding (Saldaña, 2013). This is a strategy that approaches transcripts and field notes as “social drama” and is “appropriate for exploring interpersonal participant experiences and actions in case studies, particularly those leading toward narrative or arts-based presentational forms” (Saldaña, 2013, pp. 123-124). Following this model, texts are coded according to pre-existing categories: objectives, conflicts or obstacles, tactics or strategies, attitudes, emotions and subtexts. Dramaturgical coding is a very different method than, say, descriptive coding. Rather than organize data into comparable parts it is a framework for interpreting the narrative character of lived experiences. I found that it was a method that enabled me to pay attention differently to what was taking place in the transcribed scenes; by intentionally reading for emotions, attitudes subtexts, and so on, the approach took me beyond the first person perspective which dominated my field notes, thereby improving the narrative quality of the ethnographic vignettes.

My interest in learning to code led the research into unexpected territories but also made the project stronger. In the first attempt (Lofland & Lofland, 1995), I looked to coding to provide answers, hoping it would somehow demonstrate what was important in the data. In later attempts when I not only recognized but exploited my own interpretive role, I used coding as a tool that supported my work instead of redirecting it. Coding became a way to enhance the process of writing, by providing different strategies for reading the text; *in vivo* coding focused my attention on how the group spoke about learning, while the dramaturgical coding made me more aware of the role of difference within the group, and enabled me to explore my own interpretive limitations. I recognize that this is not the most traditional use of coding, turning it into a tool to read and write about the project, rather than employing it as an interpretive device.²³

23 Because it may seem conspicuously absent, I will address the non-presence of grounded theory. Kathy Charmaz's (2006) updated approach to grounded theory bridges analytical and interpretive paradigms by acknowledging that the researcher's decisions, the questions that she is asking of the data, the way she is using the method, as well as his or her (personal, philosophical, theoretical, methodological) background shape the research process and, ultimately, the findings. As a result, the theory produced constitutes one particular reading of the data rather than the *only* truth about the data. While this approach can be reconciled in an interpretive framework and is not implicitly at odds with my own project, ultimately the coding process implies a specific progression that the research does not follow. Charmaz (2005) sees coding as a “first step in taking an analytic stance toward the data” (p. 517), whereas I was already thinking about concepts that related to the in—out learning before the fieldwork had even begun. The progression from codes to categories to themes is rejected in favor of the multi-directionality embraced by plugging-in. Whereas coding implies an interaction *with* data,

More than coding, my method was closer to what Saldaña (2013) refers to as *theming the data*: “[l]ike coding, thematic analysis or the search for themes in the data is a strategic choice as part of the research design that includes the primary questions, goals, conceptual framework, and literature review” (p. 177). The difference lies in the fact that a theme works on a broader level than a code, acting as “an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole” (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000, p. 362). The theming of the data began by building out from the main topics that appear in the national project—e.g., the concept of in/out or the tension between different learning spaces—using them to frame my study of how to interpret the research (and learning) experience. In my field diary, I began taking note of concepts such as: *blank space*, *tuning out*, *left out*, and others, which began to portray the in/out as configured by social practices. Thus, by constantly comparing the research objectives, theory, and the fieldwork, themes evolved that trace both the movements in and out of the participatory ethnography.

In summary, coding was informative in unexpected ways. While it ended up taking a supporting role in this research project, it played a significant role in my own journey as a researcher. Important frameworks that before had seemed like abstract technicalities—such as analytic versus interpretive approaches—were concepts I understood on paper without having experienced the fundamental differences they introduce into a research project. My effort to learn about coding (Fig. 5) was a process during which I learned how the questions that I wanted to ask related to the research method I used. Of course, this was something I had been taught, but it turned that I also needed to learn them for myself.

plugging in recognizes data as something that is mutually constituted through theory.

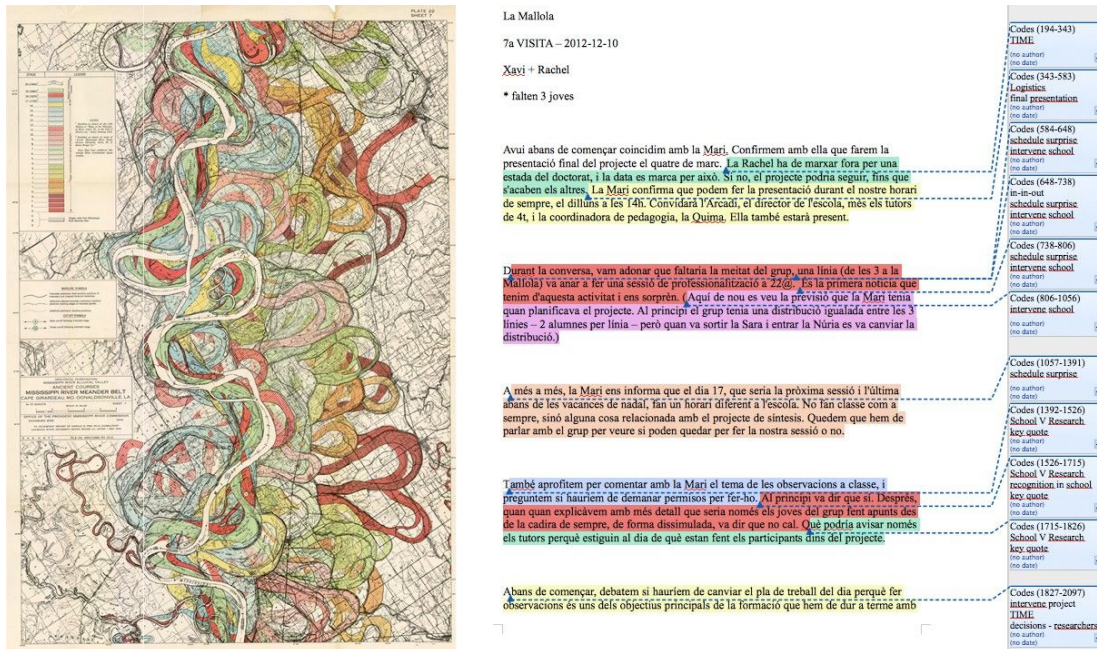


Figure 4. Coding journey: A visual metaphor of the flow of coding: a non-linear path from points A to B. Left: An illustrated plate of the flow pattern of the Mississippi river (Fisk, 1944). Right: A screenshot of a transcript that I coded in the online QDA platform Dedoose.

To overexposure and back

When I began to use coding more productively, in support of the ongoing reading/writing interaction I had with the data, I also began to feel confident enough to leave it behind. It had, after all, been an exercise born out of insecurity and doubt. I began to see thick description and coding as strategies for making the fieldwork more knowable, and therefore easier to digest. Unconvinced with the results each strategy yielded, I began to ask a slightly different question, reframing the project so as to ask not *what* the data was saying, but *how* it informed my research. In turn, I began to question not *what* type of learning was taking place (i.e., remitting to pedagogical models such as CoPs or group learning) and began to focus on *how* learning emerged and became visible, within the research process. Reframing the fieldwork as a negative space was a starting point that recognized that the blank spaces, the lapses, and all that could be considered “missing” from the data, were actually elements that could contribute to a discussion on the unsettled understanding of learning in its own right. Having attempt coding, and come out the other side, I pondered whether certain analytic strategies succeeded in overexposing the data, thereby erasing the details in it that I had come to value most.

Maggie MacLure (2013) has written on how to do qualitative research that focuses on the type of data that coding overexposes. She does not position herself against coding, but does acknowledge its limits as a method. On one hand, she recognizes—in a description

that seems to capture my own experience—the allure of coding as a way of achieving a close reading or engagement with the data:

I argue that there is a languorous pleasure and something resolute in the slow intensity of coding – an ethical refusal to take the easy exit to quick judgement, free-floating empathy, or illusions of data speaking for itself. More importantly, when practised unfaithfully, without rigid purpose or fixed terminus, the slow work of coding allows something other, singular, quick and ineffable to irrupt into the space of analysis. Call it wonder. (p. 164)

On the other hand, she critiques how coding can distance the researcher from the data and, due to its hierarchal structure, has observed that it risks subsuming difference into schemas of representation: “coding assumes, and imposes, an ‘arborescent’ or tree-like logic of hierarchical, fixed relations among discrete entities” (MacLure, 2013, p. 168). As illustrated in Figure 4, there is a point during coding when the interaction with the data feels generative, not restrictive—what MacLure calls the “flow of coding” (MacLure, 2013, p. 175). However,

[t]he question of what one brings ‘out’ of the process will depend on how far one is committed to the overarching project of including all the data within an abstracting structure of categories and levels; in other words, how far one is willing to ignore the stuff that does not fit. (MacLure, 2013, p. 175)

In my own approach, the manual labor of coding became a way of developing an entangled relationship with fieldwork after the fact. Particularly using Dedoose, the coding was capable of interrupting the chronology of events by reordering/regrouping scenes, and it provided a space of encounter where I broke ranks with the thick description I was writing. This, in turn, allowed me to pay attention differently to the data. What coding did not do was provide an easy answer with the vexing problem of what the data *mean*.

The struggle to apply coding as an analytic tool (and not as a mediated encounter with the data) is where the process begins to break down. The difficulty I had with coding closely relates to a problem observed by Jackson and Mazzei (2012) who point out that in one of their joint investigations, “the macro was at some levels predictable, and certainly did not produce new knowledge” (p. 11). They argue that processing data through coding so that it corresponds to larger truth claims can make one's work generic; in a similar fashion, I found that certain frameworks of interpretation led my research to state the obvious.²⁴ It is not surprising or innovating, for example, to report that adolescents find

24 My failed frameworks include communities of practice, and even “mapping places of learning,” neither of which turned out to be productive ways for engaging the fieldwork and were abandoned. It is worth noting that I did not leave them behind in exchange for a “truer” interpretive framework, rather I stopped asking what the fieldwork had to say about certain established theories about learning, and began to see what happened when the fieldwork was prodded with questions—in this

school restrictive, that they engage in extracurricular activities like sports or music, and that they invest time in leisure activities spent with friends, family, or on social networks. Stating as much would be an unsatisfying conclusion and contribute little to how we understand the range of activity implied by the phrase *learning in and outside school*. MacLure (2013) would argue that this approach sidesteps the “fascination or exhilaration” (p. 169) experienced carrying out the research.

In place of the cerebral comforts of ideas and concepts, or as well as these, we could acknowledge those uncomfortable affects that swarm among our supposedly rational arguments – moments of nausea, complacency, disgust, embarrassment, guilt, fear and fascination, that threaten to undo our certainty and our self-certainty... These gut feelings point to the existence of embodied connections with other people, things and thoughts, that are far more complex than the static connections of coding. (MacLure, 2013, p. 172)

Specifically, MacLure worries that coding can lose sight of the singularity, texture, and affective complexities of qualitative data and suggests that qualitative researchers spend more time considering data *hot-spots*, those affective relations to data that *disconcert* our processes of making sense.

[P]henomena are unsettling – both in the field, where they often make us feel uncomfortable, and at the point of analysis and coding, if we can’t find rational ways of accounting for them, other than counting them out as superficial or as accidents. It might be more useful, though, to treat these problematic phenomena as hot-spots – moments of productive *disconcertion*, to use Michael Taussig’s (1993) term, that undermine the analyst’s imperial self-assurance. (MacLure, 2013, p. 172)

MacLure advocates for a relationship to data that is not limited to what it says in the transcript. Data is more than words on a page, something that is perhaps easy to lose sight of while coding. In this project, it was a commitment to the disconcerting moments, the *negative space*, that brought the project out of the generic macro and allowed me to actually learn something from it.

I mentioned that while transcribing, I encountered scenes that surprised me. However, there were many scenes that were familiar—those scenes that I revisited time and again in my field notes, or merely in my thoughts, and which I had come to consider *significant moments*. Of interest is that these were the moments that coding seemed to fail, by not being able to capture or represent their full impact. What seemed particularly hard to grasp though codes and categories was the relationship between different significant moments or the relationship between a moment and the project as a whole. Certain scenes

case in relation to nomadology and becoming (i.e., mobilities).

seemed to gain strength and have a ripple effect, while others came and went like a flash; such speed and intensity is lost in methods that insist on staying grounded.

MacLure (2013) suggests that to hold on to those difficult moments, we should not rush for solid meaning and a definitive interpretation of data, arguing in favor of an affective approach that can help slow us down and sit with the “incipience, suspense or intensity” (pp. 169) that the data ignite. In this process, she hones in on the moments that create a sense of “wonder,” borrowing Stephen Greenblatt's (1992) use of the term. Of course, in Greenblatt's essay he uses two concepts: resonance and wonder.

By *resonance* I mean the power of the object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke... the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged ... By *wonder* I mean the power of the object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention. (Greenblatt, 1992, p. 42)

Greenblatt establishes a debate between a modern aesthetic contemplation of art and a perspective that appreciates the cultural value of an object. MacLure uses wonder, an aesthetic experience, to suggest a form of contemplation that interrupts the interpretive process of *making* sense, privileging instead the affective response data may provoke.

While I appreciate MacLure's description of the nuances involved in the coding process, I am hesitant to give up searching for resonance in my data, skeptical that wonder is just another way of distancing oneself from the object under contemplation. Instead I think it is productive to maintain, as Greenblatt does, the play between the two terms. There are a lot of moments in the fieldwork that evoke wonder, those moments that *stop me in my tracks*. However, to move the project forward it is productive to ask how that data resonates—how they *reach out beyond their formal boundaries*. In the later case, “the data [are] not centered or stabilized, but used as brief stopping points and continually transformed” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 6), such that there is no definitive answer but a reworking of data through the process of reading theory while reading the fieldwork. An example of this play between wonder and resonance within the dissertation is the treatment of the final presentation the youth participants developed and presented at their school. The moment of the presentation in front of the teachers is a deeply disconcerting moment, bringing the flow of the project to a sudden halt. However, further analysis allows this moment to resonate, backward and forward, informing how I come to understand the project as a whole.

This journey into and out of coding describes an experimentation with methods, but it also describes my own changing relationship to “data,” the fieldwork, and the research process. What I reject in coding is the implication that data are ever fixed or complete

(which is implied once you begin coding), as well as the linear progression this method introduces. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) underline this shift, by observing that:

The move away from the macro of coding... happens when we seek to move away from patterns for the purpose of changing our relationship to theory and data. To plug data and theory into one another in the threshold is to position ourselves as researchers otherwise than merely always-already subject ready to capture and code the experiences of our participants and their material conditions as always-already object. (p. 12)

Rather than assuming the position of always-already, this project inhabits the process of becoming (-researcher, -learner, -inquirer). By approaching the learning event through a nomadic lens, the dissertation experiments with going somewhere: following a desire path that connects intensities while mapping the site/sight/cite of learning.

Attempting "analysis"

Although Xavi feels like we're skipping ahead, I persuade him that we need to start talking with the group about analyzing our results. There are only so many sessions left in the project, after all. Xavi makes a strong point, arguing that we have barely collected any evidence. However, I suspect that can be remedied if we use the analysis as a way to focus the project, by trying to define what we want to say at the end of all of this. We come up with a strategy that involves asking the young people to identify overarching themes that will make up the "Results" section of the Prezi. Our hope is that the young people can come up with at least one of the themes.

During the session, the young people also seem aware that the project is a bit stuck, so I take the opportunity to introduce what Xavi and I had talked about earlier, suggesting that we could identify a couple of themes that reflect the work we have done so far and focus on them. Xavi provides an example, saying that we have talked quite a bit about technology, and how it is used both in and outside school. The group agrees that this is a relevant topic. I then ask if there is another topic we could focus on, but instead of offering suggestions, the group deviates as the young people bring to question point of the exercise. Echoing Xavi's comments in our earlier conversation, they intuit that we're skipping ahead, attempting to analyze something that feels like it's still in progress. Eventually, however, Roser comments that we have talked a lot about "effort," and the others express their agreement, nominating "effort" as the second theme we should explore in detail.

I propose that we split into two groups to work on each topic separately, using our notes and contributions from earlier sessions to discuss how to present and summarize each of the two topics in the Prezi. The group is doubtful, they're not sure where we're headed or how we are going to get there. The discussion becomes about how on earth we are going to talk about "effort," or about "technology," even though we all just

agreed that these are key topics that we've spent time on over the course of the project. There is nothing intuitive about this process for the young people and I have to ask them to trust the suggestion, ensuring them that we'll come up with a solution if we just give it a try.

It's far from a perfect arrangement and no one at the table feels convinced. The young people don't have a reference point for what we are trying to accomplish, they feel lost. It is not articulated, but I assume their doubts are similar to Xavi's, expressed privately, regarding the fact that that we don't have "enough evidence" to proceed to an analysis. I look at the situation differently; it is not an analysis, per se, but a way to focus on what we want to say. I hope that by deciding what we want to include in the Prezi, the group will be inspired to "fill in the blanks," and some of the documentation we have been clamoring for since October will begin to materialize.²⁵

Roser strikes a chord however, when she gives voice to her frustrations, "I can't believe that after all this work, now we're only going to look at two things." For her, these two themes are a reduction of what has taken place, not an accumulation that goes beyond the sum of its parts.

3.3. The "field of representation"

On interpretation

Having interrupted the field of reality with an uncomfortable notion of data, this section attempts to piece together a more coherent methodological and epistemological approach to trace the path drawn from fieldwork to dissertation. This research project began within the paradigm of interpretive ethnography after the literary turn (Denzin, 1997; Clifford & Marcus, 1986), hewing closely to an understanding ethnography as a way of producing the "true fictions" that Clifford (1986) describes, heeding his assertion regarding the double meaning of partiality, where "ethnographic truths are thus inherently *partial*—committed and incomplete" (p. 7). In acknowledgment of the partial nature of the text, while carrying out of the fieldwork I was attune to the fact that:

[a] theory of writing is also a theory of interpretive (ethnographic) work. Theory, writing, and ethnography are inseparable material practices. Together they create the conditions that locate the social inside the text. (Denzin, 1997, p. xii)

Thus, from the outset I was informed by the body of work that grew out of the literary turn, what George Marcus (1994, p. 389) has called "messy texts" and which Denzin

25 Essentially, this is what happens. Once we open the Prezi, the young people add some pictures, a YouTube video, and summaries of the project sessions. All of this material had been requested, negotiated, discussed, what have you, beforehand. However, the presentation format sufficiently contextualized the need for this material, less so than the ambiguous phase we called "generating evidence" which by itself produced almost no tangible results.

(1997) situates in the (present) “sixth moment of ethnography,” which is constituted by those texts that are “many sited, open ended, they refuse theoretical closure, and they do not indulge in abstract, analytic theorizing” (p. xvii). Yet when it came time to build my own a messy text, and convert the fieldwork into the form of a dissertation, I became hesitant about the nature and role of this text. Motivated by a desire to engender a “language of possibility” (Slattery, 2003, p. 653) rather than a language of certitude, I began to question to act of interpretation, or in other words, what takes place behind the scenes which leads to the production of the text.

Given the preoccupation with text and meaning, and the unsettled character of each, I was drawn to the cyclical interpretive approach of Paul Ricoeur (1981), who establishes reading/ interpreting as an act that:

opens out onto other things. To read is... to conjoin a new discourse to the discourse of the text. This conjunction of discourses reveals, in the very constitution of the text, an original capacity for renewal which is its open character. Interpretation is the concrete outcome of conjunction and renewal. (p. 158.)

Ricoeur's “reflexive hermeneutics” (Slattery, 2003, p. 659) sets the concept of text in motion, recognizing it not as an object but a discursive practice. By positing the encounter with text as an “art of deciphering” (Ricoeur, 1973. Cited in Lewandowski, 2001, p. 8), a dialogic relationship is established. While this framework productively unsettles an objective understanding of the events of the fieldwork, the emphasis on the dialogic relationship is problematic because it is built on a seemingly always already established nature of, on the one hand, the text/object and, on the other, the reader/subject. Furthermore, I remain skeptical that the work of this dissertation performs what could be considered a hermeneutic interpretation, to the extent that the themes I address do not originate in the fieldwork, *per se*.

In comparing interpretation with explanation, Ricoeur (1981) stipulates:

[t]o explain is to bring out the structure, that is, internal relations of dependence which constitute the statistics of the text; to interpret is to follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to place oneself en route towards the orient of the text. (p. 162)

Initially, I felt that working through of the fieldwork was akin to *following the path of thought* that stemmed from the experience with the group project. However I have come to recognize that there are as many paths of thought *into* the text as those that come out it. My aim in turning to Ricoeur and a dialogic understanding of text was motivated by an interest in locating strategies that would bring forth what had taken place in the fieldwork

in a way that did not limit or fix the understanding of these experiences. This decision was an attempt at better representing my object of study: the open-ended and nomadic learning experience that unfolded. What *glowed* for me in Ricoeur's work was the back-and-forth work of interpretation, which was appealing as a way to discuss how the fieldwork could inform my research, without asserting a dominant interpretation of the events. However, the hermeneutic goal of asserting the meaning of a text, and arriving at an understanding that originates in the fieldwork itself, is not a path I was able to follow for long.

Patrick Slattery (2003) attempts to update the hermeneutic project and also distance it from a traditional understanding of interpretation. He proposes an aesthetic, subjective contemplation of educational settings, where there is not a *singular* meaning to be found, but one that is constructed within a community of interpreters. Concepts such as *wide-awakeness* (Greene, 1978) or *educational connoisseurship* (Eisner, 1976) are helpful for imagining this contemplative approach grounded in the creative, multiple and intersubjective space of the aesthetic experience, where in an educational context “transformation and learning are stimulated by a sense of connectedness, solidarity, becoming, and future possibilities of what might be” (Slattery, Krasny, O'Malley, 2007, p. 556). From my background in art education I wonder if contemplation, perhaps more so than interpretation, could be a useful orientation to take up in the research. It certainly seems more relevant a term for thinking about the type of “research project” undertaken by two researchers and six youth²⁶, where our discussion of learning that took place in the spaces in-between and around our discussion of methodology, and became a space for contemplating different instances of learning in our lives.

Messy texts and transgressive data

The struggle with interpretation here is an issue that raises questions about the type of ethnographic text that appears in this dissertation. After writing a detailed account of the fieldwork for the national project (the 'thick description' mentioned previously) I rejected that approach in favor of ethnographic vignettes. Vignettes, a literary form, are evocative texts that serve as a “vivid portrayal of the conduct of an event of everyday life” (Erickson, 1986, p. 149; Cited in Humphreys, 2005, p. 842). Modeling what Saldaña (2003) might call “ethnodrama[s]” (p. 221), these short texts eschew the chronological progression of the fieldwork and the obligation to provide a holistic rendering of the events. Instead, these “performance vignettes” (Denzin, 1989, p. 124) aim to capture and share those *significant*

26 In fact, at one meeting with the research team at the university, I recall arguing that our group was not carrying out an ethnography, but was engaged in a discussion group about learning practices, in other words, contemplating learning, not researching it.

moments from the fieldwork that resonate with the questions on hand.

As described in the description on method, transcriptions, field notes, and a thematic organization of the data constitute the foundation for the vignettes, some of which were written using dramaturgical coding to develop the narrative, whereas others follow the transcription fairly closely.²⁷ The vignettes are then introduced into the dissertation using a representational strategy that maintains their difference: using a different font, dedicated headers, and a visual separation (* * *). Separating the vignettes from the dissertation narrative calls our attention to the different methodological approaches that are at work: on one hand, the interpretive vignettes, and on the other hand, the subsequent plugging in of these texts within the conceptual frame of the dissertation. The intention is to maintain a productive tension between each way of speaking the fieldwork. For example, while most of the vignettes introduce scenarios that the dissertation proceeds to comment on, inevitably the information expressed in each vignette supersedes these parameters; each vignette always contains more information than the dissertation acknowledges.

Engaging with *partial*, messy texts is a critical approach to the role of text and, by extension, the notion and use of data itself. St. Pierre's (2002) questions why a qualitative research *experience* is treated as *data*; her objection is that it is not through "data" that we come to know (or experience) a research event. In her own research, which gathered emotional data, dream data and sensual data (St. Pierre, 1997a), she confronts how "transgressive data" escape language and become "uncodable, excessive, out-of-control, out-of-category... [where] the commonplace meaning of the category, data, no longer held" (St. Pierre, 2002, p. 404). While the vignettes used here maintain a stubborn relationship with text, it is my intent that they also act transgressively, or as I reframe this concept, nomadically. The vignettes are partial, devoid of explanations, and at times are "more about difference than sameness" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 4). It is within this framework that I introduce vignettes, as a way to work with the fieldwork as *text* while avoiding defaulting to an *explanation* of the events. Instead, the vignettes introduce and irrupt into difference.

Working within the ethnographic paradigm, when I left the field and began to piece together the dissertation, I wondered: Can the eventful space of learning be captured if we think of the text as an event? This challenge led me to abandon the project of working towards understanding through interpretation, and instead I turned to the process of *thinking with theory* (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) in an effort to allow the data transgressions to take the research in different, unexpected directions.

27 It is worth noting that the fieldwork was carried out in Catalan and Spanish and therefore all quotations have been translated into English.

Plugging in: a nomadic science

Plugging in is a methodological approach that, simply put, entails thinking with theory. How does this add up to a methodology? First, a theory must be specified. The authors observe:

instead of theoretical frameworks (critical theory, poststructuralism), we needed rather to focus more specifically on theorists; and not just on theorists, but *a* specific concept from the theorists who made up part of the assemblage (deconstruction, marginality, power/knowledge). (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 5)

Second, this theory is then used to form questions that lead into and out of data. Here theory/data are conceptualized in the *threshold*, a relational space. Like Ellsworth's (2005) use of *hinge* explored in chapter 2, for Jackson and Mazzei the threshold is a conjunctive site connecting adjoining spaces—a site of entrances and exits. The threshold is the location and the activity of plugging in, it is what I have termed the research assemblage.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) argue that plugging in is both “within and against interpretation” (p. vii), which is one of the main reasons it was chosen as the methodological framework. In this dissertation I do not reject interpretation; however, I recognize its limits, questioning its underlying assumption that the object and subject of the research are separate entities. By plugging in, the issue is not about whether the work is truly inductive (data-driven) or deductive (hypothesis-driven). Instead, the focus lies on what questions “emerge in the middle” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 5) of a research assemblage when data, theory, relationships and my own wandering interests as a researcher are brought together. With this in mind, this sections looks at how I plug nomadology in, asking: *how does nomadology work in this research assemblage?* More specifically, *what does it allow me to ask?*

In chapters 4 and 5 I elaborate on the outputs of this line of questioning. While the chapters are in conversation with each other, they are not sequential. Chapter 4 focuses on the group project as an eventful space of learning (the assemblage of becoming-inquirer), while chapter 5 focuses on how the young people described their learning practices, taking up the question of learning in and outside school (the assemblage of becoming-learner). I think of these analyses as being experimental in that the process is exploratory, rather than decisive (or even conclusive).²⁸ The following paragraphs summarize the thought experiments developed in each chapter, in an effort to make the process of plugging in more

28 Deleuze (1990/1995) tells us, “Experiment, never interpret” (Deleuze & Parnet, 1997/2007, p. 48). This is an attempt at eliminating preconceptions. Experimentation is about studying an assemblage with its relations, flows, and connections amongst heterogeneous elements, emphasizing data *analysis* as a creative process.

transparent.

Chapter 4: Learner-traveler as nomad? A project investigating learning in and outside school is not place-based but learner-centered, positioning the learner as someone who engages different learning contexts while developing her/his personal learning trajectory. The imaginary of a learning landscape is therefore embedded in the foundation of the national project and it is this conceptualization of travel in and outside the curricular space that initially inspired the introduction of the concept of nomadology (See: Fendler, 2013). The line of questioning uses the figuration of the nomad to ask how 'learning landscapes' are produced and to what extent "learning in and outside school" can be considered a spatial practice (that works on the conceptual as well as physical plane)?

During and after the fieldwork, nomadology remained central in the project because it continued to introduce provocative questions, questions that made the data *glow*. Some moments in the project produced tensions between the university researchers and the youth participants, or between the youth and the school. Thinking through the modes of resistance and tensions from a nomadic perspective led me to ask: How do young people create alternative spaces of learning; or, how do they deterritorialize curricular space? What spatial practices do they adopt when developing their identities as learners? Can we locate learning as a mode of becoming in a smooth space? Finally, how does the theoretical framework allow the research to document and explore minoritarian practices (e.g., subversion, tactics, practices of silence, and so on) as part of a process designed to locating learning within the event (thereby framing the learning subject in the future-perfect tense, as *not yet*)? Plugging in leads to a research assemblage that explores how the dynamics of the group research project inform on youth engagement, which is depicted not as agency but as lines of flight.²⁹

Chapter 5: What spatial imaginaries does a nomadic understanding of learning introduce, and how do they inform our understanding of the process "learning in and outside school"? While in chapter 2 I clarified that nomadology is not always about movement *per se*, mobility is an integral characteristic of the nomad; it implies an unsettled, uprooted shiftiness that operates across on conceptual, theoretical, methodological and physical levels. If the research acknowledges that learning always exceeds the boundaries of formal education (which is implicit in the national project's phrasing of *learning in and outside school*), we may ask: how does learning become mobile? How does learning as a spatial

29 Nomadology is an approach that considers students' actions differently than the more humanistic concept of agency. Agency draws our attention to how students' capacity to act is regulated by external forces—as illustrated by the phrase "giving voice". Nomadology takes a different approach, to consider how students' actions, which they are always already engaged in, affect the context in which they are embedded or introduced. This difference is captured by the shift in perspective from student *voice* to learning *practices*.

practice allow us to think about learning differently? Chapter 5 focuses on how mobilities interrupt our thinking about learning as a form of linear progress, by pondering such trajectories as flow, scale-jumping or unfolding, complex mobilities that are as much about the journey as they are about the arrival.

In asking: how does mobile learning work?, the dissertation draws on examples from the group project and goes beyond an uneasy binary between the smooth space of the learner and the striated space of the school. The remapping of youth perspectives on learning onto a mobilities paradigm should be understood itself as a nomadic step, a deviation from the norm. In other words this chapter doesn't ask *what* did we learn, nor does it characterize *sites* of learning. Instead it uses a mobilities paradigm to contemplate *how* learning emerges, and what effect these practices have on our understanding of the in/out. Ultimately this is an attempt to interrogate learning without positing it as a result; in doing so it remains outside the realm of assessment.

As should be clear at this point in the chapter, the process of reading-data-with-theory was not a straight line from start to finish. While throughout the duration of the project nomadism acted an orientation, once plugged in it opened up different ways for thinking about how learning emerges in practice, in theory, and in representation. Nomadology therefore is a movement through the research that works across both horizontal and vertical axes, affecting how the project advances (the questions that are posed along the way) as well as interacting with the different layers implicit within the project (the field-work, the analysis, and the writing of the dissertation).

Questioning rhizomatic validity

At this point I hope that the use of nomadology and its relation to the spatial practice of learning in and outside school has been justified. However, I feel compelled to briefly address another Deleuze-guattarian term, the rhizome, which has been gaining ground as a methodological approach: *rhizoanalysis*. The term rhizome is closely related to nomadic thought and both are frequently referenced in *A thousand plateaus*; one could say that the strain of nomadic thought running throughout the dissertation produces a rhizome. That is, a map which:

does not reproduce...; it constructs. ... It fosters connections. ... The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. ... A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back "to the same." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 12).

While the rhizome can be a productive concept for thinking about the *form* of a nomadic inquiry, I wouldn't go so far as to align this dissertation with its methodological equivalent.

Authors working with rhizoanalysis (Waterhouse, 2011; Masny & Waterhouse, 2011; Leander and Rowe, 2006; Hagood, 2004; Alvermann, 2000) draw on a poststructural paradigm informed by Deleuze and Guattari, and therefore this body of work shares conceptual and methodological similarities with what I attempt by plugging in nomadology. Monica Waterhouse (2011), for example, claims that the (non)method of rhizoanalysis is about “not what data are (interpretation), but rather how they might become (rhizoanalysis)” (p. 133), an observation that resonates with the notion of a research assemblage (or, the process of thinking data with theory, in the threshold). These authors' contributions have also been influential in the way they manage to establish connections with the data that remain external to it, which is to say this approach is not based on implicit meaning but on the process of establishing relations.

In spite of the affinities this approach shares with the one I have laid out here, there are discrepancies. First of all, I argue that the focus on the exteriority of relations as represented by the rhizome, and carried into rhizoanalysis, tends to stick too much to the surface. Donna Alvermann (2000) explains her method thusly: “I work at the surface of five texts to ask what each does to the other” (p. 119). This flattening seems to belie the fact that any method adds both breadth and depth. More problematic for the current project, however, is how strongly rhizoanalysis comes out against interpretation. This is not surprising given the anti-interpretive stance that appears in Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's work—Deleuze (1990/1995) even claims that we must “never interpret: experience, experiment” (p. 87). However, as Diana Masny (2014) notes, a non-interpretive stance changes the meaning and role of the ethnographic text:

while ethnography operates with literary genre such as vignette, rhizoanalysis works with vignettes... in a conceptually different way. In the current setting, vignettes are part of a research assemblage. They constitute raw tellings in an assemblage. (p. 352)

Rhizoanalysis is interested in percept and affect, a bloc of sensation that flows through connecting relations in an assemblage (Masny, 2014). In this way, there is no appeal to interpretation, simply raw tellings. (p. 357)

While Masny's description sounds similar to my own practice of weaving together vignettes, unlike my own (albeit uneasy) accommodation, Masny rejects their connection to a literary genre in favor of understanding the vignette as a sort of provocation, or as a source of affect. I disagree with her argument that a rhizomatic approach allows us to understand vignettes as a “raw telling,” as if the texts speak for themselves. In my own consideration of how I produce vignettes, I acknowledge the interpretive stance from which they are born; the later activation of the vignettes in the dissertation as part of plugging in does not erase the conditions under which they were written. As Kathy Ferguson

(1993) has argued, interpretation should be not discarded just because poststructural frameworks are introduced. Ferguson understands how these methodologies contribute differently; when reviewing the introduction of genealogy into the qualitative paradigm, she notes that "interpretation produces the stories we tell about ourselves, and genealogy insists on interrogating those stories, on producing stories about the stories" (p. 35). These two positions, Ferguson argues, can be held together ironically, "an ironic stance allows us to hold together needed incompatibility, both to stay honest and **keep moving** at the same time" (Ferguson, 1993, p. 35. Emphasis added). I ascribe to this position—and hopefully this comes across through the use of vignettes in this chapter. Here, irony is a playful space of tension, allowing the research to maintain a stance that is both within and against interpretivism.

Although I quibble with the degree to which we can distance ourselves from data, I do find that rhizoanalysis and my own nomadic approach share more than they differ. After all, the rhizome is produced by nomadic movement; in other words, this may be a case of discussing two sides of the same coin. In particular I find a strong affinity with authors attempting to develop a way of working that allows their research to remain generative rather than conclusive. In this quest, Alvermann's (2000) own experience has been influential. She uses rhizoanalysis in order to see her research differently, and in doing so, discovers that:

the adolescents in the Read and Talk Club study had been engaging in a rhizomatous literacy practice of their own making all along; it simply took the rhizoanalysis to draw attention to this fact. (p. 125)

Her work anticipates my experience, where I found that the more I engaged with nomadic theory, the better equipped the dissertation became in detecting and responding to the significant moments, those nomadic gestures the young people were *making all along*.

Rhizoanalysis also invites a brief discussion on the notion of validity. Patti Lather (1993) locates in the rhizome a way of thinking about validity in qualitative research after the crisis of representation, citing how this approach is based on a generative and creative process rather than a deconstructive reading of data:

Rather than a linear progress, rhizomatics is a journey among intersections, nodes, and regionalizations through a multi-centered complexity. As a metaphor, rhizomes work against the constraints of authority, regularity, and commonsense, and open thought up to creative constructions. (p. 680)

In spite of its adherence to superficiality, rhizoanalysis does not forsake a rigorous research practice and offers a way to think about educational research in terms of ethics and creativity. Research advocating a rhizomatic validity is deeply political and disruptive. It

undermines authority by foregrounding the complexities of problems, multiple entry points, different perspectives, and polyvocality. Arriving at a place where research is not judged in relation to an external set of criteria, it should be assessed immanently according to its creative, affective powers.

It is this discussion on validity that brings us back to the question: how does this methodological framework *work*? What does research produce? What lines of flight does it introduce? What does it make possible to think? Nomad science as developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) does not follow an aborescent schema of knowledge, but performs a rhizomatic (re)mapping of a given assemblage, meanwhile establishing connections that emerge not *a priori* but in the doing (in the middle of things). This rhizome traces the data hot spots, those intensities that emerge in the engagement of the data/researcher threshold. It is not a method, *per se*, but a way to understand what the research produces. It is a map of those desire paths mentioned at the outset, a reordering of the learning as data produced by the wanderings of a learner-traveler.

Research intensities

1. Time

Adrià, "We're going really slow, right? I mean, we're pretty far behind."

Rachel, "Really? You've just noticed?"

Xavi and I can only laugh, in spite of the nervous look on Adrià's face. Here he is, expressing a worry that has plagued Xavi and I for weeks at this point. The question of how much time we have left has been consuming our discussions about the fieldwork as we strategically consulted our calendars and counted the days until the school presentation. Apparently, in spite of our efforts to transmit this urgency to the young people, just as in all other aspects of the project, they internalize the information on their own time, and process it as they see fit. Today seems to be the day the final presentation becomes a reality for them, or for Adrià at least. I silently take note of the different experiences we are all living in this supposedly "collaborative" project.

2. Politics

Adrià is reading his in-class observation out loud. He's improvising quite a bit because he doesn't have a long-form text, just some notes from a class he was in this morning. He and Jordi were going to work together on the observation, and it looks like they both have notes in their hand, but only Adrià is speaking.

"Most of the people answer correctly, and if someone makes a mistake, the teacher corrects him and explains why."

At this point, seemingly out of nowhere, Pere interrupts. "And the teacher is a feminist, you should add that it." He says it like an insult, and stares at Laura.

Laura shoots back, "She is not!" And for the first time in the group project, we witness real conflict between the group members. Pere is flushed, angry, and Laura is glaring at him. They normally get along well and Xavi and I are completely in the dark, we have no idea where the vitriol comes from.

We interject, asking what is going on. Roser explains that a group of girls wanted to organize a dance for the school assembly that will take place just before winter break. They asked their English teacher if they could use class time to rehearse, making the request approximately 6 weeks before the event, therefore planning ahead. Their request was granted and two weeks before the event, this group of girls missed a couple of classes to rehearse. At this point, some of the boys complained and demanded that they also be allowed to also rehearse their own dance, and their request was denied.

Roser's very careful explanation seems to annoy Pere even further, and he exclaims, "We have to go to class... and they're just, making up excuses!"

Laura seems to enjoy this reaction and taunts him, "We got out of class because we're more responsible. It's a lot of work putting our choreography together." To which Pere makes a disgusted noise and accuses them of copying everything from YouTube. Laura protests, offended.

Adrià then continues with his observation, commenting about a classmate who was sleeping at his desk, and the conversation quickly redirects as everyone clamors to find out who it was.

The moment provided a rare glimpse of conflict, an insight into the emotional aspect of schooling that rarely made its way into our discussions. Of particular interest, was how the conversation shed light on the spatial hierarchies in the school, how they are regulated, negotiated and, even, how they are experienced differently depending on the student. We later encouraged Laura to use the production of the dance as the site of her out-of-class observation, to explain it further, but this never materializes.

3.4. The "field of subjectivity"

Situated in and informed by nomadic thought, this dissertation questions pre-conceived notions of data, the interpretive process and, to the same extent, the role of the researcher. Bringing all three into contact in the research assemblage, this section reviews the practices of "working the ruins" and "nomadic inquiry," two methods that reference the work of Lather (2000) and St. Pierre (1997b, 2000), respectively. Their work is highlighted here in recognition of the influence it has had in thinking through the introduction of nomadology into this ethnographic project.

Interludes

The edited volume *Working the ruins: Feminist poststructural theory and methods in education* (St. Pierre & Pillows, 2000) initially caught my attention for the title alone.

Referencing ruins was suggestive, perhaps recalling the series of missteps revealed in this chapter but also the turning point in this project, the confrontation of the so-called *negative space*. Working the ruins is a practice that questions how methodology interacts with the world; in the introduction to the volume, St. Pierre and Wanda Pillow (2000) assert that aim is to address the challenge of how to “produce knowledge differently” (p. 1). Thus, the term ruin is not a negation, it is a potentiality, inviting in research “practices of the future” (p. 14). Lather (2001) insists that, “the concept of ruins is not about an epistemological skepticism taken to defeatist extremes, but rather a working of repetition and the place of difference as the only ground we have in moving toward new practices” (p. 478). The premise of working the ruins is to situate “different structures of intelligibility” (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p. 2) and this is precisely what is at stake when reframing the current project through the lens of nomadology.

Working the ruins addresses a “crisis of representation” in the social sciences where the humanist tradition, based on a unified, rational subject, is displaced. Instead the subject, as well as empirical data, are brought forth within the research assemblage; this implies, as Deborah Britzman (2000) reminds us, that “writing ethnography as a practice of narration is not about capturing the real already out there. It is about constructing particular versions of truth” (p. 30). She extends her understanding of ethnographic work beyond the *partial truths* advanced by Clifford (1986); the issue now is not only an epistemological one regarding the capability of text to capture the world, but also an ontological one, questioning the *real already out there*.

Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) discuss two sciences:

one consists in 'reproducing,' the other in 'following.' ... Reproducing implies the permanence of a fixed point of *view* that is external to what is reproduced: watching the flow from the bank. But following is something different... Not better, just different. One is obliged to follow when one is in search of the 'singularities' of a matter... and not out to discover a form. (p. 410)

By engaging in nomad science, I become the poststructural notion of the decentered subject, following paths of thought both into and out of the data.³⁰ As per the title of this project is not a reproduction of a real already out there, but a documentation (a navigation through) what this research project brings forth. Nomad science involves “all kinds of deformations, transmutations, passages to the limit, operations in which each figure desig-

30 Here I am guided by Patti Lather's definition (among the many existing) of poststructuralism: “Poststructuralism refers... to a sense of the limits of Enlightenment rationality. It particularly foregrounds the limits of consciousness and intentionality and the will to power inscribed in sense-making efforts that aspire to totalizing explanatory frameworks, especially structuralism with its ahistoricism and universalism.” (Lather, 2007, p. 5)

nates an 'event' much more than an essence” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 362). In other words, nomad science is a framework where the research participants (myself included) are articulated in an assemblage, they are not represented as their/our *essential* selves but become figurations that emerge in the *event*. Developing this epistemological and ontological perspective that supports the methodology has given me permission, so to speak, to follow after the singularities of the fieldwork, and pursue those small moments that glowed, rather than getting lost in the macro of it all.

In recognition of the deep level of engagement with methodological questions that this dissertation has supposed, I have included a series of interludes between the chapters that ask questions about the project of meaning making. These texts are an homage to Lather's textual disruptions that appear in *Troubling the Angels* (Lather & Smithies, 1997), a book edited by Lather and Chris Smithies. The book's main content is a collection of first-person narratives by women living with HIV or AIDS. In between the narratives, however, Lather made the controversial decision to include a series of textual “interludes” which ponder the appearance of angels in different historical texts, artworks, and so on. This decision is explained when Lather (2000) reflects back on the text:

To think topographically rather than ontologically, the angel is a place of use ... Evoking between-spaces, the angel works as a displacement device... This is a fold versus a depth model, a fold designed to disrupt the condition responses of the modernist reader. (p. 300)

In *Troubling the Angels* the interludes interrupt the voyeuristic tendencies evoked when reading first-person narratives and allow Lather to connect the painful, personal stories to a wider global narrative. In this dissertation the interludes are methodological in focus, providing a behind-the-scenes description of the research project. Earlier I cited St. Pierre who reminded us that research isn't experienced as data (See: St. Pierre, 2002); the interludes are space for exploring this complex experience of doing research, in a way that troubles the foundations of the research design. The interludes are introduced as five gestures: framing, wandering, sifting, layering and spiraling, which together symbolize the progression of a research project.³¹ At a conceptual level, the gestures attempt to serve as the connective tissue between the chapters, introducing ideas that carry over from one to the next, while exploring what doesn't quite fit into either, or that which seems to exceed the limits of each chapter.

The gestures may be summarized accordingly:

31 In other words, these gestures mimic the classic research approach of: developing a research question (or hypothesis); gathering evidence (performing fieldwork); analyzing the data; generating results; and finally, dissemination.

- *Framing.* Rather than adhere to the original research questions, (re)framing as the first methodological gesture recognizes that the fieldwork *deterritorializes* the dissertation. This shift occurs when I reject the question: *How does my fieldwork respond to my research questions?*, in favor of: *What does the fieldwork allow me to ask?* The so-called negative space that is confronted through this gesture is the starting point of an inquiry-yet-to-come, a point of departure that starts in the middle (between the fieldwork and the writing process; between the first and last day of the fieldwork...) and proceeds from there. By troubling basic assumptions about the participatory research project, this gesture becomes the first iteration of the *eventful space*, allowing the dissertation to become a site for meaning making.
- *Wandering.* This gesture references the place-making that Sara Pink (2008) demonstrates is implicit in ethnographic work, to consider what type of spatial practice characterizes the fieldwork, and by proxy, learning. If indeed “the ground on which ethnography is built is a fictive geography” (Britzman, 2000, p. 28), then wandering invites an exploration of that imagined territory of the group project, and locates it in a smooth space. Here the inquirer is configured as a learner-traveler, driven by desire. This action foreshadows the introduction of geophilosophy and the concept: *nomadic pedagogy*.
- *Sifting.* As ironically referenced through the video cited by Jaime Pitarch, meaning making in a qualitative research project is a complex, sometimes nebulous process. While sifting was originally a reference to coding—an effort to whittle the data down to nuggets of truth—it develops into a metaphor for thinking about the work of academic research. In other words, sifting is a conceptualization of Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012) threshold, the *nomadic science* where data, theory, and even the figure of becoming-researcher have the potential to be reconfigured upon contact with one another.
- *Layering.* The relationship between the fieldwork and its retelling occurs through sedimentation. The layering process evokes a multiplicity of meanings, which accumulate over time, and uses the palimpsest to evoke a reflection on the loop cycle of reading-writing-deciphering. This gesture is a reflection on the anachronistic nature of how we come to know the significant moments of the fieldwork and questions our assumptions about data, text and the “research results” so far produced within the research project. The implication (introducing a discussion on *mobilities*) is not that knowledge cannot be fixed, but that any understanding that is reached is ever only one layer of others that will come before and after.
- *Spiraling.* Finally, the fifth gesture, as its name replies, takes a step out of the assem-

blage to gain perspective as it reflects on the directionality of research project. How did this project work, and for whom? What tools were needed (or developed) to answer the questions it introduced? Spiraling is a movement that takes place within a *smooth space*, asking not so much how to register the eventful space of learning, but how to activate it.

The interludes do not attempt to generate a narrative thread that neatly ties this dissertation together. Instead they perform a rhizomatic function, acting as a space within the project where I bring together ideas, movements and other intensities that are a result of a nomadic progression through the research process (Fig. 6).

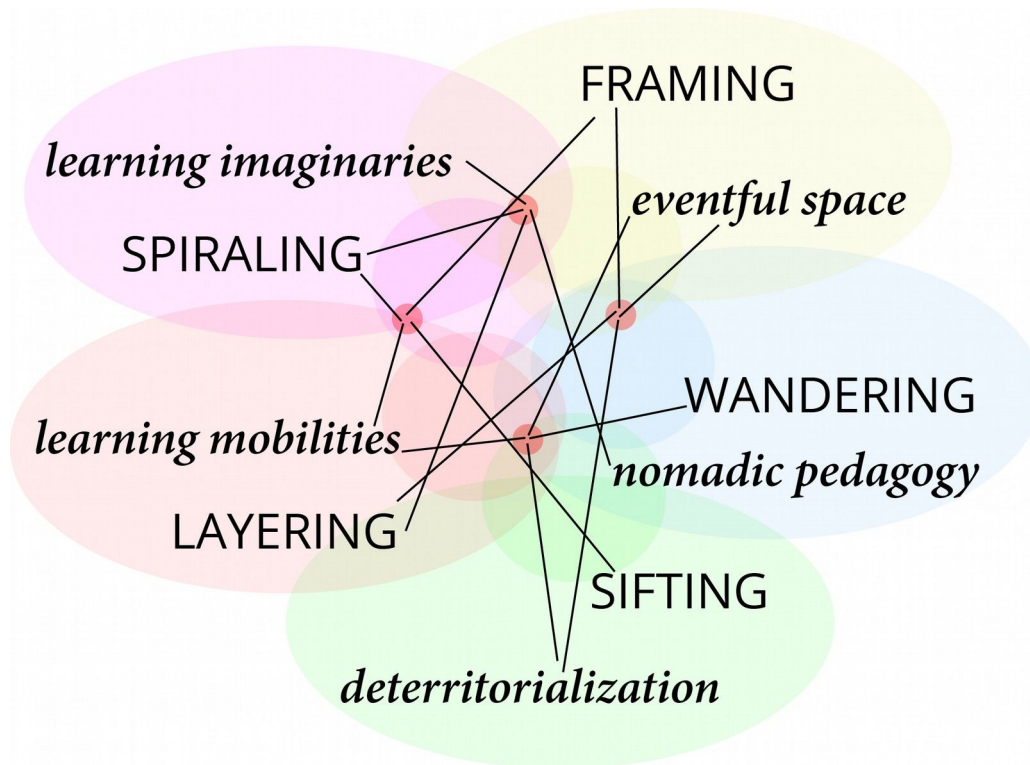


Figure 6. A sketch of the rhizomatic approximation of the dissertation, relating the interludes with key words.

In addition to being conceived as gestures—and therefore as movements—the interludes use artworks (and in one case, a highly conceptual graphic) to provoke a nomadic shift into other types of non-textual representational strategies. The included artworks are autobiographical in the sense that I was familiar with them prior to including them in the interludes; this means they were not selected as an illustration of a gesture. Rather, the artwork that is cited interacts with the concepts address in each interlude, and therefore enable me to experiment with ways of knowing that escape or at least emerge differently than in the chapters.

While this is not a black and white distinction, to a certain extent the interludes speak more of my own journey as a researcher, whereas the chapters focus more on the research project in which I form part. When looking back on her experience doing fieldwork for her own dissertation, St. Pierre (2000) poses the following question: “what parts of myself must I maintain in order to subvert myself?” (p. 259). This question gets at the heart of the matter. The interludes provide a productive aside where I confront what troubles me about the research process; acting as the space where I grapple with the journey of becoming-researcher. Working in the field of Art Education, with a background in Art History and Visual Studies, a not insignificant part of my journey has entailed reconciling how a study on learning practices also speaks to (and from) my own interests and background as a scholar in the Arts. The interludes, which incorporate artwork, thus emerge as an important inclusion of my own way of knowing the world; their presence allows me to maintain enough of myself within the project to subvert myself.

Nomadic inquiry

[T]he nomad represents a subject position that offers an idealised model of movement based on perpetual displacement. (Kaplan, 1996, p. 66)

To do away with the subject is to do away with any ground or home for thought: thought becomes nomadic. (Colebrook, 2000, p. 11)

This chapter has introduced the methodological approach, and as I stated at the start, the description of it has been somewhat biographical, framed as the process of becoming-researcher. The decision to analyze this case from the perspective of nomadology reveals a close relationship between the production of research and the production of the researcher. As Kaplan states, adopting a nomadic position is an experience of *perpetual displacement*, the progression of which I have tried to reconstruct in this chapter by sharing the missteps and dead-ends. Rejecting any *a priori home for thought*, I became familiar with different methods, methodology and theory—some of which troubled the framework established in the national project—in an effort to develop tools that allowed me to conceptualize learning differently.

The reconfiguration of research as a “nomadic inquiry” has been explored by St. Pierre (1997b, 2000); she too positions the researcher as a nomadic subject. In her work, St. Pierre uses nomadic inquiry to imagine the practice of “traveling in the thinking that writing produces, in search of the field” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 258). This is the act of re-situating oneself once the field is lost, in the smooth spaces of writing and thinking. Nomadic inquiry is St. Pierre's way of *traveling while seated*, allowing her to revisit the fieldwork through the practice of writing and thinking (with theory). The spatial practices in question here refer to the textual, mental or emotional sites, which configure the space of

encounter with the fieldwork. This imaginary of *other* spaces of learning is very informative to the way space is broadly invoked in this dissertation and hints at the multi-dimensional characteristics of the eventful space (here, described as a space of encounter through thought, i.e. learning).

In what he terms nomadic analysis, David Cole (2013) explains:

nomadism reconstructs the research from the inside and through the unconscious, putting pressure on the data field in terms of the rational nature of evidence and the concepts that nomadism implies. One could say that nomadic analysis acts as a kind of magnetism, drawing out the elements of the data with the greatest speeds and potential for transformation that is non-sedentary. (p. 235)

Cole undertakes a process similar to the current project. After producing the final report for a national project to which his research contributed, Cole reviewed the data, this time using a nomadic approach. In the second treatment of the data, Cole was able to include excerpts that didn't easily fit within the categorization developed for the original report. In this later approach, data were:

set free from their contextual groundings and given an augmented position in the findings. This augmented position has consequences for qualitative social inquiry in terms of meaning and affect. ... [The research] takes on new life according to nomadic analysis. This 'life' is not an artificial or subjective decision on the part of the researcher, but signifies a following of the material flows through the research process. (Cole, 2013, p. 230)

This process adheres to what, elsewhere, Jackson (2013) has described as “data’s ontological journey” where “the data-as-machine can be connected to another assemblage to become again” (p. 123). In the current project, as I have detailed, several reports were produced (some still underway). However, in a process that echoes Cole's, this dissertation takes on a life separate from these reports, developing in particular a different approach to studying learning. Here, the *material flows* of our group dynamic are crucial in informing how learning emerges in the project.

This methodological approach captures the ways in which the research project has been reconfigured by situating itself in the threshold: between data, theory and my own positionality. The chapter has attempted to describe how I arrived at this point, sharing some of the paths that were abandoned along the way. It would be misleading to pretend that I knew at the outset where I was headed; it would also be paradoxical given the nomadic orientation of the research project. St. Pierre (2014), reflecting on how concepts can indeed become method, shares the following:

Deleuze and Guattari provided new concepts— intensive, futural concepts

with their own speeds and rhythms that slow us down because they don't fit existing ontologies and so open things up, helping us think new modes of being. ... [T]heir concepts... can be **methods that enable new research practices that can neither be described in advance of a study nor easily described at the end.** (p. 14. Emphasis added)

St. Pierre uses nomadic inquiry to conceptualize a smooth space of thinking and writing, which created a bridge between her fieldwork and the dissertation; it was a way out when she got stuck. In my case, nomadic thought became central when I saw how it allowed me to ask questions that valued, rather than underestimated the fieldwork. It provided a way to write about learning practices while clearly admitting the project did not meet our original expectations.

I thus agree that nomadic thought plays the role of addressing a research practice that cannot easily be described, before, during, or even at the end of the study. Even now I recognize that this chapter is hedged in a certain hesitant relativism. In the parlance of *Working the ruins*, this concept|method is a figuration:

figurations are not graceful metaphors that provide coherency and unity to contradiction and disjunction, but rather are cartographic weapons, “splitting analytics” (McCoy, 1997), that propel them into the turbulence masked by coherence... [they are used] as practices of failure, tools of rigorous confusion that jettison clarity in favor of the unintelligible. (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p. 14-15)

In this case, unintelligibility is not an arbitrary muddling of sense, but an attempt to engage with a type of learning in a form that is not always already clear and codified. Admitting failure in the ability to follow a predetermined path for carrying out the research, the methodology can pay attention to the nomadic deviations enacted by the youth and by myself as researcher.

What emerges, ultimately, at the intersection of *nomadic inquiry* and *nomadic analysis* is a portrait of a research process that affects both researcher and data simultaneously. This is precisely the activity Jackson and Mazzei (2012) refer to with their term *plugging in*. Methodology is not something performed on an abstract object that is separate from the researcher. Instead, to research, the researcher must become nomadic, or perhaps we could simply say, undergo a learning experience: “The potential for transformation in nomadic analysis relates to the ways in which data affects the researcher and unties them from territorialised notions of information gathering” (Cole, 2013, p. 235). The difficult part of adopting this *following* approach is the feeling of being always one step behind, playing catch-up. This is reassuring however, doubting whether I've “arrived” at a conclusion is a mindset that engages Atkinson's (2011) notion of the *not yet*; a dissertation in the process

of becoming.

Uneasy data

Rachel, "So did anyone do their in-class observations? I didn't see anyone post anything on Facebook so..."

Roser speaks up. She is hesitant, but also insists that, "Well I did something."

She explains that she is interested in observing a class because it's different from the others. She hasn't taken any notes but has "been thinking about it." The she adds, "We don't do anything in this class, so it would actually be easy to observe, we never take notes or anything."

When her peers hear which class she wants to observe they immediately object.

Jordi laughs and says, "No, that class doesn't count!"

Adrià, "It's like being at a café, it's not a class..."

Jordi gives us more details. He explains that the Religion class is an elective that students have once a week, and that the teacher is the Philosophy teacher for the Baccalaureate program. He muses that the teacher probably teaches Philosophy well but just wastes time in Religion because he doesn't want to teach the topic, or maybe, he doesn't want to teach younger students.

Adrià states, "It's like they put him in there [in Religion], and he doesn't know anything about it, or he doesn't care, and he's just there to pass the time."

Roser insists that this is what makes the class interesting, "Sure! You see everyone, I don't know, with their cell phones, hanging out, talking, listening to music, on their laptops..."

Jordi laughs and interrupts her, "The only rule is, you can't get out of your seat. The ONLY rule."

Given the outburst that this class "doesn't count," a discussion evolves around what we should be observing. Adrià thinks the fact that this class isn't like the others disqualifies it from our study. He doesn't use this vocabulary but he intuits that it isn't *representative* of what it means to be "in class" in his school. Xavi challenges this idea by saying that if it takes place in school, it's valid, and we shouldn't just reject it.

In response, Adrià and Jordi argue that they'll do an observation of a "much more serious" class, to counterbalance Roser's contribution. Roser defends her choice by claiming that it's unique quality makes it more interesting, "It's not the typical class, where we wouldn't have anything to write about!"

When the session ended Xavi and I had understood that Roser would carry out her work as proposed, and that Adrià and Jordi would do an observation, together, of a class they considered to be more "typical." However, Roser apparently was persuaded by their arguments and her in-class observation ultimately documented a more traditional classroom.

3.5. Becoming-researcher

St. Pierre (2000) has referred to poststructural ethnography as a “site of passage... a provisional space, one coded as soon as it is imagined, yet mobile, nomadic—always a mixture of the striated and the smooth” (p. 276). I see nomadic inquiry as the activation of this site of passage, one that focuses on the process of navigation. Herein, research events are coded before transforming into something else, staying on the move. The site of this research project has been variously characterized as the threshold (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), and the assemblage. Framing the development of the methodological approach in geographic terms, I question if it is not, like learning itself, an eventful space, a space brought forth by my own wanderings in the process of becoming-researcher.

That the nomad develops through territorial practices has been explored by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004), “[t]he nomad distributes himself in a smooth space; he occupies, inhabits, holds that space; that is his territorial principle... They are vectors of deterritorialization” (p. 420-421). While at times during this project I worried that I had unleashed a vector of deterritorialization (making little “progress”), when I retreated to the striated space of coding I recognized that something important was lost. What I call “over exposure” was an inability to code for the *qualities* of the learning taking place, those irruptions into smooth space which inform my understanding of what the research project can inform on. However, in the wake of this somewhat failed attempt at researching with young people, the project wasn't derailed. In the process of becoming, it evolved, prompting me to reassemble my methodological framework. Denzin (2009) has observed that:

Evidence in a countable or measurable sense is not something that all qualitative researchers attend to. Few critical ethnographers (Madison, 2005) think in a language of evidence, they think instead about experience, emotions, events, processes, performances, narratives, poetics, the politics of possibility. (p. 142)

Attempting to represent the fieldwork opened up a review of the epistemological assumptions implicit in my methodology, introducing questions regarding what, exactly, data is, and how it speaks. Deborah Britzman (2000) poses a series of questions that emerge as a consequence of acknowledging that the “ethnographic real [is] a contested territory” (p. 30). She asks:

Are there ways to think the unthought of ethnographic narratives? That is, is there an ethnographic unconscious that marks its constitutive limits? Is there a knowledge ethnography cannot tolerate knowing? (p. 30)

Such questions activate the *negative space* of my fieldwork. Britzman's questions bring us

back to Hesse's frame (See interlude: I. Framing) by asking: What is within the negative space? How do we access it? By naming the limitations of data and method, her questions haunt my search for a methodology that is attentive to nomadic learning practices, those individuated interactions that manage to subvert the research process, bringing to light method's constitutive limits. This is the process that drives a search for methodologies responsive to the research event, an activity that brings forth the assemblage of becoming-researcher.

III. Sifting



Jaime Pitarch, *Dust to dust*. 2005.

The images are screen shots of a 17 minute video by the artist, <https://vimeo.com/126898145>.

© Jaime Pitarch.

Researching on unstable ground

Breaking the code

Autoethnographic field notes (becoming-researcher). Naples, IT. June 5, 2013.

I'm standing in a small room, juggling a paper plate and a glass of water. Lunch at this conference is informal, we mingle and comment on how great the food is in Italy. At some point a fellow conference attendee approaches, another PhD student, and we make small talk about our research. Shortly into the conversation, she asks me "how is your coding going"?

I sigh. She sighs. We relate.

This is the first year that I feel confident participating in conversations like this one, finally able to commiserate like a "real" PhD student. I am past the phase of explaining what I am hoping to do, what I plan on doing... With the fieldwork behind me I enjoy the instant camaraderie that comes with wallowing in the gritty monotony of transcription and analysis and so on, with my peers.

I confide, "I'm still not convinced that I'm getting new information with the coding... I'm worried that the coding system I have reflects what I already know and doesn't really provide new insight. And that's a disaster, because it's so time consuming! So right now I've been using it primarily to organize information. And I'm moving toward a system where, I'm kind of coding out from critical moments, if that makes sense."

My fellow PhD student launches into a similar discussion (long-winded and specific) about her travails coding video, asking by chance if I knew a better program for it?

And so it goes...

What strikes me is the subtext of our conversation, the way that coding is assumed to be part of the dissertation process. In my case it was an afterthought, spurred on by my anxiety that it is something I should be doing, something that is expected. Perhaps for that reason I am ambivalent about the extent to which it will inform my analysis in a meaningful way. Right now I feel as if coding opens doors to the task of "speaking academic," but what it has to say within my own research is still unclear.

Nomadic research

Autoethnographic field notes (becoming-researcher). Milton Keynes, UK.

March 15, 2013.

Today is my first day working in the graduate student office at the Open University. It's a cramped space, with two computer tables lining the side walls, each with a row of PCs, and a large round table in the middle. There's a refrigerator wedged in the corner with a microwave balanced on top of it, dirty plates scattered around, and absolutely no room to move around in.

I'm surprised to see someone is there already. I was told that the grad students tend to come in on Wednesday but the campus is so empty I suspected that I would leave here without crossing paths with anyone.

I introduce myself to the young man and am immediately told that the computers don't work. I glance around at the 8-10 machines and am barely surprised to hear that they're all out of commission.

Me, "No, it's fine, I brought my laptop."

Grad student, "Great, you can sit anywhere."

Once I get settled another grad student comes in, a young woman. After working for a turn, she gathers her things, while commenting to her colleague that she's worried that her van won't start. She has a doctor's appointment to go to, she explains, and she's worried about missing it. This must be a familiar topic, because the young man inquires fondly after her vehicle.

So I ask her, "What year is it?" She answers, "1979. Yeah, two years older than me!"

She leaves and the remaining grad student gives me some background information.

The woman who just departed used to live in this van, parked in the parking lot of the university. Apparently, there was an issue with her funding; when she had to do her fieldwork in a far-off place, the funding body would only pay for one housing arrangement at a time. So she committed to housing where her fieldwork was, and was unable to maintain another residence in the UK due to financial constraints. This happened in spite of the fact that she was working in both places at once, going back-and-forth. She would stay in the van while visiting the UK, but then somehow this situation dragged on even after her fieldwork ended.

The grad student nodded and explained the logistics, "You know, there's a shower in the library. And I think she just stayed in here as long as possible, until the building closed, and then went out to the van. She complained about how cold it was in the winter."

I have the feeling that I'm being told this story because it's a colorful tale, a rare case. The man confiding in me seems amused, as if the anecdote says as much about the woman's quirky personality as it does anything else.

But I can't shake it off. The story sticks with me, a visiting student, who's an expat anyway, working towards a PhD during a severe economic downturn. Since I've been in the UK, the situation at the University of Barcelona seems to have gotten even worse. There is no job security any more for tenure track positions; or maybe even, there's no more tenure track? So while there was a time that I may have found something poetic about this idea of intellectual nomadism, today it appears to be a realistic portrayal of the not-quite-getting-by status of those working in academia.

All signs point to the fact that in today's environment, working within the university is increasingly unsustainable. Some highly qualified individuals are simply opting to drive

away.³² I can't help but wonder: where exactly am I headed?

* This memo was written two years prior to the wave of personal narratives about leaving the academy that began to take over the channels of academic news in 2015 (See: #QuitLit). This recent body of literature contextualizes and expands on some of the themes addressed in this vignette.

A mobilities project

Autoethnographic field notes (becoming-researcher). Barcelona, ES - July 19, 2015.

This summer there is a migration crisis. It's been going on for a few years but the dial's been turned up—certain photographs are in circulation that capture the washed up bodies of young children, or crowds of people getting stamped with numbers and loaded onto trains. People are paying attention, reading the headlines.

I admit that it is uncomfortable working to put the finishing touches on a dissertation about nomadic pedagogy, when the lived experience of migrants has reached such a disturbing peak.

Travel, for leisure or otherwise, wasn't something the youth participants had much experience with. We had a discussion one day about how long it took me to fly "home," (their word not mine, used to refer to the Northeast of the United States). We commented on the time difference between here and there: what time is it when you leave and what time is it when you land? Jet-lag is always befuddling, in any context. Then Pere told us his sister lived in England, and then no one had much to add after that.

In spite of this, I find myself spending a large amount of time reflecting on the question of mobilities both in and outside the framework of this project. And I do have personal experience with it.

When I moved to Barcelona in 2006 for graduate school, the learning portfolio I handed in at the end of the first year was titled *The nomadic subject*. In that project, I noted that I had moved 8 times in three years (2004-2006). That year I learned the word precarious.

Things haven't really settled down since then. In March of this year I traveled 26 hours for a job interview. The last 2.5 hours of that journey I spent driving alone in the middle of the night during a rain storm. It was after midnight, local time. While on the highway I actually wondered if it was worth it... It must have been the exhaustion kicking in, because of course it was—this was a great opportunity (and the only job interview I had lined up).

32 See: <http://youtu.be/SqaNkwxQNSA>. This video is a recording of an invited talk by Dr. Aida Sánchez de Serdio. "Collir flors en l'asfalt o una possibilitat de fuga [Picking flowers in the asphalt, or the possibility of escape]." *12è Forum Indigestió*. Barcelona 4 April 2013. In the talk she discusses her experience getting pushed / pulled out of the academy due to the precarious labor conditions the university enacted.

The next day I told everyone who asked that the trip had been *Fine, thanks*.

While I was on my way home, the institution emailed me to schedule a follow-up Skype call, and because there was a slight delay on the return itinerary it was close, I almost missed it. It's those damn time zones, they leave you feeling like you're a step behind, always playing catch-up.

To apply for this job, I spent some time polishing up my CV. Looking over the conferences listed I see that in four years I've presented in 16 cities located in 10 countries. I met a lot of people while traveling to the conferences and a small number of them ended up being very influential regarding the job offer I received. This is something you learn after the fact. It is impossible to know ahead of time which people will be able to help, so you have to cast a wide net. The hustle isn't the airport hopping, it's the networking you do when you get there.

Upward mobility, social mobility and the academy. It reads like a statement of privilege. (It is a statement of privilege.) This reality interfaces uncomfortably with the headlines about the walls going up, the ships going down, and the everyday mobilities into and out of Europe in 2015.

Decoding

The gesture of sifting originated as a metaphor for the coding process. Therefore while this interlude was initially a space to reflect on method, it has evolved into a reflection on the work (and working conditions) surrounding academic research. The underlying theme connecting these concepts is that of professionalization. Thus far, I have referenced the process of becoming-researcher as one of the learning assemblages emerging in this dissertation. However, professionalization is something else, it's what supports the research process, behind the scenes.

Returning (again) to the doubts that coding introduces, I am struck by the fact that the code word *sifting* has evolved in meaning. This illustrates an issue I ran into while coding, and which is not frequently discussed in the literature: even when working within specific parameters, meaning is not fixed. A single code can be interpreted in different ways, and its meaning is subject to change over time.

Reflecting on the notion of sifting, memos have sprung up (notes from 2013-2015). I share them here to illustrate the many meanings of this *code-on-the-move*.

1. *Sifting*. As a method, there is something mundane and tedious about sifting. It is a repetitive gesture, one that is ironically performed by Pitarch as he vigorously sweeps a room, only to allow the dust to settle back down again. When I began coding, I associated it with the task of sifting flour. Sure, it's a pro move but I've never been convinced that it makes a *real* tangible difference in the end product. Note to self: keep practicing. Which is to say, have faith in the process.

2. *The sieve.* Coding would have you keep what passes through the sieve; this is the material made up of comparable parts, it's what fits in. What happens to the parts that don't make it through? Is this the data that *glows* or the detritus that gets discarded? The intended directionality of sifting is unclear, making it hard to position yourself within the process.
3. *Filtering.* Sifting is a filtering system. It's a way of restructuring your resources. There's a point when you feel like you're part of that system, getting sifted, shifted around. The worry about getting filtered out is palpable.
4. *Sorting.* At some point you start to recognize patterns and you have to get your priorities in order. You observe that people can get stuck, or maybe it's just that they want to stay put. (That's their decision, but it's not recommended.) Other people move on, and only some of them manage to come back.
5. *Codification.* The tacit knowledge that you need to acquire in the path toward academic professionalization is abundant, like in most professional arenas. Attempting to codify that knowledge, make it explicit, is an attempt to make sense of it all... But it's impossible to do so, such knowledge always exceeds our representational capacities. You have to commit to picking up what you can, as you go along; you learn on the move.

4. Nomadic pedagogy

4.1. On participation

Researching with young people

As stated in chapter 1, the national project was designed around a series of participatory ethnographies with young people. The aim in the research design was to move past an adult-centered mode of understanding, and engage directly with youth, in order to research how their social worlds are molded and influenced by learning practices. This project design was based on principles of participation and collaboration with youth (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver & Ireland, 2009), such that through collaboration, the project set out to establish a type of engagement where “students whose voices may have been silenced or devalued within traditional schooling systems can be heard” (Bland & Atweh, 2007, p. 339).

Within this proposal, the most crucial element lies in the preposition; researching *with* young people implies a specific approach and configuration of the youth participants, in this case inviting them into the project as researchers rather than informants. Therefore, this research proposal joins a growing body of literature that adopts the term students as researchers (SAR). Going beyond the elicitation of student voice (i.e., students as data source) SAR implies a higher level of engagement and collaboration in the research itself. Within these parameters, the current study falls within Michael Fielding's (2001) typology of co-researchers, where students are engaged by the university team “as partners in learning in order to deepen understanding and learning” (p. 136).

In her literature review on studies implicating students as researchers, Lena Bahou (2011, p.7) detects five common aims, which justify this level of collaboration with youth. Such research collaborations must:

1. Address issues that matter to students;
2. Create new knowledge about education for critical evaluation and action;
3. Set an agenda for students to make a difference;
4. Enable students to develop a kind of professionalism whereby student voices can be taken seriously by adults;
5. Enhance the conditions and processes of learning and teaching.

In this summary, the SAR model is closely linked to practices associated with introducing a

change in academic practice—by creating a space where students can intervene with their own opinions and questions—while at the same time it is positioned as a potentially transformative practice in the context where it is developed (in this case, schools). Ideologically, the SAR approach has ties to participatory action research (Bland & Atweh, 2007) and critical pedagogy. In Fielding's (2001) words, SAR is founded on:

a transformative, 'transversal' approach in which the voices of students, teachers and significant others involved in the process of education construct ways of working that are emancipatory in both process and outcome. (p. 124).

Critical pedagogy following Freire provides a framework for such a practice, that aims to not only generate new knowledge but also encourages, through *conscientization*, the transformation of participants' social conditions. Projects working within inclusive research, for example, that focus on “naming the world together” instead of “on behalf of another” (Freire, 1970, p. 69-70, cited in Nind & Vinha, p. 2). By using Freire's model of listening, reflecting and transforming, the research practice is used to foster “dialogical pedagogy”, where unscripted dialogue allows for a pedagogical relationship to emerge that does not just reproduce traditional power dynamics (between students and teachers; young people and adults) but gives rise to a more democratic environment. SAR projects therefore have a double agenda: to both advance research and school practice, as well as support, through their participation in this process, student agency. Perhaps for this reason it is becoming more popular when studying issues related to social justice in education (See: Smyth, 2011, 2014; Bright, 2012; Smyth & McInerney, 2012).

However, Jean Rudduck and Fielding (2006) have pointed out that the democratic project implicit in SAR requires certain institutional parameters in order to be effective. They claim that only by “rupturing the security of traditional power relations between teachers and students and redefining the boundaries of possibility” (p. 225) can the consultation with young people fulfill its critical agenda. Otherwise, voice can end up “reflecting rather than challenge the existing dividing practices in school and the systems for valuing some students above others” (Fielding & Rudduck, 2002, p. 2).

In short, at the heart of the SAR format is the issue of student voice; how voice is spoken and received in these studies is subject to conditions and assumptions that risk contradicting the critical ideologies that give rise to this format in the first place. Bahou's (2011) literature review summarizes the main challenges. Namely, that oftentimes the students who end up participating in projects that are frequently voluntary and sometimes extracurricular, tend to represent the high-achieving student population, therefore maintaining a culture of silence of the more socially disenfranchised group. Also, as described here, the lack of integration of the research project into school culture is an important

obstacle in achieving real institutional change. In this project, these issues were addressed at the outset in order to avoid the most common pitfalls associated with this methodological approach. We used an intentional sample (Patton, 2002), and asked the participating schools to ensure that students who both met and failed to meet “school expectations” be involved in the project. We also attempted to have student participation recognized by the school, and negotiated in several of the cases in the national project that their work count as their research project, which students in their last year of compulsory education carry out. In my case specifically, we were not able to link the participation with the school curriculum in a formal manner.

The following section will look at the formation of our group project, in light of the aims designed at the outset of the national project. It turns out that the fieldwork is not a best-practice example of inclusive, collaborative, critical ethnography with youth. Rather, it brings to light some of the implicit issues Fielding (2001, 2007) has with this approach. In doing so, it will serve to question how voice circulates within the project, before moving on to consider how the student participation contributes to the original research questions.

Communities of discourse

Before discussing what we can learn from the young people's participation in the project, we must first consider who the participants are. Therefore, the following section looks at the complexities around voice, considering who speaks to whom, what conditions this conversation, and where the speech circulates.

The fieldwork demonstrates the degree of nuance involved when considering participation, and when addressing our understanding of the “access” we were to have to students' voices, are nuanced. Thus, to consider the presence of voice in the research project, it is necessary to understand who is speaking, and how that speech is both localized and conditional. To better understand this complexity, I have come to label the social relationships working within this project as interlocking communities of discourse, where communities of discourse (CoD) are understood as sites where “voices interact with, influence and construct each other” (Maher and Tetreault, 1997: 138). The disparate yet overlapping communities are reminders that 'voice' is conditioned by a speaker's positionality within a social context, which destabilizes notions that voice is a pure representation of a subject's experience. Identifying the CoDs circulating in this project make it easier to see to what extent multiple interpretations and objectives among participants could affect the fieldwork.

Notably, members of each CoD have their own history of interaction prior to the project, and this influences what is said and by whom. Take, for example, the youth cohort. The six youth participants were classmates and frequently interacted with one another

outside the project; and in the final session a mother of one participant told us that four people in the group had attended school together since the age of three. This knowledge of each other showed up in the group interactions, as the young people used the project time to catch up with each other socially, commenting on their private lives and day-to-day activities. This type of intimate knowledge also was applied to corroborate or contest their peer's contributions; sometimes an observation was challenged by a friend who would claim that the other person was not telling the truth. This CoD was both, therefore, a support system and also a regulator, keeping the young people's voices within the bounds of what their peers recognized as "true" or accurate.

The group was also diverse in terms of the relationship each person had to school and therefore reported on the in-school context from different perspectives. Two of the youths had been chosen by the school because they did "not meet school expectations," yet each one seemed to be struggling differently. On one hand, Pere seemed uninterested in applying himself, maintaining a taciturn, frequently sarcastic distance from the goings on in our sessions, unless directly addressed. Yet, he was active in a competitive volley ball league after school and had already identified a vocational program he wanted to enroll in the following year. On the other hand, Joan gave less indication that he had a support system that was helping him navigate the transition he had ahead of him, in his final year of secondary school. It is true that he told us that this year, for the first time, he had a tutor that would help him with his homework. However he also claimed to spend as much time as possible on the street and as little time as possible at home. During the sessions he most frequently expressed frustration and bewilderment with the research process, struggling to understand what we were trying to do, while at the same time chiding the others who seemed to be working too much on task.

Of the four people the school identified as meeting school expectations, again we see different personalities and relationships to learning. While Adrià and Roser excelled at following along with the weekly developments of the project, Jordi and Laura were more hesitant and expressed their doubts more frequently. In contrast to Joan and Pere, however, their doubts were vocalized in an effort to improve their understanding of the project, whereas such doubts seemed to inspire silence among Joan or Pere, who more frequently opted to just tune out and pay less attention.

Finally, the university researchers, Xavi and I, also had a prior history with each other, as both colleagues and friends, and as well as different relationships with the project itself. Xavi was not producing a dissertation and I was, and sometimes the tension between the national project's design for the fieldwork and my own research questions surfaced when Xavi and I negotiated how to proceed in the fieldwork. At times I was inclined to drift from

the established project norms and had to negotiate this path with Xavi, who was much more 'on track' due to using the project design as his main reference point for how to proceed.

What is more, the group project is spoken within three separate interpretive frameworks. Namely:

1. Esbrina: The national research project met bi-monthly since the inception of the project and played a significant role in developing the theoretical and methodological framework for the (double) ethnographic work carried out in the schools. This CoD has a long history with educational research, and this project builds on previous experiences (Hernández-Hernández, 2011). Not only did the research team establish a structure for the fieldwork that each center tried to comply with, but during the time Xavi and I were working in la Mallola, other pairs of researchers were working in four other centers. The regular meetings we had during this time were dedicated to sharing our experiences and comparing our progress, which had a significant impact on the way Xavi and I structured our sessions with the secondary students in La Mallola, as we shared significant moments in our work and were able to compare and contrast them with our colleagues, in an act of mutual problem solving.
1. La Mallola: This is a secondary school in the metropolitan area of Barcelona. The school administration was open to collaborating with our research team, and this project marks the second time that Esbrina has intervened at this school (See: Sancho Gil & Alonso, 2011). The relationship the school had with our research was an outlier in contrast to the other four participating centers. La Mallola administration believed it was important that the students have independent time to participate in the project and the school didn't want to the school to "intervene" in the work Xavi and I were doing. This hands-off approach created a very specific work environment where the young people found themselves in a work space free of the expectations and presence their teachers and tutors.
2. My dissertation: While it may seem like a stretch to label a dissertation in the same category as other CoDs mentioned here, my research is carried out within a wider (academic) community, and speaks within this community according to a set of references and discourses.

Disrupting voices

Awareness of the different ways the project is interpreted and understood according to each agent (or community of discourse) provides a better understanding of the events that

unfolded during the project. Thinking of the group as an encounter between different communities of discourse with their own established modes of communication, acknowledges the situated knowledge brought into the experience and emphasizes the dialogic understanding of voice, based on Mikhail Bakhtin's (1975/1981) analysis, where:

Every conversation is full of transmissions and interpretations of other people's words... The majority of our information and opinions is usually not communicated in a direct form as our own, but with reference to some indefinite and general source. (p. 338)

Bakhtin's understanding of dialogue highlights the circulation of voice in the project, a flow and flux that is not fluid but encounters obstacles, detours and mutations, a conditional circulation dependent on who is talking to who. For Bakhtin, his term for contextualizing—i.e., recognizing the double-voice of a person's speech—is *dialogizing*: when speech enters into dialog it automatically takes on a duplicate, and perhaps duplicitous role, as meanings of what is expressed and intended are entangled:

the object [dialogue] is always entangled in someone else's discourse about it, it is already present with qualifications, an object of dispute that is conceptualized and evaluated variously, inseparable from the heteroglot social apprehension of it. (Bakhtin, 1975/1981, p. 330).

Jackson and Mazzei (2009) have critically approached the privileging of voice in qualitative research, which tends to portray voice as “true and real,” and “almost a mirror of the soul, the essence of self” (p. 1). Expanding on poststructural understandings of subjectivity their discussion of voice undermines its authenticity, in recognition of, in Chris Weedon's (1987) words, “a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory, and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak” (p.32).

In addition to problematizing the question, how do we speak? Voice is also problematic in terms of how do we hear? Who decides what counts as 'real' or 'authentic'? Relations of knowledge, power, and desire shape the discursive environments within which voices are fashioned. Idealizing (certain) voices reinforces a speech/silence binary and ignores conditions of reception and production that make some voices intelligible and not others. How is this intelligibility constructed? What are the activities of recognition that shape both speaking and listening, both what can be said and what can be heard?

The power to select and authorize certain voices can also be read in the paternalistic concern, in critical pedagogy as well as in research, to give “voice to the voiceless” (Visweswaran, 1994, p.9). This construction of 'voice' against a background of silence tends to result in a romanticized and essentialized version, singular and representative, obscuring dissonance and multiplicity. This use of 'voice' also reinforces an unproblematic

speech/silence binary. In this binary, speech is (necessarily) beneficial, and silence a sign of repression. Speech is positively loaded with assumptions of agency, and silence negatively loaded with passivity. Not only is this a Western view of the practices of speech and silence, it also elides the conditions of reception and production that make some voices and not others intelligible. As Gayatri Spivak (1988) challenges, the subaltern can speak—but can she be heard?

The nature of the participatory research design invited the students to participate in the project as researchers rather than informants, and thus required a re-configuration of the register and representation of student voice. From the outset of the project I was looking for signs that indicated our progress as we became a research group, hoping to observe our steps towards collaborative practice. To this end, initially the characteristic Lave and Wenger (1991) describe as fundamental to developing a community of practice served as a guide. They observe, “for newcomers the purpose is not to learn *from* talk... it is to learn *to* talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation” (pp. 108-9. Emphasis is original.). What Lave and Wenger claim is that gaining expertise—which in our case is the act of becoming inquirers—can be observed through the quality of participation demonstrated by group members. In practice, however, *learning to talk* was an increasingly frustrated category, showing up in speculations in my field notes but not in the actual transcriptions. The problem appeared to be that *learning to talk*, as a concept, accounts for a lineal, uni-directional progress; an acquisition of skill and repertoire in advancement toward a goal, which the events of the fieldwork did not echo.

If voices are embedded in a dialogic web of relations: always “half someone else's” (Bakhtin, 1975/1981, p. 352), always anticipating response, always enlisted in struggles for meaning, then we must attend to what Bakhtin calls the *forces of heteroglossia*: centripetal forces—normative and homogenizing—and centrifugal forces—disruptive and dispersing. This complex interplay of forces shapes struggles for meaning within discursive and material environments. In acknowledgement of these complexities between studying voice as a way of engaging the ‘true’ experience of young people, this chapter interrogates not what the young people say, but at how meaning is negotiated and disrupted within the process of participation.

As explained in chapter 1, and highlighted in the interlude I. Framing, of the five participating groups in the national project, ours was an outlier, due to the response the young people had to the university's proposal. More so than other groups, the youth response here was characterized by a lack: of participation, productivity, and so on. I discovered that working with the young people did not guaranty direct access to their experiences and lives in general, instead it gave me access to what they chose to discuss and

share in our project sessions. Rejecting the infallibility of voice acknowledges how the careful curation of their participation—via their questions and responses—provides a productive starting point for analyzing what took place in the group.

4.2. Disruptive questions

Refusal as a generative form

Thus far, this chapter has mapped out an approach to participatory research that is grounded in critical pedagogy (researching *with*) yet at the same time, has questioned that position by branching away from a simplistic interaction with young people and an appropriation of their voices into the research agenda. While the national project designed our intervention in the schools with a methodology that drew on SAR models, the resulting interaction with both the young people and the school revealed a more complex space of negotiated encounter. The following section shares a working-through of this framework as applied to the project sessions. Namely, here I will look at the act of questioning, shifting from considering voice-as-data toward presenting voice as a praxis. When voice is not necessarily a representation of the young people's learning experience, it turns into evidence of the nature of the participation itself, revealing the eventful space of the participatory project.

The terms in which the youth added their voices to the project and negotiated their participation opens-up the analysis to think about learning not as something that was reported on in the project, but as something that emerged through practice (bringing forth the assemblage of becoming-inquirer). As we will see below, the project was marked by a refusal on behalf of the group to speak in the terms set by the research project, although in other moments the young people were generous with their opinions, anecdotes and actions. This “refusal” can be read in terms of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's (2014) portrayal of the productive nature of this negation:

Refusal is not just a “no,” but a redirection to ideas otherwise unacknowledged or unquestioned. Unlike a colonial configuration of knowledge that is petulantly exasperated and resentful of limits, a methodology of refusal regards limits on knowledge as productive, as indeed a good thing. (p. 239)

Tuck and Yang explore the role of refusal among informants and/or participants, within the context of ethnographic research involving minority cultures. Their questioning however of the limits of research and the way participants work to construct them from within, resonates with the fieldwork described in this study. In their review of how “refusal is not a prohibition but a generative form” (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 241), they posit the following axioms:

1. Refusal interrupts established power dynamics. “It makes transparent the metanarrative of knowledge production—its spectatorship for pain and its preoccupation for documenting and ruling over racial difference. Thus, refusal to be made meaningful first and foremost is grounded in a critique of settler colonialism, its construction of Whiteness, and its regimes of representation.” (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 241)
2. Refusal interrupts representational boundaries. “Refusal generates, expands, champions representational territories that colonial knowledge endeavors to settle, enclose, domesticate.” (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 241)
3. Refusal establishes an ethical position that does not follow a scientific logic. “Refusal challenges the individualizing discourse of IRB consent and “good science” by highlighting the problems of collective harm, of representational harm, and of knowledge colonization.” (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 242)
4. Finally, refusal can act as both method and theory, when it's interruption of ways of doing research produce alternative approaches, produced from other logics.

The continuation of this chapter draws on the discontinuous, disruptive dialogue framed in the previous section, in order to question how learning practices emerged during the fieldwork through the negotiation of participation. From the outset the research group involved six young people who didn't necessarily identify with the research topic. If the idea of school disaffection was familiar, they made no note of it, and while they did acknowledge the logic of “in and outside school,” it was an uncomfortable distinction that was constantly thrown into question. Into this unsettled collaboration, the young people did not refuse to participate, *per se*, rather their actions deterritorialized the research orientation, and necessarily, its conclusions. Therefore, rather than provide 'authentic voice', the fieldwork generates a refusal response as described by Tuck and Yang (2014); such tactics used by the young people as they defined and redefined their role in the project, are actions that themselves “speak to” the idea of learning. In this way, the negotiated participation becomes evidence of the everyday practices learning (and inquiring).

Questioning and responding

Lefebvre (1974/1991) argues that the encounter is what breaks the closed circuit of reproduction in hegemonic spaces (such as the city, the school...), acting as a short circuit in a web of social relations. Understanding the project sessions as sites of encounter looks at the SAR model not as a way of gaining better data (from young people) and transforming the school (using the research as a democratic project). Instead, voice can be introduced as the moment of encounter. To do so, the following analysis will look at the

use of questions. Studying the way questions were voiced reveals modes of address (Ellsworth, 1997) that speak to the nature of participation within the project, making voice not a representation of the young people but rather, as evidence of the group dynamic. This is a use of voice that studies the complicated nature of researching *with* that does not address the subjects' lives, but rather the project aims and objectives.

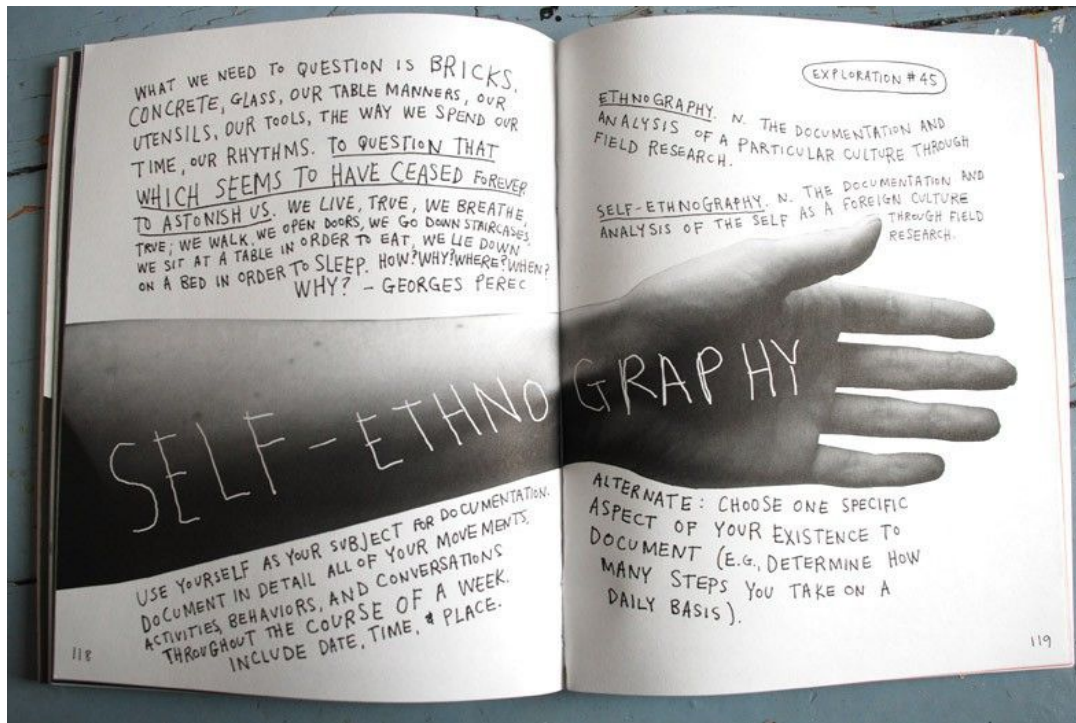


Figure 7. From the powerpoint shared in the 5th session. (Smith, 2008, pp. 118-119)

Why do we ask questions? (1)

As we go through the pages I have passed out to everyone, we arrive at an image from Keri Smith's (2008) book (Fig. 7), *How to be an explorer of the world*. After several sessions discussing the research topic, today we're focusing more specifically on how to do ethnographic research. After pausing for a moment to let everyone look over the page, I read aloud the quote that appears by Georges Perec:

What we need to question is bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our utensils, our tools, the way we spend our time, our rhythms. To question that which seems to have ceased forever to astonish us. We live, true, we breath, true; we walk. We open doors, we go down staircases, we sit at a table in order to eat, we lie down on a bed in order to sleep. How? Why? Where? When? Why? (Cited in: Smith, 2008, p. 118)

After I read, together we pick through the text, translating it. Finally, Xavi re-reads the sentence that appears underlined in the image, this time in Catalan: Hem de

qüestionar les coses que han deixat de sorprendre'ns. I then ask the group why they think someone would recommend this? Why do we ask questions?

Jordi: To learn.

Adrià: If we don't ask questions, we won't know what's going on...

The rest of the group stays silent.

* * *

The development of this participatory project was marked by our seemingly constant struggle to find ways to move forward—especially when so often where we were going, and how we wanted to get there, was unclear. When we begin to talk about how, exactly, we can go about researching our learning practices, the conversation turns to the act of questioning. Here, we see that two of the young people equate questions with information gathering, and claim that they are a path to learning; in fact, Jordi's immediate response—that we ask questions in order to learn—seems to resonate with an inquiry-led process such as the one we have initiated.

Prompted by their responses, I wonder whether, can charting the articulation of questions allow us to observe the process through which our group moves toward becoming inquirers? In this manner, my attention to the group dynamic shifted from an abstract idea I had carried with me into the fieldwork—the idea of learning to talk (Lave and Wenger, 1991)—and began to consider the role of the questions we were asking each other. Revisiting the transcripts, I found that the appearance of questions captures the changes in directionality that came to characterize our time working together. Here, questions are a record of the mobilities within the group project, tracking the flow of communication between group members and highlighting both the roadblocks we faced and our attempts to overcome them.

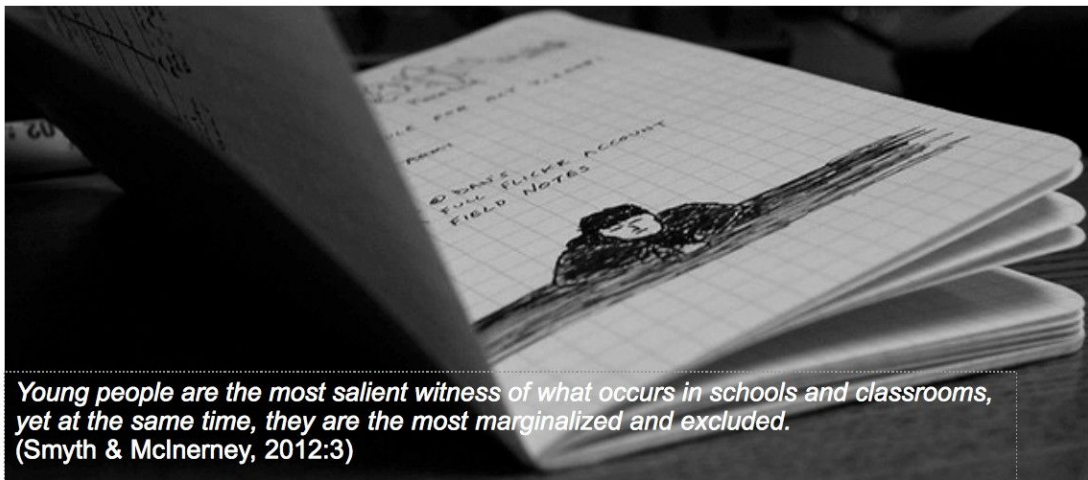
Why do we ask questions? (2)

... After acknowledging Jordi and Adrià's response, I add:

Rachel: Yeah, also, asking a question, like asking, *why is something the way it is?* Is another way of asking, *why couldn't things be different?* Asking questions is a way of imagining new possibilities.

Xavi joins the conversation, reminding the group that the origin of this project is the idea of school disaffection. *It's a project that questions the school, asking why so many people aren't finishing their studies.*

We explain that our ethnography, and in particular their observations, can contribute new knowledge about what is taking place in school. We move on to the next page in our handout (Fig. 8) and read a quote from *Silent Witnesses* by Smyth and Peter McInerney (2012, p. 3):



Los jóvenes son los testigos más relevantes para hablar de lo que pasa en las escuelas y en las aulas, sin embargo, al mismo tiempo, son marginalizados y excluidos.

Figure 8. From the handout shared in the 5th session. Original color photograph by Flickr user Brian Cook, rendered in black and white. CC BY-NC 2.0. Available online: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/brianjcook/2942432352>.

In this session, Xavi and I present ethnography as an inquiry-led process informed by critical pedagogy, including a reference from Smyth and McInerney (2012) that was influential in the design of the project. However, while this critical perspective brought us to the school's doorstep, and we lightly touch on the topic with the introduction of this quotation, it was not an explicit reference within our group work. It turns out that following Adrià and Jordi's lead and thinking of questions as a way of improving our understanding rather than as a way to develop an institutional critique, is closer to how our project developed.

Also, looking at the use of questions provides a more minute description of the difficulties and non-linear progress of a group working towards an inquiry-led practice. The organizational aspects of the group work tended to closely mimic classroom practices, where certain people have the authority to monitor tasks and others are responsible for meeting them. Questions here created a back-and-forth cycle that didn't advance our aims. What emerges from a reading of the way the young people question the project, is a reorientation away from questioning as associated with critical pedagogies. Instead, the use of questions can be better characterized as movement-generating tactics which kept the research in motion, according to the gestures *leading*, *deflecting* and *putting on the brakes*.

Leading. Throughout the fieldwork, I pose most of the questions. At the end of each session I ask the group what we should do for next week, and at the start of each session I ask what everyone had worked on since we saw each other last. These questions serve as a strategy for drawing the participants into the project; it is a way of restating our aims and

asking what should come next, rather than just dictating the group's activities. As shown in the example from the field notes above, when I ask “why do we ask questions?” it serves as a way to get the conversation flowing—an effort to interrupt the binary of us as explaining and the young people as receiving our lectures. It is also, however, a demonstration of an implicit directionality and a hierarchy, as I try to guide the young participants in making a connection regarding what it is (I believe) we are trying to accomplish.

Deflecting. Certain questions had a ricochet effect, these were often expressed as a *Who me?* reaction when the topic of concrete tasks came up. Not infrequently following a leading question—*Joan, did you bring in your out of class observation? - Who me? What observation?*—this response creates a loop, keeping the object of discussion in the air without settling it and moving on. Deflecting in this manner sets up a back-and-forth volley that plays with the intentions of the leading questions, dodging their insistence and refusing their guidance. This game initiated by leading and deflecting reflects a dynamic that the young people are used to, as it is present in the classroom. Sometimes, Xavi and I felt obliged to occupy a role of teacher and/or enforcers, monitoring the progress of the project and even sometimes, the behavior during the sessions.

Putting on the breaks. While sometimes expressed with great frustration, the questions that at first seemed to bring the project to a halt were most effective in allowing the group to move forward in a meaningful way. When a group member insisted on a different explanation, or demanded that we revisit a topic, the group always gained more insight and, usually, a clearer vision of where we were headed.

We're totally lost!

Once everyone is gathered around the table I speak up, but not before observing that even this far into the project, no one takes out any material—no notebooks or laptops—to begin the session. As per norm, I am the only person who seems to keep track of what is happening.

I press play on the recorder and ask, “Ok so I think today we were going to share our out-of-class observations, right? I didn't see any on our Facebook wall this week so... Did any of you do one?” Looking around, “Anyone?”

Roser begins to protest, “I did an in-class observation, so others had to do the out of class ones!” She's very anxious that some of the work has not been completed and is uncomfortable that I seem to be accusing the group of not following through. She too looks pointedly at the other group members and makes it clear that this was not her responsibility.

Pere scoffs at Roser and then makes eye contact with me. He looks incredulous, “What?? Me?”

Joan laughs and points at him, “You haven't done anything, man!”

Me, "How about you?"

While Joan and Pere are making light of the situation, Laura crosses her arms in front of her chest, she looks incredibly frustrated, and spits out, "Wait, what do you mean? I don't understand!"

Unlike Joan and Pere, Laura isn't acting surprised by the fact that were supposed to go over the out-of-class observations today. Instead, she is clearly feeling frustration with the expectations of the project, claiming to not understand how to do what we've said we were going to do.

Roser answers her first, "Laura, you had the dance." She reminds Laura that when we talked about what each person could observe outside school, that Laura had agreed to write about the dance she organized and choreographed for the school holiday assembly.

Laura, still tense, answers slowly, "Yeah but... what is that? In or out?"

Roser, "It's... in and out."

Everyone laughs at Roser's conclusion, but then the group falls silent.

Laura doesn't let the subject drop. "Wait. So, when you say "in class", we're talking about... You write down what happens in class."

Jordi, "yeah, like what we did those a couple weeks ago... "

Laura continues, "yeah but, "outside"... What do you write down?"

Adrià shrugs as if this was obvious, "What you do at home. 'A day in the life,' you know."

Laura becomes sarcastic, "I get home. I turn on the computer. I do my homework..." . She rolls her eyes.

Xavi tries to remind the group that the point of the observations is not just to record everything, but to respond to the research topic. He adds, "It should relate to the idea of learning more than anything else."

Laura lets out a short laugh, "Ha! Yeah." Her sarcasm is cutting, and silence falls once again.

Sensitive to her frustration, I try to address the question that seems to be floating in the air.

"Laura I agree with you, there is a feeling like we aren't very focused. We need maybe, to be more focused." I'm referring to the fact that the group has not articulated its own research question, beyond the prompt that Xavi and I brought into the project. It feels like a *catch-22*, where until we have some material to look at (i.e., the observations) it will be hard to find these threads that we want to investigate further. However, understandably, Laura seems to sense the vague state of the project and feels insecure about how to proceed.

Laura throws her hands up in the air, "Focused? We're totally lost!" But she laughs—more relaxed this time—and Roser joins in.

The noise in the hallway, which started five minutes ago, is starting to get louder, and more steady. We have ten minutes left in the session and you can feel the school day coming to a close. Joan starts talking to Pere again... and this time they aren't whispering. They appear completely disconnected right now from the group conversation.

Trying to focus the group and come to a conclusion before the session ends, I remind the group of how we did the in-class observations, reviewing the categories we came up with ahead of time that would help us focus.

Xavi suggests that we can use the same categories, "So we can use the same categories? The ones we used for the in-class observations? And we can apply them to our outside observations."

Adrià, "and write like, do an observation of something we do outside, right?"

Rachel, "yes, and rather than the class observation, this would be more like, observing yourself."

Xavi, "yeah, the idea is to be introspective. Record what you do."

Adrià, "well, then we could all do that."

Before we can discuss a new plan in detail, the group is sidetracked by Roser, who is thinking ahead and has questions about how we will do the analysis. When we get back on track, there is less time. The other classes have let the students out and you can hear them in the hallway, making noise. A boy comes into the classroom and hands Adrià notes from Physics class... There are a lot of distractions.

So the session ends in a rush, once again we try to confirm what each person will write about. However, instead of having a different discussion about how to do the observations, it ends up being more a repetition of the last session, as Xavi and I repeat the observations that we had agreed upon earlier. Jordi will write about Volleyball practice, Laura (with Roser's help) will write about organizing a dance for the school assembly. Adrià volunteers to write about "a typical afternoon". With Joan, because he hasn't shared any information about his extracurricular activities besides saying that he spends as little time at home as possible, we have to ask him what he'd like to observe. He replies that he would also write about a typical afternoon but his response makes it clear that he just repeated the last suggestion we said.

"Really?" I ask him as he walks out of the room, and he shrugs without looking back.

* * *

This scene begins in a manner typical to our project sessions, when I ask a leading question that attempts to focus our work for the day. Immediately, several of the young people deflect, either by placing the responsibility on others or shrugging off the suggestion that they should have been working on the project during the week with a laugh. However, notably on this day, something else happens. Laura becomes extremely frustrated and begins to ask real questions about how to do what we are trying to do. She performs what I

call, *putting on the breaks*. This session stands out due to the high level of frustration and anger Laura expresses, but it is this insistence that obliges the group to address the issue. Too often deflection manifests passively, when the young people acquiesce to Xavi and my suggestions, while giving little thought to what the work will entail.

Directing the questions at the project itself, allows the group to break out of the back-and-forth movement established by the leading and deflecting questions. This shift recalls Ellsworth's (1997) description of a mode of address that is not binary but introduces a third term, placing the university researchers and the young people on the same side, rather than in opposition. The difference is played out in the fact that although this is not the first session that we try to come up with topics or activities to observe, it is the first time we discuss, step-by-step, how to write them and why we want to do so, working together to better define our purpose. As the scene suggests, there is no perfect resolution or epiphany produced at the end, but in the following session some of the young people did come with work to share.

However, reading this scene through Ellsworth's description of modes of address, provides another entry point into a subtext that runs through the project and which is embodied by Laura's frustration. Although this is not the question she articulates, in this scene Laura is essentially asking, "What's the point?" She knows that we are researching learning, but she seems confused; she doesn't see how she would contribute to that topic by making a mundane (her point of view) list of her day-to-day activities. Her peers try to give her advice by talking about what could be observed, but this doesn't get at the root of the question, which addresses the how and the why of the exercise. Unlike a couple of group members—such as Roser or Adrià—Laura doesn't want to do something just because it was assigned; she is trying to piece together what she should share and how it contributes to the research project as a whole. The conflict is perhaps about those who accept research paradigms and those who don't, or those who trust the process and those that feel lost.

Here, the action of putting on the breaks amounts to a fundamental questioning of our project. It appears that an unspoken, deeper suspicion lies in the heart of Laura's doubts, that stems from her pondering how to speak of the outside on the inside, our inside—within the project itself. A question sets the research in motion, but not by way of a linear understanding of "progress". Ellsworth's reading of Felman's analysis of Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah*, in which she introduces the third term, provides a theory of discontinuity, a form of confronting complex knowing without reconciling it into what can appear "a facile and exhaustive compatibility with knowledge" (Felman & Laub, 1992, p. 264, cited in Ellsworth, 1997, p. 120). Discontinuities serve to keep a narrative unsettled, breaking with

discourse. This is not just a gesture of introducing multiple points of view, but entails introducing a radical difference that is “irreconcilable”:

Lanzmann's strategic necessity as a filmmaker and as an educator is to *not* foreclose these discontinuities or to resolve them into “knowledge” or “understanding.” ... **His task is to use the discontinuities instead to provoke something else into happening**—something other than the return of the same old same old forgetting, denial, framing through ready-made interpretations, fantasies of complete understanding... With this shift from pedagogy as a representational act to pedagogy as a performative act, we've left the business of communicative dialogue and of realism in education. (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 125. Emphasis added.)

What this scene allows therefore is to look at student voice not in terms of what is said, leading as it were to the 'truth' of young people's experiences, but to introduce it as a performative act that reveals how the young people negotiate what is spoken, and when. The disruptive voice of their questioning serves to push against the implicit search for knowledge, as the project endeavors to learn about how young people learn in and outside school. By turning the questioning back onto the project itself, Laura's frustration is an act of generative refusal, one that creates barrier between her experiences and the research project, as she works to understand how her contribution will fit in, and be used, before deciding what to share.

It is in this very gesture of responding (rather than by 'gaining voice') that Ellsworth locates the agency of participants. She observes, “There is a performative aspect to any response I give, and that prevents my response from being an answer, from being settled” (1997, p. 137). Reading into how the young people negotiate their responses in the act of performing their role as so-called student researchers, it is clear that the youth respond to the research prompt, but they do not provide answers. Their response is not communicative, it doesn't lead to a tidy contribution of “student voice” on the topics of “youth learning” and “school disaffection.” Rather, their choices in how to respond—in the way they question and deflect—create a discontinuity, which itself speaks to the tactical approach to learning that the young people adopt, as well as their complex relationship with the boundaries they navigate in and outside school. By revealing the discontinuous mode of address that circulates throughout the project, voice is not a data source through which we learn about the young people's learning practices, but rather it manifests as a disruption, a discontinuity that opens-up the possibility of *provoking something else into happening*. Questioning reveals a form of mobility in our project, where the sessions are not stepping stones for making progress, and instead become a series of encounters characterized by leaps, falls, and pauses. This idea of tactics and discontinuities will be taken up

in the following section, not in terms of voice—not looking at how learning is spoken—but by looking at how it is practiced.

Inhabiting a living inquiry

Before moving on to the next section, however, we must reflect on where such refusal leaves us? The research process is always subject to what takes place in the field; in this case, the SAR design put into practice reveals a complex relationship between voice, data collection and participatory practices. Broadly conceived, rather than a formal ethnography what we achieved as a group, the participatory project can be better understood as a living inquiry. As explained above, the institutional conditions were not such as to fulfill Fielding's criteria for SAR. Also, the young people themselves were skeptical of the invitation and through their careful implication in the project, shared some things, and not others. Elsewhere, I have discussed the role of living inquiry in this project (Fendler & Hernández-Hernández, 2015) as a useful term for understanding how the young people contributed to the project, not necessarily as researchers but as inquirers.

The concept of living inquiry, with its ties to action research, is an effective framework for opening-up research beyond the academy, by acknowledging that everyone is an expert of her/his own lived experience. While it shares with SAR an interest in provoking institutional change from within, it also describes the process through which we may come to adopt “an attitude of inquiry” (Marshall & Reason, 2008, p. 61) towards our professional lives, or in this case, our personal learning practices. To borrow the distinctions made by Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle (2001), the young people were invited to contribute their *knowledge-in-practice*, through observations of their classrooms and reflections on how some meaningful experiences from their extracurricular activities, and so on. From there, the younger researchers were cast as learner-practitioners whose work allowed them to develop *knowledge-of-practice*, in order to expand our understanding of learning in and outside secondary school.

In addition to thinking about the ways in which secondary students can be considered researchers, the term living inquiry also assists us in describing the organic, lived nature of our progress. Judi Marshall (1999) has defined the practice of what she terms “living life as inquiry” as:

... ways of behaving which encourage [us] to treat little as fixed, finished, clear-cut... living continually in process, adjusting, seeing what emerges, bringing things into question... attempting to open to continually question what [we] know, feel, do and want, and finding ways to engage actively in this questioning and process its stages. (pp. 156–157)

Our invitation to the young people to participate in a national research project was a

“first” for the youth. Therefore an important part of the experience was developing the attitude Marshall describes here, of being able to cast a quizzical and critical gaze on our own practices. This is not always lived as a pleasurable process, and the starts and stops, moments of frustration or impasse, and the more than occasional tangent were inherent to the process as we learned how to research, together.

When we acknowledge that the research process cannot be fully controlled or contained, we are able to consider the wayward dynamic of collaborative research as not antithetic to the project aims. Living inquiry disrupts the sense of linear progress, recognizing that research is not merely a means to an end, placing value on the journey and on the transition inquirers (and the inquiry itself) go through between the start and the finish. It is from this perspective that the group dynamic becomes a focal point of our process. Like Karen Meyer (2010) observed in her experience in a primary classroom, our group project found that living inquiry encouraged us to ask questions and critique what we know:

Living inquiry provides a space for young students to openly explore and begin to understand their own relationship with the world and, in doing so, conceivably push back the notion that they are always already determined and fated by it (p. 88).

Adopting an inquiring attitude reconfigured our identity as learners, and the relational space of our collaborative project was the context where this transformation could take place.

The project set in motion a living inquiry and created a social space where the young people could intervene as they pondered and developed a response to the research prompt. Joanne Rappaport (2008) reminds us that when carrying out collaborative ethnographies, “what happens in the field is much more than data collection” (p. 7). This group experience testifies to this. The experience of collaboration in fact says more learning practices than the “reporting” the young people did. The different communities of discourse that are active in this project reveal the encounter as a social space of learning. The young people's participation was an interruption in their everyday school lives, displacing them both physically—as they missed class to meet with us—and also in terms of their identity, in that we were asking them to occupy the role of researchers rather than students. The reflection provoked by the act of becoming-inquirer is an outcome that is as equally important as what the youth reported on during the fieldwork.

Coming back to the notion of encounter, the epistemological position of researching *with*, when not based on the desire to “give voice” to the young people, becomes a place-making technique, that generates a site where young people's voices can be heard. It enacts

an encounter, a *short-circuit* that interrupts representational practices, challenging the relationship between fieldwork and knowledge production. The performative act of engaging in dialogue, of exchanging communication for a disruptive mode of address, has the effect of troubling the research design. At the same time, it allows for *something else* to take its place. By adopting an attitude of inquiry a change was introduced; data was not collected, it emerged, as learning practices do, in an eventful space of encounter.

4.3. Learning tactics

The everyday practices of learning

Transitioning from considering student voice in terms of the disruptive, discontinuous gestures it performs in a participatory encounter, this section now addresses how to frame these gestures as emergent learning practices performed in an eventful space. This maintains the position of reading the project not in terms of how learning was reported on by the young people, by considering the extent to which their responses to the project were a site for playing with, and around, the inquiry structure that was proposed. Looking at the youth response as a tactical maneuver illuminates the agency and objectives of the research participants, turning the 'negative space' of the fieldwork into a generative one.

Tactics, as defined by de Certeau (1984) serve to:

bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of "discipline." Pushed to their ideal limits, these procedures and ruses of consumers compose the network of an antidisciplines. (pp. xiv-xv)

When working with the transcriptions of the fieldwork sessions, a series of exchanges began to emerge that brought together a body of improvisational gestures: *tuning out; blank response; tangents; sidetracked; inside joke; researcher in the dark...* These codes paint a picture of a group dynamic characterized by moments of unknowing and a series of unanticipated actions that interrupt the project aims. Framing these activities merely as a negation of the project however, does not do justice to this productive form of refusal.

Sidetracked

I am looking at Joan and Pere while Roser is leading the group in a discussion about what they could observe outside the classroom. They have their cell phone in their hands, in their laps. They are looking at their screens, and at each other's screens, and are leaning in towards each other, heads together, huddling apart from the group. They aren't paying any attention to the rest of us.

They are across the table from me, but since I'm sitting down, it doesn't actually cover-up what is happening underneath. I think that if I was standing, as perhaps is more typical of the position teachers adopt in the classroom, they're phones would be hidden

from view. Not that their body language was working to keep their actions a secret.

"What are you looking at?" I ask them.

"What? Nothing!" "My phone is off!" ...

* * *

In the *Practices of Everyday Life*, de Certeau (1984) develops an analysis that pushes against the micro-structure of power (proposed by Foucault) and provides a counter-proposal by recovering the myriad ways in which this structure of power is upset and challenged. Dividing the universe into "producers" (who create, maintain and impose disciplinary spaces) and "consumers" (who operate within these spaces), he describes actions that either support or subvert "the proper". Within this environment, the tactical appropriation of disciplined social structures offers a theoretical basis for imagining the itinerant space of the learner (consumer), who opposes the fixed space of the school. In his description of the grammar of movement, de Certeau demonstrates how transiting through the city (a disciplinary space) is an embodied strategy, on one hand subverting power structures and on the other, creating new possibilities for inhabiting one's surroundings.

As unrecognized producers, poets of their own acts, silent discoverers of their own paths in the jungle of functionalist rationality, consumers produce through their signifying practices something that might be considered similar to the "wandering lines"... "indirect" or "errant" trajectories obeying their own logic. (de Certeau, 1984, p. xviii)

de Certeau thinks of consumers' everyday creativity in terms of trajectories that can be mapped as a dynamic tracing of temporal events and acts. As such, he introduces a permanent negotiation between the (proper) power of space and the spontaneous (and tactical) act of occupying it. His argument doesn't reject the potential of space to act as a dominant or normative force, yet he insists that everyday practices introduce new interpretations and meanings in any context. When thinking about education, and the tension between disciplinary spaces and the subversive tactics, we are reminded of the smooth and striated spaces described by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004). In this project, schooling represents a disciplined space, in which young people are the consumers (which is not to automatically position teachers as the producers, since they are also subjected to the external pressure of standardized education...).

Smooth versus striated spaces

Oh man! ___ [name of computer game – not captured in the transcription]

Exclaiming the name of this computer game, which neither Xavi or I are familiar with, brings everyone to attention. Roser says, "Oh yeah, I remember!" reminiscing with something akin to nostalgia about a game that was popular three years ago, and Laura chimes

in in agreement.

The topic came about because Xavi asked the students about the 1×1 policy the school adopted, in 2009, making the students in our group members of the 1st class where each student had a notebook they brought to school. We eventually asked them about this policy because we knew about it, but the notebooks didn't make much of an appearance in the research project, and even when they did appear, not everyone seemed to have one.

Jordi blurts out the name of the game right away, seemingly without thinking, then elaborates:

“The teachers, I mean, they didn't know how to handle it, we were horrible. Everyone was online on their laptops all the time. At one point, every single person – every person – in our year was playing this game with each other, all at once.”

Xavi, “Everyone? In all the different classrooms?”

Adrià, “Yeah, it was crazy!”

* * *

Rather than celebrating behavior that can derail activities in the classroom and the research project merely for their deviance, the notion of tactics introduces a reading of young people's actions as creative potentialities, and therefore provides a way to see them as productive learning practices. On one hand, de Certeau's (1984) concept of *making do* contains the idea of producing or responding according to the materials one has on hand; this clever, resourceful act is a way of making life more livable, as it “simultaneously organizes a network of relations, poetic ways of “making do” (bricolage), and a re-use of marketing structures” (p. xv). *Making do* is a bricolage practice which appropriates and improvises with everyday objects to address the task at hand. In this case, this activity manifests in small moments, like when the young people use my notes and photographs to make the Prezi (why should they put into their own words what I already have written down?) and get the presentation done by filling in the blanks to make up for what others have left out (leaving the blaming and deflecting behind).

Tactics, on the other hand, are a more resistant practice that actively subvert dominant structures, amounting to:

a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. ... The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the means to *keep to itself*, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection: it is a maneuver “within the enemy's field of vision”... It does not, therefore, have the option of planning, general strategy... It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow... This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and

seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment...

It is a guileful ruse (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 36-37. Emphasis original).

Tactics enact the negotiated response to the project, where the young people used the research as a space for developing a critique of the school. Their response rejected the “self-ethnography” we introduced and paid less attention to pondering the in/out binary we suggested as a focus. As the young people tested out topics and behaviors that were taboo in the classroom, the sessions became a collection of accumulated maneuvers developed around a critique of the school, both speaking and representing how students strive to navigate formal education.

In this way, tactics become not just a way of creating more habitable spaces, it allows us to consider young people as desiring subjects:

the trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop. (de Certeau, p. xviii)

... actions are incorporated as tactics in order to understand the many ways of establishing a kind of reliability within the situations imposed on an individual, that is, of making it possible to live in them by reintroducing into them the plural mobility of goals and desires—an art of manipulating and enjoying. (de Certeau, p. xxii)

This is precisely the interest in *plugging-in* (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) de Certeau at this point in the analysis, because he provides a framework that values rather than pathologizes the way young people work to inhabit the school space (and by proxy, the site of the research project). Considering the young people as active agents who are capable of determining their role in the research project is in line with Tuck and Yang's (2014) aim when they push against “damage-focused narratives,” in favor of “a desire-based framework” that provides “a more complex and dynamic understanding of what one, or a community, comes to know in (a) lived life” (p. 231).

Working towards an interpretation of participation as a tactical maneuver is an attempt to acknowledge the so-called invisible learning so often marginalized and devalued within the formal curriculum, and therefore expand our understanding of how students develop their learning practices inside, outside and against the school space. Rather than present the fieldwork as a case of misbehavior, tactics are a way of recognizing the agency students had, and how they turned the research project into a process that suited their own aims and needs, rather than those of the university or school. The following section will take an in-depth look at the tactical appropriation of the fieldwork on behalf of the young people.

*Fictionalizing the account**A (re)presentation of the project*

After their presentation³³, the six students sit down and face the small crowd in front of them. The public forms a small semi-circle, having rearranged the neat rows of paired desks in the classroom into a manner better fit for discussion. The gathering consists of both known and unknown people. On the one hand, the youth recognize their principle, the Physics and Chemistry teacher who negotiated to allow this project to take place in the center, and two of the 4th-year tutors that were able to come, as well as me, and my colleague Xavi Giró who were involved in the project that was just presented. On the other hand, three people are new. The PI of the national project that supports the students' work, Fernando Hernández, has come to watch and it is the first time the young people have seen him. There are also two guests that the teacher liaison invited from the Town Hall, who work in the Department of Youth. The threat of having government officials attend their presentation had been looming large, but the two unassuming and surprisingly youthful figures ultimately do not make a grand impression; they hang back and refrain from asking questions.

Prior to the start of the presentation, there was a buzz to the air. The young people fluttered around, organizing and rehearsing up (and past) the last minute, ignoring the fact that some people had already taken their seats. They hovered over the two computers, stepping in front of and then away from the screen, re-arranging themselves and coordinating who would talk, who would pass the slides. Now, after the fact, the nervous energy that had characterized the start of the presentation has dissipated. What takes its place, however, is not a celebratory mood of accomplishment but an almost somber confrontation of what is to come. Seating themselves side-by-side in a straight line, the youth don't join the circle but remain, symbolically, on the stage. "And now for the jury..." joked Joan under his breath, and the young people cast sideways glances at each other and begin to murmur amongst themselves. It seems like everyone knows that the presentation is far from over.

Here marks the moment when the research project that contributes the empirical data to this dissertation is made public for the first time, offered up to the scrutiny of those school officials who allowed the project to take place. Sitting off to the side, not quite aligned with the crowd but not with the young people either, I deeply empathize with the students, wondering how the teachers will respond to the work we've been carrying out, whether they think it was worth the time invested.

33 To view the Prezi, visit: <https://prezi.com/iq-nciuka7ik/in-out-la-mallola/>.



Figure 9. “And now for the jury...” Photograph from the presentation to school teachers and administration.

The principal is the first to raise his hand (Fig. 9) but before he can speak, his cell phone rings. After fumbling with the touch screen to turn it off, he gives up and answers the phone with a perfunctory “I’ll call you back,” and hangs up. This is met with a giggle from Roser and an exaggerated sigh and an eye-roll from Laura. Unfazed, he begins by providing a positive overall assessment of the project:

“Well, so, when the project was first proposed we understood that it would be a serious commitment, it would mean disrupting the normal schedule, and placing a group of girls and boys into a new dynamic. The biggest doubt I had was, would they be productive? Would they learn something different, to make up for losing class time? Seeing the results, I think-- you know, I congratulate everyone involved because I think you have learned things, I think we made the right decision.”

He then poses the first question: “My question is, has it been worthwhile for you, participating in something like this? Would you do it again? Have you achieved what you wanted to?”

The group doesn't hesitate before answering, launching their comments right away, one after another: “It wasn't just the classes, like Physics which I missed. Here we have had the opportunity to learn how to research,” Laura states emphatically.

“It will be useful for next year, when we have to do a research project,” says Jordi.

“And the group work. I'm not, I don't like working in groups, but here it was all group work,” Pere adds.

The principal interrupts here, joking with Pere in the informal and jovial manner he has with his students: “Maybe you should be practicing everyday, eh? And not just keeping what you learned in your back pocket!” His comment is met with good-natured

laughter, and the young people continue answering.

"I don't know, talking about things, coming to a conclusion, it went OK," Joan brings the conversation back to an evaluation of the project.

Adrià offers a conclusion, drawing on the vocabulary Xavi and I used to introduce the project back in October, in the second session, when we talked about what it meant to do research in the social sciences, as opposed to a laboratory. "Above all, it's a research project that isn't—I mean, it wasn't just a science experiment. There wasn't just one possible outcome, or just one answer, it was different, it was more like a social project." His justification is the same one we provided to them and hearing our words cited his response, almost verbatim, highlights what I found so unsettling about the presentation. Where are *they, the young people*, in the Prezi? What happened to our process, why did it disappear?

The principal doesn't have a follow-up question and the next person to intervene is Mari, the teacher-liaison. She is the person closest to the project, having become involved with the research group at the outset she is most aware of the project aims and objectives, and her question brings us back to the research topic, regarding learning in and outside school.

"We can see that learning in and outside school are different for you. But here inside, you've had a different kind of learning experience, right?"

Laura interrupts, "that's what I was saying..."

Mari continues her line of thought, "You've talked about learning when you are interested in the topic, and the idea of making an effort. I wanted to ask you, have you been rewarded for the effort, in this case?" Mari takes up the critique that was expressed during the presentation, which seemed to negatively represent in-school learning and placed a higher value on learning outside school. She begins to add nuance to the critique, highlighting the fact that while the presentation was critical of the classes and the school, the young people are giving positive evaluations of the project. She claims that the project took place in school, surely in an effort to not maintain such a clear division as out is good, in is bad. Through her questioning, however, instead of interrogating this representation, her questions echo the principle's and asks that young people to describe what they have accomplished.

"What has your reward been? Seeing this from the outside, I can see that it has been rewarding, but what would you say? For you, in this project that took place inside, not outside, what was the reward?"

Laura begins, "well, I guess for me, it was about seeing myself, and about recognizing that as much as I make an effort inside, I also do outside. And sharing with the others, and finding out what everyone was interested in..."

"Me too," Joan adds quickly, nodding his head.

"Well," Roser reflects, "I guess my reward is feeling like I was learning, and doing it

with my classmates. It's not everyday that you learn how to research, and so that's important."

"Yeah exactly," Pere interjects.

The conversation takes a turn when Laura speaks again, this time addressing the subtext of Mari's comments, and repeats the critique of the school that was articulated in the presentation, this time in less ambiguous terms.

"Also, at school, I feel like I'm here just to learn and be quiet. I mean, I never give my own opinion. But with them, like Xavi said, it was us who said *now we'll do this* or *let's look for information about that*. It was more participatory."

We did not discuss learning in and outside school in this black-and-white manner during the project, but Laura seizes the opportunity here to speak her mind, backed by the platform the group has been given in the format of the presentation.

Jordi jumps in, more conciliatory, by adding "it was a different way of learning."

Whereas Joan takes the opportunity to join in the critique, "It was us, without anyone telling us what we had to do and all that."

Finally Adrià speaks up, changing the tone of the discussion. While his words are less brash than Laura's comment they are perhaps equally critical of the school, "We had a certain amount of independence without everything being handed to us. So we weren't following any standard ways of learning, where it has to be the same for everybody. Everyone is a bit different, everyone has something that distinguishes them from everyone else. Something that makes you different, or more different."

After interventions on behalf of the principal and Mari, Tonyo then enters the conversation and introduces a new line of questioning. His transition marks the end of the discussion about learning outside versus inside school, navigating away from that topic without responding to the challenge the young people introduced. Instead, he questions how the project came together, focusing on the collaboration and participation.

"I was wondering, how did you work as a team? Did you all cooperate on everything? Was there really never any conflict? Did you always get along perfectly? Well...?"

Jordi replies quickly, "Yes," and the others remain silent, with nothing to add.

The principal, who stepped out of the room during the discussion on school learning, has returned and joins in, "And you each gave the best of yourselves? Did you give everything you could? Or could any of you have contributed more than you did?"

There is a small pause and then Joan responds with the general remark, "You can always do better, contribute more--"

-- of course there is always room for improvement," Pere jumps in.

Joan: "But we tried, we really gave one-hundred percent."

Observing this exchange, I begin to feel frustrated that the conversation is not focusing on the project *per se*, and instead interrogates the young people's behavior. At the same time, I also become aware of a dynamic that I hadn't anticipated. Sitting in a

straight line, facing the crowd, the young people have formed a united front and speak as if to justify the project and their actions.

Today the young people are students, not researchers, I wrote in my notebook. And further down the page, *teamwork means something different when the teachers talk about it; it isn't necessarily a way to develop and support the pedagogical relationship, but a more like a "key competency," it's something that is expected of them, and which they are expected to demonstrate proficiency in.* After Joan's comment, cheeky in his sincerity, about his admirable effort (which his peers stoically accept rather than challenge), the discussion evolves into a consideration of whether the teamwork referenced by the group is transferable to the class project that will take place this spring. Pondering the possibilities, Tonyo comments:

"Of course, with sixty people, more conflicts pop up. People have to confront and negotiate different ideologies... Here there aren't any ideologies, there are some inclinations, but not really any ideologies."

Then, acknowledging Laura and Adrià's indignant faces and their claims that this project *of course involved ideas!*, Tonyo clarifies what he means by ideologies, observing that there weren't any deep conflicting opinions among group members, no one had to decide between, for example, doing a play or a musical, between speaking Spanish or Catalan... When the young people seem to acquiesce to this assumption and cede the argument to Tonyo, Xavi steps in and points out that, in fact, there were a lot of negotiations that took place, citing the decision to do a Prezi as an example, given that many group members were against it initially.

At this point, the presentation has evolved into a two-sided discussion, wherein instead of opening-up the conversation, exploring elements that were part of the research project in the project, each party is reiterating their position, and the young people in particular are defensive. Isolated as the project had been from the regular school life, I had lost track of the different interests and agendas circling around the project. Of course, the school's justification and support of this experiment is an integral element to its development and success. Still, when this agenda that came to the fore during the presentation, I was surprised by how much focus was on the school and how little we spent time talking about the research process and results.

* * *

In subsequent readings of how the presentation in the school unfolded, rather than feel frustration for the lack of recognition on behalf of the school of the work the young people had done, I began to question the presentation itself and ask why it provoked so little dialogue. I have come to conclude that with the Prezi, our group is guilty of "telling not showing." The collaborative work dynamic is briefly mentioned but the relational element of the project remains invisible; the Prezi fails to capture the experiences we shared and how meaning was constructed during the process. With some perspective, I

have come to read this representation as a “success story,” in other words, a narrative that does not problematize or critique what it represents. Written as a heroic tale, the Prezi presents the best possible outcome of the project and glides over the obstacles, frustrations, and all the loose and untidy ends. It is this characteristic of the Prezi that likely influenced the way it was received the day of the school presentation. I understand now that by stating (telling) but not illustrating (showing) what had taken place during the project, the audience was both shut out of process and led to be mistrustful of an account so one-sided.

When we began to develop the Prezi, Xavi and I hoped that it would allow us to see how the young people articulated the project. Gathering the material together, we were eager to see which things they would highlight, what had made an impact, and how they would evaluate the experience. However, when the day arrived to present the Prezi, I already knew that I would glean little new information from what we had produced. In retrospect, it is clear that, the young people had a deep understanding of their audience and a clear motivation regarding how to present themselves. While I desired a critical and open-ended reflection on the research processes, the young people had created a class presentation designed with their teachers in mind, and angled to present themselves as good students.

It turned out that presenting to a group of tutors and teachers turned the presentation into an opportunity to reflect on how the project contributed to the school's mission. The reactions frame the project within the school curriculum, particularly Tonyo who was interested in how this experience could contribute to the 4th-year project that was soon to be underway. Undeniably this was an opportune time to think about how this project connects and contributes to the students' school experience, but it also limited the feedback, recognizing only part of the work that took place. At the time of the presentation, I worried about this reaction, noting: *if projects like this are only seen as pilot projects that support the school curriculum, the ideas generated in the research, specifically about learning in and outside school, are not given as much consideration. The thinking seems to be: how can the project support the school, not how can the project challenge and introduce change.*

In a re-appropriation of the negative connotations of sophism, de Certeau (1984) offers the following provocation:

As the author of a great "strategic" system, Aristotle was already very interested in the procedures of this enemy which perverted, as he saw it, the order of truth. He quotes a formula of this protean, quick, and surprising adversary that, by making explicit the basis of sophistic, can also serve finally to define a tactic as I understand the term here: it is a matter, Corax said, of "making the worse argument seem the better". (p. 38)

If the presentation was, ultimately, a “sophist” argument, making the work carried out by

the students *appear better than it was*, then according to de Certeau it was also a tactic. The young people produced a narrative that, by mimicking what was believed to be the “right answer,” performs a profound critique of the research project, where student voice becomes a deliberately (tactically) fictionalized account of what took place. Of course, this left little room for discussing what had actually occurred, keeping personal evaluations at bay. For example, the individual descriptions of each group member were written by Laura – upon reading them the other members protested, but the original texts were left unchanged. The session summaries, written by Adrià, sound like a text-book definition of ethnography and have little to do with the procedures undertaken by the group. The individual evaluations that conclude the presentation were written individually, but Roser was the first to add hers to the Prezi, and most of the other responses pick up on the key elements she highlights as important, creating a rather homogenized opinion about the process. In this manner, the Prezi systematically refuses to satiate our desire for the authentic contributions of the young people. de Certeau continues his reflection on the sophists:

In its paradoxical concision, this formula delineates the relationship of forces that is the starting point for an intellectual creativity as persistent as it is subtle, tireless, ready for every opportunity, scattered over the terrain of the dominant order and foreign to the rules laid down and imposed by a rationality founded on established rights and property. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 38)

Within this framework, the Prezi is evidence of the performative appropriation by the young people of the project and its aims. Based on the questions they were asked and how they chose to answer them, one can gather that the “success story” produced by the young people wasn't a casual result, but an active decision. In the way they defend the project during the presentation, it's clear that they wanted to justify the time they spent missing class, and convince the audience that they had done rigorous work. Positioning themselves in front of their teachers as researchers legitimates their critique of the school and gives them a platform for expressing it. Lankshear and Knobel (2002), who have also considered the role of tactics and learning, suggest that young learners' tactics display, like the sophists, a “manifestation of smartness”, and:

forms of intelligent behaviour that can be understood in terms ranging from Postman and Weingartner's (1969) notion of having an efficient ‘crap detector’ – an oldie, but a goodie – to more mainstream concepts of kinds of ‘higher order’ logics appropriate to a ‘meta age’ that values originality, innovation, capacity to make quick shifts, and so on. It is a fair bet that ‘getting by’ in the world that awaits today's learners will have a lot more to do with honing tactical ‘smarts’ than with submitting to technical mechanisms that promote what Donaldo Macedo (1994) has magnificently referred to as ‘stupidification’. (p. 10)

While working with the young people, I experienced frustration during the fieldwork with the lack of progress I hoped to see, as I held on to my desire that the Prezi serve as the site of *authentic voice*, where the students would finally put their own mark on the research project (See: Fendler, 2013, where I articulate this desire. The text was written prior to developing the fieldwork). This fantasy, stemming from pre-conceptions about researching with young people, was efficiently subverted. Instead, I encountered a much more nuanced (and personal) portrayal of the everyday tactics young people deploy in school. The Prezi is a presentation that returns the legitimation of academic language approved by the school, but returns it with a difference. This difference infuses what is written with irony, turning it into a cynical representation by the young people of what adults want to hear. This response, is as Ellsworth (1997) describes:

an ironic turn. Because it returns a difference, it has a performative dimension and force—“always somewhere subversive”—always circling back to and from elsewhere, never describing the same path in the way a circle does. (p. 148)

While I considered a range of possible responses to the Prezi, eventually I got on board and joined in. *Making do* with available video footage, I created a short video clip spoofing the our “participatory ethnography,” following the format of a blooper reel. The students added this video to their Prezi for the final assembly, unsurprisingly (and rightly) claiming it as their own.



Figure 10. “Blooper reel”. Edited by the author with footage from the project sessions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpe2kXhx0uw>

Ironic validity

The discussion provided by Deborah P. Britzman (2000; 1995) about educational post-structuralist ethnography points out how poststructuralism questions three aspects of ethnographic authority: “the authority of empiricism, the authority of language, and the authority of reading and understanding” (p. 28). Britzman (2000) describes subjects, participants, the author, and readers, as:

textualized identities...[whose] voices create a cacophony and dialogic display of contradictory desires, fears, and literary tropes that, if carefully ‘read,’ suggests just how slippery speaking, writing, reading, and describing subjectivity really are. (p. 28)

We can see how a loss of belief in the text and in the object of research must also throw into question the notion of a unified subject carrying out the research. Lather (2007) situates this decentering of the subject as a byproduct of working with ethnography after post-structuralism; arguing that “to situate inquiry as a ruin/rune is to foreground the limits and necessary misfirings of a project, problematizing the researcher as ‘the one who knows’” (p. 10-11). This process is what foregrounds the characterization of her project as “getting lost,” an act that is “something other to commanding, controlling, mastery” (p. 11).

The process of becoming-nomad in this inquiry certainly began with getting lost, both conceptually and methodologically. The journey was ushered in by my skepticism in using an interpretive framework the subsequent turn to the methodology of plugging in. The disillusionment with interpretation, explained in chapter 3, was born out of the onus it puts on the researcher's perspective of the events:

Interpretation is usually a subject-centered project. Its search for truth privileges the self-understanding of either the individual or collective (or some individuals or some collective), while at the same time acknowledging that there is always more to the self than the existing self-understanding makes available. (Ferguson, 1993, p. 328)

As Ferguson implies, even when we accept truths as partial (Clifford, 1986), interpretation privileges the researcher's telling of the tale. However, in an event that cracks open this dissertation, we see here how the young people's interpretation of our group project, as represented by the Prezi and their public presentation of our results, is a tale that throws into question the role of interpretation in this project. In the aftermath of this presentation, I struggled to find a way to speak of the fieldwork without contradicting this version of events and thereby supplanting one interpretation for another. While I cannot confirm this tale, I do not want to re-write it either, I want to engage with it. To do so, while mourning the loss of authority and understanding, I admit that I initially fell back on a certain

amount of irony in order to moving forward. Kathy Ferguson (1993) encourages this response:

The tension between longing for and being wary of a secure ontological and epistemological home, if handled ironically, need not be a source of despair; it can instead produce an appropriate humility concerning theory and an ability to sustain in the contrary pull of continuing to want what cannot be fully had.
(p. 35)

Returning to the fieldwork after the fact, while developing the dissertation, my insecurities regarding the ambivalence of *what* of the project accomplished were replaced by an ironic characterization. At this point this should be evident in the vocabulary used, which includes terms like *negative space*, *working the ruins*, *getting lost*, *pointless geography*, *detritorialization*, *sophism*... even to a certain extent *the nomad*... While all of these terms contribute theoretically to the project, their inclusion is also inspired by a tinge of humor, it is a vocabulary that admits defeat.

By expressing my frustrated attempts at interpreting the events of the group project, this ironic approach allows me to acknowledge rather than attempt to fix or solve the complex, sometimes contradictory, contributions of the group project.

Irony is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true. Irony is about humour and serious play." (Haraway, 1991, p. 149)

Therefore while it was in part an ironic response to the results of the group project that nomadology became a guiding concept for re-encountering the field, it is also *serious play*. I use an alienating lexicon to gain a critical distance from the events, while still working as an insider. At the same time, I am able to recognize in my own process the gestures of the young people who were part of the project; fluent as they were in irony and sarcasm, this position mimics their ability to keeps the issue at hand at arm's length, while dancing around different versions of the truth.

This ironic position is a sort of sly deterritorialization, it decenters the interpretive stance by highlighting "the gap between the spoken and the silent, between what is said and what is meant or can be heard" (Ferguson, 1993, p. 31). Perhaps there is truth in what it conveys, but you have to scratch for it, buried as it is just below the surface.

4.4. Nomadic pedagogy

To close this section, I bring together an assemblage of quotations, to confront the question that echoes loudly throughout this chapter: *What did we learn from this?*

Fielding:

Promotion of student engagement turns out to be about the development of essentially disciplinary devices aimed at increased compliance and enhanced productivity. The entry of student voice into the previously forbidden territory of teaching and learning is neither innocent nor innocuous. In re-articulating the largely predictable list of what makes a good teacher, a good lesson or a good school, students become unwitting agents of government control. Equally unsatisfactory is the atomistic individualism typical of neo-liberal thinking, its ironically undifferentiated account of 'voice', its pervasive silence about issues of power, and its highly instrumental view of learning. (2010, p. 3)

Lankshear and Knobel:

Producers, by definition, are less directly acquainted with the responses of Consumers, and are too involved in Producing for the option of looking at Consumer operations... This is parallel to a tendency within, say, critical literacy, for literacy theorists to spend time and energy developing techniques to be used to analyse texts critically, as distinct from concentrating on what consumers of texts actually do with the artifacts they consume and how they do it. (2002, p. 4.)

Tuck and Yang:

Moreover, some narratives die a little when contained within the metanarrative of social science... Extending Richardson's analysis of Vizenor's work, beneath the intent gaze of the social scientific lens, shadow stories lose their silences, their play of meaning. The stories extracted from the shadows by social science research frequently become relics of cultural anthropological descriptions... (2014, p. 235)

The selected citations, thus assembled, address a deep skepticism of the notion of voice, and the consequences of soliciting it. They raise questions regarding how to allow the experience of others—in this case the youth participants—to infiltrate research in a way that doesn't turn their contributions into fodder for 'producers'. Rudduck and Fielding (2006) discuss what can happen when young people's voices are shared in conditions where power relations, authenticity and inclusion are not taken into account. This, as Lankshear and Knobel (2002) suggest, often has the effect of leading researchers to analyze the contributions as data for their own purposes, without considering the effects of participation in the research project. As Fielding (2010) indicates, separated from lived experiences, voice can become a token, a decorative object in an individualistic neo-liberal society. Tuck and Yang (2014) express further concerns about the role of analysis, wondering if due to the academic tendency (itself neo-liberal) to over-expose stories through interpretation and representation, there are stories that “the academy doesn't deserve to hear” (p. 232).

At stake in this assemblage, therefore, is whether or not research can allow:

gestures [to] act performatively, rather than representationally, and resituate the events of places... within a different structure of relations. (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 146)

The stories told by the young people—the ongoing tale developed with the researchers during the project, and the other similar but different story represented by the Prezi—are noteworthy for “refusing to settle” (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 140) the understanding about their learning experiences. Through their deflection of the research question, and by using the sessions as a site of immediate critique, cast outwards, the space of inquiry becomes a smooth space that interrupts the striated space of the school, as well as the research expectations. Smooth spaces, characterized by their nomadic thought, are motivated by contingent (not causal) chains of events and are woven together by the “the fabric of the rhizome [which] is the conjunction, 'and...and...and...'" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 28).

Nomadology, as a pedagogy of tactics, suggests that learning practices can be developed in such a way that they make spaces more inhabitable. How this is accomplished may be controversial, as demonstrated by de Certeau's spatial appropriations. Exploiting disruptive practices, the participatory project can be seen as an eventful space that does not fix an experience but multiplies it. Its impact, for the young people, stems from its unpredictability which is what allowed the youth to take over the project in the first place.

This is a position that ties in several concepts introduced thus far. First, it reveals the way multiplicity returns difference. As Haraway (1991) observed, working ironically is a way to include “contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes” (p. 149). Keeping the project fractured is a way of keeping it active, becoming. This brings up the second point, regarding the project of becoming, in relation to the learning process:

It is through this process—what philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1990) refers to as the event of ontological immanence—that indeterminate, differential ways of seeing and thinking emerge... the Deleuzian event is a complex singularity, a discontinuous agglomeration of heterogeneous movements that disarticulate ideological representations. Representationalist thinking is at issue because assessments of teachers' and students' performances once ontologically codified, restrict and impede any emergence of unpredictability in classrooms and nullify creative modes of address. (Garoian, 2014, p. 187)

By orienting the final presentation of the project results toward a perceived reception on behalf of the teachers and school administration, the project engaged with a *representationalist logic* and confronted the possibility of assessment.

Initially, this return to the familiar was alleviating; the young people who were accustomed to carrying out their school assignments in a timely manner sprang into action and

set to work. The shift was dramatic, before the Prezi we grappled with the idea of learning and discussed abstractions like 'methodology'. Once the Prezi was open, the sessions were dedicated to producing the material we needed in order to "fill it in." *Making do*, the Prezi is not really a synthesis of the project, it is an addition, an agglomeration; it tells the story of its own production and in doing so, fictionalizes the account of the earlier sessions. As such, the Prezi becomes one addition in the assemblage surrounding the project. Rather than fix a representation of the experience it enacts a *yes, and* gesture, forming part of an assemblage of material that also includes: the YouTube video I created shortly after the presentation, this dissertation, and the repeated appearance of this fieldwork in different articles, chapters and a meta-analysis produced by the research team (of which I form part), for the national project.

It is through this performative depiction of the project—which tells the tale of students performing "as researchers"—that the nomadic position is maintained. I now wonder if the students, consciously or not, believed that stories about their learning outside school were stories "the academy doesn't deserve to hear" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 232), let alone their teachers. However, if the project is understood as an event in the Deleuzeogouattarian sense, then by collapsing the present and future, it involved the young people in the experience of becoming-inquirer, where they could put into play their identities as students, learners, young people and researchers.

To conclude, this reflection on response and the development of the Prezi presents the project as a microcosm that reveals how learners negotiate spaces of formal education (striated spaces) through the "weak art" of tactical interventions (de Certeau, 1984). In this environment, it has been productive to consider Ellsworth's (1997) description of modes of address, which rephrases the understanding of 'voice' in terms of 'response'. A response implies a different type of agency that is not dependent on a researcher's ability to empower young people, recognizing instead the self-empowered decisions initiated by those who choose to respond. This framework is tested by a returning to the last day of the fieldwork, when the young people presented the project to their teachers and the school principle. Here we witnessed a response so calculated and so at odds with the day-to-day life of the project, that it read as a performative representation of "students as researchers."

At this point in the engagement with the research event, the chapter plugs into the concept of nomadology in order to ponder what this specific experience in the field can tell us about young people's relationship to learning. By zooming out to look at the bigger picture, the text questions what ontological conditions of "becoming learner" are made possible through an activation of tactical learning practices, or what I term, *nomadic pedagogy*.

The presentation developed by the students (the Prezi) read from a perspective of nomadic pedagogy, becomes a symbol of representational logic corresponding to a “transcendent position towards being” (Atkinson, 2011, p. 6), whereas the immaterial and relational experiences of the group project depend on “the potentiality and ‘unknown’ of becoming” (Atkinson, 2011, p. 6). In predicting that the relational aspect of the project could not be spoken in the classroom environment, nor heard by the teachers, we witness the students responding in a majoritarian language. While this was experienced initially on my part as a disappointment, feeling as if the Prezi “failed” to give an account of what took place, in subsequent readings I have come to see the Prezi as one version, in a series, of the ways this fieldwork has been reworked and disseminated in a continuous re-writing of the fieldwork. Or in other words, a palimpsest that enacts the contingent multiplicity that gives rise to the eventful space.

IV. LAYERING



Ann Hamilton. Photographs from the installation and performance *Tropos*. 1993.
Dia Art Foundation, New York.
Photography credit: Thibault Jeanson. © Ann Hamilton Studio.

Statement from AnnHamiltonStudio.com:

In this work Hamilton continues her investigation of reading—erasing mechanically reproduced letters with the measured sensory, repetitive acts of the body and adding a new mark of unmaking, or rewriting, the page.

For her installation *Tropos...* an attendant read each line of text silently while at the same time, with an electric burner in hand, burned each line from the book as it was read, causing the air to fill with acrid smoke. For Hamilton, the smoke itself is part of the language of remaking, for “the transformation of the text—printed word—to smoke is reabsorbed as smell by the hair, the floor; thus word is again materialized.”

Underlining

Roser's in-class observation:

[This is a translation of Roser's narrative] We use our books, we never take out our computers, we never use our cell phones, the teacher doesn't write on the blackboard, she has a PowerPoint slide on the projector showing a graph of the epoch we are studying. Basically, someone reads and we underline the text in our books.

In the classroom we are seated in pairs, and there are no class discussions. When we take turns reading aloud if there is a strange word the teacher will ask if we know what it means, and whoever raises their hand and responds will get points.

The students ask about words we don't understand as we read.

We are never in groups in the classroom. We do some group work, but always outside school hours, on our own time.

During the class only the teacher talks, the students are quiet and well-behaved. People pay attention to the teacher, but some I don't know, they look somewhere else, as if they weren't interested.

No one laughs or makes gestures, they only underline. No one sleeps.

Some people are working, they make an effort to underline and pay attention. Others don't, they're in their own world.

We correct the homework we had, Sections 2.1 and 2.2 of Theme 4: Liberalism in Catalonia and Spain, from our textbook. We're always assigned homework. Today we are told to summarize pages 74-75 and look up information on the *Anthem of Riego*.

The students only have to do their homework, underline, listen, and pass the exams.

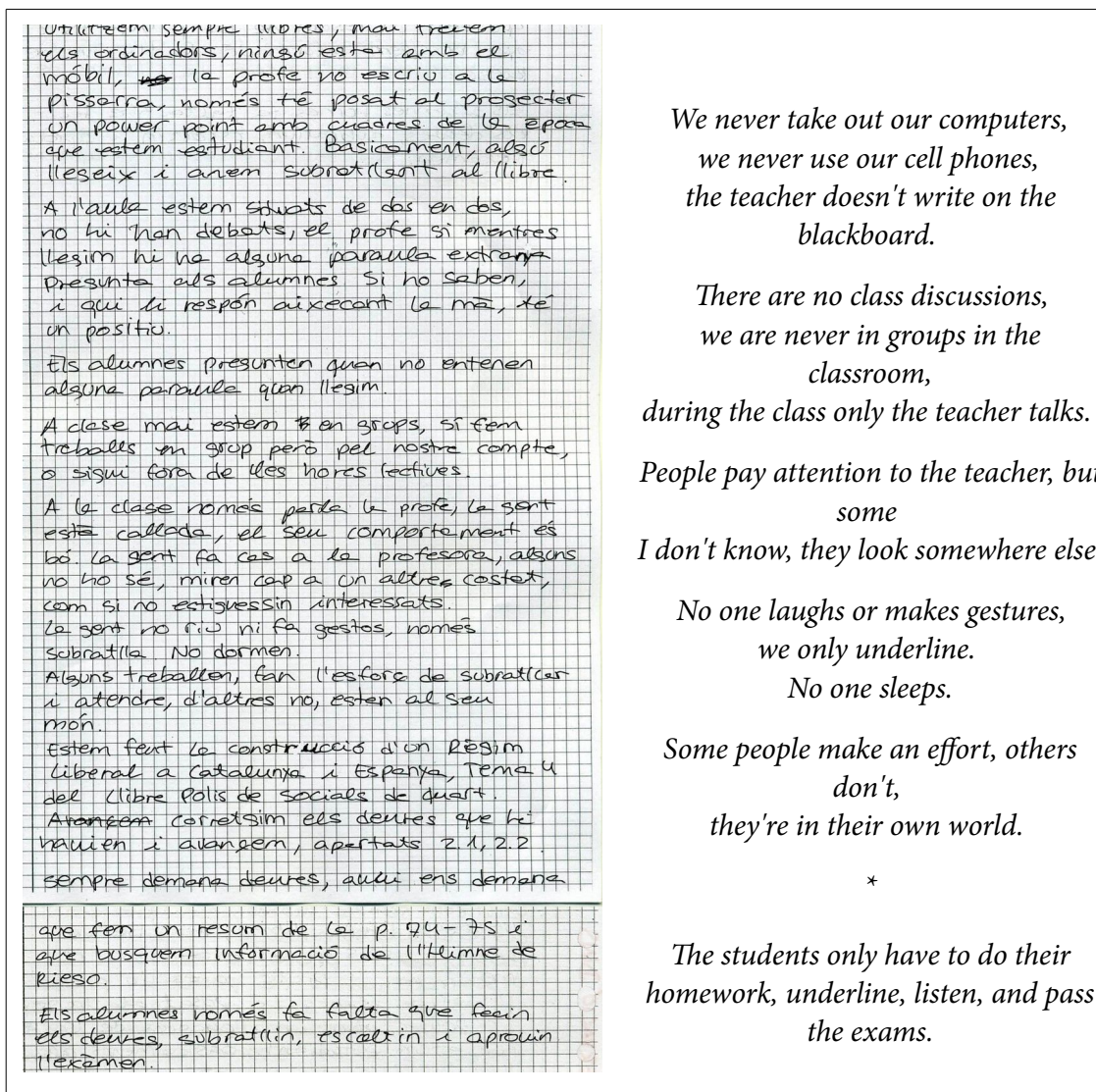


Figure 11. Left: a scan of Roser's in-class observation. Right: a first-impression rendering of the observation, based on notes I took in my field diary while listening to Roser read out loud.

Roser reads her observation out loud to the group, and I find myself in the unexpected situation of listening to an observation about what is not happening. When she finishes Xavi and I are nonplused; Xavi asks Roser why she wrote so much about things that weren't taking place, and then it is her turn to be caught off guard. It wasn't intentional. Pondering the question, Roser wonders out loud whether this was a way of confronting assumptions about student behavior. She felt the need to comment on certain activities that she assumed were considered typical classroom antics, like young people using their cell phones or dozing off. The observation emerges not only as a register of events that Roser witnessed, but also serves as a refutation of what 'other people' may think was going on.

Roser's observation is evocative. Written almost entirely in the negative this text troubles our understanding of what is achieved through youth *contributions*—contribution sounds like an addition, yet this text seems more like a subtraction. Similar to the Prezi, this observation enters into dialog with an overarching understanding about what productive student practices should be. While not an entirely conscious decision, this external pressure leads Roser to insist that in her class, the students are well-behaved, and even, most of them are paying attention. On the other hand, maybe they aren't; maybe they're looking somewhere else, maybe they're in their own world. It's hard to say, meaning in this case, that it's hard to see.

St. Pierre and Willow (2000) in their own interrogation of ethnographic practice ask:

What counts as data? Can the category of data be enlarged?... If so, what exactly are the methods that produce such data? And if, as Richardson (1994) suggests, 'writing' is a method of inquiry, **what kind of data does it produce—only words on a page?** (p. 10. Emphasis added.)

Indeed, what kind of data does this observation produce? More than anything, it reveals a slippage between what we see, what we observe and what we are able to know. Transferred to text, the observation becomes words on the page, but is it more than that? The observation informs, but the story it tells is not clear. The text works as a palimpsest, a commentary learning *under erasure*.

What can writing as inquiry accomplish? Laurel Richardson (2001) advocates that it is:

a method of discovery, a way of finding out about yourself and your world. When we view writing as a method, we experience 'language-in-use,' how we 'word the world' into existence... This 'worded world' never accurately, precisely, completely captures the studied world, yet we persist in trying. (p. 35)

On one hand, this dissertation is deeply committed to wording the world, given that it builds a conceptual framework for discussing learning by uniting terms, notions and representational strategies. On the other hand, the youth approached this task differently and what Roser shares casts the writing process in a different light. The hollow act of underlying that Roser emphasizes is not the empowered practice of wording the world that Richardson depicts, and instead seems to share more affinity (ironically) with Ann Hamilton's performance, where the words are erased as they're encountered. This recalls the Prezi, which itself reveals a crack in the research process, demonstrating when re-writing is not always sincere but sometimes self-interested. The youth contributions introduce doubt, showing that there is something disingenuous about insisting that we must

persist in trying to word the world as a method of discovery. Wording the world will is both powerful and *partial*.

Which prompts the question, what exactly is this world, anyway? Eric Bredo (1997) wonders what happens when what is behind the words turns out to be just a blank sheet of paper. “*But what if there is no there there?* What if there is no ‘it’, no system, but merely various agents, themselves changing, engaged in an interaction whose patterns are also changing?” (Bredo, 1997, p. 11. Emphasis added.). The question sounds slightly paranoid but he does have a point, what are we even writing about anyway?

Roser was asked to observe a class. The observation produced is a tale about what is happening, and what isn't; it is a description of what should be happening, and what should not. The background of this scene, the vanishing point, is not anything more (or less) than a discourse about what learning could be. The text situates her peers—we see that class is taking place—yet what do we learn about learning practices? They appear as a simulacrum. *There is no there there*, instead we are given with the hollow act of underlying, a mode of ready-made behavior that suggests studying but makes us doubt its sincerity.

The palimpsest

In *Tropos*, a series of readers methodically erase different texts as they read them; the words become smoke and the page is modified, imperfectly cleared, awaiting another intervention. This action suggests the making of a palimpsest—a document of accumulated texts, layered one on top of the other—and reminds us of the cyclical relationship between reading, interpreting and writing. Thinking methodologically, the palimpsest is a provocation, recalling the way meaning emerges, is altered, leaves a trace, and disappears.

Patti Lather (2001) uses a “palimpsest approach” as a metaphor for deconstruction. Referencing Jaques Derrida when articulating the *double project* of ethnographic writing, she claims that when “victory narratives are interrupted what is left is worked for the resources of its ruins” (p. 478). In the project of deconstruction, what we achieve through the writing process is a reworking of narratives in order to rewrite the world. There is no clean state to start with, hence the layered methodology of the palimpsest, amounting to a sedimentation of accumulated texts, accumulated meanings.

Within this project, the term learning has been difficult to pin down. The entire dissertation has amounted to shifting away from the topic through a series of nomadic practices (playing out across both practical and theoretical planes). To this extent, it has at times felt like the research addresses *learning under erasure*. Once again, as per Lather (2007):

To work “under erasure” involves **simultaneously troubling and using the**

concepts we think we cannot think without. It entails keeping something visible but crossed out in order to avoid universalizing or monumentalizing it, keeping it as both limit and resource. (p. 167-168. Emphasis added.)

Deconstruction has been accused of harboring nihilist tendencies, but working *under erasure* is not a process of removing anything; concepts do not disappear, their meaning simply becomes less self-evident. *Tropos* helps us imagine this feat. If we return to the written statement about the work, cited earlier, we are reminded that:

an attendant read each line of text silently while at the same time, with an electric burner in hand, burned each line from the book as it was read, causing the air to fill with acrid smoke. ... **the smoke itself is part of the language of remaking**, for “the transformation of the text—printed word—to smoke is reabsorbed as smell by the hair, the floor; thus word is again materialized.” (Emphasis added.)

The gesture of burning in *Tropos* suggests the act of working under erasure. The encounter with the text provokes a transformation, it changes its nature, turning it into more than words on a page. So too in the group project, when the term learning is brought into contact with—and extracted from—school, research and life experience, its meaning went up in smoke. Yet, it didn't disappear; while undergoing a qualitative shift, learning remains a concept the project cannot think without.

The problem of rewording the world is that the material flow of learning, in our case, often exceeded language. Given the way the young people responded to the research it sometimes felt like they were creating a smokescreen, but this opaque vision allowed me to experience the concept of learning differently. This was a move toward nomadic analysis. David Cole (2013) looks at how nomadic analysis, by following the material flows through the research process is able to give new life to certain data events:

Nomadic analysis involves a social cartography that extends and plays with the forms of the real. This does make the real unstable, and this will be a problem for realists, yet the point is not to take away the grounds for common sense perceptions of the real, but to enable social inquiry to delve into conjoined material flows. **These flows cross back and forth between the real and the unreal**, for example. (Cole, 2013, p. 225. Emphasis added.)

The Prezi, as a *fictionalization*, still manages to contribute to the research project. While the day of the presentation it felt like the young people had taken the project and burned it down, in retrospect they were *contributing to the language of remaking*. In this case, creating a layer, the “clean slate” equivalent of the palimpsest.

5. Mapping learning mobilities

5.1. A learning mobilities perspective

A move toward mobilities

To continue this project, this chapter will turn to the concept of learning mobilities. Building on a mobilities perspective, the learner will no longer inhabit the centre of attention, but will remain contextualized within a network of interrelations (e.g. Lefebvre's nexus of *in and out conduits*) that manage to keep several competing factors that influence learning in play. This discussion therefore returns to the problem of representation and recognition, to argue in favour of a diversification rather than a simplification of what learning looks like, or what it could be. To this end, this chapter considers how the fieldwork informs on the question of *learning in and outside school*. In keeping with the nomadic orientation of the analysis, I draw on the mobilities paradigm to look at not what the young people learned, but rather, how learning travels in and outside school, and how such mobilities effect our understanding of learning across contexts. The chapter will introduce the mobilities paradigm, and situate the learning mobilities perspective. Finally, the chapter will then perform a mobilities reading of the fieldwork with the aim to develop an approach to learning that avoids more traditional assessment frameworks.

If school disaffection is itself a mobility, implying a pushing-out of young people from formal education, than a mobilities perspective should provide a more nuanced understanding of this process. What a mobilities approach achieves is, effectively, an activation of the conjunction AND (in AND outside) thereby focusing on the connections and interrelations established across sites, which are drawn and redrawn through learning practices. Particular attention is paid to Tim Cresswell's (2012) description of a politics of mobility, by adopting a critical approach towards the representation of learning in research and educational discourse. The result of this work is a portrayal of learning as an assemblage constituted by the learner-traveler, one that encourages us to reconceptualize the learning process.

A mobilities paradigm

The mobilities paradigm has emerged as a consolidated research area in the last 15 years. 2006 is perhaps a turning point, marking the launch of the peer-reviewed journal *Mobilities*, and the publication of Mimi Sheller and John Urry's (2006) article naming "new mobilities paradigm" in a widely circulated journal *Environment and Planning A*. A

number of more recent publications reflect the extent to which this term has gained traction. Edited volumes have appeared, such as the wide-reaching *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* (Adey, Bissell, Hannam, et al, 2014), a collection on the problem of representation, *Researching and representing mobilities: transdisciplinary encounters* (Murray & Upstone, 2014); or a review of the “mobilities turn” in geography, *Geographies of Mobilities* (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011), not to mention a regular series by Ashgate that has regularly produced numerous titles since 2007.³⁴

Mobilities is an interdisciplinary approach that is mostly descriptive, useful for articulating “a set of questions, theories, and methodologies rather than a totalising description of the contemporary world” (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 210). The study of mobilities brings together research from sociology, geography and anthropology, among other fields, to focus on:

a wide array of economic, social and political practices, infrastructures and ideologies, that all involve, entail or curtail various kinds of movement of people, or ideas, or information or objects. (Urry, 2007, p. 43)

Cresswell (2010a) argues that this framework introduces an important perspective into geographical research; while such classical notions as transportation and migration clearly involve movement, mobilities is invested in exploring not only the conditions that produce mobility but also the effects it produces, the relationships between different types of mobilities, and so on. Adey (2010) compares this approach to the ripple affect that occurs when water is displaced. If we dangle our feet in a pond, for example:

What effect will your feet have on the water? Every move you make will conjure ripples that move across the surface... what happens every time we move or are mobile? Space is changed. The subsequent movement of the pond is displaced, charged, splashed, frothed around due to our mobility. Of course, the space around us and through which we then move is disturbed, but it is also altered for others... our mobilities make waves. (p. 19)

This position expands beyond geography, of course, “putting into question the fundamental ‘territorial’ and ‘sedentary’ precepts of twentieth-century social science” (Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 2), and I would add, educational research.

Here, we may draw a direction connection with the so-called “spatial turn” in the social sciences, to the extent that a mobilities perspective also explores how space has

34 These include, but are not limited to: *The mobilities paradigm: Discourses and ideologies* (Endres, Manderscheid & Mincke, forthcoming, 2016); *Mobilities: New Perspectives on Transport and Society* (Grieco & Urry, 2011); *Mobilities and inequality* (Ohnmacht, Maksim & Bergman, 2009); *The ethics of mobilities* (Bergmann & Sager, 2008); *Tracing Mobilities* (Canzler, Kaufmann & Kesselring, 2008); *Gendered Mobilities* (Uteng & Cresswell, 2008).

become mobile, subject to ongoing processes of “spacing, placing and landscaping, through which the world is shaped and formed” (Merriman, 2004, p. 146). On one hand, this perspective supports analyses of today's globalized, network society, where:

the image of political-economic space as a complex, tangled mosaic of superimposed and interpenetrating nodes, levels, scales, and morphologies has become more appropriate than the traditional Cartesian model of homogenous, self-enclosed and contiguous blocks of territory. (Brenner, 2004, p.66)

On the other hand, this paradigm has always been sensitive to the risks of getting caught up in “neo-nomadism” (D'Andrea, 2006), or a vision of unproblematic, constant flow. This perspective was emphasized in the inaugural editorial for *Mobilities* where the title, “Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings,” highlights that both movement and stasis. The authors explain, “deterritorialization and reterritorialization, or what we also call mobilities and moorings, occur dialectically” (Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 2). Sheller (2011) takes up this criticism, arguing that that mobilities do not privilege the nomadic over the sedentary—they certainly don't set out to prove the mobility of all social phenomena—but instead can be applied to look at how the manifestation of mobility allows scholars to track “the power of discourses and practices of mobility in creating effects of both movement and stasis, and uneven distribution of 'network capital'” (p. 3). The mobilities paradigm is therefore does not just expound on the quality of being mobile, and in fact is not necessarily about movement; instead it emerges as a field from which we may question the lack or presence of movement and the effects of such.

Rather than try to draw boundaries around a mobilities perspective, many authors find it more productive to think about how mobilities are constructed, and in doing so they fall back on equations. Peter Adey, David Bissell, Kevin Hannam, Peter Merriman and Mimi Sheller (2014), for example, ponder if the original equation for speed (i.e, speed is equal to distance divided by time) does not provide an entry into the field; they use these three: speed, distance (namely, proximities) and temporalities, as a broad approach to ordering mobilities research. The mathematical formula that Adey *et al.* (2014) introduce is partly inspired by one Cresswell (2006) proposed years earlier, stipulating that mobilities are a combination of movement, representation and power. In this equation, Cresswell's political stance is articulated specifically by considering the extent to which the “material movement, representation and practice” of mobilities allow for an analysis of how they “are implicated in the production of power and relations of domination” (2010b, p. 162).

It is Cresswell's (2010b; 2012) interest in the politics of mobility that are particularly informative in the current project:

By politics I mean social relations that involve the production and distribution of power. By a politics of mobility I mean the ways in which mobilities are both productive of such social relations and produced by them. Social relations... include relations between classes, genders, ethnicities, nationalities and religious groups... Mobility, as with other geographical phenomena, lies at the heart of all of these. (Cresswell, 2012, p. 162)

Following Cresswell's analysis, we may ask to what extent disaffection is itself a form of mobility, performed as a veritable pushing-out of young people from formal education. If that is the case, approaching learning from a mobilities perspective invites us to think about how young people are navigating between sites of learning, and what effects of movement and stasis are in play. Peter Merriman expands on Cresswell's *constellation of mobilities* (2010b) by paying attention to the diverse movements implied by mobilities:

The world may be in constant movement, flux and becoming, but this does not mean that those movements are flat, linear and uniform. Movements and becomings may be approached as qualitative multiplicities, and they are clearly underpinned by diverse political strategies. (Merriman, 2012a, p. 5)

The notion that learning is a form of becoming is a broad statement; from a mobilities perspective we may develop a more careful consideration of the great variation, or *qualitative multiplicities*, of learning practices. The aim in reading the project from a mobilities perspective is to highlight these differences, and thereby expand our social imaginary of learning.

Learning mobilities

Learning mobilities as a sub-field within the broader mobilities paradigm is not widely represented in the literature; it is more common to see studies looking at education, rather than those focused specifically at learning practices. For example, mobilities has been addressed recently in special issues in educational journals, including a state of the art on the "mobile sociologies of education" published in *European Educational Research Journal* (Landri & Neumann, 2013), or the special issue edited by Eleftherios Klerides and Robert Cowen (Klerides & Cowen, 2009) for *Comparative Education*. Still, it is possible to identify research going a bit further and asking how mobilities affects notions of pedagogy or learning in particular. A comprehensive and influential entry into the field is provided by Kevin Leander, Nathan Phillips and Katherine Headrick Taylor's (2010) chapter published in the annual *Review of Research in Education*, a publication produced by the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Another major contribution, albeit less direct (in that mobilities is not a term the authors use), is Jennifer Vadeboncoeur, Hitaf Kady-Rachid and Bruce Moghtader's (2014) *Yearbook* published by the National Society for the

Study of Education on the topic of 'learning across contexts'. These two contributions, in widely circulated high-impact publications, constitute a convincing and declarative case for learning mobilities as a specific area of inquiry.

Leander, Phillips and Headrick Taylor (2010) revives Lefebvre's critical analysis of the "nexus of in and out conduits" (1974/1991, p. 93) that condition the production of social space. They introduce their own mobilities formula based on "the (newly) imagined geographies of place, trajectory, and network... [which] push open the boundaries of the enclosed classroom as a dominant discourse and historically sedimented geography within education research" (p. 330). They trace this work to an influence and evolution of sociocultural perspectives of learning, Leander *et al.* (2010) argue that today, "processes of thinking and learning [are] not contained within individual minds, but rather distributed across persons, tools, and learning environments" (p. 330) on the basis that "questions concerning evidence and equity in education are in principle questions about systems and distributions rather than about individuals alone" (p. 330).

The emphasis within learning mobilities on the socio-cultural processes of learning (rather than an internalized cognitive approach) is echoed in Paolo Landri and Esther Neumann's (2013) special issue, which draws heavily on Actor Network Theory (ANT) and work coming out of science and technology studies (STS). Landri and Neumann (2013) claim that "[a] mobile sociology of education complexifies the description of the social," moving away from fixed categories like the nation-state or the classroom, and "shifting the unit of analysis from societies to assemblages" (p. 5). Focusing on mobilities, both texts question how learning manifests and embraces what Nigel Thrift (2004) has termed "movement-space," or a reordering of spatial thinking based on movement.

This focus on expanding the imaginary of learning brings Vadeboncoeur *et al.*'s (2014) work into the discussion. While these authors do not explicitly align themselves with the mobilities paradigm ("mobility" is not a term they use), their work is closely related to the mobilities project; they replace the traditional study of sites of formal and informal learning looking instead at what they deem "learning across contexts." This approach advocates:

against equating education and schooling, instead noting that education occurs in and out of schools, and that school and non-school contexts are neither homogeneous nor opposites in a binary. (Ibid., p. 341)

Vadeboncoeur *et al.*'s volume asks how to expand educational research beyond the confines of formal education—what Leander *et al.* (2010) identify as the "classroom-as-container" discourse (p. 329)—in order to ask "what possible futures are imagined as a

result of recognizing learning in and across multiple contexts?” (Vadeboncoeur, et al., 2014, p. 341).

Working from comparative education, Robert Cowen (2009) articulates mobilities in terms of “transfer, translation and transformation” (p. 323) in order to review the “shape-shifting” of educational discourse as it is applied on a global, national and local level. Thinking about new forms of connectivity Landri and Neumann (2013) observe that “the new materialities of education generate complex restructuring processes that call for a perspective that is capable to capture the codependent action and complex assemblages of people, technology and objects” (p. 2). In both Cowen's analysis and Landri and Neumann's more wide-reaching state of the art, there is an acknowledgement of a change in *scale*; where nested individual units of social analysis are flattened, losing hierarchy as they become:

self-organizing systems... where the dynamic properties of matter produce a multiplicity of complex relations and singularities that sometimes lead to the creation of new, unique events and entities, but more often to relatively redundant orders and practices. (Marston et al, 2005, p. 422)

We find that a mobile approach to learning deconstructs what Leander *et al.* (2010) identify as the “classroom-as-container” discourse (p. 329). It allows us to shift from focusing on learning as a result to considering it as a series emergent processes—reconfiguring educational research as an “investigation of (re)assemblages” (Landri & Neumann, 2013, p. 5).

Hopefully the brief introduction has made clear that “mobilities” is not the same this as “mobile learning,” or m-learning. The expansion of learning opportunities available to young people today, briefly mentioned in the introduction of this volume, are associated with the extent to which the use of digital technologies and Internet access is now a part of the learning process. However, in their revision of so-called mobile learning, Gunther Kress and Norbert Pachler (2007) argue that the qualifier mobile should not be limited to the use of different digital technologies in different spaces but rather is determined by a new *habitus*:

[T]hose who ‘have’ it are accustomed to immediate access to the world... The habitus has made and then left the individual constantly mobile—which does not refer, necessarily, to a physical mobility at all but to a constant expectancy, a state of *contingency*, of *incompletion*, of moving toward completion, of waiting to be met and ‘made full’. The answer to ‘who is mobile?’ is therefore ‘everyone who inhabits the new habitus.’ (p. 27. Emphasis is original)

Thus while technological innovations have aided in repositioning the learner in a broader

context both spatially and temporally (illustrated by terms like “ubiquitous learning” or “lifelong learning”), by framing a mobility as a habitus Kress and Pachler demonstrate that it is not the technologies but an underlying process of socialization that have an impact on how we understand learning practices. What Kress and Pachler introduce here is a mobilities reading of m-learning; demonstrating how a mobile habitus destabilizes the learning, introducing a *constant expectancy* of improvement. In other words, as opportunities expand, so too expectations and performance demands.

What is clear from this recent research area is the fact that a mobilities perspective does not reinvent the wheel, it contributes more by assembling a body of work that shares a similar interest, and which together allows us to think differently about how we approach the study of learning. Leander *et al.* (2010) comprehensively map the theories of learning that support a mobilities understanding. In doing so they make the interesting observation that what *situates* learning is frequently the research gaze itself, not necessarily the object of study. They caution that “while developing an expanded version of mind and learning as distributed and mediated, theories of distribution within this tradition have been packed rather tightly within local containers” (p. 335). Therefore part of the challenge of mobilities as a post-disciplinary paradigm shift is to intercede into educational research on a methodological and epistemological level. This approach is best understood as descriptive, suited for exploring ways in which we may speak about learning, especially working with young people, rather than evaluate it in any way. By focusing on learning as a series of mobilities, therefore, the notion of learning emerges as an actant, a process that brings together subjects, spaces and processes into relation, in the so-called eventful space.

5.2. Navigating learning mobilities

Using a mobilities perspective directs the interpretation of the fieldwork events toward the *ripple effect* (Adey, 2010) of learning: how it circulates, who it brings together, and what it sets in motion. This is not a perspective that is imposed on the project, but a result of the fieldwork itself. Focusing on learning *in and outside* school, the project initially set up a comparative approach between formal and informal learning. However, as our group work progressed, the notion of a fixed in/out binary became hard to maintain; neither school nor ‘the outside’ were categories that tended to stay put in young people’s lives. To better capture the entanglement of the transitions, trajectories, and socio-spatial practices that produce learning, the mobilities emerged as a coherent starting point for interpreting the project's progress and tentative results.

Thus, this section uses the group project to take a closer look at what it means to frame youth learning practices as mobilities. Whereas situated learning studies learning in

relation to space and social interaction, learning mobilities is concerned more with the process of navigation, prioritizing *movement-space* (Thrift, 2004). To this end, the following discussion does not propose a theory of knowledge acquisition, but instead asks: what are the mobile characteristics of learning practices? Here, learning mobilities counter the traditional structure of in and out of school learning, or formal and in-formal binaries, and focuses instead on the relationship between different learning sites and practices. I have already introduced mobility “formulas” such as place-networks-trajectories (Leander, Phillips, Headrick Taylor, 2010) or transfer-translation-transformation (Cowen, 2009); for their respective authors, these categories act as “filters,” providing a lens through which to apply a mobilities approach to learning. My starting point was Cresswell's use of movement, representation and practice (See: Hernández-Hernández et al, 2014). However, fittingly, these categories have undergone their own sort of shape-shifting and this section will consider study learning in relation to the mobilities: channeling, scale jumping, assembling and unfolding.

These mobilities evolved from an initial thematic analysis of mobilities within the literature on learning in and outside school (See: Fendler & Miño Puigcercós, 2015, in press, for an earlier, more traditional rendering of the learning mobilities). In a second phase of interpretation, these mobilities were then plugged into nomadic thought and brought into contact the geophilosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004). The result is a series of mobilities that bring concepts such as the smooth space, deterritorialization, double articulation and the fold into the conversation on how learning *takes place*.

Channeling

This mobility explores the tension between smooth and striated spaces, which in this particular case are drawn together by *flow*. As we have seen, networks are a central structure within the mobilities paradigm, serving as the new the spatial imaginary of a hyper-connected, globalized society. Within networks, the default mobility is “flow,” which is frequently, and incorrectly, conflated with movement liberated from the confines of ideological space. Instead, flow is best understood as the state wherein sites and subjects are constantly on the move, even when that movement is directed or forced. Manuel Castells (1996/2010) introduces the “space of flows” as part of the configuration of today's network society:

Our societies are constructed around flows: flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organizational interactions, flows of images, sounds and symbols. Flows are not just one element of social organization: they are the expression of the processes dominating our economic, political, and symbolic life. ... Thus, I propose the idea that there is a

new spatial form characteristic of social practices that dominate and shape the network society: the space of flows. The space of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows. By flows I understand **purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction** between physically disjointed positions held by social actors. (p. 412. Emphasis added.)

In Castells' central argument we see that flow is written as *purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences*; the oft-cited *space of flows* does not suggest that flow exists outside of social and cultural influence, but rather it works to reveal these influences, connecting social actors. Situating education within the network society, Jason Beech's (2009) work in comparative education argues that "the way in which education is thought about is increasingly defined in the space of flows" (p. 361), whereby flow becomes a symptom. In his research it allows him to make the connections between "discourses that define an educated identity for the information age" (Beech, 2009, p. 348), relating local practices to state initiatives and global agendas. This connectivity is not about freedom of movement.

The relationship between flow and established networks of power (ideological, political, socioeconomic, and so on) is important when applying this term to learning in and outside school. While the term mobilities often conjures an image of movement without restriction, this is ultimately a simplistic vision that fails to capture the numerous elements that condition young people's navigation through learning spaces. Cresswell (2010b), reflecting on Deleuze and Guattari's description of smooth space, reminds us that:

Mobility is 'channelled' into acceptable conduits. Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. Producing order and predictability is not simply a matter of fixing in space but of channelling motion – of producing correct mobilities through the designation of routes. (p. 24)

Education is, essentially, a 'correct mobility' for learning, and designates how young people should progress. Frequently articulated in terms of the acceptable conduits it represents, schooling is represented as a path of *upward* mobility, and can be a gateway for improving young people's social opportunities. It is important to recognize that conduits are not inherently bad; on the contrary, education is an ethical project specifically when it promotes democratic practice. The question is how does the striated space of education interact with the smooth spaces of youth learning practices.

The prison v. the street

In the first project session, Joan makes an impression. He stands out because he

participates the most; he doesn't seem intimidated into silence, and instead cracks jokes and asks the 'obvious questions' that keep the conversation rolling. Incidentally, Joan was the only youth participant we got any background information on. Mari spoke to Xavi and I about him that morning, before we started the project, and this information inevitably influenced our observation of him. The information we received surprised Xavi and I, given its deeply personal nature, which we weren't expecting. It was clear at the time that Mari wasn't warning us about his behavior, but instead seemed to want to contextualize (if not justify) why he was at risk of school disaffection. Consistently, she also communicated a deep concern for Joan's well-being and we witnessed on several occasions the personal investment she and others on staff had in his progress.

Regardless of this information, in our first encounter with the young people, as we introduce ourselves by talking about our interests and hobbies, the conversation is stilted. However, we find ourselves—Xavi, Joan's classmates and I—equally subjected to Joan's questioning, which eases the tension, temporarily drawing our attention away from the awkwardness of the situation we find ourselves in.

The youth are self-conscious about introducing themselves to strangers, and perhaps more so, to introducing themselves to their peers (who may be friends, or may be just acquaintances). When it's Roser's turn, she insists that she doesn't do anything after school.

"Nothing?," the group is incredulous, and presses for more. But she just shakes her head and shrugs, looking down at the table, her face red. Joan keeps it light, asking her if she at least parties on the weekends, turning the focus toward himself by bragging that he does, before we move on to the next person.

When it's finally his turn to share, Joan references Roser's comment but goes into more detail, "No I'm the one who doesn't do anything. I eat [lunch] as soon as I get home and then I leave. Then I won't go home until about 9:00 pm. Then, I eat dinner, maybe go on Facebook, listen to music, and if I have any, I'll do my homework." His classmates laugh at the suggestion that he does his schoolwork. Instead of disputing this, Joan just grins, and clarifies, "Well, this year I do the work, my mom hired a tutor who comes on Tuesdays and Thursdays."

In the second session, Xavi and I turn the focus of the discussion toward the topic of learning in and outside school. The young people look at the graphic we brought and begin to discuss it.

Xavi directs group's attention to the icon of a house, which falls in the "in" quadrant. "Why would a house be *inside*?" he asks us?

Joan speaks up right away, "because here [in school] it's a prison, we're locked up in here."

As the weeks pass, Joan only reinforces the presentation of himself as someone who spends all his time on the "street" continues. He insists that he spends as little time at

home as possible, and emphasizes that he goes out on the weekends. Once when the topic of employment comes up, and a few of his peers talk about the difficulty of finding work these days, he shares this anecdote:

"I was out on the street the other day and four guys in suits came up and asked if I knew anyone who was looking for work..." He glances at around the table before adding, "I said no."

Initially the group doesn't respond to this story. On one hand, the non-reaction is sometimes a way of managing Joan's behavior, a way of not encouraging the group story-teller. However, it also seems like a tacit confirmation that such an event could have taken place. "Uff...", utters Adrià finally, offering a non-committal reaction that at least acknowledges the shadiness of the situation. At any rate, no one challenges Joan on this subject, no one has the authority to talk about what goes on on the street like he does, whether they believe him or not.

* * *

The school represents Joan as someone who needs careful channeling to help him get through the basic requirements of the conduit that is compulsory education. As he himself acknowledges, he had a tutor for his last year in compulsory education, which is a remedial resource contracted in reaction to his poor performance in prior years. It seems as if his progress is being closely monitored: on occasions the principal or Joan's tutor inquired specifically about how he was doing. Joan was the only young person who received any kind of follow-up on behalf of the teachers throughout the duration of the project. In spite of the impression that the school was personally invested in Joan's progress, we never hear him say anything positive about the experience of being in school. In contrast to the school's efforts, Joan depicts his relationship to learning in and outside school through a binary representation of the prison (i.e., the school as a disciplinary space) and the street, which is seen as a site of independence and leisure, and perhaps community.

Returning to the concept of a space of flows, Castells' (1996/2010) description makes clear that a network is not equivalent to a smooth space, *a space without conduits or channels*, but exists as a landscape composed of interconnected, decentered nodes.

This new form of spatiality is what I conceptualized as the *space of flows*... This involves the production, transmission and processing of flows of information. It also relies on the development of localities as nodes of these communication networks... This analytical perspective may contribute to understanding the extraordinary transformation of spatial forms taking place throughout the world. (p. xxxii)

If we characterize the back-and-forth movement that connects different spaces of

learning as flow, the in/out landscape is redrawn as a territory composed of interconnecting *nodes* within a single, open network. In Joan's case, his status of being at risk of school disaffection comes to represent a mobility that resists the school's efforts at channeling him, almost as if his problem is that of *excess* mobility. Jana Costas (2013) contrasts contemporary mobilities, what she terms the “kinetic elite,” with the idea of stickiness (as in, the notion of *viscosity* borrowed from Sartre). This is an intriguing concept when applied to a learning context; for Sartre, stickiness is not about getting stuck, but rather brings up the question of what *sticks* to you, or if we are thinking about learning, what do you carry on when you leave?

In their work on connected learning Ito *et al.* (2010) describe the practice of “geeking out,” which is essentially a practice of getting stuck—or hung up—on a topic, a practice of diving in and going deep. This is a transformational learning process that Ito *et al.* (2010) observe in young people whose interests lead them develop expertise in a certain activity or topic. The manifestation of Joan's school disaffection resists that quality of mobility. His flow stays on the surface of things; he practices tuning out, shrugging it off, shuffling along, slipping out of the school's grasp. Here we face a mobility that makes us wonder: what would it take to make Joan stick around?

Smooth vs. striated spaces

The initial project sessions with the young people had a fluid and open quality. Xavi and I introduced the topic of learning in and outside school and all together, we searched for ways to discuss this notion, trying to get to know each other while figuring out where to go from here, or how to move forward. This inquisitive approach wasn't unequivocally positive, as the open-ended questions and lack of a clear pathway also contributed to a climate of doubt, insecurity, and at times, frustration. One could say that without establishing a definite way to proceed, our progress often felt aimless, as if we weren't going anywhere. The group dynamic changed significantly when we began working on the Prezi, in the second half of the project. Once we settled on designing a presentation and set a date, the young people responded with efficiency, feeling more secure once the tasks and responsibilities were clearly defined.

While Xavi and I were initially relieved to see the group spring into action, it was unsettling to observe that the more “productive” the group became, the less Joan participated. The questions he asked that were so important in setting a tone at the outset, morphed into protests of misunderstanding and deflection. He increasingly seemed out of the loop, going online with Pere's phone while the rest of the group was talking, shrugging off our inquiries into how he wanted to contribute to the project, and encountering even technical set-backs that became an obstacle to his participation. (For example, it took him a month to visit our project's Facebook group, something the group had collec-

tively interpreted as a lack of his interest. However, one day he came in excitedly talking about the material he had finally seen by visiting the page, and it was clear that he had somehow not understood how to access it before then.)

While the young people who felt comfortable and successful at school began to thrive as the project activities became more familiar, based on concrete results, this is when Joan's status of "at risk of school disaffection" became most obvious. In spite of the Prezi working as a platform where everyone could pitch in, it was not truly participatory, as some young people adapted with more ease to the task of designing and writing the presentation. While Xavi and I recognized this while it was happening, we felt the need to choose between 'moving forward', in the sense of covering certain content (what is ethnography) and achieving our aims (preparing a final presentation), at the risk of some of the members of the group getting left behind.

* * *

Some authors go so far as to characterize youth culture itself as implicitly nomadic, arguing that adolescence cultivates a sort of mobile and *smooth* subjectivity. Technology plays a large role in this imaginary, and connectivity, particularly the use of mobile technologies like smartphones (which allow you to be 'neither here nor there'), and even the "uniform" of hoodies and headphones and skateboards, have been cited as embodiments and representations of the smooth spaces young people can seem to naturally inhabit (Valentine & McKendrick, 1997; Matthews, 2003; Semetsky, 2006). However, while some literature seems to celebrate the smooth space as a quintessential youth experience, the experiences of Joan and his peers demonstrate that smooth space is not in any way "better," and in fact, may pose risks. Meanwhile, striated space may act as a site of recognition and affirmation, as demonstrated by the confidence and sense of accomplishment some of the youth experienced when building the Prezi.

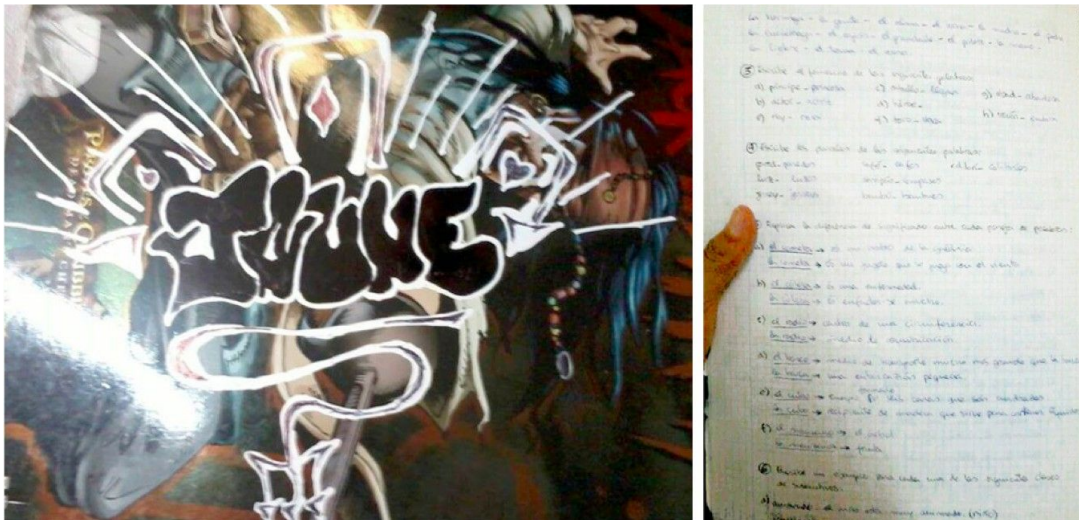


Figure 12. Joan's representation of what “effort” means to him in school. On the right is a page of notes, on the left is a graffiti he has drawn on the cover of his notebook, which is something he does when he's supposed to be taking notes but isn't.

In Mari Tamboukou's (2008) evaluation of the role of smooth and striated space in education, she comments, “striated spaces are hierarchical, rule-intensive, strictly bounded and confining, whereas smooth spaces are open dynamic and allow for transformation to occur” (p. 360). Joan seems particularly cognizant of this tension; embedded in the comparison between a graffiti of his first name and neatly printed class notes (Fig. 12), is an expression of the tension between the subjective, explorative space of becoming and the more clearly defined parameters set out by schooling.

That there are two separate spaces in play is quite evident in the interactions we have with Joan; but how they work to support his learning practices is not as straight forward. As the project developed, Joan represented himself as someone who spends all his time on the street—which he associates with independence and leisure, and perhaps community—while continuing to criticize the disciplinary tactics of the school. Joan's criticism stands out from a more general dissatisfaction with school as expressed by his peers because he so clearly articulates a space that is alternative to the school, one that resists the conduit of classes and formal assessment.

However, it is unsettling to think that this dichotomy should be celebrated without critique.

Of course, smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory. But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries. Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 500)

Deleuze and Guattari make clear that smooth spaces are not superior to striated spaces. In fact, if we continue to think of smooth spaces as a type of site that is comparable to the striated, different only in composition, the analysis is quickly frustrated. In Joan's case, we may even find ourselves comparing school with the street, mimicking Joan's own hierarchization, and resurrecting a notion of in/out that this project has been arguing against. In addition, I imagine that most educators, myself included, are skeptical of this easy binary. It is certainly not clear that Joan is less restricted in the space he only vaguely refers to as time spent 'on the street'. We must ask, is he not just exchanging one conduit for another? The error lies in maintaining a sedentary conceptualization of the smooth space, as if it were lying in wait somewhere (outside), where learning can take place differently. Smooth space is not, however, just another type of space as we know it. Instead, the smooth space is a movement, a deviation, an actualization of the moment when *the struggle is changed and life reconstitutes its stakes*.

This is a lesson that Joan teaches us. As the project advanced and became more technical, I began to observe how Joan was a master at cultivating smooth spaces (Fig. 13) within the confines of more traditional educational spaces—by spacing out, looking at his cell phone, or starting conversations—he continually, and successfully, redirected the flow of the group. In doing so, his actions demonstrate the fragility between what it means to be in or outside school. Joan seemed to inhabit the in-between: activating the conjunction of in AND out.



Figure 13. A smooth space? This is a moment caught by the video camera, where it appears that Joan is instructing the group on how to throw a punch. Xavi and I, meanwhile, seem rather oblivious to these gestures.

In his discussion on the politics of mobilities, Cresswell (2010b) asks “Who moves furthest? Who moves fastest? Who moves most often?” (p. 21). By paying attention to the directionality of mobilities, and how they effect learning in the space of flow, we may better understand the negotiations that young people engage in while learning across contexts and become more aware of the contradictory currents that young people are attempting to navigate. In the example used here, Joan's mobility demonstrates that disaffection is just not a movement away from school, but also a movement into and within other spaces, ones which we can imagine as having their own conduits and channels. What is more, we find that the push—pull dynamic of flow doesn't have a uniform effect, it squeezes some learners out, while at the same time, drawing others in. Within this flux, smooth spaces work to interrupt established paths of flow, those so-called *acceptable conduits*. Rather than position smooth spaces in opposition to striated spaces, they emerge as moments (or movements) that reconfigure boundaries or rules, becoming those “spaces that leak, spaces that speak, spaces of possibility” (Helfenbein, 2010, p. 309).

Scale jumping

Mobilities at times can seem like a “common-sense” representation of learning that responds to the changes taking place in education in the information age, where the discourse on “lifelong learning” and the knowledge economy restructure our understanding of the aims of education in a flexible, global economy. In particular, when referencing learning outside school, this orientation is more evident. Prior to the fieldwork, for the national project we reviewed literature involving the tension between learning in and outside school, which revealed a disconnect between young people's lack of engagement at school, compared to their enthusiastic participation in extracurricular activities, which often require a high-level of technological expertise and time commitment (Patel-Stevens, 2005; Ito, et al., 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). This situation is the foundation of Doug Thomas and John Seely Brown's (2012) call for a “new culture of learning,” where the resource of the Internet, combined with natural curiosity and a supportive learning environment (i.e., the school) should come together to create optimal learning conditions. Ito *et al.*'s (2010) ethnographic research into young people's media use also interrupts how we imagine a school should function; exploring the way so-called “connected learning” deeply affects the dynamics of youth-adult negotiations over literacy, learning and authoritative knowledge. Consistently, learning coupled with mobile technology is seen as promoting self-directed inquiry in spaces (both virtual and physical) where young people are not only learners and apprentices, but also teachers and experts. In this context, taking youth

seriously as actors, “is crucial in grasping how youth understand and incorporate new media in their everyday lives” (Ito et al, 2010, p. 7).

Co-constructing a Prezi

All hands on deck! I jot down this phrase in my field diary on the evening after the 13th session. Next week is our last meeting before the final presentation and we are hoping to use that time to rehearse, which means that the Prezi should be finished today. Everyone in the room seems to feel the pressure. It's down to the wire!

In the previous session we sketched out an outline of the presentation and divided up who was responsible for each part; since then we've been making progress. Laura took it upon herself to write and design the introduction, drafting a short presentation of the school and surprising us by also writing the individual blurbs about each of her classmates. When she was finished she read each personal description out loud and to what seemed like universal disapproval. However, no one intervened and Laura's introductions for each young person remained untouched.

Today, she helps Jordi write up the session summaries he was responsible for, having finished her work on the introduction. Joan and I together were able to get the photographs he wanted to share into the Prezi. He didn't know how to pass them from his phone to the computer, so we improvised: he sent the photographs to my phone via WhatsApp, and then I sent them to my computer via email. Switching to a computer, we downloaded the photos then uploaded them into the Prezi. Pere then helped Joan place them in the Prezi, since he was more familiar with the platform. Across the table Xavi and Roser were looking for open-source images online to illustrate the different technologies used to support learning in and outside school... and so on.

* * *

The projects mentioned in relation to the representation of learning mobilities are two studies financed by the Digital Media & Learning Initiative funded by the MacArthur Foundation (<http://www.macfound.org/programs/learning/>)—both Ito *et al.*'s (2010) study as well as Thomas and Seely Brown's (2012) research are major contributions to this work program. Each are representative of this widely disseminated and well-funded initiative, adopting a tone that positions youth culture and the spread of Web 2.0 technologies as tools that can stem the tide of school disaffection by pointing the way to more meaningful learning experiences. Framing this work in terms of mobilities, we may note the strong emphasis in this research placed on horizontal pedagogical relationships (i.e., “peer-to-peer learning”). However, while I have looked for confirmation of this phenomenon in my own research, the informal learning the young people discussed included participating in sports or music, two activities which replicate the binary relationship between learner and coach, or they cited less self-directed learning practices

such as traveling or working. None of the young people strongly identified with the image of a self-directed learner engaged in a specific virtual learning community.

Therefore, while it is tempting to depict the Prezi as an example of establishing horizontal relationships, this would be overly simplistic. Xavi and I collaborated more with the young people during this stage of the project, and our participation coalesced around a digital platform that technically permitted non-hierarchical participation. However, the pressure to build the presentation represents a moment when Xavi's and my authority is displaced, over-shadowed by the pending confrontation with the teachers and administration. In other words, building the Prezi does not represent a removal of authority in the young people's learning process, but a shift in recognition of who they have to answer to.

The problem of representation

We're seated around the tables, which have been pushed into a large square in the front of the room, and everyone is working on a laptop, some individually and some sharing a computer. While it's nice to have a session where everyone is working and focused, I worry about how the content of the Prezi. Xavi and I have contributed significantly to the presentation. I uploaded scans of all the observations and diagrams produced in earlier sessions, as well photographs of a map I had drawn summarizing our work in sessions 1 – 10. Last week, between sessions, Xavi logged on and restructured the content so that it was more clearly organized into the four sections we had named, back

when we initially brainstormed how our presentation should go. His intervention created four distinct columns: Who are we?; What have done?; Results; Conclusions. and also added the official project logo. While Xavi's intervention was mostly aesthetic—he essentially just added headings and columns to make things more easy to read—it made me feel uneasy. I was still waiting to see how the young people would structure their own “path” through the Prezi once we uploaded the content into the platform. (I also thought the project logo was too big in comparison to the role it had played in our sessions.)



Figure 14. The Prezi.

My reaction, however, was the outlier. When the group project shifted its focus of the project sessions toward the final presentation, I showed the group a map I drew to summarize our progress so far. For me it was a sort of prototype that could help the young people identify significant moments of the project and begin to construct their own trajectory. Roser saw things differently. When we began to talk about how to summarize the project sessions she asked why we couldn't just use the map?

"We already have a map of the sessions," she said, indicating the drawing, "why do we need to write it all over again?" Like Xavi's intervention, Roser's reaction initially struck me as overly pragmatic and seemed to limit the potential of the group presentation. My reaction at this point in the project shows how, even at the close of the fieldwork, I was still motivated by a desire to elicit more information from the young people, in the form of personal opinions and reflections. In focusing on their contributions, I missed the project the youth were engaged, which was different from my own.

When I revisited this collaboration later, when writing the ethnographic narrative for the national project, I began to feel more comfortable with the nature of our intervention. Seen in a different light, Xavi's and my contributions are consistent with our participation in the project as a whole. I could even argue that leaving the young people to do the project themselves at that point would have positioned them as students, instead of co-collaborators; insisting that they work without relying on us would have followed a logic of examination rather than inquiry.

I see now that when I proposed we use Prezi for the final presentation, I was holding on to the hope that our project could "map learning," a strategy that I had become interested in prior to starting the fieldwork. I thought that perhaps it would be an effective way to re-imagine the social space of learning, not in terms of places (in or outside school) but in terms of the personal trajectories of the students (See: Fendler, 2013). However, the young people were invested an altogether different representational strategy. Although I had yet to catch on, the Prezi was never an extension or concretion of the discussions that took place in the first half of the project. Instead of providing a way to represent individual learning practices it became a way to frame our project sessions as "research" and served to justify our actions to external evaluators.

* * *

What is at stake in discussions surrounding connected learning is the learning imaginary; the horizontal relationships established by peer-to-peer or self-directed learning practices deconstruct the vision we have of learning as played out within a teacher/student binary relationship. From a geographical perspective, we could argue that this shift is essentially a change in the *scale* of the learning landscape, moving from classroom practices or the school, to considering how young people are participants in distributed communities located in the worldwide web.

Traditionally, scale has been thought of in relation to a vertical axis, organized into a

“nested hierarchy of bounded spaces of differing size, e.g., local, regional, national, global” (Delaney & Leitner, 1997, p. 93). In the late 90s however, this conceptualization was thrown into question, especially when brought into contact with the smooth space of a networked society. By 2005 geographers were attempting to eliminate it from their vocabulary, as demonstrated by Marston *et al.*'s (2005) polemic argument claiming that “horizontally networked relations contrast with the vertical hierarchies of scale theory” (p. 416), offering instead to exchange “the hierarchical, ‘or looking up’, spatial ontology, [for] a flat alternative, one that does not rely on the concept of scale” (p. 417). In the vestiges of this debate³⁵, scale stands out as an important representational strategy—the geographic equivalent of what ethnographers would term *micro*, *meso* and *macro* levels—where for geographers,

the discourses and actions constituting the politics of scale are a fundamental ingredient of the ways in which we go about creating, revising and living within a complex set of power relations, and illuminate, in different ways, elements of what John Agnew (1993) has called ‘hidden geographies.’ (Delaney & Leitner, 1997, p. 94)

Playing around with scale is revealed as a tactic (to borrow from de Certeau's lexicon) that interrupts the nested hierarchy organized around a vertical axis. A study discussed by Leander *et al.* (2010) demonstrates how 'horizontal relationships' in informal learning can productively be thought of in terms of scale. Citing a study by Leander and Lovvorn (2006; cited in Leander *et al.*, 2010, p. 347), Leander *et al.* (2010) describe how one learner's gaming activity outside school was structured in a way that provided a wide-angle view of how his activity interacted, on a small and large scale, within the whole game. They contrast this with the fact that at school, the same boy “seemed often unaware of a perspective on his activity beyond the immediate and more-or-less pressing task” (Leander *et al.*, 2010, p. 348). In this study, the online activity of the young gamer can be discussed in terms of the horizontal pedagogical relationships it permits. However, it seems that the larger impact on the learner derives from how this class of activity introduces a scale change. The online gaming provided a much bigger picture, shifting the boy in question's perspective of learning from a view of day-to-day classroom activity, relocating his learning practices within a far-reaching relational network.

The current project, framed within the mobilities paradigms, raises the question of how scale can be activated to support learning practices. Deliberate movement from one scale to another is referred to as “scale jumping,” a phrase introduced initially by Neil Smith (1993; 1996), and which has become a mode of analysis for *multiscalar* perspectives:

³⁵ Marston *et al.*'s argument led to a lengthy, special issue rebuttal in the following issue (2006) of *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers NS* (31).

Scale jumping occurs when actors seek to make policy, resolve conflicts, exercise power, and so forth, at the scale that is most favourable to their values, identities, and interests. The motivation for scale jumping is to take advantage of the structurally-inscribed scalar privileging of some forces, some spatial horizons of action, strategies, policies, etc., over others. The scalar division of labour and scale jumping are linked to attempts to redefine and recalibrate that division, engage in interscalar articulation, institute new scales and/or abolish old ones, and redefine scalar selectivities in order to gain advantage in the jumping game. (Jessop, 2009, p. 93)

Scale jumping disrupts the traditional “nested” understanding of scale; it acts as a line of flight, deterritorializing an assemblage in the process of creating an alternative one. Kevin Cox (1998) argues that scale, instead of being based on “aerial units” (e.g., specific areas or terrains, as in “local” or “global”), can be understood as networks. In other words, scale is not universal and therefore, scaled spaces can, and do, interrelate with each other. The political strategy behind scale jumping, Cox posits, has the effect of creating two distinct assemblages, which he defines as “spaces of dependence” and “spaces of engagement,” where the former represents the day-to-day network of operations, and the latter is a strategic alliance generated for political gain. Each space is scaled, but they have a horizontal relationship to each other, they aren't nested but intersect on the same plane.

As I have insinuated, a facile interpretation of the process of building the Prezi would be that it is the result of, and by proxy a representation of, the horizontal pedagogical relationship established in the group work, made possible by the collaborative editing capabilities of the digital platform we were using. After all, everyone pitched in, in a way that reflected each participant's skill base and personal investment in the project. However, that interpretation fails to capture how the Prezi rewrote the project, effectively creating a gap between the experience itself and the representation of this experience. This gap is easier to understand if we recognize that at some point, scale jumping occurred.

At the outset of the project, in spite of the interruption it caused in their school schedule, the project sessions remained within the young people's *space of dependence*. Looking inward at individual experiences, the inquiry focused on topics that reflected the young people's day-to-day activities, including school, hobbies and leisure. However, the narrative developed in the Prezi speaks from a wider perspective; in fact, the statements which surprise me most tend to be those that can be attributed to the scalar jump.

In the introduction, for example, Laura's presentation of the group ends with the simple declaration “we are young” (“*som joves*”), using a global construction of “youth” as an identifier uniting the six participants. This introductory statement signals where this presentation is headed: away from the singular, subjective perspective and toward a more

generalized, universal description. Next, in the session summaries, Adrià writes about our progress by describing it as a research project, using technical terms to frame the project within a qualitative research paradigm—discussing “methodologies” that were briefly mentioned by Xavi and I and citing the steps of generating evidence, performing an analysis and drawing conclusions, without hinting at the great obstacles we faced when confronting and modifying these steps along the way. Rather than interrogate what actually was achieved in our group, Adrià borrows the official language of the university research project to bolster and contextualize the group work. Finally, the individual evaluations overrepresent the notion of working together. Initially I saw this as a domino effect, where the young participants read the first evaluation that was uploaded, written by Roser, and then wrote something similar of their own.³⁶ However, on day of the presentation, when the debate with the teachers focused almost exclusively on the idea of teamwork, it appeared that the group's decision to locate their ability to collaborate as a key indicator of the project's success was very strategic. The young people seamlessly wrote their project in accordance with the school's mission statement. The Prezi thus appears to be a reaction by the young people, under the threat of assessment, to develop a discourse that would add heft to their argument.

It turns out that the parts of the Prezi that most rankle with my own interpretation of the events are those that adopt a discourse that aligns the group work with a generalized, universalist dialogue. This has the effect of negating the project's relationship to *schoolwork* and, in terms of scale, represents a tactical creation of a *space of engagement*. In this scenario, scale emerges as not an external measure but relative to an actor's own space of agency (Jones, 1998).³⁷ Observed from a mobilities perspective, scale jumping reveals a specific type of spatial practice, one that provides a more nuanced take on the rhetoric dedicated to the horizontal relationships associated with informal learning. We can observe that it is not individual agency that is necessarily the missing ingredient in school learning, and points instead to the interest young people have in understanding how their actions are embedded in a larger context, which in turn helps give meaning to their

36 I agree that the affective element of the project was an important experience for our group, but the last-minute upload of three evaluations (by Jordi, Pere and Joan) that all hew close to what Roser wrote are not, I believe, good indications of individual reflections on what the project meant *to them* individually. Jordi later confirmed my suspicion, commenting that he wished that he and others had written better conclusions, instead of what had been shared in the short texts that appeared in the Prezi on the day of the presentation.

37 I am reminded in this scenario of Jordi's reaction after the general assembly (see Interlude I: Framing), where he approached Xavi and I to ask how this project would be disseminated later on, because “people needed to hear about it.” Traveling to the university and presenting in front of 100 people—professors, teachers and other project participants—was an embodied scale jumping that had profound impact on how he understood what the project accomplished.

learning practices.

Assembling

The mobilities discussed thus far reveal ways in which learning acts as a spatial practice, engaged in rerouting or retracing how we envision the boundary between in and outside school. The following section asks: To what extent may learning be thought of as a mobility, expressed as becoming? And, How can this performative quality of learning be captured? This mobility introduces the performative act of *double articulation* to look at how learning practices form assemblages.

Helfenbein (2010), in his reflection on how to map the space of curriculum ponders, what if “the only maps [we] can draw are maps of possibility?” (p. 305). Early in the group project, in our first attempt to discuss learning practices, we experimented with representational strategies, using social cartography (Paulston, 1996/2000; Paulston & Liebman, 1994; Liebman & Paulston, 1993) as a starting point for mapping learning practices in and outside school. The result was a performatic representation of learning, or, the creation of maps of possibility.

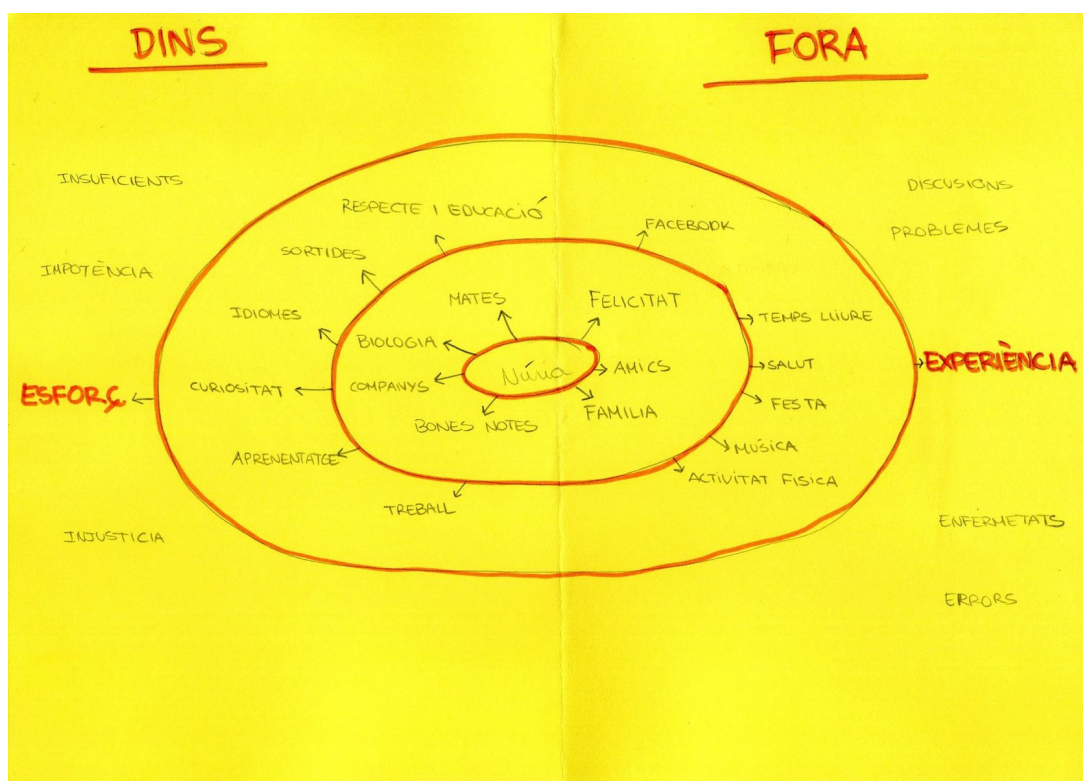


Figure 15. Learning assemblage. Map drawn by Laura.

Our exercise in mapping illustrates a potentiality, where the maps drawn did not define learning but served instead as a starting point for further inquiry. The reverberation

caused by Laura's map (Fig. 15) illustrates this point.³⁸ In what amounts to a *first articulation* of learning, she draws two concentric circles, thus reterritorializing the zones labeled as inside and outside school into two alternative (concentric) spheres related to effort (*esforç*) and experience (*experiència*). As the project went on, we started to focus our attentions on the term effort, using the word to identify the complex appearances of learning in our lives. The later stage represents a *second articulation*, whereby this new assemblage drawn by Laura was expressed (or coded) in terms of the young participants personal learning practices.

Effort

During the final presentation at the school, Adrià highlights how the concept of effort was one of our project "results." To explain why we chose this word, he provided the following commentary on what effort meant to us, in the context of our project³⁹:

When talking about learning, we used the term effort. It's kind of abstract. We weren't able to measure it or have physical proof to bring here today, but we were able to reach certain conclusions. First, well, effort is always rewarded. If you put effort into something—even if you just try—you can still see where you went wrong and go back and try again.

Also, effort is relative, and depends on where you are and what you're doing. It's not the same to make an effort doing something that you love, as it is to force yourself to do something that you don't enjoy at all. Something can seem to take forever and be really annoying, while sometimes you won't even notice the time passing.

And, sure, attitude is important. How much you want to do something and how easy it is for you makes a difference. Even if we don't want to do something, we'll still do it, but then it will be harder, more complicated, and we'll have to make more of an effort.⁴⁰

From Adrià's comments, we gather that learning was confronted as an abstraction,

38 It is impossible to underestimate the impact this map had on the project. The two concepts *effort* and *experience* introduced here became the principal terms used to discuss learning for the remainder of the project, effectively shaping both the terms and the scope of our inquiry.

39 It is of interest that the young people used the term "effort" to describe learning, given its close relationship to the notion of "grit" or what is referred to as academic perseverance. There is an established research area that looks at the relationship between academic perseverance (see: Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) which is defined broadly as the "tendency to complete school assignments in a timely and thorough manner, to the best of one's ability, despite distractions, obstacles, or level of challenge" (Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, et al, 2012). In spite of this history, the concept was explored not in relation to academic performance but as a way to discuss the experience of learning. It appears that the feeling of reaching a goal or overcoming obstacles, or in other words making a conscious effort, allowed the young people to articulate how learning felt, and what it learning meant to them.

40 This quotation is a transcription of Adrià's oral presentation.

something that could not be measured by the group. Instead, we find that it is expressed through a change in time (lived in degrees of intensity); Adrià states that the quality of the learning experience can speed time up, or slow it down. He also maintains that a tangible outcome is not necessary—you can be rewarded for your efforts, or even just awarded for making an effort. While this description provides a processual interpretation of learning, it is of note that the mention of space is absent. As a result of the project, the where of learning begins to fade, and a focus is placed on the learning process itself.

* * *

The notion of double articulation draws on the performative ontology (Dewsbury, 2000; Fenwick & Edwards, 2013) of Deleuze and Guattari. It provides a template for looking how the process of learning produces a learning assemblage.

Double articulation is so extremely variable that we cannot begin with a general model, only a relatively simple case. The first articulation chooses or deducts, from unstable particle-flows, metastable molecular or quasi-molecular units (*substances*) upon which it imposes a statistical order of connections and successions (*forms*). The second articulation establishes functional, compact, stable substances (*forms*), and constructs the molar compounds in which these structures are simultaneously actualized (*substances*). (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 45-46)

This is a rather difficult definition of a complex process. Manuel DeLanda (2008), who has followed this formula through its different iterations in the work of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, summarizes double articulation thusly: “the first articulation is called ‘territorialisation’ and concerns a *formed materiality*, the second one is ‘coding’ and deals with a *material expressivity*” (p. 164). The materialist understanding of the performative provided by double articulation is relevant in the current project because it allows spatial arrangements, like the inside and outside, to be re-written (re-articulated) through practice. In other words, the performative act of becoming, framed as a double articulation, introduces a materialist perspective that remits back to our focus on (relational) space. The argument is decidedly less abstract if we go back to considering concrete examples from the project.

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004), the creation of assemblage is the result of considering both the substance and form of content (a material assemblage) and the form and content of expression (p. 49).⁴¹ When our group tried to conceptualize learning practices, it immediately felt like we were moving away from the topic. We found

41 “It is necessary to ascertain the content and the expression of each assemblage, to evaluate their real distinction, their reciprocal presupposition, their piecemeal insertions... [E]xpression in it becomes a *semiotic system*, a regime of signs, and content becomes a *pragmatic system*, actions and passions. This is the double articulation face-hand, gesture-word... This is the first division of every assemblage: it is simultaneously and inseparably a machinic assemblage and an assemblage of enunciation.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 555)

that we had to call learning something else in order to make it our own. Our first step, therefore, as depicted in Laura's map (Fig. 15), was to create an alternative material assemblage, performing according to DeLanda's (2008) short-hand, a *territorialization*. Here we find that her diagram unites a series of objects—incorporating knowers, knowledge and modes of knowing—around the term *effort*. The project then proceeded to explore forms of expression, looking at ways this new assemblage expands our understanding of learning. In this second stage—which DeLanda (2008) calls *coding*—we began to share anecdotes about what effort meant, to us. The youth quoted slogans, and talked about their sports teams, their classes, or the pressure put on them by their parents, all of which express this new concept of “learning-as-effort.”

This practice of double articulation captures the open-ended inquiry that defined our project. During our time together the young people never defined learning, nor generated a specific list of so-called learning practices. What we did instead was approach learning by allowing this concept to become-other, to occupy a new space in our lives, and we watched as it eventually deterritorialized a set of practices we were already engaged in, giving them new meaning, articulating them within a new assemblage.

Imagining, performing, “learning”

Once we decided to do our presentation in Prezi, as a group we quickly came up with an outline, in four parts. That was the easy bit. What followed was a process of filling in the blanks, and we needed to come up with material to fill in each section. So we double back on our efforts and once again we find ourselves trying to imagine how to represent learning.

Rachel, “Ok but how will you represent it, learning inside I mean?”

An idea comes to Adrià, who quickly explains, “It would be like... like a picture of someone studying at a desk. One of those desks with a little lamp, and some books.” He describes an image like he's seen it many times before.

For a brief moment I'm confused, so I ask, “What picture, a picture of you?”

Jordi builds off Adrià's answer (Fig. 16.). He insinuates a lamp with one hand, then assumes the position of someone studying: he leans forward and rests his head in one hand, looking down as if reading. He wrinkles his brow. “Yeah, like that.”



Figure 16. Imagining and performing inside learning.

As Jordi pantomimes, I can picture it: in a dark library, illuminated by a desk lamp, sits a young man in the pool of light, books piled on a table around him, reading with his head rested in one hand. Adrià and Jordi are describing a stock image: a product of a Google Image search (See: Fig. 17).



Figure 17. "Studying". The images are the top three results from a Google Image search of the word: studying. Tellingly, the word learning produces similar results, but they come further down. Learning is apparently a more abstract concept, as revealed by the graphics and cartoons that are associated with it (communicating ideas that cannot be captured in stock photographs).

I realize that Adrià and Jordi are talking about images that they see as representing learning, they aren't thinking about how they themselves could represent learning. I push for more, asking, "But can't you take your own pictures? What if you took pictures of your own desks, where you study at home, or in the library?" Adrià and Jordi look doubtful.

It wasn't until we addressed the term effort that we began to come up with more personalized answers. Joan shared his graffiti (See: Fig. 13) and Jordi and Adrià brought in images from their soccer games, which were long promised but did not materialize until the end of the project. As a result, I'm left wondering if the term learning exists in the realm of the symbolic (the realm of stock images). The word effort works by bringing the topic into a first-person perspective, grounding it in everyday experiences.

* * *

Double articulation is Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the performative, and it is based on the notion of becoming. This is not exclusive to Deleuze and Guattari, for example, Judith Butler (1990) also makes this association, commenting

that “gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity... gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort” (p. 112). Jordi and Adrià's performative representation of learning, in turn, provides clues as to how young people “become students” through the repetition of discursive practices with the institution of schooling. These practices are illustrated when Adrià and Jordi, act out what they consider a normative version of studying. However the performative is not only the purview of discourse and speech acts; here, the desk, the reading lamp, the book, and even the fact that the subject in question is solitary, are all factors that when brought together, articulate what inside learning is.

The fact that a concept *becomes* through a process of articulation does not mean that it is always inviting of difference. In fact, in chapter 2 we explored the apolitical foundations of the notion of becoming. DeLanda has explored the political implications of double articulation when it manifests as a way of *legitimizing* and *enforcing* traditional practices (DeLanda, 2008, pp. 170-172). However, reiterating the argument established in chapter 2, it is through encounter that becoming has the opportunity to affect change. For example, Tara Fenwick, Richard Edwards and Peter Sawchuk (2011) explore how learning practices *bring forth* the relational space of learning.

[E]ntities, knowledge, other actors, and relations of mediation and activity – all the forces directly engaged in learning activities – are also being brought forth in practices as learning. ... [I]t is through the being-together of things that actions, including those identified as learning, become possible. (p. 6)

Framing learning as a performatic expression, or a double articulation, emphasizes that it is not a stable concept, but requires a continuous assembling (through content and expression). This repetition can contribute to the legitimization of normative practices, but also serves as the location for change. Louis Althusser (2006) has observed that “not all existence is reproduction and the logic of the encounter produces rather than reproduces” (p. 198). The group project supports this; in our encounter with the term learning, we challenged existing definitions and brought forth new ones; the process is productive not reproductive.

To insist on learning as an assemblage is to insist on the plasticity of the term, making it subject to change through practice. Thinking about learning in terms of the experience of making an effort, we are encouraged to think in Deleuzeoguattarian terms and read effort (an expression of learning) as desire; in which case, the learning assemblages here introduced are scaled not by quantifiable measures (of latitude and longitude) but by a “pragmatics composing multiplicities or aggregates of intensities” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 16). To conclude his monolog on effort (cited earlier), Adrià finishes his

description with the observation that:

People are all doing the same things inside, while outside, everyone makes an effort with things they like to do, which are probably completely different. So, you can tell who a person really is outside, instead of inside.

Adrià's description imagines learning as an assemblage that overlaps inside school and then diverges outside, once learners have the freedom of movement to engage in differentiated activities. As Adrià succinctly captures, learners are effectively desiring subjects, engaged in exploring their relationships to learning, which are in turn expressed through a constant reconfiguration of the assemblages that such desire enacts.

Conceptualizing

Like the discussion elaborated in chapter 4, this chapter works through the events that took place during fieldwork by asking: what does this collaboration teach us about learning practices? Here, a mobilities perspective engages in a series of thought experiments, following events from the fieldwork in order to consider, first, how learning emerges, and second, how it changes our understanding of the boundaries between in and outside school. Mobilities activates a consideration of learning as a performative practice—or a becoming—and reveals the in/out to be a question of assemblage rather than a set of fixed locations. Likewise, we see that there is no sorting-out the difference between the young people as students and learners. Such signifying practices exist on a continuum; the young people pursue different trajectories while navigating a range of possibilities and practices, both inside, outside and within the in-between.

Cresswell (2006) has argued that mobilities are to movement as place is to space. In other words, mobility is the signifying practice that makes movement meaningful (p. 21). In an effort to understand learning not as an empty process but as a significant one, this chapter has reviewed three possible mobilities.

Channeling. When reviewing the tension between smooth and striated spaces, the forces of channeling were closely examined, attempting to portray disaffection not as a mere drifting away from school, but part of a complex network of multi-directional flow, with a brief consideration of whether stickiness may be an interesting antidote for those young people who are just drifting along. The review of spaces of flow threw into question the tendency to equate the in/out with the striated/smooth and sought out mobilities that create qualitatively different spaces (smooth ones), which are capable of subverting the acceptable conduits of schooling.

Scale jumping. Borrowing a term that fundamentally altered the meaning of scale within geography, this mobility situates young learners' agency within an exterior set of relations. This mobility acknowledges the emphasis on the horizontality of non-curricular

learning, which provides young people the ability to act as both learners and teachers (or experts). It then tries to add to the conversation by recognizing that the ability to align themselves with wide-reaching networks is another appeal for young learners, one that is not necessarily about personal development (or “going deeper”) but which can be about personal gain. Here the Prezi is once again a point of conflict, but valued as a line of flight. An attempt is made to understand the presentation as the product of scale jumping, which deterritorializes the *space of dependence* and introduces a *space of emergence*. The Prezi may not be “true” to the project, but it ends up representing a powerful learning strategy put into practice by the young people.

Assembling. Abandoning the horizontal (flow and networks) and vertical (scale) axes, the final mobility engages a more conceptual plane. Although it risks getting lost in abstraction, this mobility attempts to understand how learning acted as a mobile concept during the group project, tracing an ambivalent connection between our ability to create concepts, and our ability to be formed by them. In the context of the project, learning was addressed in terms of the experience of learning, or what it feels like when you make an effort. Inna Semetsky (2010), writing on the notion of experience in Deleuzian thought, reminds us of the relationship between experience and experimentation, “experience is rendered meaningful not by grounding empirical particulars in abstract universals but by experimentation” (p. 91). By framing the work of the group project as a double articulation, the inquiry studies how the learning assemblage is recast through a play between content and expression, or between inquiry and practice.

The question I asked at the outset of the chapter may have been: What does learning do? However, reaching the end of this reflection it is more appropriate to ask: What has this study done to the concept of learning? Claire Colebrook (2010a) reminds us that for Deleuze, “[c]oncepts are intensive: they do not gather together an already existing set of things (extension); they allow for movements and connection” (p. 1). She continues, “life is an expressive and open whole, nothing more than the possibility for the creation of new relations; and so a concept, or the thought of this life, must try to grasp movements and potential, rather than collections of generalities” (Colebrook, 2010b, p. 96). Conceptualizing learning as a series of mobilities aims to capture this intensive project, working toward the individuated practices of learning, rather than attempting to subsume them into a preconceived narrative.

In summary, the mobilities presented in this chapter provide examples of learning in the nomadic space. This is a space that has no intrinsic properties (no preconfigured movements) but which emerges through extrinsic relations, as a result of mobilities. By expressing learning through a concept of mobility, we arrive in the eventful space.

It is important to note with all the talk of virtual geographies that the virtual in this sense has nothing to do with a representational system that configures an unreal space of interaction. Here, the performative frontier proceeds not by elimination (possibilities not realised), nor by limitation (thwarted possibilities) but only by creation (the actualisation of potential). (Dewsbury, 2000, p. 480)

This progression of abstract thought, as John-David Dewsbury mentions, is not just a piling on of metaphors but an attempt to think the unthought, or the outside of learning.

5.3. Learning in the eventful space

As stated, the perspective of mobilities constitutes a road map for researching youth learning practices with young people, providing an entry point for addressing the broad topic of learning in and outside school. As the project unfolded, I became interested in engaging with the entanglement of mobilities: across places, networks and trajectories, while at the same time engaging questions of flow, scale and performative practices. This effort allowed the young people's contributions to impact the direction and shape of the project itself, directing the scope of the inquiry.

It was proposed at the outset of this chapter that this participatory project would draw on a notion of mobilities, focusing on the coming together of practices, spaces, objects, and agents capable of generating (rather than containing) learning. As our group sessions accumulated, in the variety of activities that were reported on as learning—from sport to photography, from design to cooking or playing video games—we saw different examples of the activities youth identified as sites of learning. As this list grew, it became hard near the end of the project to distinguish between learning and “life experience.” This forced a change in strategy. Rather than fixing learning to location, this research began to ask, what happens when learning is no longer tied to the school? Where does it take us, what does it set into motion, and what trace does it leave on our collective imaginaries? As mentioned, through this process, we came see the relationship between in/out not as a binary, but as parts of the same plane. In addition, without fixing it to a location or framing it as a result, I have attempted to show how mobilities shift our consideration from learning as an individual activity, portraying it instead as a connective tissue, or actant.

Working within a mobilities paradigm, the aim has not been to celebrate several concepts circulating through this dissertation—the smooth space, deterritorialization and the assemblage—but to look critically at what those concepts mean when considering them in the context of everyday learning practices. Now, I will briefly look back on this thought experiment to ask what this mobilities paradigm has accomplished. It is possible to say that

it has informed on learning broadly in two ways. First, it allows us to think of learning as movement, or a becoming. Second, it invites a consideration into whether learning is nomadic to education, and therefore resistant to 'audit culture' and other processes of standardization.

Peter Merriman (2012b) traces a philosophical interest in mobilities across several sources, highlighting Henri Bergson's influence, and citing him at length:

Before the spectacle of this universal mobility there may be some who will be seized with dizziness. ... They must have 'fixed' points to which they can attach thought and existence. They think that if everything passes, nothing exists; and that if reality is mobility, it has already ceased to exist at the moment one thinks it – it eludes thought. ... Let them be reassured! Change... will very quickly appear to them to be the most substantial and durable thing possible. Its solidity is infinitely superior to that of a fixity which is only an ephemeral arrangement between mobilities. (Bergson 1992, 150; Cited in Merriman, 2012, p. 21)

Merriman (2013) argues that it is possible to foreground mobility, placing it ahead, for example, of space and time in terms of its importance in the events of life:

other registers and measures—such as rhythm, movement, force, energy and sensation—may be important properties for understanding the unfolding of specific ontologies and events, as *may* space or time in specific situations. (p. 186)

In the current project, learning is such an *unfolding of an event* that is productively approached through mobilities. At a time when youth are actively excluded from formal education, or when they at least face a series of obstacles that prohibits them from successfully navigating through it, it appears that learning has everything to do with a *register and measure* based on mobilities. Recognizing learning as a mobility allows the inquiry to foreground learning by asking how it emerges within space-time, instead of positioning it as a product of it. To this end, I argue that learning is a vital drive (a desire)—the *rhythm, movement, force, energy and sensation*—that is not generated by space but which articulates space in its actualization. This theory necessitates an understanding of space that supports mobility rather than works against it as a sedentary force.

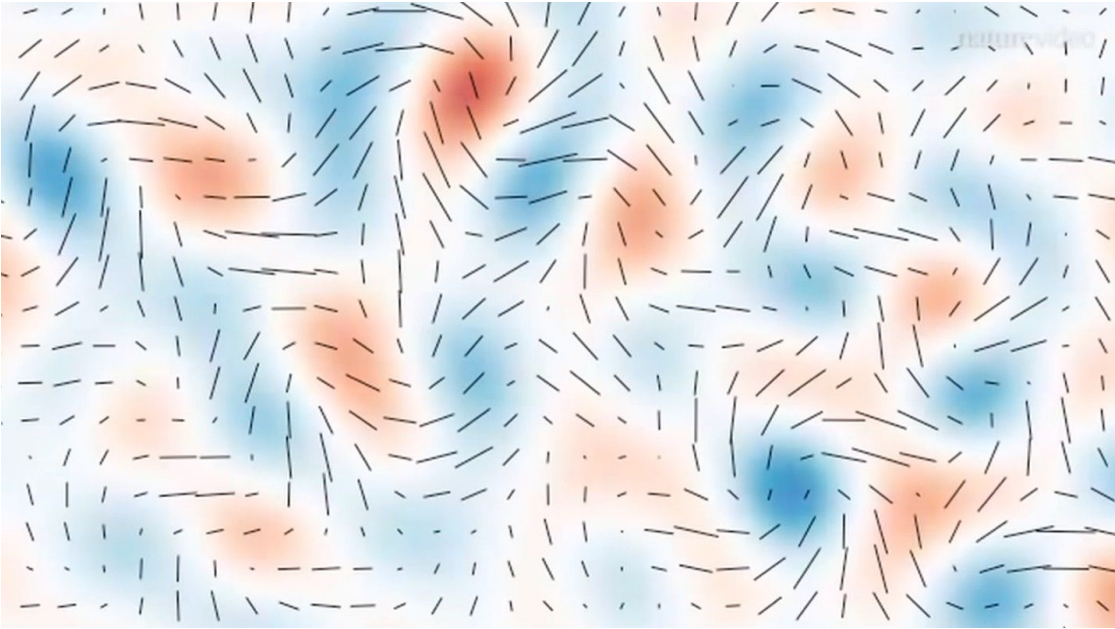
By focusing on composition, thinking with the concept of assemblage enables an ethos of engagement with the world that is deliberately open as to the form of the unity, the types of relations involved, and how the parts will act. (Anderson et al, 2012, p. 176)

Thus this chapter has discussed learning *taking place* as a project that creates an assemblage, highlighting learning as the relationship that brokers this engagement with the

world; a process not a fixed result.

At the same time, positioning learning as nomadic to the project of education poses an interesting question regarding how the standardization of learning is to be avoided. The slippages and small subversions, those practices that reveal *spaces that leak*, *spaces that speak* and *spaces of possibility* are recovered as mobilities. In the analysis performed in this chapter, I portray learning as occupying a space that is always outside of the grasp of traditional representational strategies, not to be contained. Chasing after it, the objective here has not been to apply a pedagogical model, or to read the experience against such a framework, *per se*; instead the end result of the research project has been to find paths that permit thinking about learning outside the bounds of formalist frameworks.

V. Spiraling



Graphic from BICEP2, a project that operated from the Dark Sector Lab at Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station from January 2010 to December 2012.

The graphic illustrates the found evidence of the imprint of gravitational waves on the border of the universe, created mere moments after the big bang.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJYc9YmKIO8&feature=youtu.be>

Ripples in space-time

[A] team of astronomers led by John M. Kovac of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics detected ripples in the fabric of space-time—so-called gravitational waves—the signature of a universe being wrenched violently apart when it was roughly a trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second old.

... The ripples manifested themselves as faint spiral patterns in a bath of microwave radiation that permeates space and preserves a picture of the universe when it was 380,000 years old and as hot as the surface of the sun.

– Extract from the *New York Times*' article “Space ripples reveal big bang's smoking gun” (Overbye, 2014).

In the spring of 2014, the *New York Times* reported that scientists in the South Pole were able to photograph “ripples in the fabric of space time,” effectively proving how the universe expanded when it was *roughly a trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second old*. To achieve their task, the scientists needed significant technological innovation (i.e., one giant telescope) to be able to x-ray the gravitational waves, which were first hypothesized to exist forty years ago.

When first reading this news item, deep into the process of grappling with my methodological approach, I acknowledged that this scientific accomplishment made the task I had set out for myself appear rather humble, to say the least. Then again, I asked, am I not also interested in tracing what is unseen to the naked eye? In my own work I constantly wonder if the project left any small traces on the participants – *did it cause any ripples in space-time? And if so, is it possible to capture them?*

For their work, the astrophysicists needed a stronger lens. In my case, I find that it comes down to rethinking the relationship between the tools I'm using and the phenomena I want to represent. I must ask: What does my methodological approach allow me to capture, and is it sensitive enough to catch the experiences whose presence I can only intuit?

Possible futures

Halfway through the session before winter break, Xavi puts away his tablet and I bring out a tray of pastries and set them in the middle of the table. This was met with an incredibly enthusiastic response, even though a week earlier I had told everyone, and then reminded them via the Facebook group, that today we could have a holiday party. The idea, I told everyone, was to spend part of the session just talking, instead of working on the research project.

Last week, the young people took a field trip to a career development center in

Barcelona, where they took a quiz that could tell them about future career options. Xavi and I ask them what results they got and in those 20 minutes, I think we learned more about the people participating in the project with us than in the rest of our time together, combined.

Pere had not been too forthcoming in the project, and prior to today we knew of him as a laconic Volleyball player and occasional skateboarder. His most memorable contribution to date had been admitting that when he's not at school, he really just likes to just hang out on the couch watching TV for hours. Now, talking about his results, we learn that he likes to draw and has built a career plan around that fact; he plans on getting a vocational degree in technical drawing and he has a few vocational schools picked out that he's looking into for the fall. He didn't need the test he says, because he's got it all figured out.

Jordi chimes in that he, too, knew what result we was going to get because he already knows he wants to be a journalist. He informs us that he likes to write, and hopes to cover sports. Earlier we knew that his hobbies were playing soccer and music, but writing has never been mentioned, nor has Jordi written anything in the context of the project. I'm curious about this proclivity so I ask him if he blogs, and he says he doesn't. I mention that that seems to be how a lot of people break into the industry these days but he shrugs this off. I think to myself, this is his future we're talking about, not his present.

Joan doesn't give a list of his results, but he does say that one career suggestion he received was to be a cook. As soon as he pronounces the word his classmates clamor in surprise, "You know how to cook?!" I take in their reaction and think, *of course. Of course Joan is the only one who prepares his own meals.* This distinguishing factor seems like merely a fun anecdote for his peers and we keep it light. I ask him if he has a favorite recipe and he says he makes lentils, which earns him a whole round of questions by his mystified classmates.

When it's Adrià's turn, and he blurts out, "biomedical engineering and robotics and telemedicine."

Rachel, "What??" He speaks so quickly that at first it sounds like one long word, and I'm confused.

Xavi is also surprised, commenting, "it seems like your results are really specific."

Laura jumps in at this point. She qualifies that he is talking about is nanorobtics, before adding that she too had the most results in the area of medicine. Her response gives us more information about how the test works, by describing that first it highlights general fields, and then recommends specific careers. She explains that she's interested in studying psychology, or maybe pediatrics. Roser adds that she also got high results for the areas of medicine, as well as research and social work. She is also interested in medicine and begins chatting with Laura about their similar results.

* * *

The young people take different approaches to thinking about their future projects, either by linking current interests or skills to specific jobs, or by defining a broad area of intervention, in which they hope to find a career, further down the line. Each choice had an implied path regarding their future studies, with some of the youth planning on going to university, and others opting for a different route. Of interest is how this conversation that emerged over snacks, during our “off time,” and perhaps, arguably outside the formal boundaries of the research project.

While the term learning remained an abstraction within the group, this conversation reveals that ideas about who they want to be, what they want to do, and by proxy, how they should continue their studies are all issues that seem to be on the forefront of their minds.

Misleading

While collaborating with the young people, the term learning quickly became slippery and hard to grasp. Once uprooted from its association with learning objectives and the school, the focal point of our research was revealed as being difficult to talk about and confusing to document. In order to make progress, the group adapted by adopting a spiraling motion, developing ways for understanding learning in and outside school by working around the concept and slowly expanding our vocabulary and knowledge.

The form of spiral is important for understanding what took place in a fieldwork experience where during some stretches of time we appeared to be going nowhere. We did not progress in a linear manner as outlined by the project objectives; there was no clear movement from the definition of a research question, to collecting evidence and then continuing to analyze the data and represent the results. The cyclical format was frustrating sometimes because we felt that we were always going back to the where we started without making progress. When the project concluded, however, there was a sense of accomplishment about what had been achieved. The group seemed to acknowledge that he had ended up in a different place than where we had started.

Disseminating this internal sense of accomplishment has proved difficult, given the inconclusive results of the project. In the most recent conference presentation I gave of this work, one audience member commented that she felt my use of the term learning throughout was “misleading.” She suggested that other words may be more appropriate to talk my object of study. Her comments are in line with others I have received, and I have become aware that the treatment of learning in this project is polemic. There is concern within the field of education that talking about learning as a mobility tells us very little about learning *as such*.

Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) remind us that the work of *minor languages* is not

about adopting a different language. Instead, this concept focuses on how to successfully become-other within one's own mother tongue (p. 280). Which inspires me to ask: Is there not a way to trouble the term learning from the inside? Can we occupy a margin within which we may consider learning from a *minoritarian perspective*? If we are misled within the terminology, can we accept this deviance as a provocation to think learning differently? The nomadic framework developed in this project is a response to the misleading experience of the fieldwork. It is not an attempt to re-write it, but rather an attempt to learn from it.

Therefore, I have incorporated this comment into the research as another mobility, one which introduces a new way of thinking about what this dissertation does. I accept, rather than reject, the suggestion that this project *misleads*. It certainly was misleading *in situ*, as our group got off track, got stuck, and then emerged as the least productive group at the end of the national project. It was the process of getting lost (See: Lather, 2007), however, that has characterized this inquiry. It has allowed the study to evolve into a critical interrogation into how to make sense of the fieldwork, learning experiences, and the research process itself.

To take a picture of the ripples in space time that remain engraved in the boundary of our universe, astrophysicists first had to imagine that this image existed.⁴² Meanwhile, the current project also took as its starting point an intuition, the notion of invisible learning, without having a clear understanding of how to research it. Ultimately, the dissertation documents my confrontation with this issue, and the fact that the research began somewhere and ended up somewhere else can be seen in a positive light. Having been *misled* by the research event is not only a testimony to the experience of getting lost. It also speaks to the fact that learning has taken place.

42 The moment when Andre Linde, the researcher who hypothesized the existence of these ripples, and developed the theory of cosmic inflation in the 1970s, received confirmation of his hypothesis was captured on film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlfIVEy_YOA.

6. A learning assemblage

In its exploration of learning practices, this project has moved in several directions. Situated within a national project that aimed to study learning in and outside secondary school with young people, the dissertation research took up the topic of sites of learning, asking to what extent we can approach learning as a spatial practice. To support this inquiry, a conceptual framework has emerged that traces a connection between the spatial tactics of de Certeau (1984), the mobilities paradigm (Cresswell, 2006, 2010a; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Leander et al, 2010; Merriman, 2012), and the nomadic thought of Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004; Braidotti, 2006). This perspective has developed in order to allow the research to follow the learner and stay close to those deviations, tangents and lines of flight that composed those significant moments in the empirical study. After recognizing that the fieldwork deterritorialized the research (or at least, the my own expectations for it), the project was obliged to develop an alternative vocabulary to speak the research event. As such, the question of how to interpret and represent this particular project became a case study for the larger question of how to address learning practices that push up against representational boundaries.

By way of concluding, this chapter will focus on three main points. First, returning to the initial proposal to study sites of learning, I will address the three named assemblages of becoming-learner, -inquirer, and -researcher, unraveling them in order to examine how they act as spaces of learning. Next, I will review the development of the project as a nomadic inquiry to consider what this perspective has contributed to the project. Finally, I revisit the notion of the eventful space and review the impact this research has on addressing the social imaginary of learning.

6.1. Spaces of learning: reassembling

Christian Bueger (2013) has described assemblage thinking as “a sensitizing framework for empirical research” (p. 65), and to a certain extent this is the rationale behind the use of assemblage in the current project. When speaking of the assemblage, the object of study is set in motion, as “an ethos of assemblage eschews thinking in terms of essence or fixity by holding onto the possibility that entities are continuously being formed and deformed” (Anderson et al, 2012, p. 180). The assemblage emerges as a territory defined by movement, however, the movement in itself is not informative; the interest lies in how this movement is a catalyst for introducing difference.

In chapter 2 I argue that the assemblage is a territory that *does something*, it is a *purposeful* arrangement rather than a casual constitution of disparate elements. In locating the role of the assemblage as the site of becoming, it can read as the eventful space, a site characterized by “intensive relations that are actualized in extensity. It is thus through the event that we find the expression of the differential in the unfolding of space” (Marston et al, 2005, p. 426). Framing this project, as well as the act of learning, within an assemblage it is a strategy for articulating the knowledge, knower, and act knowing in relation, in response to the question: How does learning *take place*? Graham Livesey (2005) reveals some of the spatial imaginaries contained within the notion of assemblage:

The result of a productive assemblage is a new means of expression, a new territorial/spatial organisation, a new institution, a new behaviour, or a new realisation. The assemblage is destined to produce a new reality, by making numerous, often unexpected, connections. (p. 19)

Hinting at conceptual, physical, mental, or even imagined spaces, the dynamic territory of assemblage captures the fluidity implicit in the term *spaces of learning*. Taking a closer look at how the assemblages have emerged within this project, I will consider the territories of becoming that have informed this research.

Becoming-learner

We have seen that the discussion surrounding school disaffection often advocates for young people’s rights, agency, and access. Without in any way opposing that project, this dissertation does something else; rather than focus on creating a space for student subjectivity and belonging within the school (as if “school” and “student” are somehow separate entities), the becoming-learner assemblage works as a way to introduce difference—and by extension multiplicity—into our thinking about how young people learn. Here, a mobilities perspective imagines a learning landscape populated by the multi-directional forces, influencing how young people navigate between in and outside school. If school disaffection promotes a discourse built around a vision of closed spaces and exclusion, a perspective of learning mobilities recovers this situational aspect of learning, providing a more nuanced understanding of what is taking place within, or beyond, school borders.

What can a mobilities perspective teach us about learning practices? In spite of coming from the field of geography, this concept is not as foreign to education as it sounds. In fact, the multi-dimensional landscape created by youth learning mobilities has been addressed within educational theory, mainly by socio-cultural pedagogical models inspired by situated learning. Thinking beyond questions of physical location, the following categories, for example, characterize the learning young people reported on in terms of the mobilities they put into action.

Mobility in conceptual space. We have seen that the young people's interest in specific activities, like sports or music, mobilized them to take part in learning activities outside school. These affinity spaces (Gee, 2004)—which are virtual, physical or hybrid—serve as spaces where the young people connected with those who share their interests, and which supported their growth in a particular topic or competency. *Mobility through social space.* The different social groups young people interact with—at home, in school, through leisure activities and so on—allow them to share and receive differentiated knowledge. In our project, when discussing their goals for life after school, some students drew on non-academic skills (such as cooking) to inform their interest in possible future professions, as well as conversations with parents and siblings. While the “funds of knowledge” (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) that families or communities provide—by way of resources, networks or cultural traditions—were not explicitly identified as “learning practices”, they emerged during the project as being highly influential in young people's sense of self, and had a definite role in contributing to their career goals. *Learning dispersed over time.* This understanding of lifelong learning positions the learner as an agent in transit, who gains knowledge and competencies over time. The young participants in the research project painted a picture of school as being one part of a wide panorama constituting their lives. Lifelong learning was seen as akin to life experience, gained through time spent engaged with family, friends, teachers, sports, hobbies, work, and so on.

While the mobilities that occupied the analysis in chapter 5 hew closely to the conceptual lexicon developed in this dissertation, thinking of how learning takes place in conceptual space, social space and in space-time returns this interpretation to themes and issues more commonly addressed in educational research. The fact is, while the term mobilities has yet to reach wide circulation in the field of education, it is already a central concern for educationalists.⁴³

The assemblage of becoming-learner is populated by questions regarding the *where*, *when* and *with whom* of learning, in this case framed by the notion of “learning in and outside.” By sharing examples and questioning our assumptions during the project, it was possible to discuss learning that was separate from schooling, defined not necessarily by specific sites but by a wider network of interests, relationships and practices. This conceptualization captures the extent to which learning leads young people to

43 Of course, educational mobilities is a common term, but it refers mainly to two issues: a specific process of migration involving students carrying out their higher education in a foreign country, and issues related to social justice and access to education across the globe. While clearly important topics, they do not reflect the interest of the mobilities paradigm as elaborated in this project.

actively seek out and create social spaces that support their interests and emerging identities. By turning to a mobilities perspective, the learner as a nomadic subject is portrayed as embedded in an assemblage of interrelations (i.e. a nexus of in and out conduits), a vision that supports an imaginary of learning across contexts.

Becoming-inquirer

A not insignificant outcome of this research project was the disruption the participation in the project introduced into the young people's regular school day. The youth missed class to participate in the project. What made more of an impact was the fact that the project did not follow a syllabus, but followed a more open-ended practice of living inquiry. I would argue that this interruption is as much a “result” of the project as the accumulated observations shared by the young people. Ann Brown (1997) has demonstrated the inexperience young people have in thinking about learning, observing that this can limit young people's awareness of the learning practices available to them. She claims, “[children] had little insight into their own ability to learn intentionally; they lacked reflection. Children do not use a whole variety of learning strategies because they do not know much about the art of learning” (p. 400). When youth participated in the project as researchers, documenting and reporting on their own experiences within a process defined as a living inquiry, they expanded their repertoire of learning strategies.

Ultimately, through their participation in this study the young people gained a critical distance that allowed them to question their role as learners (in a way that was distinct from their role as students). The identity work involved in recognizing oneself as a pedagogical subject indicates why participatory ethnography with youth as a research design is also an ethical project. As discussed in chapter 4, Smyth (2006) advocates that young people need to have agency before they can begin to repair their disaffection and disinterest in school; incorporating students as researchers is one way of allowing this agency to develop.

Given the evolving, open-ended (or ambiguous) conclusions of our group project, we may consider the youth perspectives in this project as contributing to a diversification rather than a categorization of what youth learning looks like. In the assemblage of becoming-inquirers, the young people discussed and shared their own experiences, while reporting on and putting into practice modes of learning that challenged traditional classroom practices. Observing this process changed how we understand the relationship between in and outside school and demonstrated how the act of inquiry is itself a learning practice.

Becoming-researcher

This dissertation is deeply invested in confronting methodological issues, asking how we can hold research accountable for the production of a social imaginary of learning. Therefore, while this work has been informed by empirical work with young people, the research questions I articulate distance themselves from this experience, creating a space that has enabled me to reflect on my own encounter with the research event.

The elaboration of a dissertation has consisted in positioning my own work within a tradition of academic thought, one that speak of the research in ways I find generative rather than restrictive. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) state, “the becoming is the something else, the newness that is created. Becoming is the movement through a unique event that produces experimentation and change” (p. 87). While I have learned an immense amount from the fieldwork, the process of becoming-researcher has been as much, if not more informative. If the dissertation is a way of writing oneself into the academy, than the assemblage of becoming-researcher documents how this process is enacted.. This territory is composed of the readings, meetings, talks and other encounters that have constituted my (ongoing) induction into academia. As such, it also represents a mapping of a field of future inquiry and intervention.

The fold

If we return to the question regarding what are the everyday (spatial) practices of learning, the answer must necessarily remain open-ended. Hence the turn to the processes of becoming, and by proxy, the introduction of the assemblage as a territory capable of bringing together the disparate practices the make up a learning landscape. In her study of the relational character of space, Doreen Massey (2005) argues that we must:

understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. (Massey, 2005, p. 9)

Using the assemblage as a sensitizing framework opens up the research to the potentiality of the learning event, as expressed through the *contemporaneous plurality of coexisting heterogeneity*. By using the dissertation to expand our understanding of learning, it avoids reductive frameworks.

In describing the complexity of national research project, during one of the research team meetings the PI of the project, Fernando Hernández-Hernández, likened the our undertaking to a set of Matryoshka dolls—in reference the many research groups nested within the project design. However, I would argue that a more accurate descriptor is the *fold*. Deleuze uses the notion of the fold to trouble the delineation of the in/out boundary,

claiming “folds and foldings that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of the outside” (Deleuze, 1986/1988, pp. 96-97). In other words, the fold evokes a doubling wherein two elements (i.e. the inside and the outside) are brought into a relation (O’Sullivan, 2005). The project introduced here enacts such an entanglement. The participatory ethnography with the young people; the partnership between Xavi Giró and I; the university research team; this dissertation: these layers are not a nested set of bounded entities but an overlapping, contiguous field, where meaning emerges through a process of doubling inward and outward, moving back and forth between layers.

Becoming is therefore a radicalization of relations, of the spacing of relations, and of relationship space, wherein the conjunctive 'and' takes all; the conjunctive 'and' (is what) deconstructs. It deconstructs the borders, boundaries, and limits that are erected and projected between things. (Doel, 1996, p. 427)

One result of the project is the observation that the presumed boundary between in and outside school is not as clear as it seems; it is a result of, not a container for, learning practices. By activating a logic of AND, we can imagine the learning assemblage—in AND outside school—as an enfolded experience, which is a “folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding outwards of affects. A mobile entity” (Braidotti, 2000, p. 159). This assemblage draws a portrait of a relational site of learning, and in doing so positions learning as a process of becoming. As I have stated, this is a deeply ethical project, which attempts to open up ontological possibilities. In the words of Atkinson (2011):

The ethical imperative for pedagogy is concerned with maximising the power of learning, it is not focussed on what we are and should be, that is to say on some transcendent position towards being, but upon the potentiality and ‘unknown’ of becoming. (p. 6)

Moving from site to assemblage is a way of moving past the transcendent *is* to work within the potentiality of *AND*.

6.2. Nomadic inquiry

As I have discussed in chapter 3, and to a great extent in the interludes, the turn to nomadic inquiry came about as an effort to engage with the negative space of the field-work. Lather's (2001) inquiry into how to work the ruins of ethnography has been influential to this project. She reminds us that:

we must think against technical thought and method and toward another way that keeps in play the very heterogeneity that is, perhaps, the central recourse for getting through the stuck places of contemporary ethnography. This might

be termed a 'praxis of stuck places' ... To situate ethnography as an experience of impossibility in order to work through aporias is what Ellsworth (1997) terms 'coming up against stuck place after stuck place' as a way to keep moving in order to produce and learn from ruptures, failures, breaks, refusals. (p. 482)

Nomadology is a powerful conceptual framework that approaches the spatial practices of learning by embracing their subversive potential. Gravitating toward this framework in order to understand the fieldwork led to a profound change in the methodological approach. St. Pierre (1997b) muses that a nomadic inquirer is "more interested in the surprising intensity of an event than in the familiar serenity of essence" (p. 370). In other words, the nomadic inquirer is on the look out for a provocation, a change in ontological state wrought by the event. This section looks at the place and practice of nomadic thought within the research.

Nomadic thought

In his introduction to *A thousand plateaus*, Brian Massumi (2004) provides the following definition:

"Nomad thought" does not immure itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority; it moves freely in an element of exteriority. It does not repose on identity; it rides difference. It does not respect the artificial division between the three domains of representation, subject, concept, and being; it replaces restrictive analogy with a conductivity that knows no bounds. The concepts it creates do not merely reflect the eternal form of a legislating subject... They do not reflect upon the world but are immersed in a changing state of things. A concept is a brick. It can be used to build the courthouse of reason. Or it can be thrown through the window. (p. xii-xiii)

Massumi's description of the nomadic recognizes how the term manifests in the subject, concept and being of the research project; not limiting itself to the 'merely' epistemological, it emerges as an orientation for the methodological approach as well as the ontological understanding advanced in these pages. This is a risky proposal, as has been illustrated by the effects of embracing nomadic thought in this dissertation. Ultimately, this project advances through a series of deterritorializations; it poses questions that remain open-ended at the conclusion of each chapter, only to start over with a fresh set of questions in the following one. Meanwhile, the foundational concepts of movement, imaginaries and invisible learning create an unstable ground on which to work on.

Taking stock of the situation, perhaps the question to ask at the close of this project is whether nomadology has hindered or enhanced the ethnographic work: has it built something or thrown a brick through the window? (Also a worthy question: Are those opposing

projects or merely different accomplishments?) What is at stake is whether geophilosophy amounts to merely a word game (where *there is no there, there*) or whether it is capable of participating, in a meaningful way, in the project to counter school disaffection. I argue that while nomadology is a theoretical construct, this does not inhibit it from having a practical application. Theory can lead to the articulation of different questions, perhaps better questions, and this has had a direct effect on my methodology and my ability to learn from the research event.

John Smyth, whose work is strongly political in its commitment to reducing school disaffection, advances a project to counteract disenfranchisement in which he also emphasizes spatial practices. In an action he characterizes as sculpting a social space for re-engaging with learning (Smyth & McInerney, 2012), he advocates for creating spaces where youth are able to 'speak back' (See: Smyth, 2006, 2011; Smyth, Down & McInerney, 2014). Speaking back is a form of contestation,

not in an imprudent or rude way, but rather in terms of students exercising a voice in having a stake in their learning in a context that would prefer that they be docile and compliant in satisfying capitalism's human capital requirements. (Smyth, Down, McInerney, 2014, p. 7)

Using nomadology to interrogate the spatial practices of young people is a project that has allowed me to pay attention to the ways in which the young people spoke back in the project. Not only did this framework lead the research away from preconceptions I may have had about how to talk about youth learning, it brought to the fore the productive deviance that came to characterize the fieldwork. Here I draw a connection to nomadic thought and Atkinson's "pedagogies against the state:"

An emphasis upon the becoming of learning is crucial to pedagogies against the state, or put another way, pedagogies of the event; pedagogies that attempt to anticipate new forms of life beyond the parameters of known forms. (Atkinson, 2011, p. 114)

Particularly with the introduction of rhizoanalytic and ironic validity (explored in chapters 3 and 4 respectively), nomadic thought is was able to highlight and value the objectives and achievements of the young people, even when they differed from, and perhaps deterritorialized, my expectations. In other words, this framework attempts to think *new forms beyond the parameter of the known*. This is disconcerting but also necessary to the project of becoming-pedagogical.

The joke's on who?

By plugging in nomadology, the research took advantage of the stuck place, moving past it by engaging in a mobile endeavor, one that entailed posing questions, experi-

menting, and opening up the research in an attempt to think the new. Nomad science is, we recall, a method that *follows* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004, p. 413), working in a way that is “problematic rather than theorematic” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 277). In other words, it is explorative; it chases after lines of flight. This does not, however, make it a flight of fancy, but a project dedicated to thinking learning in ways that alter our perception of how learning takes place.

David Cole (2011) justifies the activation of Deleuzian thought in educational research in the following manner:

Deleuze is an attractive outside to the all too frequently normalised discourses of education. It could be stated that professional standards, curriculum outcomes and assessment regimes stand across a vast divide in relation to the concept-creation of Deleuze. Yet these realms are not necessarily oppositional... Applying Deleuze’s philosophy is as much about unlocking joy and laughter with respect to seemingly hopeless situations, as it is about understanding exactly what he was talking about. This unlocking concerns the use of affect, and is a future orientated approach to education as the becoming that it at its core moves us through time as an effect of power. (p. 13)

Much of the geophilosophical lexicon sounds removed from lived experiences, bordering on silly, but that is also how it *works*; taking a cue from the antics of the group project, framing the research through the lens of nomadic pedagogy is a way to counteract processes of standardization. This is true both theoretically and, as I elaborated at the start of chapter 3, methodologically as well. And why not, as Cole suggests, approach the notion of school disaffection by *unlocking joy and laughter with respect to seemingly hopeless situations?*

While working with nomadic thought, I consistently asked if the concepts I was using were imposed on the fieldwork, or if they engaged productively with the 'data' when plugged into the research event. Revisiting the fieldwork scenes and repeatedly witnessing the lapses in communication, the missteps, the chaotic, *haptic* space of the research group, I argue that this conceptual framework may be *an attractive outside* to educational discourse, but it is not so to the fieldwork. Instead it responds to the very tactics embraced by the young people in an attempt to dedicate the dissertation to them.

What this light-heartedness introduces, however, is a deep incompatibility between learning imagined through the lens of nomadic pedagogy and the formal project of schooling. If education is “essentially and pervasively normative, and all research is in some respects normative” (Mason, 2008, p. 10), then the uncontrolled, out of bounds, vital nature of nomadic movement is a threat to education. Having said this, I recognize that this is a problem without a solution; the tension between learning practices and formal

education remains unresolved. However, having observed learning taking place, I argue that to counter school disaffection, school must become a site where young people have agency, as per Smyth's project dedicated to turning schools into communities where youth can *speak back*. The fieldwork has demonstrated that youth are always already engaged in the process of seeking out and occupying such sites; the question now becomes how to activate these sites in support of young people's learning trajectories.

6.3. Activating collective imaginaries

The eventful space

In his own project regarding spaces of agency, Smyth (2006) recognizes the relationship between school disaffection and an ontological stratification of educational space:

under the 'conservative assault' of the 'new authoritarianism' (Giroux 2005) of these 'testing times' there is a massive 're-territorialization' (Deleuze and Guattari 1997) underway as the boundaries of schooling are invaded by big business with its corporate ideology of consumerism, benchmarking, standards, competitiveness, ranking, rating, and testing. The intent is to construct schools as sites that stratify, organize, re-legitimate, and reflect wider deformed social hierarchical structures of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and privilege. (p. 280)

This project bears witness to how young people counteract standardization through the production of and participation in smooth spaces, following lines of flight that manifest in ways that are more or less beneficial to their future projects—from tuning out during class, getting involved in a hobby, or by following a path that leads away from school all together. Rather than entrench even further the association of learning with specific sites, such as inside and outside school, this project shifts the research narrative away from the striated space of formal education, focusing instead on how alternative spatial practices allow us to rethink the way young people engage with learning. Surprisingly, regarding research in this area:

[t]here are fewer studies than one might reasonably expect... Much classroom research reflects the dominant conception of 'learning = being taught', and investigates matters such as teachers' questioning, teachers' managing the classroom, teachers' dealing with student misbehaviour, teachers' grouping of pupils, etc. (Watkins, 2005, p. 48)

Therefore it is necessary to produce research that is committed to intervening in the social imaginary of learning. As Elizabeth Grosz (1995) has commented, "there is an historical correlation between the ways in which space (and to a lesser extent, time) is represented, and the ways in which subjectivity represents itself" (p. 97). Highlighting the spaces of

agency available to young people avoids treating them as subjects of an *abstract space* (Lefebvre, 1974/1991).

Hence the focus on the representation of the landscape of becoming. Doing away with an already ordered spatial imaginary (the in/out) is the first step towards representing the eventful space of learning. For the young people, school is a territory marked by its disciplinary reach and expectations. However, learning is an *action*, it is not tied to a territory and instead *takes place* activating a “geography of the ‘yes, and’” (Helfenbein, 2010, p. 314). Furthermore, we may conjecture that if space is produced then it is always under construction, making it susceptible to minor practices of resistance, which by nature are unpredictable and subversive (evental).

Like energy in a material form such as a molecule or an atom, social energy is both directed and dispersed; it becomes concentrated in a certain place, yet continues to act upon the sphere outside. This means that social spaces have foundations that are at once material and formal, including concentricity and grids, straight lines and curves—all the modalities of demarcation and orientation. Social spaces cannot be defined, however, by reducing them to their basic dualism; rather, this dualism supplies the materials for the realization of a very great variety of projects. (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 192)

In spite of the important differences in their theoretical positions, it is possible to trace a connection from the humanist tradition of Lefebvre (1974/1991) into the poststructuralist theory of nomadology elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004). Here, the link between these different approaches is located within their portrayals of the diverse tendencies that interrupt both ontological and epistemological understandings of space. The above quotation depicts a common thread between the authors, even demonstrating the extent to which Lefebvre anticipates some terms also used by Deleuze and Guattari (his *social energy* recall the later authors' portrayal of *molecular becoming*, among other similarities). The insistence that social space can give rise to a *great variety of projects* anticipates the immanent potential of the eventful space.

Developing a theoretical framework that draws on nomadic thought has enabled this project to seek out the spaces of resistance, where the pedagogical subject is not pre-conceived, or *not yet* (Atkinson, 2011). Recovering a quotation from the introduction: “What does this eventfulness mean in practice? It means that the world is not given in advance.” (Doel, 2010, p. 120). To express the *not yet*, becoming is necessarily contingent on multiplicity (n-1), or the expression of non-totality. Always expressed in the process of assembling or forming part, this is a reflection of the transformation that is precipitated by the event.

Narrating the partial cultural milieux

This dissertation emerges from a shadow—or negative space—and is in dialogue with the other four cases that were carried out in parallel to this one, in the framework of the national research project. As such, it is defined by a struggle to recover meaning in a project that, in so many ways, failed to live up to expectations. This journey has implied rethinking the role of voice in participatory research projects, questioning positions frequently adopted by researchers that equate voice with agency and who equate collaborative research with “giving voice” to young people. By looking at refusal of the young people to participate as a generative rather than negative outcome, this dissertation reframes the study by looking at the *interaction* between the young people and the project objectives—i.e., their participation—rather than their lived experiences as learners (See: chapter 4).

Reviewing how youth practices can deterritorialize the research, without opposing it, is an important for resisting the temptation to fall back into a binary consideration of learning practices. Homi G. Bhabha (2003) reminds us that “subalternity represents a form of contestation or challenge to the status quo that does not homogenize or demonize the state” (p. 31). One unsettling element of the theoretical framework developed in this project is the contrast between striated/smooth spaces; producers/consumers; nomads/the State; or inside/outside. Rather than see these as opposing forces, Bhabha understands that there is no true outside because no entity is ever whole or pure. The formula of the not-One (Braidotti, 2014) implies that everything is in fact, hybrid (or in our case, folded).

While the young people enact a critique of the project, this does not mean that both tactics and nomadic pedagogy are in opposition to dominant forces of power; they exist and are activated from within them. Or, as Atkinson observes, “The minor is not to be viewed as outside or separate from the major but as constituting what are termed new lines of flight that deterritorialise major practices” (2011, p. 113). While the learners may constantly subvert the school through the use of tactics, that does not automatically mean they are against the school, *per se*, but rather, their actions serve to illustrate how school is just one element in a larger manifestation of the social space of learning.

The introduction of the minoritarian voice is therefore not to be seen as an attack on the school, but instead, understood as an effort to generate multiplicity. Take this example from de Certeau (1984):

Thus a North African living in Paris or Roubaix (France) insinuates into the system imposed on him... Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, **he establishes within it a degree of plurality and creativity. By an art of being in between**, he draws unexpected results from his situation. (p.30. Emphasis added.)

Bhabha's work on the notion of hybridity frames a potential outcome of the generative subversion of nomadic thought; he suggests we mine the “liminal space” (Bhabha, 1994) of hybridity such that the group project may act as a source for collective (plural) imaginaries of learning.

In an essay on human rights, Bhabha (1999) recovers Taylor's (1997) explanation of the broad conceptualization people have about themselves, their collective life, and society, the aforementioned “social imaginary.” To arrive at the social imaginary, Taylor explains that he must ignore what he deems the “partial cultural milieu”, which is at odds with overarching dominant narratives that define an imaginary. In response, Bhabha (1999) wonders in what way the partial milieu can gain cultural recognition, and by doing so erode the understanding that a nation state (or identity) is ever, in fact, whole. Rather than seek to marginalize the partial cultural milieu, he suggests, “it is the ethical and aesthetic 'imagination' of cultural difference, and its conditions of commonality or association” (p. 164) that need to be questioned. In other words, how our assumptions about totality create the effect of marginalization.

What Bhabha's recovery of the partial culture milieu achieves is a pluralization of the social imaginary. Applied to learning, I argue that by shedding light on the minoritarian (also, nomadic) practices of youth learning, common-sense ways of imagining learning are troubled. This allows us to recognize the productive nature of difference, whereby:

Difference as positivity at the heart of the subject entails a multiple process of transformation, a play of complexity that expresses the principle of not-One. (Braidotti, 2014, p. 171).

Interrogating the notion of a learning assemblage is a way to push against the representational boundaries of what learning looks like, in an effort to expand and erode the established social imaginary in favor of plural and collective practices.

Pluralizing the social imaginary

This dissertation concludes with a call to arms. St. Pierre (2004) argues that:

We are in desperate need of new concepts, Deleuzian or otherwise, in this new educational environment that privileges a single positivist research model with its transcendent rationality and objectivity and accompanying concepts such as randomization, replicability, generalizability, bias, and so forth—one that has marginalized subjugated knowledges and done material harm at all levels of education, and one that many educators have resisted with some success for the last fifty years. We seem to be in a time warp, when the overcoding machine of ‘state science’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 362), or what Sandra Harding (1991) calls ‘science-as-usual’ (p. 1), once again attempts to control education. (p. 286)

Carl Bereiter (2002), in a similar vein, suggests:

to draw politicians and business people away from their fixation on achievement test gains one must offer them the vision of a superior kind of *outcome*. The failure to do that is, I believe, the most profound failure of educational thought in our epoch. (p. 490.)

At the outset, I stated that this project engages the imaginary, that seemingly self-evident understanding of what learning is. In order to disrupt this normative vision, the project develops new concepts, and thus, offer a superior kind of outcome. To do so the project deviated from educational discourse, producing a layered and polyphonic representation of learning practices that refuses to settle in a normative paradigm. The project attempts to intervene in the social imaginary across three levels.

1. First, it develops an interpretation of learning as a mobility rather than an outcome. Focusing on the relationships, transitions, boundary crossings or displacements that young learners currently navigate, this descriptive approach highlights both the displacements and stases activated by learning. By revealing what I have referred to as the *qualitative multiplicities* of learning practices, mobilities generate a more nuanced approach to talking about how and where learning is (and is not) taking place.
2. Second, the participatory ethnography is revelatory in that highlights a frequently overlooked perspective in educational research, that is: the personal agendas of adolescents in relation to their learning trajectories. The youth revealed themselves to be adept at creating spaces of agency, navigating easily between official and peripheral sites of learning, as they developed their own paths through secondary school. By observing how their efforts frequently clashed with the mobility sanctioned by the school, de Certeau's (1984) notion of spatial appropriation and Ellsworth's (1997) modes of address were used, to rethink our assumptions about the relationship learning places and practices. We could argue that both mobilities and tactics introduce an alternative "(a)where-ness" (Thrift & Amin, 2005, p. 226) of learning practices, one that maps an agentic understanding of learning onto a situated imaginary of the student.
3. Finally, the research is permeated with a nomadic tendency, which in the introduction I identified as the keystone of this project. As both a concept and method, nomadology introduces a shift in our understanding of learning places and practices, locating them within a processual, performative ontology of becoming. Nomadic inquiry exploits the overlap between research and learning,

extending the framework into the process of investigation itself. Using notions such as the smooth space, deterritorialization, lines of flight and the assemblage, it imagines learning as an immanent form of becoming.

Working from a perspective that imagining is an action, and not a mere contemplation, the figurations put forth in this dissertation serve as a tool for pluralizing and intervening in the ingrained definitions we have about the what, where and how of learning. I accept that this particular framework may:

not tell us much about the real, yet nomadic analysis does determine a different way of performing social inquiry, and this difference opens up new paths to the real, including a questioning of the real and the often unaccounted for multiplicities of the real. (Cole, 2013, p. 225)

In a project that recognizes a blindness in how schools and educational research identify learning practices, it is more concerned with questioning the so-called real than reproducing it. By exploiting representational boundaries, in an attempt to explore and name alternative imaginaries of the learning process, an artistic license is taken. The result is an example of how to work within *the eventful space of learning*, a fictive territory that is not unreal, but merely configured by the ineffable act of learning taking place.

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Aprender dentro del espacio-acontecimiento:

Una cartografía de movilidades, nomadismos y otras tácticas espaciales

Resumen

Esta investigación cualitativa se basa en los resultados de una etnografía participativa que se llevó a cabo con 6 alumnos de 4º de ESO durante el año académico 2012-13. La investigación contribuye al proyecto nacional *Vivir y aprender con nuevos alfabetismos dentro y fuera de la escuela secundaria: aportaciones para reducir el abandono, la exclusión y la desafección escolar de los jóvenes* (MINECO. EDU2011-24122). En una serie de sesiones semanales de trabajo, con los jóvenes, indagamos sobre la noción del aprender y el significado en sus vidas, tanto dentro como fuera de la escuela, un proceso que interviene en nuestro imaginario social del aprendizaje.

A raíz de cómo se representaba y hablaba del aprender en este proyecto se construye un marco teórico que cuestiona la geografía imaginaria implícita en la frase “dentro y fuera de la escuela”. Se introducen autores como Lefebvre, de Certeau y Deleuze y Guattari, además de aportaciones desde la perspectiva de las movilidades, para estudiar el aprender como una práctica que produce el espacio social. Este giro conceptual se aleja de preguntas sobre el qué se ha aprendido, para pensar en cómo el aprendizaje emerge o bien, cómo tiene lugar. Alrededor de esta argumentación se despliega una reflexión sobre las estrategias representacionales posibilitadas por la etnografía postestructural. Se adopta el pensamiento nómada como concepto y método para movilizar la investigación etnográfica, convirtiendo la tesis en su propio espacio-acontecimiento.

Al final, la tesis aborda una ceguera existente en el campo de la educación, la cual hace que ciertos aprendizajes sean invisibles. Con la intención de problematizar modos de reconocer el aprendizaje que se adscriben a una lógica representacional, este estudio investiga aquellas experiencias pedagógicas intangibles que se encuentran más allá de las prácticas educativas tradicionales.

Cartografiar el espacio-acontecimiento del aprender

1. El contexto de la investigación

Una de las características más importantes de la tesis es que no es un proyecto independiente, sino más bien *forma parte*. Se trata de una de las muchas contribuciones que han salido a raíz del proyecto nacional en se basa la tesis. Además el estudio se llevaba a cabo dentro de un equipo de investigación y con un grupo de jóvenes participantes. Localizar la tesis dentro una producción colectiva debilita la posición de la investigadora como autora solitaria y hace hincapié al hecho de que este proyecto se produce dentro de una red de relaciones, un *ensamblaje* que abordo ahora.

El grupo de investigación

El grupo de investigación consolidado *Esbrina – Subjetividades, visualidades y entornos educativos contemporáneos* (2014 SGR 632)⁴⁴ reúne investigadores de las Facultades de Bellas Artes y de Pedagogía y lleva a cabo el proyecto nacional. Este equipo desarrolla una línea de investigación que estudia las trayectorias de los jóvenes, por la educación formal y, al nivel más amplio, por las transiciones que implica la construcción de la subjetividad. El grupo se acerca desde una perspectiva crítica a los discursos que caracterizan lo que significa el éxito y fracaso escolar para avanzar un proyecto que reconozca a los jóvenes como sujetos que aprenden (Hernández-Hernández, 2007). Para apoyar su compromiso ético y político, el grupo desarrolla una metodología basada en investigar *con* jóvenes, lo que permite al grupo posicionar a los participantes en sus investigaciones como colaboradores (no informantes) (Hernández-Hernández, 2011). Esta aproximación metodológica se sitúa dentro del marco de investigación interpretativa y se nutre de la perspectiva narrativa (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), lo que lleva al grupo indagar continuamente sobre cuestiones epistemológicas. La historia del grupo da cuenta de este proceso, donde se puede ver cómo el grupo intenta innovar sus metodologías en función de las necesidades del proyecto (Hernández-Hernández & Sancho Gil, 2015).

Sitúo el modo de trabajar del grupo porque la tesis es un producto de este entorno. Llevo desde 2008 colaborando con en el grupo—por tanto su perspectiva ha sido clave para mi formación como investigadora—y además, el diseño formal de la investigación que se presenta aquí, tanto el enfoque sobre el aprender *dentro y fuera* de la escuela, los parámetros del trabajo de campo o una serie de decisiones metodológicas, salen del grupo no de la tesis. Trabajar en equipo significa que durante la realización del proyecto nos reuníamos con regularidad para compartir dudas, discutir las tomas de decisiones durante el trabajo de campo y elaborar en colectivo los principales resultados del proyecto nacional.

⁴⁴ Véase: <http://www.esbrina.eu> para revisar sus proyectos y otras producciones.

Por otro lado, el labor de la tesis se ha elaborado en paralelo; se establece un diálogo con el grupo, mientras avanza por su propio camino. Al final considero que haber tenido el espacio dentro del grupo para hacer una investigación etnográfica más tradicional me ha permitido usar la tesis para expandir el marco, lo que me lleva aquí a experimentar con conceptos, estrategias de representación y modos de interpretación no contemplados dentro de trabajo grupal.

El proyecto nacional

Esta investigación contribuye al proyecto nacional *Vivir y aprender con nuevos alfabetismos dentro y fuera de la escuela secundaria: aportaciones para reducir el abandono, la exclusión y la desafección escolar de los jóvenes* (MINECO. EDU2011-24122).⁴⁵ El proyecto trata de generar conocimiento sobre la actual situación de la escuela secundaria a partir de indagar sobre las estrategias que los jóvenes utilizan para aprender dentro y fuera de la escuela. El proyecto giraba en torno a la realización de una serie de estudios etnográficos con cinco grupos de jóvenes (de cinco IES) que se encuentran en el último año de la educación secundaria, dentro de lo cual se proponía a los jóvenes estudiar los sentidos que dan al aprendizaje dentro y fuera de la escuela. Frente a una situación donde un alto porcentaje de jóvenes sufren de la desafección escolar, el proyecto pretendía elaborar otros relatos que cuentan la relación de los jóvenes con el saber (Charlot 2000; 2007).

El trabajo de campo se realizó durante el año académico 2012-13. En cada de las cinco escuelas se reunía un grupo de jóvenes de 4º de ESO (entre 4-11 jóvenes por escuela) junto con dos investigadores de Esbrina y, en algunos casos, con un profesor o profesora acompañante. Las sesiones con los jóvenes eran semanales y consistían en dos fases: 1) introducir metodologías etnográficas a los jóvenes, como por ejemplo, la observación, el diario de campo, la documentación fotográfica, etc.; y 2) indagar sobre el aprendizaje tanto en la escuela como en contextos fuera. Por supuesto cada grupo personalizaba este enfoque a la medida en que los proyectos evolucionaban y veíamos que algunos grupos enfatizaban temas más concretos como: el uso de las tecnologías, las actividades extracurriculares, la vida dentro de la escuela, etc.

Para incentivar la participación de los jóvenes intentamos que el proyecto contara como su crédito de investigación de 4º pero no ha sido posible en cada escuela. Al final 3 de las 5 escuelas reconocían formalmente la participación de los alumnos mientras en 2 se realizaba un seguimiento más informal del proceso. En cada escuela los grupos se componían por jóvenes que sí y no cumplían con las expectativas de la escuela. La participación

45 Aquí en enlace al proyecto: <http://esbrina.eu/portfolio/vivir-y-aprender-con-nuevos-alfabetismos-dentro-y-fuera-de-la-escuela-secundaria-aportaciones-para-reducir-el-abandono-la-exclusion-y-la-desafeccion-escolar-de-los-jovenes>.

era voluntaria, pero cada escuela gestionaba la selección del grupo a su manera, desde una escuela que abrió el proyecto a todos los de 4º y que al final tenía un equipo de 11 jóvenes, a escuelas que seleccionaba a los candidatos, controlando más la composición del grupo.

El caso

De los cinco casos que formaban parte del proyecto nacional, la tesis se centra en uno, el que se llevó a cabo en el IES La Mallola, un centro público en Esplugues de Llobregat, dentro del área metropolitana de Barcelona. Esplugues de Llobregat es un municipio de aproximadamente 50.000 personas que tiene una demográfica de clase media o media alta, y con una población inmigrante por debajo de la media catalana. La Mallola ofrece ESO y Bachillerato y tiene aproximadamente 360 estudiantes y un cuerpo docente de 40 profesores. Es un centro que disfruta de una buena integración entre el centro y la comunidad con unas instalaciones bien cuidadas y equipadas con tecnología actualizada (como las pizarras inteligentes, una sala de informática y redes de WiFi, entre otras dotaciones).

Participamos desde la universidad Xavier Giró y yo. Por parte del centro el grupo se formaba por seis jóvenes, 4 chicos y 2 chicas, seleccionaban por el centro. El grupo participante es una muestra representativa del alumnado. Los seis jóvenes desarrollan actividades extraescolares, como por ejemplo: deporte, música, idiomas, gimnasio o tutorías personales. Cinco de los jóvenes usan el catalán como idioma de preferencia y un chico solía hablar en castellano aunque sus contribuciones para el proyecto las producía en catalán. Como anécdota, observamos durante la realización del proyecto que tuvieron lugar dos viajes excepcionales: una excursión de esquiar para todos los de 4º y un intercambio a Alemania en que participaba una parte de la clase. Estas actividades nos hablan de los recursos que se gestionan en la escuela y la inversión por parte de la comunidad en el centro.

El grupo se compone por cuatro chicos y dos chicas, con 2 chicos que no cumplían con “las expectativas de la escuela”. Este grupo fue seleccionado por los tutores de 4º con la intención de incluir 2 alumnos de cada una de las tres líneas (A, B y C) para mantener una distribución igualitaria. En nuestro caso, la escuela reconocía de manera informal la participación de los jóvenes (es decir, que el proyecto no se vinculaba al crédito de investigación) e incluso en un momento dado, ambos la profesora que negociaba la entrada del proyecto a la escuela y el director del centro expresaban un interés en dar al proyecto la libertad que necesitaba poder desarrollarse sin intervención por parte del centro. La distancia calculada que ejerce el centro tiene un impacto importante en el grupo; liberado de las expectativas escolares los jóvenes participantes tenían más libertad para negociar los términos de su participación y vemos cómo este se permite una dinámica más casual (para no decir anarquista) que lo que se desarrollaba en otros centros participantes en el

proyecto nacional.

El proyecto se realizaba durante 14 sesiones de trabajo y dos sesiones de presentación de los resultados, la primera frente a los tutores de 4º y el director del centro y la segunda en la asamblea del cierre del trabajo de campo, donde presentaron los cinco grupos en un evento que tuvo lugar en la Universidad de Barcelona el 13 de abril de 2013. Las sesiones proponían realizar una investigación *con* los jóvenes pero entrar en colaboración no es una tarea simple, sino cada paso requería su propia negociación y replanteamiento. Resulta que investigar es un modo de trabajar que inquieta al alumnado, quien no se acostumbra a trabajar sin pautas, por tanto el proceso incluía sus momentos de bloqueo y frustración. La pregunta inicial: ¿cómo aprendemos dentro y fuera de la escuela?, no facilitaba el trabajo y vemos como, una vez desvinculado de la escuela, el concepto de aprender nos resultaba tan abstracto que hablar de ello nos costaba.

Dado el impacto que ha tenido la experiencia acumulada de esta indagación viva (Marshall, 1999), cuando se acaba la estancia en el campo ordeno los resultados del trabajo de campo en dos áreas distintas, aunque relacionadas:

1. Por un lado, se trata de estudiar e interpretar las contribuciones de los jóvenes. Aquí se reúne el conjunto de material (textos, imágenes, conversaciones...) que se producían durante las sesiones cuando los jóvenes comentaban su relación con el aprender dentro y fuera de la escuela.
2. Por otro lado, el propio trabajo de campo se convierte en un caso que permite observar los procesos de aprendizaje. Aquí las evidencias son nuestras interacciones en el grupo, al dinámica de trabajo y todo aquello que pasaba durante las sesiones de trabajo. Se trata de estudiar el proceso de *aprender investigando* que también contribuye igual que las contribuciones de los jóvenes a reflexionar sobre el espacio-acontecimiento del aprender.

El ensamblaje

El proyecto se estructura por capas, dentro de las cuales la frontera entre lo que entendemos por “aprender” y lo que entendemos por “investigar” se vuelve cada vez mas indistinta. Con los jóvenes aprendemos investigando, investigando el aprender. Seguíamos este proceso desde la comunidad de aprendizaje (Watkins, 2005) que caracteriza el grupo de investigación Esbrina. Mientras, para la tesis se desarrollaba otra capa que reflexiona sobre este proceso... Este nudo se define como un ensamblaje del *devenir-aprender*, una idea que se nutre del proceso de “becoming-pedagogical” de Leggo y Irwin (2013), y que se activa a través de una toma conciencia del aprender para repensarse como sujeto pedagógico *en relación*. Esta figuración aparece una y otra vez a lo largo de la investigación y se puede considerar un tema central del proyecto.

Remarcar el proyecto dentro de un proceso de devenir es una manera de situarlo en el ensamblaje (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2004), un territorio liso caracterizado por movimientos, derivas y relaciones contiguas. El ensamblaje vuelve la investigación a la noción del espacio, un tema central del proyecto, sin insistir en aterrizarlo. La noción del ensamblaje “eschews thinking in terms of essence or fixity by holding onto the possibility that entities are continuously being formed and deformed” (Anderson, Kearnes, McFarlane & Swanton, 2012, p. 180). Por tanto se trata de imaginar el aprender en un proceso que reúne sujetos, conocimientos y procesos de aprender, para reflexionar sobre cómo emerge el aprender dentro de una relación dinámica, lo que aquí se refiere como el espacio-acontecimiento.

2. Áreas de intervención

Esta sección introduce tres conceptos que estructuran y orientan la investigación, la cual se define como una intervención en el imaginario social del aprendizaje.

El imaginario social

El proyecto indaga sobre cómo se representa el aprender, un proyecto que dialoga con lo que denomino el imaginario social del aprendizaje. Según Charles Taylor (2004), el imaginario social refiere a la amplia conceptualización que tenemos de nuestros mismos, de la vida colectiva y de la sociedad. Se destaca que un imaginario no es la realidad en sí, sino se refiere a nuestra manera de comprender la realidad, una perspectiva tan normalizada que impide nuestra capacidad de imaginar alternativas.

El 'imaginario' es un concepto que se diferencia de una 'teoría,' porque se trata de “the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings, and this is often expressed in images, stories and legends” (p. 23). Es decir, el imaginario no algo claramente articulado sino se manifiesta en las representaciones, mitos y otros relatos no necesariamente discursivos, circulando en el espacio que Taylor llama “the background” (p. 25). En una investigación con jóvenes que avanzaba a través de anécdotas, fotografías compartidas por Facebook y muchas conservaciones tangenciales, es evidente que el proyecto no opera a un nivel teórico sino interviene al nivel del imaginario. Acercar el aprender desde el imaginario es un modo de indagación que no intenta dar respuesta a cuestiones relacionadas a los modelos pedagógicos ni a los procesos de adquisición de conocimiento, sino más bien se preocupa por la representación del aprender. Aquí localizamos un objetivo de la tesis: si la desafección escolar es el resultado de una sensación de alienación, o el efecto de no sentirse reconocido en la escuela, propongo que expandir el imaginario social puede expandir también la capacidad de reconocimiento que gestionan las instituciones escolares.

El aprendizaje invisible

El estudio se inscribe en un contexto nacional en el que el abandono escolar prematuro es un problema urgente por resolver. En España, aproximadamente el 25% de los alumnos no terminan sus estudios más allá de la educación secundaria, porcentaje que dobla la media europea (Eurostat, 2012). Frente a este escenario educativo, nuestro grupo de investigación decidió replantearse el tipo de enfoque sobre el concepto de aprendizaje en la investigación educativa. Como David Buckingham (2007) sugiere, ciertos tipos de competencia digital no se reconocen formalmente en el currículum escolar tradicional, dando lugar a una clase de actividad que algunos han llegado a llamar "aprendizaje invisible" (Cobo Romaní & Moravec, 2011).

El concepto del aprendizaje invisible nos recuerda de, por ejemplo, nociones como el currículum oculto (Jackson, 1968) o el estudio de Bourdieu y Passeron (2000) sobre las pedagogías implícitas y explícitas. Sin embargo, según el análisis planteado por Cobo Romaní y Moravec (2011), el foco no está en las relaciones de poder, sino en la diversidad de las prácticas de aprendizaje que los jóvenes desarrollan fuera de la escuela. En vez de interrogar las dimensiones ideológicas de la educación, el *aprendizaje invisible* señala una ceguera, llamando la atención a la incapacidad de las escuelas—y hasta cierto punto la investigación educativa también—de poder reconocer los aprendizajes que ocurren fuera del espacio curricular (Sefton-Green, 2013). Para el proyecto actual, que opera al nivel del imaginario, se trata tomar el *aprendizaje invisible* como una invitación, o una apertura, para considerar aquellas características inefables, y potencialmente subversivas, del acto de aprender. Dar cuenta de los aprendizajes invisibles pueda expandir el imaginario social del aprendizaje.

El espacio-acontecimiento

Si el aprendizaje se hace invisible cuando las barreras disciplinares o curriculares nos impide cambiar de vista, este proyecto trata de imaginar otro tipo de espacio, lo que no se sitúa en un lugar sedentario sino que emerge como resultado de las prácticas sociales (y espaciales). Los geógrafos Crang y Thrift (2000) identifican una tipología de espacio que se base en las prácticas (y no el lugar), lo que definen como el "eventful space... less a limit than a creation of what it encircles, more to do with doing than knowing" (p. 6). Partiendo de este concepto, el espacio-acontecimiento pone nombre a la geografía imaginaria del ensamblaje del devenir-aprender. Es decir, si imaginamos el devenir-aprender como el ponerse en relación de sujetos, conocimientos y modos de saber/aprender, se puede decir que el encuentro que provoca esta acción tendrá lugar (*takes place*) en un ensamblaje; el espacio-acontecimiento es tanto el producto como el catalizador del ensamblaje.

Tanto la teoría del espacio-acontecimiento como el ensamblaje se fundamentan con la

geofilosofía de Deleuze y Guattari (1980/2004). En el Cap. 2 se introduce una serie de conceptos claves: la nomadología, el espacio liso, la deterritorialización, el ensamblaje y las movi­lidades, los cuales nos permiten cambiar de manera radical como acera­mos a la noción de los lugares de aprendizaje. Desde la geofilosofía la frase *aprender dentro y fuera de la escuela secundaria* es una provocación, lo que nos lleva a estudiar cómo el aprender transita entre espacios, dentro Y fuera de la escuela.

Si este proyecto se dedica a repensar el aprender como una irrupción o una reestructuración del ensamblaje, el acontecimiento es una noción clave. Siguiendo sobre todo una noción deleuziana del acontecimiento, se puede considerarlo como una teoría de cambio que no corresponde a posibilidades preconcebidas, lo cual le dota con la capacidad de introducir diferencia. Aquí se ubica la posición ética de este marco teórico, donde se entiende el proceso de devenir-aprender como un cambio ontológico que potencia otros modos de aprender, y de ser (Braidotti, 2006, 2014; Atkinson, 2011, 2012).

3. Estructura y desarrollo de la tesis

La tesis se desarrolla en 4 capítulos troncales y 5 interludios. Los capítulos siguen una lógica nómada: cada uno empieza en un lugar y se desplaza hacia otro, por tanto se pueden considerar, como indico en el II Interludio, como *caminos deseados* que dan cuenta de mis propios tránsitos por la investigación. Los capítulos no son secuenciales sino establecen un dialogo entre ellos, mientras cada uno compone una trayectoria distinta para abordar el ensamblaje del devenir-aprender. Los interludios aparecen entre los capítulos y ocupan el lugar de los *espacios-entre*. Estos intertextos activan una lógica de la conjunción (AND), donde no hay fronteras sino pliegues que establecen una relación contigua entre las partes. Los interludios, por un lado, son puentes que negocian las transiciones temáticas entre capítulos, y por otro lado, recogen aquellos *inputs* que han sido clave para el desarrollo del proyecto pero que no tienen lugar en la narrativa principal del relato.

Los interludios

Los interludios responden al marco postestructuralista que aborda en la tesis, y en particular son un homenaje al trabajo de Patti Lather (2000, 2007) quien introduce esta estrategia narrativa en el libro *Troubling the Angels* (Lather & Smithies, 1997) para distanciar el relato de una representación “verdadera” del caso de estudio. Además, dado que generan espacios-entre, los interludios ofrecen diferentes puntos de entrada al texto y permiten explorar el proceso de investigación desde otro lugar. Elizabeth St. Pierre (2002) nos recuerda que aunque solemos trabajar con *datos* en la investigación cualitativa, no es a través de los datos que vivimos y conocemos el proceso de investigación, lo cual implica que hay otro material, lo que ella denomina “transgressive data” (p. 404) que informa a

nuestro trabajo. Los interludios recogen los datos transgresores para examinar el proceso de producción de la tesis: el fuera de campo de la investigación cualitativa.

Los interludios se desarrollan a partir de cinco gestos—y por tanto son conceptos-móviles. Los gestos recuerdan a las etapas estándares de un proyecto de investigación. O sea, *framing*, *wandering*, *sifting*, *layering* y *spiraling* reflejan los pasos de: *articular la pregunta de investigación*, *realizar el trabajo de campo*, *procesar los datos (codificar)*, *producir el relato y diseminar los resultados*. Los interludios se destacan además por su introducción de obras de arte (y en un caso, un gráfico conceptual). Aquí el arte provoca un giro en cómo entendemos la producción de significado dentro de la investigación. Las obras que se introducen no ilustran a los gestos sino entran en diálogo con ellos, por tanto experimentan con una forma de saber y conocer que no parte de lo escrito.

Si bien no es una distinción definitiva, hasta cierto punto los interludios hablan más de mi propio viaje como investigadora, mientras que los capítulos se centran más en el proyecto de investigación en la que formo parte. St. Pierre (2000), en una reflexión sobre su trayectoria como investigadora, lanza la pregunta, “what parts of myself must I maintain in order to subvert myself?” (p. 259). Esta pregunta es clave. Los interludios comparten el proceso de producir una investigación y el proceso de formarme como investigadora. La incorporación del arte es una manera de citar a mi posicionalidad dentro del campo de la educación artística, en un estudio que tiene una relación intrínseca con lo artístico. De esta manera, los interludios documentan mi propia manera de conocer al mundo. Dicho de otra manera, lo que se incluye en los interludios y su presencia en la investigación es lo que me permite *maintain enough of myself in order to subvert myself*.

- *Framing*. El gesto de enmarcar reconoce que el trabajo de campo deterritorializa la investigación, un hecho que implica reconfigurar no sólo mis expectativas sino también mi modo de trabajar. Abandono mis preguntas iniciales y vuelvo a estudiar la experiencia del trabajo para descubrir ¿de qué me permite hablar? Aquí se encuentra la primera aparición del espacio-acontecimiento, cuando el *espacio negativo* del trabajo de campo se convierte en un lugar que me permite reflexionar sobre el devenir-aprender.
- *Wandering*. Este gesto configura a la etnógrafa como place-maker (Pink, 2008), una creadora de espacios cuyas acciones configuran (no descubren ni observan) el contexto de su investigación. La etnografía así emerge como un *camino deseado* en anticipación de la discusión de cómo el aprender tiene lugar (*takes place*) que se desarrolla en el Cap. 2.
- *Sifting*. Este gesto empezó como una referencia irónica al proceso de codificación pero se convierte a lo largo del proyecto en una reflexión sobre el labor del trabajo

académico y indaga sobre el proceso de profesionalización que se realiza en un ámbito precario.

- *Layering*. Este gesto interroga la relación entre el trabajo de campo y el relato que se produce para narrar esta experiencia. O sea, cuestiona el proceso de producción de significado. Se introduce la metáfora del palimpsesto para imaginar este proceso, como una acción de acumulación y sedimentación de un proceso cíclico de leer-escribir-descrifra-repetir.
- *Spiraling*. El último gesto sale fuera del ensamblaje para cuestionar hasta donde llegó el proyecto. La forma del espiral refiere a la progresión no lineal del proyecto, pero este camino, en expansión continúa, también representa cómo avanzamos. Aquí los desplazamientos constan como evidencias del proceso de devenir-aprender.

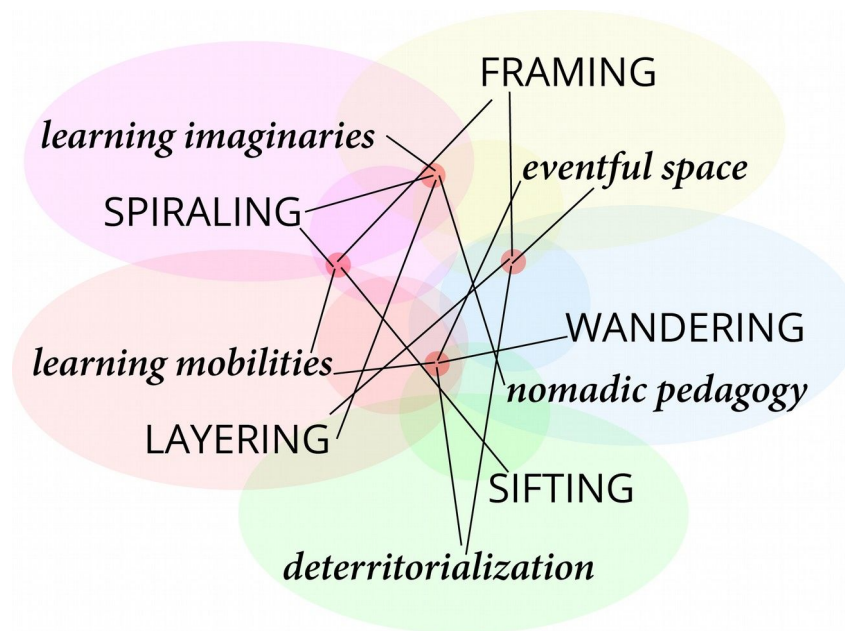


Figure 6. Un mapa rizomático que muestra cómo los interludios interactúan con los temas que se trabajan en la tesis.

Cap. 2: Aprender dentro del espacio-acontecimiento

[Nota de traducción: Este capítulo introduce la frase en inglés *learning taking place* que sitúa e aprender como practica *espacial*, lo que nos permite imaginar cómo el aprender, en su momento de actualización, produce el espacio-acontecimiento.]

Este capítulo empieza situando el problema la desafección escolar, tanto en España y

Europa. Además, este tema emerge como un tema problemático dentro de la investigación educativa, donde se destaca un interés en intervenir al nivel del espacio social, con el objetivo de convertir a las escuelas en centros donde todos los alumnos están reconocidos como sujetos que aprenden (Smyth, 2006, 2011; Watkins, 2005). Después se revisa dos estados de la cuestión recientes (Vadeboncoeur, 2006; Sefton-Green, 2013) que interrogan las idas implícitas y explícitas que circulan cuando hablamos la educación formal / informal / no-formal. Esta revisión concluye que el vínculo entre el lugar y el modo de aprender no viene dado—sólo decir aprender dentro o aprender fuera no dice mucho sobre el proceso de aprendizaje—sino vemos que hace falta fijarse en el modo de participación que se establezca en cada lugar. Finalmente en esta primera parte del capítulo, se introduce la teoría del aprendizaje situado (Lave & Wenger, 1991) para pasar de hablar de la educación a centrarse en el aprender. Este tránsito plantea la pregunta: ¿cómo puede el aprender introducir un cambio en nuestro estado de ser (devenir)? Se establece una conexión entre las teorías socio-culturales del aprender y el enfoque ontológico que introduce la noción de devenir (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000) y que ocupa un lugar central en la tesis.

La segunda parte del capítulo introduce el giro espacial para volver a la noción del espacio someto a la práctica.

(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products ... It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object. (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 73)

Se trata de trazar una conexión entre el trabajo de Lefebvre y de Certeau (1984) para argumentar que el espacio-acontecimiento es una práctica que potencia diferencia (o es decir, otros modos de ser y de devenir). Aquí se introducen datos del trabajo de campo que muestran cómo los jóvenes ponen en duda el binario dentro/fuera para ejemplificar que que ambos “dentro” y “fuera” no son lugares fijos sino se producen en las práctica.

Al final, el capítulo pasa de considerar el espacio diferencial a estudiar la geofilosofía desde el pensamiento nómada. A partir de los conceptos aquí definidos, la tesis empieza articular cómo una teoría del acontecimiento introduce una posición ética. Se trata de pensar en devenir como práctica espacial—la actualización del ensamblaje—que a la vez es un territorio de potencialidad. A través de la activación de conceptos como la multiplicidad, la diferencia y acontecimiento se trata de contrarrestar los procesos de estandarización escolar.

Cap. 3: Los límites representacionales

El tercer capítulo presenta la aproximación metodológica y epistemológica de la tesis, la cual figura como una configuración del proceso de devenir-investigadora (*becoming-researcher*) donde comparto mi búsqueda para una metodología que me permita trabajar

los “datos” de la investigación de manera coherente con la experiencia del trabajo de campo. En particular quería respetar la tensión que emergía en el campo entre la experiencia y la manera de compartir y representarla (un tema que trabajo con más detalle en el Cap. 4). Por esta razón me centro en la etnografía postestructuralista, que se sitúa en un momento después de la crisis de la representación (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000).

Primero, reviso el enfrentamiento de larga duración que tenía con el proceso de codificación, que al final tiene poca presencia en la tesis pero que ha incitado un proceso de aprendizaje importante. Sobre todo, estudiar la codificación me obligaba reflexionar sobre el trabajo de producir conocimiento y la relación entre modos de analizar y modos de conocer la investigación (MacLure, 2013).

En un segundo momento reviso la tradición de etnografía interpretativa (Denzin, 1997; Clifford & Marcos, 1986) en que se inscribe el proyecto nacional. Aquí comparto cómo trabajo la escritura etnográfica dentro de la tesis, a partir de la noción de viñetas (Humphreys, 2005; Denzin, 1989). Esta estrategia es interpretativa pero también visibiliza que el relato se produce en relación a las preguntas que formula la tesis, un proceso que reconoce que “writing ethnography as a practice of narration is not about capturing the real already out there. It is about constructing particular versions of truth” (Britzman, 2000, p. 30),

Al final, me aterrizo en una propuesta metodológica proporcionada por Jackson y Mazzei (2012). *Plugging in* es una propuesta de *leer y pensar los datos con la teoría*. Esta practica no contempla que los datos existen como algo independiente de la investigación, sino considera que emergen cuando construimos nuestra mirada sobre ellos. El proceso de *plugging in* consiste en dos pasos: 1) definir un concepto que guía el trabajo interpretativo; y 2) articular preguntas que establecen un diálogo entre “los datos” y el concepto, en un vaivén continuo.

En mi caso se trata de elaborar un proceso de *plugging in nomadología*. En Cap. 4. la pregunta central es: *¿Es el alumno-viajero un sujeto nómada?* Este capítulo estudia la dinámica del grupo y observa las practicas sociales que ejercen los jóvenes y que les permiten tener más control y agencia dentro del proyecto participativo. A la hora de pensar en los modos de resistencia y las tensiones que producen desde una perspectiva nómada, se puede preguntar: *¿Cómo y cuando crean espacios alternativos los jóvenes que apoyan sus procesos de aprendizaje? ¿Cómo deterritorializan los jóvenes el espacio curricular? ¿Cómo se puede usar la nomadología para documentar y dar cuenta de las prácticas minoritarias del aprender para que informen sobre el concepto del espacio-acontecimiento?* Como se puede ver, *plugging in* es una metodología expansiva (no necesariamente conclusiva).

En Cap. 5, las preguntas centrales son: *¿Cuales son las geografías imaginarias que*

emergen a la hora de pensar el aprendizaje como proceso nómada? ¿Cómo afectan nuestra comprensión del aprender “dentro y fuera de la escuela?” Este capítulo elabora una perspectiva basada en las movilidades para concretar lo que significaría estudiar el aprendizaje como practica espacial con ejemplos del trabajo de campo. Aquí se activan los conceptos como espacio liso, ensamblaje, y devenir para ver cómo se aplican a la experiencias encarnadas del aprender.

La etnografía postestructuralista y *plugging in* en particular no responden a una noción de la verdad objetiva sino crean maneras de hacer hablar los “datos” dentro de un marco concreto de investigación. Es una metodología que reconoce que no se puede captar la realidad, porque siempre supera los límites de la representacionalidad:

No method can, for instance, retrace casual or constitutive links between the representation of [an event] ... To understand the political dimensions of this process, methods other than those based on social scientific models of causality are needed: strategies that acknowledge the multidirectional and multifaceted dimension of events. (Bleiker, 2012, p. 80)

La validez de esta metodología, que puede ser rizomática (Lather, 1993; Alvermann, 2000) o incluso irónica (Lather, 1993; Ferguson, 1993), se basa en las siguientes preguntas: ¿Cómo funciona esta estrategia (*how does it work*)? ¿Qué produce? ¿Cuales son las líneas de fuga que introduce (i.e., hacia donde nos lleva...)? Dado que la nomadología es un proceso que tiene afinidad por los viajes y desplazamientos, esta metodología es coherente con su incesante movimiento. *Plugging in* no llega a ningún final sino nos lleva a otro lugar.

Cap. 4. Pedagogía nomada

Este capítulo gira en torno a la dinámica del grupo (a diferencia del Cap. 5 que considera cómo los jóvenes representaban sus procesos de aprendizajes dentro del marco del proyecto).

Primero, el capítulo revisa la tradición en la investigación educativa de solicitar a la voz de los jóvenes e introduce una perspectiva crítica (Fielding 2001, 2007) de este proceso, en contra de una incorporación superficial de “voz” que no pretende cambiar las condiciones sociales de los jóvenes, porque puede acabar “reflecting rather than challenge the existing dividing practices in school and the systems for valuing some students above others” (Fielding & Rudduck, 2002, p. 2). Vemos como no es suficiente investigar *con* jóvenes sino se trata de establecer un proceso de investigación comprometido para asegurar que las voces, una vez articuladas, se pueden escuchar.

En un segundo momento el proyecto desarrolla una crítica del uso de voz en la investigación cualitativa para: 1) desvincular la noción de voz de un imaginario del sujeto esencialista; y 2) cuestionar la idea que las investigadoras 'damos voz' a los participantes.

Para dar la vuelta a este proyecto, la tesis incorpora la noción de *respuesta* en vez de voz (Ellsworth, 1997) para considerar cómo los participantes negocian su papel y participación dentro del proyecto, e introduce el trabajo de Tuck y Wang quien considera que “refusal is not a prohibition but a generative form” (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 241). Se establece una conexión entre la idea de negación (*refusal*), los modos de direccionalidad discontinuos de Ellsworth (1997) y las actuaciones de los jóvenes para pensar un modo de participación más provocativa que evocativa.

Esta discusión luego pasa a considerar la participación provocativa de los jóvenes como una pedagogía de tácticas (de Certeau, 1984), lo que introduce un análisis del poder subversivo de los *everyday tactics of learning*, haciendo hincapié a prácticas como *making do*, *weak art*, *sophism*, e *improvisation*. Se considera la presentación final producida por los jóvenes como un producto que desencadena todas las tensiones aquí estudiadas y se contempla hasta qué punto los jóvenes no querían compartir sus historias, como si consideraran que haya experiencias que “the academy doesn't deserve to hear” (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 232).

Al reconocer la experiencia de participación provocativa como una deterritorialización, el capítulo acaba elaborando el concepto de la pedagogía nómada, como un proceso de aprendizaje basada en las tácticas de negación y negociación.

Cap. 5: Movilidades del aprender

Este capítulo retoma la noción del devenir-aprender como una práctica móvil. Se trata de usar de la perspectiva de movilidades para establecer un lugar alternativo desde donde interpretar los resultados del proyecto. Se introducen para este ejercicio tres movilidades:

1) Canalización – una movilidad que cuestiona la idea predominante de que *el flujo*, la movilidad que caracteriza el mundo globalizado, es un movimiento incesante no sometido a los efectos de poder. Aquí se analiza la desafección como una movilidad para estudiar los obstáculos y procesos de canalización que tienen influencia en las trayectorias de los jóvenes. Se trata de representar un proceso de navegación dentro y fuera de la escuela remarcada por diferentes flujos.

2) Cambios de escala – tomando prestada una noción de geografía, la tesis vuelve al Prezi que prepararon los jóvenes para pensar cómo el discurso que elaboraron para representar sus “resultados” ayudaba a los jóvenes alinearse con una esfera alternativa al instituto. Este concepto entra en diálogo con la noción del aprender horizontal para introducir una movilidad más compleja y multidireccional.

3) Ensamblar – se recupera la teoría de Deleuze y Guattari (1980/2004) para situar el aprender en un proceso de doble articulación. Aquí se estudia las maneras en que el término 'aprender' y los procesos de aprendizaje se recomponen de manera performativa,

en un proceso de continuo territorialización y deterritorialización.

Al final, se considera que adoptar una perspectiva de movilidades para hablar del aprender cultiva una mirada que esté atenta a las derivas y desplazamientos que experimentan los jóvenes y nos brinda de estrategias que nos permiten contrarrestar la homogeneización y estandarización que se encuentran en ciertos paradigmas de la educación presentes en las aulas de muchos centros de secundaria. El ejercicio de mapear los lugares de aprendizaje nos permite recuperar las diferentes experiencias y perspectivas de los jóvenes y contextualiza la vida de los institutos dentro de un paisaje más amplio. Un paisaje en el que las fronteras de los centros son cada vez más permeables. Hecho que no se considera como una amenaza, sino como una posibilidad que permite poner unos modos de aprender en contacto con otros, para potenciar un aprendizaje mestizo, capaz de cruzar fronteras y transformarse. Este posicionamiento híbrido busca crear puentes entre el dentro y fuera que posibilitan el desarrollo de prácticas más inclusivas.

Cap. 6: Conclusiones

Carl Bereiter (2002) sugiere que

to draw politicians and business people away from their fixation on achievement test gains one must offer them the vision of a superior kind of outcome. The failure to do that is, I believe, the most profound failure of educational thought in our epoch. (p. 490)

La tesis ha intentado intervenir en el imaginario social para interrumpir nuestra percepción normalizada de las formas y procesos que configuran el aprendizaje, y este objetivo responde a lo que Bereiter denomina un *resultado alternativo*. El proyecto sigue una lógica que no recorre a los marcos de evaluación sino indaga sobre el impacto que tiene el aprendizaje en nuestro espacio social. Las intervenciones en el imaginario social han sido:

1. Una interpretación del aprender desde una perspectiva de las movilidades, lo que lo posiciona como proceso y no como resultado. Este cambio de perspectiva nos permite considerar las características y cualidades de los procesos de aprender que nos pasan por desapercibidas. Sobre todo señala una visión de un entorno de aprendizaje definido por flujos multidireccionales, una característica que siempre se tiene en cuenta cuando se habla de la desafección escolar.
2. Segundo, la dinámica de grupo de la etnografía participativa contribuye una visión que no se trata lo suficiente en la literatura: el reconocimiento de los jóvenes como expertos a la hora de poder negociar entre sus diferentes lugares de aprendizaje. Mientras se configuran en la literatura como sujetos marginalizados, vemos en el proyecto que los jóvenes saben crear espacios de agencia y de actuación, para

navegar entre los lugares oficiales y periféricos de la escuela. Observar la frecuencia con la cual sus movi­lidades chocaban con las movi­lidades sancionadas por la escuela también nos permite repensar las causas y el impacto de la desafección. Podemos decir que esta perspectiva nos proporciona una visión alternativa de la práctica de aprender como una acción relacional (agentic) que contrasta con el imaginario sedentario del alumno.

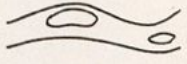
3. Por último, destaco que la investigación es nómada, tanto los conceptos que adopta como en su metodología. Como practica espacial, la nomadología no intenta controlar los esfuerzos de la deterritorialization sino les persigue, cartografiando el espacio liso y dando cuenta de los ensamblajes producidos por las líneas de fuga. Al menos, eso es lo que se ha intentado en este proyecto: seguir los movimientos y desplazamientos de los jóvenes para reconfigurar nuestro imaginario social del aprender. La nomadología cambia la noción del in/out a partir del pliegue—in AND out—lo cual sitúa el aprender en un red dinámica de relaciones.

Si entendemos el imaginar como una acción y no solo una contemplación, las figuras trabajadas en la tesis sirven para convertir la visión singular del imaginario social en plural: los imaginarios colectivos del aprender. Atkinson (2011) nos recuerda de la importancia de este proyecto:

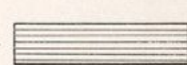
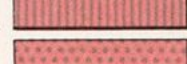
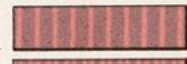
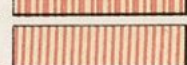
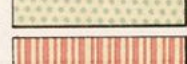
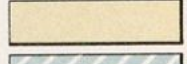
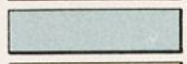
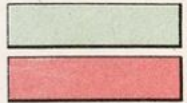
The ethical imperative for pedagogy is concerned with maximising the power of learning, it is not focussed on what we are and should be, that is to say on some transcendent position towards being, but upon the potentiality and ‘unknown’ of becoming. (p. 6)

Imaginar el aprender en el espacio-acontecimiento es un trabajo no intenta explicar el aprender ni anticiparlo, sino se trata de incentivar la potencial del aprender a introducir un cambio, un desplazamiento a *otros modos de ser*, que aún no han llegado y que ni siquiera se pueden visualizar.

LEGEND



Mapped historical courses



Stages reconstructed from aerial photographs

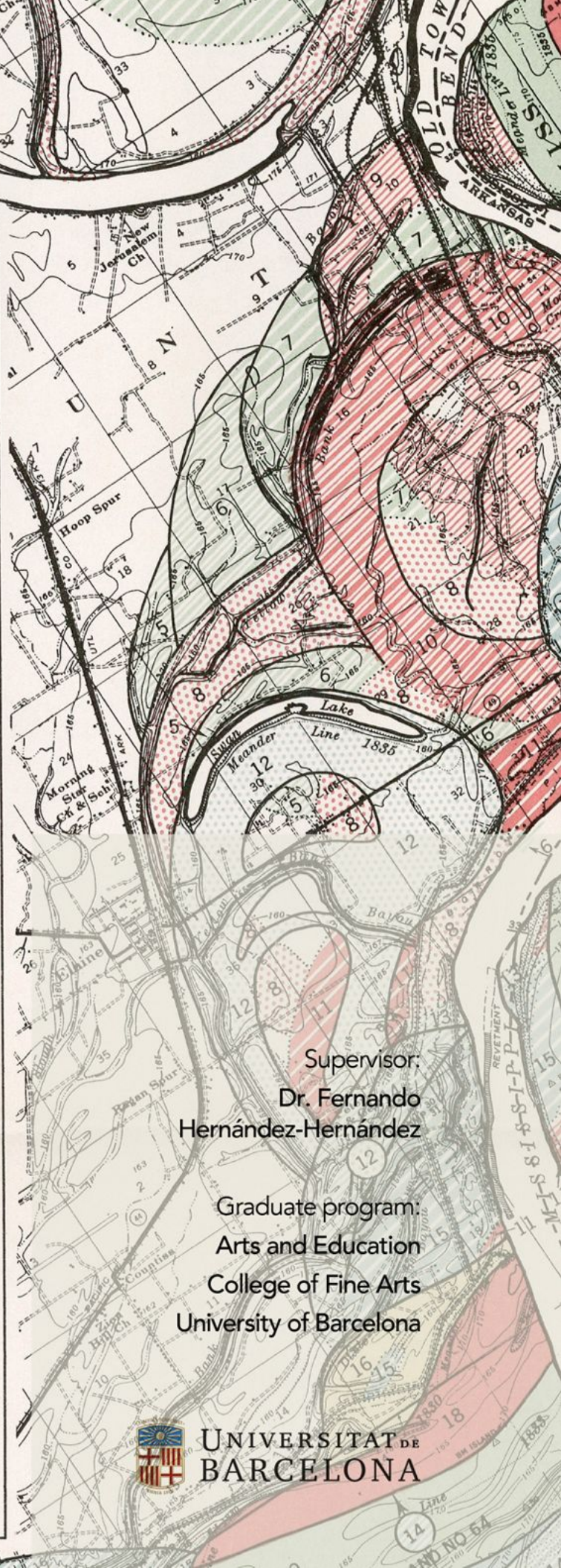
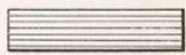
NOTES

¹ Bankline as shown on the 12th Edition of "Maps of the Mississippi River, Cairo, Ill., to the Gulf of Mexico, La." dated January 1944.

² Bankline as shown on maps of "Lower Mississippi River, Early Stream Channels, Cairo, Ill., to Baton Rouge, La."

Base Map from published Mississippi River Commission Quadrangles.

Stages older than Mississippi River Meander Belt



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