Power, Emotions and Embodied Knowledges: Doing PAR with Poor

Young People in El Salvador

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Barbara Van Wijnendaele

Department of Geography and Earth Sciences

Centre for Human Geography

Brunel University

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Abstract

From March 2006 until March 2008 I worked and did research with young people in El Salvador. I coordinated a local youth participation project in the capital, where, at the same time, I conducted fieldwork for my PhD research. The youth project aimed at empowering young people through participatory action research (PAR) and, together with the young participants, I critically reflected on the empowering impact of this participatory process.

While participatory researchers and practitioners traditionally stress the importance of critical consciousness and critical discourse as the principal motors for individual and social transformation, my research with the young people particularly confronted me with the power of emotions and embodied knowledges. This research focuses in particular on the politics of emotions; their role in confirming exclusion and oppression and in facilitating empowerment and resistance.

In this thesis, I bring together different bodies of theory. I start from the critical literature on PAR and from a poststructuralist account of power and empowerment. I build on an understanding of emotions as socio-culturally constructed and, at the same time, as deeply embodied phenomena. I look into emotional geographies considering emotions as relational and as always functioning within power relations and I use non-representational theory to challenge the privilege of cognition by focussing on practical and embodied knowledges and explicitly recognising their political and empowering potential.

I conclude that although participatory researchers have increasingly extended and refined their understanding of power and empowerment, they still focus too much on critical reflection, discourse and conscious/linguistic representation as key to personal and social change. This focus has distracted their attention from the way power works through emotions and embodied knowledges. I believe that participatory researchers should become more sensitive still to the subtleties of power by paying more explicit attention to how emotions and embodied knowledges function within power relations to reproduce or challenge the existing status quo. Such a focus also opens new doors to new ways of empowerment (and politics) by considering alternative methods and media directly engaging with the power of emotions and embodied knowledges to shape the social world.

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Acronyms

ARENA: Nationalist Republican Alliance

CFO: Centre for Training and Orientation

ERP: People's Revolutionary Army

FMLN: Farabundo Martí Nacional Liberation Front

FPL: The Popular Liberation Forces

PAR: participatory action research

PRA: participatory rural appraisal

PRTC: The Central American Workers' Party

RN: National Resistance

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Writing these acknowledgements it slowly starts to dawn on me that now I have really finished writing my PhD. Since the last six months or so (or is it one year?), I have been saying (daily) to myself and others that I am 'almost' finishing. My family and friends must have gotten tiered with my 'almost'; rightly wondering why 'almost' takes such a long time. At the end, I have been impatient to get it done and over with, but now that I have come so far I find it hard to talk about my PhD in the past tense. For almost five years this research was part of my daily life (and worries). It has been a challenge I have taken up passionately and it has been very intense. More than finishing a PhD project, it feels like concluding a whole life experience. My emotional attachment to this thesis has, above all, to do with the people I met and who have been involved in this research. Clearly, I have not done this on my own and many people have contributed to it.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Discovering PAR

July 2001, I had just finished my Masters thesis in anthropology for which I did one year of participant observation working as a street worker with street children and street youth in Romania. At that time my supervisor had asked me whether I would be interested in doing a PhD. At that time, my determined and confident answer was: "Oh no, I'd rather 'do' something and make a difference". Now, about ten years later, I am finishing my PhD. So, did I stop caring about making a difference then? Did I eventually exchange my enthusiasm and engagement for academic stiffness and neutrality? I didn't! What happened is that I became interested in participatory action research (PAR).

After finishing my Masters, I started working with street children in Nicaragua, but quickly became disappointed with the paternalistic attitudes of many organisations towards street children and 'the poor' in general. I was rather doubtful about their definition of participation and empowerment. I wondered what real difference these projects made and noticed that children and young people were rarely asked for their opinion. Looking into the critical literature on development and searching for alternative approaches, I got interested in participatory development (Chambers 1994a, Holland and Blackburn 1998a 1998b) and PAR (Reason and Bradbury 2001, Kindon et al. 2007). I was attracted to these practices because they aimed to do research 'with' rather than 'about' people, starting from their own daily experiences, needs and interests. I discovered that, when done in a different way, research could make a difference for the research participants involved and could contribute to social change. After Nicaragua, I was offered the opportunity to work for a local youth project in El Salvador. The project aimed to empower young people through popular education, critical consciousness-raising and PAR. Remembering previous work experiences, I considered it important to critically evaluate the empowering impact (if there was any) of these processes together with the young participants, starting from their own experiences of power and empowerment. That is how, eventually, I still ended up doing a PhD, hoping that I would be able to give young people 'a voice' and contribute to a more critical understanding of empowerment and to a more effective participatory practice.

1.2   Including young people's voices

In many countries in the Global South young people constitute the majority of the population and are at the centre of societal interactions and transformations. Yet, children and youth are often placed at the margins of the public sphere and of major political, socio-economic and cultural processes. Globally, young people are increasingly becoming the focus of interest and concern; however their own views and visions often still wait to be heard and considered. Most often they are constructed from the outside and above as a problem, a threat for society and the established order, or as a lost generation in crisis (De Boeck and Honwana 2005).

In El Salvador, violence in general and youth gangs in particular have become the country's principal preoccupation. The primary governmental response to violence has focused on the youth gang phenomenon and relies on repressive law-enforcement arbitrarily targeting poor youth and justifying constant police harassment and persecution. In the mass media young poor people are depicted as a threat rather than as bona fide members of society. This has created a general atmosphere of distrust towards poor youth. This has further exacerbated the already vulnerable position of young people who grow up in marginalised communities that are severely undermined by poverty and where the lack of participation and the absence of social expression are lived as fear, distrust, suspicion and a loss of meaning. Within this particular context, young people's participation and empowerment is an urgent and delicate issue.

This research starts from the young participants' own experiences of exclusion and empowerment. It recognizes that young people's experiences are worthy of investigation in their own right and involves the young participants as competent social agents in the research process (see also Prout and James 1990). This understanding of young people is reflected in my methodological approach and in my choice of methods.

1.3   Doing PAR and thinking about empowerment with young people in El Salvador

From March 2006 until March 2008 I worked with young people from Mejicanos, a poor and violent municipality of the capital San Salvador. The youth participation project that I coordinated and where, at the same time, I conducted my fieldwork intended to actively involve marginalised young people in PAR, that is, in a process of identifying social

problems, collecting and analysing information, and acting upon the problem in order to find solutions and to promote personal and social transformation (Reason and Bradbury 2001). Four groups of young people from different communities in Mejicanos started the PAR process and prioritised different forms of violence as the main focus of their research. They chose creative art forms such as theatre, dance, music, and community paintings to reflect and act on their daily experiences of violence and exclusion.

PAR has a long and varied history. It has been praised as a unique way of empowering socially excluded people, but it has also been fiercely critiqued for offering little empirical evidence of its empowering impact (Cooke and Kothari 2001). I aimed at critically evaluating whether young people felt empowered by PAR and how. I did two years of participant participation living in Mejicanos and working in the youth project; I organised several participatory focus groups with the young participants; and I conducted individual interviews with some of the young people. While PAR traditionally stresses the importance of critical consciousness and alternative discourses as the principal motor for individual transformation and collective action, this research with young people particularly demonstrates how power functions through emotions and practical knowledges. In and beyond the PAR, the young people's emotions of fear, distrust, rage and apathy were strongly felt and considerably impacted on their lives and on the PAR process. These emotions derived from, and at the same time underpinned, a culture of violence, structural oppression and inequality. On the other hand, emotions and embodied knowledges also turned out to be powerful catalysts of individual and social change. Focussing on emotions and on practical knowledges allowed for seeing the young people's PAR and the idea of empowerment under a slightly different light, providing a greater insight into the power and politics of emotions; their role in confirming the status quo and in facilitating resistance. It contributes to a better understanding of why it is that, often, critical consciousness is not enough to start building truly different, more just and more human societies. Methodologically, this study points to the importance of practical and affective knowledges in facilitating individual and social change and in fomenting social action.

1.4   The structure of this thesis

In the next chapter, <u>chapter two</u> of this thesis, I begin by explaining in detail the concept and practice of participatory action research (PAR). Despite the fact that PAR emerged out of a

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wide variety of disciplines, I try to distillate some fundamental characteristics of PAR. PAR is not new and has a long history. There have been many PAR experiences and experiments all over the world. These learning processes have yielded successes and improvements, but also critiques. I summarize the most fundamental critiques and then explain how participatory researchers have recently engaged with these critiques promoting a more critical interpretation and practice of PAR. Finally, I also place my own research within the ever evolving theory and practice of PAR, arguing how it connects to previous work and how it aims to contribute to it.

PAR explicitly aims to empower socially excluded people and, as such, is all about power. The concept of power is central to PAR and has been interpreted in different ways. Within PAR an understanding of power has evolved from rigid and structuralist to more flexible and highly influenced by poststructuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault. In chapter three I look deeper into structuralist and poststructuralist understandings of power. Building on recent work in PAR, my understanding of the young people's PAR is based on a poststructuralist understanding of power and is strongly influenced by Foucault's thinking. Engaging with poststructuralism, participatory researchers have been increasingly committed to developing a better understanding of the workings of power, yet, by principally focussing on critical consciousness and discourse they tend to overlook the link between power, emotions and politics. Starting from young people's experiences of empowerment, in this thesis I aim to critically engage with the notion of participatory power and the difference it aims to make, complementing the transformative power of critical consciousness and discourse with the socio-cultural politics of emotion.

The word 'emotions' has been mentioned several times already in this introduction. Though initially planning to focus on the concepts of participation and power, eventually, my research turned out to be all about emotions. So, to conclude the literature review, in chapter four, I look at emotion theory. Emotions constitute a huge domain comprising many disciplines not all of which are relevant for this research. I do not give an exhaustive account of all that has been written on emotion, but I try to orientate the reader by offering a brief overview of the general tendencies and the main approaches within emotion theory. I then look specifically to what has been written on emotions in human geography, writings that build further on these general tendencies and approaches. Within human geography a distinction is made between a feminist approach of emotions contrasting with non-representational theories and related theories of affect. Though both lines of thought have severely critiqued each other, they each

shine a challenging and complementary light on my research data and were most inspiring and helpful in formulating my own arguments about the role of emotions and embodied knowledges in the young people's PAR.

From abstract conceptualization and theory I then shift my focus to the concrete context of my research and to the actual practice of doing PAR with young people in El Salvador. Understanding the general context in which young people live is crucial for understanding their PAR and its empowering impact. Therefore, in <u>chapter five</u> I describe the economic, social and political situation in El Salvador. The recent evolutions in the country cannot be understood without an understanding of the past, so I briefly relate the nation's history, a long history of violence that continues to persist in Salvadoran reality today. In a second part, I describe the young people's PAR process in more detail. I explain who the young participants were, where they came from, which problems they prioritized, which methods they used during their research, which actions they took, and what kind of challenges they encountered. I aim to provide the reader with a good insight in these processes, because, after all, they form the empirical basis on which my research is based.

From the young people's PAR I switch to my PhD project and my own research approach. I start the <u>sixth chapter</u> by clarifying how I looked at and approached the young participants, because the way we, as researchers, consider young people (as victims, criminals, rebels or social actors) influences the way we listen to them and the research methods we choose. The way I approached the young participants is very much in line with the ideas and practices promoted by the new social studies of childhood. In this chapter I explicitly refer to the concrete implications of doing research with young people. My research is firmly grounded in a participatory and feminist methodology largely sharing the same principles. Based on these principles, this chapter is structured around three important participatory/feminist themes: engagement/reciprocity, reflexivity/positionality and ethics. I elaborate on these issues theoretically and then concretely argue my own research methods and practices.

After having explained young people's and my own participatory research, <u>chapter seven</u> is devoted to the young people's everyday emotions and the impact they have on their daily lives and beyond. I try to understand the young people's experiences of fear, distrust, anger and apathy. I look at what these emotions *do* with the young people and how they shape their lives and their immediate environments. Going beyond the individual and community level, I also consider the cultural politics of these emotions by linking them to larger political, social and

economic processes both in the past and in the present. I argue that the young people's emotions of fear, anger, distrust and apathy are the result of processes of exclusion and oppression, and, at the same time, function to confirm a historically instilled, dominant position of a small elite over a majority of poor people. As will become clear in this thesis, understanding the young people's emotions and their impact on both local and more global scales is basic to understanding the young people's PAR and its empowering impact.

In the chapter that follows, chapter eight, I describe the empowering impact of the PAR in the young people's own terms. The participants insisted they felt empowered because they learned to 'feel' different: they felt more connected; they learned to trust others, to overcome fear, and to be calmer, etc. Their evaluation insisted on the importance of emotional transformation as a form of resistance and at the same time relativized the role of critical reflection and understanding in facilitating individual and social change. During the PAR process young people enthusiastically participated in activities such as theatre and drama, painting, and cooperative games, yet they were much less willing or able to participate in moments of critical reflection. Nevertheless, change happened! Young people changed by participating in direct embodied experiences of doing, feeling, acting, and performing. In the young people's PAR process the importance of different and alternative, non-cognitive and non-representational (practical, embodied and emotional) ways of knowing and being in the world came to the fore. It demonstrates that empowerment and participation are not only about introducing new, critical discourses, but also about cultivating new practical and affective knowledges; new ways of feeling about oneself, others and the world.

Finally, in chapter nine, I end this thesis with a brief summary of my main arguments and with a critical reflection about the contributions of my research to theory and practice. The young participants involved in this research pointed to the importance of emotions and practical knowledges in empowerment processes. I analysed and interpreted young people's emotional and embodied experiences of empowerment by bringing together different theoretical perspectives on PAR, power and emotions and my research contributes to these theoretical bodies in different ways. This thesis advances PAR by more explicitly linking power to emotions and practical knowledges as both culturally constructed and deeply embodied phenomena. It complements the power of discourse and reflection with the power of emotion and affective knowledges and points to alternative ways of facilitating individual and social transformation in PAR. It also makes a modest contribution to the current debates

about the role of emotions in politics and about the possibility of a 'new politics of hope' (see Thrift 2007).

2 Participatory Action Research: an evolving theory and practice

2.1 Introduction

This research explores PAR as a potential site of empowerment and resistance and follows a group of young people from a poor and violent municipality in El Salvador conducting PAR. The first question, then, to be answered in this thesis is: what is PAR?

In this chapter I aim to explain the practice of PAR through a critical engagement with the relevant literature. I begin with a brief outline of the history of PAR in which I draw attention to its heterogeneity of forms: to its different epistemological stances and its different politics in different parts of the world (Kindon et al. 2007). I briefly review the pioneering ideas of Paolo Freire and the influential work of Robert Chambers, two of the most cited advocates of PAR. I then look at more recent contributions to PAR, summarising some essential characteristics that most participatory research approaches have in common, however diverse they may be. Finally, I engage with some fundamental critiques directed against PAR and I look at how participatory researchers, influenced by poststructuralism, have recently responded to these critiques. By outlining the evolution in PAR, I mean to familiarize the reader with PAR, but also to contextualize and place my thesis in the ongoing critical debate in the domain of PAR.

2.2 A history of PAR

PAR is a broad, diverse and living movement that draws from a variety of traditions and is known by a variety of different names: Activist Participatory Research, Participatory Research, Action Research, Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Participatory Interaction in Development, Participatory Learning and Action, Participatory reflection and Action, etc. (Samaranayake 1996). PAR refers to a growing family of diverse approaches, rather than to a single specific methodology and is therefore difficult to neatly define.

The fact that PAR is grounded in many different disciplines makes it difficult to trace a coherent history (Reason and Bradbury 2001). The origins of PAR are generally traced back to the 1940s, to the social experiments of Kurt Lewin (Reason and Bradbury 2001, Kindon et al. 2007). Lewin used the term 'action research' for the first time, describing a research process in which social theory was developed and tested by practical interventions and action, and in which project ends and means were grounded in guidelines established by the host community (Kindon et al. 2007). He accentuated the iterative process of interplay between researcher and participants in which activities constantly shifted between action and reflection (Fisher and Ball 2003 cited in Kindon et al. 2007).

Kurt Lewin's concept is taken up by many others. Paolo Freire (in the domain of popular education and political activism) and Robert Chambers (in international development theory and practice) are two of the most well-known advocates of PAR and represent, to a certain degree, how PAR has evolved over time.

2.2.1 Paolo Freire

In the 1960s and 1970s, a growing number of academics and popular leaders, confronted with increasing poverty and structural oppression, grew increasingly dissatisfied with current academic and development practices (Fals Borda 2001). Consequently, in those years there was a steady proliferation of PAR approaches, particularly in Africa, India and Latin America (Kindon et al. 2007). One of the first and most well-known advocates of PAR was Paolo Freire (2003 [1970]). Freire started to organise community-based research processes to support people's full participation in knowledge production and social transformation. He promoted what he called processes of 'conscientization' in which poor and marginalized groups developed a heightened awareness of the structural forces that affected their lives and then could use these new insights to inform political action (Kindon et al. 2007).

In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2003 [1970]) Paolo Freire defends a radical praxis in which critical consciousness is linked to human liberation. His radical praxis aims at challenging structural inequality and effecting social change. To this end, a radical pedagogy motivates people to reflect on their daily experiences of social exclusion. By questioning their everyday experiences, excluded groups of people gradually become more critically aware of their situation of oppression and its causes. Such a process of critical reflection finally results

in "[marginalised people's] necessary engagement in the struggle for liberation" (Freire 2003 [1970]:44). The oppressed learn to perceive their reality not as natural and unchangeable, but as a limiting situation (instilled by human beings throughout history) which they are able to transform. Such an enhancing worldview is gradually constructed through "the praxis of their struggle: through reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire 2003 [1970]:51). A process of liberation and conscientization can never be purely intellectual, but must involve action. Yet, it can also not be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection. Only then will it be praxis (Freire 2003 [1970]).

In his work, Freire insists that a pedagogy of the oppressed must be forged *with* and not for the oppressed (Freire 2003 [1970]). It always starts from the present, existential, concrete situation of the people involved and fully reflects their needs and aspirations. A radical praxis must take into account people's own view of the world and their own ethics. Therefore, critical educators have to be able to enter into a genuine dialogue with people and to honestly communicate with them. True dialogue requires an intense faith in human kind, because without such faith, dialogue inevitably degenerates into paternalistic manipulation. Critical educators must establish a horizontal relationship with people and ensure mutual trust between the dialoguers. Facilitators and participants must participate as equals in the process, learning and growing together.

Other often cited predecessors in this period are Marja-Liisa Swantz in Tanzania, Orlando Fals Borda in Colombia, and Rajesh Tandon in India (Kindon et al. 2007; Fals Borda 2001).

2.2.2   Robert Chambers

In the 1980s there was a second boom of PAR, most particularly in community development and international development contexts (Kindon et al. 2007). At the end the 1980s traditional top-down development apparently seemed to have failed to reduce poverty and social exclusion. As a result, populist participatory approaches, most noticeably in the form of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), gained in importance and rapidly went to scale in international development (Holland and Blackburn 1998, Nelson and Wright 1997, Kindon at al 2007, Chambers 1994). In the 1990s, a participatory approach gained ever more currency, to such a point that it was possible to talk about a paradigm shift to participatory development (Samaranayake 1996). Even the World Bank co-opted the concept of participation (Nelson

and Wright 1997). Within international development, most of the attention has been focused on PRA, often treating it as the definitive form of participation and obscuring, in part, the diversity of participatory research practices (Hickey and Mohan 2004).

Robert Chambers, the main representative of PRA, describes it as "a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local (rural and urban) people to express, enhance, share and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act" (Chambers 1994b:1253). PRA evolved from Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) (Chambers 1994a). RRA is rooted in the critique of 'development tourism', the brief rural visit by the urban-based professional, arguing that those who make recommendations and final decisions in development are often poorly informed about the realities of those who finally have to live with the consequences of these decisions (Cornwall and Guijt 2004). Initially, RRA was not so much about empowering poor people as about facilitating a closer contact between development agents and the reality of the subjects of their programmes and policies (Cornwall and Guijt 2004). However, over time, new methods and techniques were developed out of which grew a new approach that explicitly aimed at empowering people, called PRA (Cornwall and Guijt 2004). While in RRA information is extracted and elicited by outsiders as part of a process of data gathering, in PRA information is generated, analyzed, owned and shared by local people as part of a process of empowerment (Chambers 1994b). The idea that local people can and should conduct their own appraisal and analysis is grounded in Freire's critical pedagogy (Chambers 1994b). The specific methods used in PRA are mainly derived from agro-ecosystem analysis, such as, among others, participatory mapping and modelling, transect walks, matrix scoring, well-being grouping and ranking, seasonal calendars, and institutional diagramming, all undertaken by local people (Chambers 1994b).

Chambers insists that PRA is essentially about reversals of role, behaviour, relationship and learning (Chambers 1994b, Kapoor 2002). A first reversal is that from a stress on the knowledge, categories and values of the outsider professionals to those of insider local people (Chambers 1994). PRA is about learning from local people, directly on the site and face-to-face. It is about gaining insight into their local, physical, technical and social knowledge. PRA does not follow a blueprint programme, but is a progressive and adaptable learning process. Contrary to the rapid rural visit by development professionals, PRA is about establishing rapport with local people, about "being relaxed and not rushing, listening not lecturing, probing instead of passing on to the next topic, being un-imposed instead of important, and seeking out the poorer people and women, and learning their concerns and priorities"

(Chambers 1994:1254). Most important is the methodology's inclusiveness, meaning that all community members can participate, including marginalised and disadvantaged social groups (Kapoor 2002, Samaranayake 1996).

Secondly, PRA pays special attention to reversals and changes in outsiders' behaviour. The emphasis in PRA is on how outsiders interact with local people. In PRA personal demeanour is fundamental: showing humility, respect, patience, and interest in what people have to say. Outsiders "hand over the stick" (Chambers 1994b:1254). They facilitate investigation, analysis, presentation and learning by local people themselves. Outsiders need to have confidence in the capacities of local people (Chambers 1998a); in the fact that they themselves have the knowledge and ability to be the subjects of their own development (Holland and Blackburn 1998a). Facilitators also need to be self-critically aware: they need to continuously and critically examine their own behaviour. This includes embracing error; welcoming error as an opportunity to learn and correcting dominant behaviour (Chambers 1994b). PRA practitioners also need to take personal responsibility for what they do, rather than relying on the authority of manuals or rigid set of rules. They need to "use [their] own best judgment at all times" (Chambers 1994b:1255). Facilitators need to be willing to share information and ideas, between local people, between them and outsider facilitators, and between different practitioners.

Other reversals are from an individual approach to a collective one and from verbal to visual methods. Discussions with individuals do take place, but participatory analysis principally happens in group. Visual literacy is independent of alphabetical literacy and appears to be nearly universal. Finally, Chambers argues, reversals of frames, modes and relations contribute to reversals of power. PRA stresses the abdication of power and passing most of the initiative and control to local people.

Chambers' PRA and Freire's critical pedagogy broadly share the same epistemological and ethical roots, but often their long-term goals differ. Generally speaking, Freire's popular education is part of a broader movement of helping to shape popular movements pressing for social and political change. PRA is more concerned with the intricacies of recognising the complex knowledge systems of local people and providing them with the tools to design their own specific development projects (Blackburn and Holland 1998a). So, while PRA finds part of its inspiration in the work of Paolo Freire, it is often said to circumvent its more radical

implications (Hickey and Mohan 2004). I will go deeper into this later in this chapter, when discussing some fundamental critiques of PAR.

PAR is commonly categorized under the disciplines of popular education and development practice, but there are other traditions which deserve attention. PAR, for example, also partly originates in the growing critique of positivist science and scientism and in the movement to find new epistemologies of practice. Feminism often goes unrecognised as a source of inspiration for PAR, though feminists have always fundamentally challenged the structures and practices of domination in all fields. The feminist practice of consciousness-raising can in itself be seen as a form of experiential action inquiry (Reason and Bradbury 2001, Kindon et al. 2007, Maguire 2001).

The wide variety of ideological underpinnings and different approaches to participation means that the concept of participation can be used (and abused) for different purposes and for different (contrary) ideologies and political projects (Hickey and Mohan 2004). It is highly questionable whether all the different institutions, organisations and people working 'in the name of participation' agree on its meaning (Blackburn and Holland 1998b, Samaranayake 1996). I will come back to this later in this chapter.

2.2.3   Recent contributions: resuming PAR's fundamental characteristics

PAR originated as a process by which communities work towards individual and social transformation (Pain and Francis 2003). PAR has become popular in education and development and is also increasingly employed by academics as a means of research. Whatever its specific use, it is the commitment to change through investigation and critical reflection that is PAR's fundamental principle (Pain and Francis 2003).

PAR is a practice for the systematic development of knowledge, but it is different from traditional academic research. PAR has different purposes, is based in different relationships, and has different ways of conceiving knowledge and its relation to practice (Reason and Bradbury 2001). PAR is:

"a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview. It

seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others in the pursuit of practical issues of concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and communities." (Reason and Bradbury 2001:1)

Based in radical theory, PAR is not just another methodology (Kindon et al. 2007); it is a political statement as well as a theory of knowledge (Reason and Bradbury 2001). PAR confirms people's right and ability to have a say in decisions which affect them and which claim to generate knowledge about them. It affirms the connection between power and knowledge and promotes a shift in the balance of power in favour of poor and marginalised groups aiming at democratic social change (Reason and Bradbury 2001).

Participatory research approaches represent a critique and a reversal of traditional research methods and relations and their emphasis on neutrality and objectivity (Kesby 2000a, O'Kane 2004). Conventional research is characterised as:

"a process that begins with an externally developed research design; proceeds with the extraction of data from the field and their transportation to distant institutes for lengthy processing by experts; and results in the presentation of results at scholarly conferences and in academic journals or, occasionally, in reports to policy makers" (Kesby et al. 2000:424).

Traditional research often distances respondents from the process of knowledge production (Kesby et al. 2005) and produces few positive impacts in the researched communities themselves (Kesby 2000b, Kesby 2005, O' Kane 2004). By claiming neutrality and objectivity researchers often, willingly or unwillingly, support the status quo (Fals Borda 2001).

PAR, on the contrary, aims to do research *with* people. It considers the research participants not as objects but as subjects in their own lives (Beazley and Ennew 2006). PAR values ordinary people's knowledge (Fals Borda 2001). It tries to involve research participants directly in some or all stages in the research process, from problem definition through dissemination to action (see Hall 2005, Kesby et al. 2005, Kindon 2005, Pain and Francis 2003). Ownership of the research is shared with participants who negotiate the process with the academic researcher (Pain and Kindon 2007). Researchers and research participants are not considered as two discrete, dissonant and antagonistic poles. They are both seen as thinking-feeling persons whose diverse views and life experiences are jointly taken into

account and elaborated on through dialogue based on symmetric reciprocity and mutual respect. Researchers temper their own expert status. While not dismissing their own specialist skills they do not presume to have a superior perspective. The agency of participants is recognised and encouraged and researchers and participants enter into a horizontal, equal relationship in the research process (Kesby 2000b).

PAR is not just about analysing and understanding the world together, but also about changing it for the better (Kindon et al. 2007). Social action is considered an integral part of the research process (Pain and Kindon 2007). The researcher creates an environment in which participants take greater control over the process of investigation. He or she facilitates the use of innovative research techniques that enable participants to define and analyse their own problems and to seek appropriate solutions (Kesby 2000b). PAR is:

> "a process through which members of oppressed groups and communities identify a problem, collect and analyse information, and act upon the problem in order to find solutions and to promote social and political transformation." (Selener cited in Reason and Bradbury 2001:1)

PAR is based in an ontology that suggests that human beings are dynamic agents capable of reflexivity and self-change (Kindon et al. 2007). Its success is not only measured by the quality of information generated, but also by the extent to which participants' skills, knowledge and capacities are developed through the research experience (Kesby et al. 2005).

In PAR, ideally, research participants collaborate in all stages of reflection and action. In reality, however, the levels of participation may vary significantly. This might be due to the external (financial or time) constraints imposed on research projects, but it might also depend on the specific research context. Research participants might be asked to take the lead and to participate fully, but they might not always be willing or able to do so. This does not mean that they cannot or do not participate at all. There are different possible levels of participation. Roger Hart (1997), for example, developed a 'ladder of participation' for working with young people and children.

Figure 2.1.: The ladder of participation
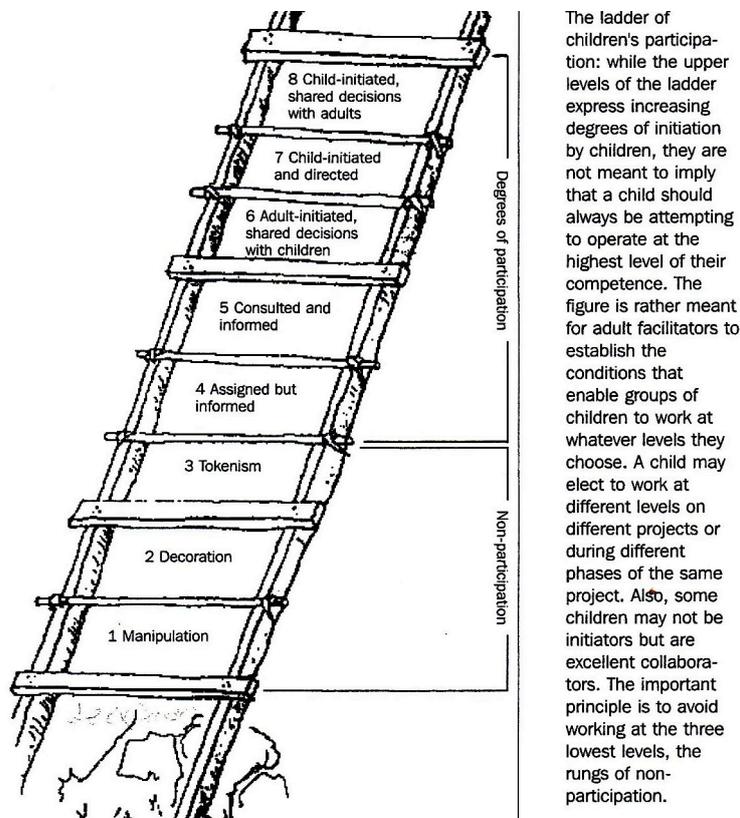
The ladder of children's participation: while the upper levels of the ladder express increasing degrees of initiation by children, they are not meant to imply that a child should always be attempting to operate at the highest level of their competence. The figure is rather meant for adult facilitators to establish the conditions that enable groups of children to work at whatever levels they choose. A child may elect to work at different levels on different projects or during different phases of the same project. Also, some children may not be initiators but are excellent collaborators. The important principle is to avoid working at the three lowest levels, the rungs of non-participation.

Source: copy from Hartman 1992 in Kindon et al. 2007

According to their wishes and capacities young people participate at different levels and, over time, can grow into higher levels of participation. The degree of participation should always be negotiated between research participants and researcher. Research participants may not desire full participation and care needs to be taken to work with people on their own terms (Kindon at al 2007). The ladder of participation aims to point to the different grades and shades of participation, but, because of its vertical structure, still implicitly accords value judgments to the different levels. In order to more explicitly acknowledge that various forms of participation are equally valid at different times during the research process and in different situations and contexts, Pretty et al. (1995 cited in Kindon et al. 2007) proposed to use the term 'participation continuum'.

Figure 2.2.: Participation continuums

	Ladder of public participation	Ladder of children's participation	Continuum of participation

Collective action — Child initiated, shared decisions with adults

Child initiated — Self mobilisation

Co-learning — Adult initiated, shared decisions with children — Interactive participation

Cooperation — Participation for material incentives

Functional participation

Consultation — Children consulted but not informed — Participation by consultation

Compliance — Children assigned roles but not informed

Co-option — Tokenism — Participation in information giving

Manipulation

Passive participation

Decoration

Direction of increasing co-researcher or participant control and benefit

2.3   Critiques of PAR

The concepts of participation and participatory research have become very popular, but also have been fiercely critiqued. The critical backlash of the end of the 1990s has been mainly directed to the international participatory development context and to PRA in particular and often explicitly focused on the work of Chambers (Hickey and Mohan 2004). Nevertheless, these critiques are relevant and pose challenging questions for all participatory researchers alike.

Generally, it has been argued that, despite its claims of empowerment and democratization, there is little empirical evidence of the long-term effectiveness of PRA in materially improving the conditions of the most vulnerable people or as a strategy for social change (Cleaver 2001, Henkel and Stirrat 2001). Apparently, the ideal of participation is seldom achieved and effecting change with participants seems to be fraught with difficulties (Pain and Francis 2003). This critique has taken three main forms (Pain and Francis 2003). First, there are those who are supportive of PRA, but who critique the fact that participation has often been manipulated and adopted in name only. Secondly, there are researchers and practitioners

who target the weaknesses in PRA's methodology and who thereby focus on techniques and issues such as rigour, reflexivity and validity. Thirdly, there are the critiques that challenge the fundamental concepts underlying the participatory development orthodoxy.

Critiques of PRA, then, have focused on its technical limitations on the one hand and on the theoretical and conceptual limitations of participation on the other (Kothari 2001). Within the PRA-orthodoxy there has been an espousal of on-going self-critical, epistemological awareness. These critiques were limited to the technical limitations and to methodological revisionism. They involved the conviction that getting the technique right was the principal way of ensuring the success of participatory approaches and so they did not represent a critique of participatory methodology per se (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Chambers, for example, argued that "PRA is not always well done but when it is well done, local people, and especially the poorer, enjoy the creative learning that comes from presenting their knowledge and their reality" (Chambers 1994b:1266). Participation, so it seemed, was considered intrinsically a good thing (Cleaver 2001), a "warmly persuasive word" (Nelson and Wright 1997:2) never to be used unfavourably.

Recently however, the fundamentals of participatory research and development have been challenged more profoundly by focusing on their theoretical, political and conceptual limitations. In *Participation, the new tyranny?* (2001) Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari offer a poststructuralist critique of PRA. They fiercely argue that tyranny (understood as the illegitimate and unjust exercise of power) is both a real and a potential consequence of participatory research and practice, counter-intuitive and contrary to its rhetoric of empowerment though this may be. For them and the other authors in this book, PRA's tyrannical potential is systemic and not just a matter of practitioners' attitudes or the techniques and tools employed. The discourse itself, they argue, and not just the practice, embodies the potential for an unjustified exercise of power (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Their fundamental critiques revolve around three main issues:

1) The focus on 'the local' and on local knowledge at the cost of analysing broader social structures (Mosse 2001)
2) The romanticised understanding of community (Cleaver 2001)
3) The lack of a clearly defined concept of power and its limited (naïve) understanding of how power operates (Kothari 2001)

I will now look in detail at each of these critiques.

2.3.1   Essentializing local knowledge

The incorporation of 'local' people's knowledge is central to PAR. It is based on the conviction that the articulation of people's knowledge can transform top-down bureaucratic planning systems (Mosse 2001) and challenge unequal power relations. The move to participatory approaches and their focus on the 'local' has been a promising tendency, but also implied the danger of essentializing and romanticizing the local which has resulted in the downplaying of local social inequalities and power relations (Mohan and Stokke 2001).

Uma Kothari (2001) remarks that local knowledge is constructed by people in specific contexts and reflects local power relations. Knowledge is culturally, socially and politically produced and is continuously reformulated as a powerful normative construct. Knowledge is an accumulation of social norms, rituals and practices that, far from being constructed in isolation from power relations, is embedded in them. All individuals' behaviours, actions and perceptions, Kothari argues, are shaped by power embedded and embodied within society. Individuals might think they are free, while "they are in fact in the grip of more insidious forms of power, which operate not solely through direct forms of repression but often through less visible strategies of normalization" (Kothari 2001:144). Individuals adopt discursive and embodied articulations of power that become readily adapted as cultural norms and in this way power and inequalities become normative and remain unchallenged (Kothari 2001). So, Kothari (2001) concludes, participatory researchers and practitioners may interpret the actions and expressions of participants as local culture when they are, in fact, the product of processes of normalization (Kothari 2001).

Inevitably, PRA produces knowledge that is shaped by local relations of power and authority (Mosse 2001, Mohan and Stokke 2000). By accepting local knowledge as some kind of objective truth, and not recognizing that knowledge is produced out of power relations in society, participatory methodologies are in danger of reifying inequalities and affirming the agendas of elites and other more powerful actors (Kothari 2001). By romanticizing local knowledge and perceiving it as naturally benign, PRA refrains from problematizing the local context (Mohan and Stokke 2000). Yet machismo and gender inequalities, for example, are far from incontestable (Mohan and Stokke 2000).

Kothari continues to argue that the use of participatory techniques often "requires the taking out of anything complicated, making people's lives and their social interactions linear and sterile so as to make them fit into charts, diagrams and tables and conform to the boundaries and limitations of the methodological tools" (Kothari 2001:147). Consequently, PRA easily results in a process of controlling to (re-)produce the norm (Kothari 2001). As such, "Participatory analysis [might] reinforce a normative discourse that reflects a group consensus on what is usual and ordinary, while the complexities and 'messiness' of most people's everyday lives is filtered out" (Kothari 2001: 147). Participatory techniques such as mapping; modelling and transect walks are claimed to be neutral and adequate for all cultural settings and to facilitate the articulation of local knowledge. But, mapping and other methods are instruments of knowledge production and are woven into the power structures of society (Penn, 1993). What is often taken as people's local knowledge is itself constructed in the context of planning and research and reflects the social relationships that those research systems entail (Mosse 2001). The right of the participant to draw his or her own map might give him or her some kind of ownership, but, to a large extent, PRA already presupposes the frame of what can and cannot be done as it canonizes the kind of visualization acceptable. Supposedly neutral participatory techniques in fact encourage a particular way of seeing, understanding and representing the world and may actually represent a way of thinking that is particularly western (Mohan 2001). Participatory methods are instruments based in western rationality. Western models of cognition still strongly assume knowledge to be mediated by language, while most knowledge is non-linguistic, tacit and generated in practice (Mohan 2001). The weakness of much PRA is that it still heavily relies on linguistic representations and as such is structurally biased away from other kinds of knowledge (Mohan 1999, 2001). The issue of linguistic representation versus embodied knowledge in PRA became an important focuses of attention in my research and will be further reflected on in the last chapter of this thesis.

Furthermore, critiques of PRA refer to the fact that idealising local knowledge has also resulted in treating all knowledge from the west as suspect or tainted (Young 1990 and Goebel 1998 cited in Mohan 2001, Kesby 2005). Outsiders (facilitators) started to behave as if they had nothing else to offer but facilitating the welling up of local knowledge. This made genuine dialogue and learning impossible. In PRA all parties involved, including research facilitators, should be able to make explicit their point of view so that different interpretations can be exchanged and discussed and so that new insights can emerge. Yet, PRA does not look

beyond binary notions of local/ Western knowledge, self/other and insider/outsider and does not recognize that none of us are all-knowing subjects (Katz 1992 in Mohan 2001). Mohan claims that PRA does not sufficiently acknowledge that knowledge is generated inter-subjectively, but mistakenly privileges one form of knowledge as more complete or essentially more appropriate (Mohan 2001).

2.3.2   Romanticising the community

Researchers critical of PRA have stated that it is not only 'local' knowledge, but also the concept of community that has been essentialised and romanticized (Nelson and Wright 1997, Guijt and Shah 1998, Mohan and Stokke 2000). Community, in PRA, has been understood as a natural social entity characterized by solidaristic relations (Cleaver 2001). Processes of conflict, negotiation, inclusion and exclusion are occasionally acknowledged, but little investigated. Researchers and practitioners have always assumed, so it seems, some underlying commonality of interest (Li 1996 cited in Cleaver 2001). Mohan (2001) argues that such a simplistic understanding conceals important differences within communities along lines of class, gender, age and ethnicity. Considering communities as consensual and harmonious resulted in PRA promoting a consensual view (Goeble 1998 cited in Mohan 2001). Kapoor (2002) adds that the very fact of seeking consensus risks using coercion and simplifying diversity. Representing the community in a uni-dimensional way may facilitate the task of research and the finding of solutions for development problems but, in doing so, it may also silence or exclude certain voices within the community. In PRA power often lies in the hands of the more articulate or politically adept and this might serve to reinforce the status and power of existing cliques within the community (Haily 2001). Some groups in the community might have the skills and the authority to present personal interests in more generally valid terms, but others do not (Mosse 2001). Mosse (1994 2001) observes that, from a policy point of view, the consequence of the tendency in PRA to look for consensus is that actions based on such consensus often are in favour of generally accepted norms set by dominant groups. On top of this comes the fact that in PRA consensus is generally sought in public communicative interactions. In some cultural contexts it is considered inappropriate or unusual for some groups, women, children and young people for example, to speak in public and they might feel uncomfortable doing so. Consequently, the particular concerns of these silenced groups will not be represented in the consensus generated by PRA (Kapoor 2002). So, it is argued, participatory facilitators too easily assumed that participants will transcend

their individual interests through qualitative discussion and collective compromise and that public deliberation will gradually lead them to seeking the good of all. Yet, participants need to debate and select one claim over another in order to reach consensus and so, unavoidably, participants will have to struggle and engage in critique. This generally is a messy process in which conflict cannot be avoided (Kapoor 2002). So, finally, there remains the question of legitimacy:

> "what ensures that PRA meetings and interactions are coercion free? What prevents women […] [or young people] from feeling intimidated by the authority or male figures being present? What allows participants to feel free to broach controversial topics or question the meeting's procedures? What provisions exist for free and equal deliberations?" (Young 1996 cited in Kapoor 2002:107)

There is a lack of concern for building more legitimacy into PRA procedures to ensure just outcomes and to represent socio-cultural differences.

2.3.3 Under-theorizing power

Power and empowerment are central concepts in PAR (Pain 2004). Nevertheless, the way power has been conceptualised in participatory has been one of the main issues of contention in the growing critical literature (Cooke and Kothari 2001). PRA's basic practice/empiricist orientation caused the concept of power to be insufficiently theorised and politicised. This empiricism resulted in getting bogged down in methods and techniques without pausing to reflect on initial assumptions and broader issues (Kapoor 2002, Haily 2001). Hence, PRA has often ignored questions of legitimacy, justice, power and the politics of gender and difference (Kapoor 2002).

Some authors have argued that, within development, PRA projects often tended to methodological individualism (Francis 2001 cited in Hickey and Mohan 2004) which obscured an analysis of what makes participation difficult for marginal groups in the first place (Hickey and Mohan 2004). They claim that attention has been distracted away from an engagement with the underlying forces of socio-economic and political change that shape people's livelihoods (Hickey and Mohan 2004). Such a lack of critical stance resulted in simplifying or ignoring oppressive relationships between local communities and socio-

economic power structures (Kapoor 2002). Yet, it is exactly these power relations in which local people are enmeshed that often make it difficult for them to participate, even if they wish to (Pain 2004).

An insistence on individual agency and personal change has reinforced this tendency (Cleaver 2001). Implicit in much PRA is a structuralist understanding of power as a commodity concentrated in the hands of a few, emanating from the top-down and from the centre outward, and as exercised instrumentally to dominate marginal groups and to recreate ideologies that maintain relations of dominance (Maguire 1987 cited in Kesby 2005). Chambers (1997) and many other practitioners principally locate power in individuals (rather than in broader systems of power through which people are structurally disempowered) who intentionally use their power, or impose it on others (see also Williams 2004). Concerning PRA's claim to effect political change, they opt for 'the primacy of the personal' in which rectifying power inequalities happens through personal transformation (Chambers 1994b). Additionally, the onus of transformation lies entirely on the 'uppers' (the powerful) who have to disempower themselves to empower others (Chambers 1994b). This is a voluntaristic solution relying on personal choice and on the changing of behaviour of individual members of elite groups (Williams 2004). It is not clear, however, why the 'uppers' would agree to give up their power, or participate in behavioural training to change attitudes. Chambers also fails to provide any role for 'lowers' (the powerless) in this process. The almost exclusive focus on the micro-level and on people who are considered powerless and marginal has reproduced the simplistic notion that power and control are to be found solely at the macro and central levels (Kothari 2001). Consequently, PRA's aim of empowerment is often a rather paternalistic project ignoring the extent to which people can self-empower (Leyshon, 2002 cited in Pain 2004). Participatory practitioners and researchers also failed to acknowledge and accept the capacity of individuals and groups to resist participation and inclusion. Subversive participants can choose to opt out of the participatory process (Kothari 2001). Individuals may find it easier or more beneficial or simply habitually familiar not to participate (Adams et al. 1997; Zwaverteen and Neupane 1996 in Cleaver 2001). Non-participation may be both a rational strategy and an unconscious practice embedded in routine, social norms and the acceptance of the status quo (Cleaver 2001). People may have more immediate concerns than engaging in a participatory research process (Pain and Francis 2003). There have been several calls to recognize both the cost and benefits of participation for individuals (Mayoux 1995 cited in Cleaver 2001).

Neglecting the non-local, or considering the local in isolation from broader economic and political structures, has resulted in PRA downplaying local socio-economic inequalities and ignoring national and global socio-economic forces (Mohan and Stokke 2000, Kapoor 2002). The personal and the local have been reified as the only valid political sites, being at odds with the increasingly globalizing tendencies of many economic and social processes (Mohan 2001). Hence, there clearly is some kind of contradiction between the global causes of social and economic marginalization and PRA's focus on local knowledge and personal change (Pain 2004).

Finally, considering issues of power, Haily (2001) argues that it is crucial to investigate why a participatory approach to research and development have become so widely accepted (Haily 2001). According to Haily (2001) the knowledge embodied in the discourse of participation should not be seen as representative of a universal truth, but as an exercise of power. He suggests that participatory practice owes its genesis to attempts by Western governments (and Northern donor agencies by virtue of their funding position) to limit the power and influence of political dissidents, freedom fighters and radical Marxists, and to prevent any radical engagement in social or political restructuring. In a similar vein, Henkel and Stirrat (2001) analyse the discourse of participation by investigating its genealogy and the way it relates to the concept of empowerment. They argue that the empowerment promised by participatory development in effect might be very similar to what Foucault has called 'subjection' (Foucault 1980 cited in Henkel and Stirrat 2001). The important question that arises with regard to empowerment is not so much *how much* people are empowered but *for what*? They argue that through PAR vulnerable groups of people are empowered "to be elements in the great project of the modern, as citizens of the institutions of the modern state, as consumers in the increasingly global market []" (Henkel and Stirrat 2001: 182). Through participation people are drawn into becoming compliant subjects of the broader project of modernisation. "Empowerment is not just a matter of 'giving power' to formerly disempowered people. The currency in which this power is given is that of the project of modernity" (Henkel and Stirrat 2001:182). Participation can all too easily be linked to a softened neo-liberalism that sees empowerment in narrow market terms, emphasizing local control and autonomy (Williams 2004, Cahill 2007b). Some participatory projects designed to bring the excluded in, actually bind them more tightly to structures of power that they are then not able to question, resulting in forms of control that are much more difficult to challenge (Cohen cited in Kothari 2001, Williams 2004). In that way, it is argued, participatory processes may give an impression of

change while actually serving the status quo and stifling dissent (Pugh and Potter 2003 cited in Pain 2004).

Briefly summarized, the concepts of participatory development and PRA have been critiqued for the fact that, too often, they have been used as a form of political control: emphasising personal reform over political struggle; obscuring local power differences by uncritically celebrating the community; and using the language of emancipation to incorporate marginalised populations of the global south within an unreconstructed project of capitalist modernist action (Williams 2004). These fundamental critiques insist that the ills of participation do not result from the shallow use or abuse of techniques by those uncommitted to the philosophy of participation. Rather, these ills reflect the fact that even deep participation constitutes a form of power that has dominating effects (Cooke and Kothari 2001a cited in Kesby 2005).

2.4 Participatory researchers' response to the fundamental critiques of PRA and participatory development

Many participatory researchers have accepted the fundamental critiques outlined above. But, rather than simply giving up on the idea of participation, they have started to engage with the critiques directed at them. As a result, it has now become indisputable that politics matter in PAR and it is largely agreed upon that understanding the complex ways in which participation relates to power and political systems is a necessary condition for moving towards a more transformative participatory approach (Hickey and Mohan 2004, Kesby 2005). I now consider the ways participatory researchers responded to the above mentioned critiques and how this has influenced PAR.

2.4.1 Considering participation as a universal human right

Going beyond an understanding of development as participation in neatly defined, time-bounded projects, the concept of participation is now increasingly linked to the concepts of citizenship and democratic governance (Gaventa 2004, Cornwall and Guijt 2004). Citizenship is understood here as practised rather than as given (an individual legal equality accompanied by a set of rights and responsibilities bestowed by a state on its citizens). Citizens are recognised as makers and shapers, rather than as users and choosers of interventions or

services designed by others (Gaventa 2004). Extending the concept of participation to one of citizenship recasts participation as a right and not just as an invitation offered to the beneficiaries of development. The right to participate in decision-making in social, economic, cultural and political life is a basic human right (Lister 1998 in Gaventa 2004). Linking participation to the human rights discourse offers marginalised social groups an important ideological resource for situating their struggle within a broader democratic project with a universally recognized and politically powerful framework (Wignaraja, 1993 cited in Hickey and Mohan 2004)[1].

Participatory researchers now insist that, to facilitate participatory citizenship, mechanisms are to be explored that foster more inclusive and deliberative forms of engagement between citizen and authoritative institutions, among others the state. These mechanisms can be placed on a continuum, ranging from ways of strengthening voices on the one hand and strengthening receptivity to voices by institutions on the other. Important enabling conditions for transformative participatory governance are: a strong central state capacity; a well developed civil society; an organized political force with strong social movement characteristics (Heller 2001 cited in Gaventa 2004) and a rough equality of power within society (Fung and Wright 2003 cited in Gaventa 2004). But, in a vast number of societies, such as El Salvador, these conditions are absent (Gaventa 2004). Some argue that promoting participatory approaches should be avoided at local levels where there is little pre-existing local agency or where the wider political space is unsupportive of such initiatives (Fox 1997 and Kohl 2003 cited in Hickey and Mohan 2004). But, as Hickey and Mohan (2004) argue, participatory practice can also be associated with promoting / claiming the types of institutional and structural transformations required for participatory governance (Hickey and Mohan 2004). It is important, they argue, to recognize that although mechanisms and procedures to increase the presence of more marginal actors in spaces for participation are necessary conditions for their formal involvement, they may not be sufficient to enable such actors to participate substantively (Knight and Johnson 1997, Kohn, 2000 and Pozzoni 2002 cited in Cornwall 2004). Having a voice depends on more than getting a seat at the table. Those who have spent their lives being on the receiving end of prejudice often have so internalized discourses of discrimination that they are often barely able to imagine themselves

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[1] Cultural relativists have argued that human rights are a product of the dominant Western parts of the world, framed in their language and reflecting their needs and aspirations. Human rights, they argue, historically and conceptually reflect western values. They see the human rights discourse as an instrument in confirming the moral, economic and political domination of the West (Brems 1997).

as actors, let alone agents (Freire 1972 cited Cornwall 2004). Poor people who never had the opportunity of participating in a democratic process require time to learn, to formulate and express their ideas, participate in open debate, take collective decisions and follow up with cooperative action (Samaranayake 1996). As will become clear in the following chapters, this is also the level at which the young people's empowerment took place. The possibility for participatory citizenship and people's engagement cannot be taken as given. It is a necessary first step to develop the pre-conditions of participatory governance, including critical consciousness-raising, building civil associations and social movements and strengthening institutions of governance, both at the local and central level (Gaventa 2004).

2.4.2   Recognizing PAR as a form of power

It has been argued that participation is full of authority and domination and little different to other imposed forms of research and development (Cooke and Kothari 2001) and that, therefore, it can only be resisted (Kesby 2007b). Mike Kesby (2005, 2007b) has responded to this critique. He argues that the critiques regarding the dominating impact of PAR are valid, but that they, nevertheless, do not offer a viable substitute for the practical utility of participation, but simply leave the readers depressed by the revelation that participation is a form of power. Kesby (2007b) agrees that participation is a form of power, but disagrees that it can therefore only be resisted. He takes seriously the claim that power cannot be avoided. "Participation", he argues, "even when done deeply and properly will always already constitute a form of power" (Kesby 2007b: 2814). Therefore, he concludes, power must be recognised and worked with.

Kesby (2005) relies on Foucault and poststructuralist theory itself to adjust the poststructuralist critique of participation's naïve conceptualization of power. I will look in more detail to Foucault's work in the next chapter, but, briefly summarized here, for Foucault power is relational and decentred (Foucault 1998[1978]). Power is not just inherently negative, limiting or repressive, but also inherently productive of actions, effects and subjects even when most repressive (Foucault 1998[1978]). Power is everywhere and permeates and constitutes all social relations and, consequently, even democratic, emancipating discourses and practices are entangled with power and contain forces of domination (Sharp et al. 2000). So, even the discourse of participation is revealed to be a form of 'governmentality' or 'biopower', defined as "the ways in which subjectivity is constituted within a constellation of

powers and in which people continuously and permanently survey and govern themselves as an effect of those powers" (Foucault [1979] 1991, [1981] 1988 cited in Kesby 2005:2042). The discourses and practices of participation, as any other kind of discourse, govern the possibilities of behaviour, reflection, representation, and action within a given arena of research or intervention (Henkel and Stirrat 2001). They produce new subject positions, principally that of the participant (Henkel and Stirrat 2001) who must learn to constitute him- or herself as a self-critical agent equal to his/her peers and as part of a collective (Kesby 2005).

For Mike Kesby, participation's failure to escape from power and its association with governance does not prevent it from being one of the many helpful discourses on which people can draw in the pursuit of a radical, transformative political praxis. Kesby (2005) argues that even though participatory discourses constitute systems of power with the capacity to dominate, it is important to recognize that some discourses are more dangerous than others. In many contexts, he writes, participation cannot be viewed as the most oppressive form of governance shaping people's lives. Often, people comply with their subordination because they lack the knowledge resources to construct a credible alternative and the organisational resources to outmanoeuvre existing networks of power. If ordinary people are to resist existing power structures they require new powerful discourses that provide some guidance for alternative living (Clegg 1989 cited in Kesby 2005). Deploying forms of governance such as participation is the only practical means to outflank forms of power that are more oppressive and less self-reflexive (Kesby 2005). For Kesby, this idea is absolutely central to the debate about whether participation is a form of power that can facilitate resistance. Participation must be conceived as a form of power and its tyrannical tendencies must be resisted, but at the same time it does provide an alternative guide for living and is a valuable resource on which women and men can draw in order to challenge the status quo. Understanding participation as a form of power helps to understand how participatory practices actually work and the ubiquity of power suggests that participation will also, inevitably, always be a dirty business, because we have no other alternative "but to sully ourselves with power" (Kesby 2007b:2827).

2.4.3 Integrating power at different scales

As a reaction to the critique that PAR is based on a simplistic understanding of power, participatory researchers increasingly argue that to be truly transformative, participation must be ideologically explicit (tied to a broader radical project of social justice and challenging existing power structures) and dedicated to development as a historical process of social change rather than development as a series of specific, time-limited interventions (Hickey and Mohan 2004). Participation is often used for rendering research and policies more sensitive to the needs of the poor, yet as a perspective that takes into account power and politics, it should be based on a more radical view of participation. Getting the poor to participate has no meaning unless it simultaneously addresses power structures that perpetuate poverty (Mohan and Hickey 2004). Participation must go beyond the individual and local and must involve multi-scaled strategies that encompass the institutional and the structural (Hickey and Mohan 2004).

Instead of a romanticised concept of community, places are to be considered as sites where complex social worlds are situated. Communities are sites of both solidarity and conflict, of shifting alliances, power and social structures (Cleaver 2001). 'Community' is a living and contested entity involving the historical constructions of place-based identities influenced by prior processes, themselves shaped by forces that may not originate within that same space (Hickey and Mohan 2004). It has become common sense that places are constituted by economic, social, cultural and political relations and flows of commodities, information and people extended far beyond a given locality. Hence, what is required is a global sense of place rather than conceptualisations of the local as discrete communities (Massey 1994 cited in Mohan and Stokke 2000). Effective local action must simultaneously address the non-local. Only by linking participatory approaches to wider and more difficult processes of democratization and anti-imperialism will long-term changes occur (Mohan 2001).

Besides idealising the 'community', PAR has also been critiqued for romanticising local knowledge and authentic identities. Initially, within PAR, the subject seemed to be understood as having a deep and pre-existing identity alienated by structures like capitalism and patriarchy. It was believed that, through PAR, hitherto stifled 'authentic' thoughts and voices were to be released, placing the subject on the road to emancipation and liberation. However, with poststructuralists loudly ringing the death of 'the subject', PAR's quest for authentic identities has been questioned (see also the next chapter). In poststructuralist thought there are no depths to plumb for the subject's true essence or identity. The subject is understood as fragmented and always in the process of becoming; as being shaped in a

multitude of ways by various discourses and practices (Cameron and Gibson 2005). Applied to PAR, this means that there are no authentic identities to be discovered and no subjects to be empowered and subsequently liberated. Instead, there only exist various forms of subjection, including that of empowerment and liberation (Cruikshank 1999 cited in Cameron and Gibson 2005). Subjection, then, is not just about identifying how subjects are constituted in ways that limit their possibilities, but also, more importantly, about detecting glimmers of new forms of subjectivity that offer enabling futures. Understanding the discourse of empowerment as a form of subjection enables the recognition of a politics of becoming in which new forms of subjectivity are cultivated (Connolly 1999). While this does not exclude collective political action, it does draw attention to another, micro-political dimension of the process of social change. As such PAR's alliance with poststructuralism explicitly brings the personal back in. But, the micro-politics of cultivating new subjectivities is not to be compared with Chamber's much criticised naive faith in voluntaristic personal transformation independent of more global political processes. On the contrary, in a poststructuralist approach to participation, the personal is defined as political, *only because* it is inevitably entangled with broader issues of governance and politics. An understanding of empowerment as a politics of becoming and as the cultivation of new subjectivities also lies at the heart of my interpretation of the young people's PAR and the changes it produced.

2.5   Conclusions

Clearly, participatory approaches have transcended the search for simple technical fixes and are demonstrably moving towards more structural transformations. It has become clear that participation is not something that we should open our arms to without looking at it very critically (mrs kinpaisby 2008). We need to be wary of how participation is used and for what purpose. "This is the contradictory ground upon which we must 'locate' participatory theory and practice, not as an ideal but as a messy, slow, engagement of power, politics and context" (Cahill 2007b:2861). The challenge always remains of how to negotiate the inherent ambiguities and contradictions of participation, at the same time as opening spaces for the dissemination of new insights and possibilities for transformative knowledge and action (Pain and Kindon 2007).

As described above, the most fundamental critiques of PAR are related to its simplistic (structuralist) understanding of power relations. Yet, in the meantime, participatory

researchers engaging with a poststructuralist account of power have refined their understanding of power (and empowerment) and are better able to account for its complexity. My research strongly builds on their work, but, at the same time argues that, while having developed a more complete and nuanced conceptualization of power, participatory researchers still largely neglect how power functions through emotions and embodied knowledges. In this thesis I particularly focus on the connection between emotions, power and politics. I conclude that participatory researchers tend to overemphasize the role of critical reflection and understanding as the first and principal step for achieving change and that PAR is still very much associated with discourse and linguistic representation (see also Jupp 2007). Consequently, PAR often doesn't fully acknowledge the fundamental role of emotions in confirming or challenging situations of structural exclusion and oppression and doesn't fully exploit the empowering potential of embodied (and affective) knowledges.

In the next chapter I go deeper into the structuralist and poststructuralist understandings of power that underlie much participatory thinking and practice to better explain the (poststructuralist) ideas on which many recent participatory researchers build their analysis and which also strongly influence my own research.

3 Power and empowerment: from a structuralist to a poststructuralist approach

3.1   Introduction

Participatory approaches claim to challenge oppressive power relations and to empower marginalised groups. This research critically considers the empowering potential of PAR. As such, the concept of empowerment is central to participatory research and practice in general and to this thesis in particular. In the previous chapter it already became clear that the notion of empowerment is inseparably linked to the concept of power and that different understandings of power result in different interpretations and opportunities for empowerment. The most fundamental critiques of PAR and the more recent contributions to participatory theory all accentuate the importance of a nuanced understanding of power for PAR to be truly empowering.

I have described the evolution in PAR from a rigid, structuralist approach to a more flexible, poststructuralist understanding of power. In this chapter I look deeper into these different accounts of power for the following reasons: First of all, the contradiction between a structuralist and poststructuralist understanding of power was quite central to the PAR process in which I was involved. These opposing accounts are representative of the contradictory ways in which power and empowerment were perceived by the different actors involved and they explain some of the difficulties encountered in the process of empowering young people. Secondly, my research is firmly grounded in poststructuralist theory which has provided me with important conceptual models that helped me to make sense of my data and to develop the main arguments in this thesis. To explain a poststructuralist account of power, however, it is necessary to start with a structuralist approach, because the first emerges out of, and as a reaction against, the second.

3.2   A structuralist understanding of power and resistance

Structuralist or modern accounts conceive of power in terms of a binary between dominance and submission. They equate power straightforwardly with domination and coercion and give

little space to notions of resistance. Power is exclusively conceived of as the power to dominate (Raby 2005, Sharp et al. 2000).

In a modernist approach, examining power is very much equated with identifying processes of governing and modern theorists tend to focus on institutions, in particular the state, as the principal dominating power (Sharp et al. 2000). They present power as a uni-linear relation from the rulers to the ruled, from those who have power over those who lack it. These approaches often portray dominant power as so ubiquitous that acts of resistance appear either futile or trivial.

A binary position on power also connects with a particular understanding of the subject and of agency. Agency arises from an autonomous, rational, pre-discursive, internally coherent acting subject (Mac Donald 1991 cited in Raby 2005). The subject is whole, with a clear position in relation to domination, rather than fragmented, and thus has a clear source of agency and of morality. The powerful are set against the powerless and it is always clear who is dominant and who is subjugated (Raby 2005).

3.2.1 A one-, two- and three dimensional account of power

A structuralist approach to power has evolved over time. Robert Dahl (1957) was one of the first representatives of a structuralist approach. He defined power as: "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B normally would not otherwise do" (Dahl 1957:203). Dahl and other modernist theorists focused on causality, individual agency and decision-making processes as central to the power debate (Clegg 1989). Their perspective was called a one-dimensional, pluralist[2] view of power, because it focussed on "behaviour in the making of decisions on issues over which there is an observable conflict of interests, seen as express policy preferences revealed by political participation" (Lukes 2005:19). Such a conception of power is restricted to issues of individual agency to the detriment of any adequate conception of the linkage between agency and structure. It views power only in

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[2] Sociologically oriented researchers have consistently argued that power is highly centralized, while political scholars have concluded that in 'their' communities power is widely diffused and that one group always balances the power of others. Therefore, the latter group defines itself as 'pluralist' and its counterpart as 'elitist' (Bachrach and Baratz 1962).

individualistic terms, rather than adopting a more structural understanding of its exercise (Clegg 1989).

Reacting to the shortcomings of a one-dimensional view of power, Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz attempted to forge a link between agency and structure and defended an approach that recognised what they called 'the two faces' of power (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). They critiqued pluralists for concentrating their attention only on the exercise of power and not on its sources. In their opinion, pluralists consider power too narrowly as participation (initiating, deciding, vetoing) in decision-making to be analysed only through a careful examination of a series of concrete decisions (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). Such a model, Bachrach and Baratz argue, is limited because it takes no account of the fact that power is not only exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B, but also when A is able to create and reinforce social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public issues which are relatively innocuous to A; preventing B from bringing up issues that might be against A's interests. They argue that all forms of political organization are biased in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). Power is also exercised when a person or a group of persons creates and reinforces barriers to the public airing of conflicts. So, according to Bachrach and Baratz, a satisfactory analysis of power involves looking at both decision making and non-decision making processes, the latter referring to the process of suppressing any latent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision maker (Bachrach and Baratz cited in Lukes 2005). Non-decision-making happens directly through force, manipulation or co-option, or indirectly through the mobilization and utilization of an existing bias of the political system such as influencing community norms and values and political procedures (Bachrach and Baratz 1975).

While better accounting for the subtleties of the exercise of power, according to Steven Lukes (2005) a two-dimensional view of power still focuses too much on actual observable conflict assuming that if there is no conflict (overt or covert) then there must be consensus (Lukes 2005). He critiques Bachrach and Baratz for assuming that if people feel no grievances they have no interests that are harmed by the use of power. Lukes (2005) elaborates on the work of Bachrach and Baratz, but radicalizes their conceptualisation of power by constructing a three-dimensional view of power. In Lukes' opinion, a two-dimensional view is still too committed to behaviourism; to the study of overt actual behaviour of which concrete decisions, in situations of conflict, are seen as paradigmatic. Lukes argues that the bias of the system is not

sustained simply by a series of individually chosen acts, but also, most importantly, by the socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups, practices and institutions (Lukes 2005). In Lukes' opinion, Bachrach and Baratz still resemble the pluralists in adopting a too methodologically individualist view of power, starting from an idea of power as the probability of individuals realising their will despite the resistance of others. Yet, A not only exercises power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but also by influencing, shaping and determining B's very wants. According to Lukes, the supreme exercise of power is to get others to have the desires you want them to have and to secure their compliance by controlling their very thoughts and desires (Lukes 2005). This is possible through the control of information, mass media, processes of socialization, etc. So, the most effective use of power is to prevent conflict from arising in the first place.

"[…] Is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people to whatever degree from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial" (Lukes 2005:28).

3.2.2 The possibility of resistance in a structuralist approach to power

A structuralist view seems to be premised on an underlying tacit and constitutive conception of power formulated after the manner of sovereignty: a power as a locus of *will*, as a supreme agency to which other wills should bend; power as prohibitory and power as negation of the power and will of others (Foucault 1981 cited in Clegg 1989). In its most excessive and subtle form, power penetrates into the very thoughts and consciousness of others and domination is understood as subjugation through ideology (Raby 2005). A form of supremely sovereign will is thus constituted from which there seems to be no escape (Clegg 1989).

Some authors however, such as James Scott (1990) and Michel De Certeau (1988), while still inscribing themselves into a structuralist logic, try to recuperate the notion of resistance. Both develop interesting ideas that pose some critical questions about how to understand resistance and empowerment.

In *Domination and the arts of resistance: hidden transcripts* (1990) Scott challenges the concept of hegemony. He argues against the idea that subordinate groups come to internalise the norms and values of the dominant class and accept the social arrangements that produce their subordination. Scott insists that subordinate people do recognise unequal power relations, but must suppress and mask their anger towards the dominant group to escape persecution. 'Subordinates', as Scott calls them, conform and obey not because they have internalised the norms of the dominant, but because a structure of surveillance, reward and punishment makes it prudent for them to comply. Scott claims that much of the political life of oppressed social groups has been ignored, because it mostly takes place at a level rarely recognised as political. He distinguishes between openly declared forms of resistance and the disguised, low-profile and often fugitive resistances of the poor (e.g. poaching, foot-dragging, pilfering). He argues that as long as we confine our conception of the political to activity that is openly declared, we tend to conclude that subordinate groups essentially lack a political life. According to Scott, theories of resistance tend to focus too much on overt challenges rather than on more subtle ones including humour and passivity. Scott uses the term *infrapolitics* to refer to the low-profile resistances of dominated groups and demonstrates that what looks like acquiescence may not always be so. According to Scott, oppressed people apparently conform to dominant rules, but actually opt for a hidden tactical resistance, always testing and probing the boundaries of the possible. An open confrontation often is not a viable option for them because of the severe consequences this might provoke. But, Scott argues, "[e]very subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, 'a hidden transcript' that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant" (Scott 1990: xii). Their rage and revolt emerges in backstage transcripts of values, understandings and popular outrage carefully hidden from the dominant and confined to informal networks of family, friends, neighbours and community. Such form of disguised, silent resistance does not make any public claims and all political action is designed to obscure their intentions or to take cover behind apparent meaning (Scott 1990).

Similar to Scott, in *The Practice of everyday life* (1984) Michel De Certeau tries to understand the complex actions of dominated people. He distinguishes between strategies and tactics. He defines a strategy as:

> "The calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power can be isolated from an environment. [...] A strategy assumes a place that can be

circumscribed as proper and thus serves as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it" (De Certeau 1988:xix).

De Certeau describes a strategy as a typical attitude of modern sciences, politics and the military and as reflecting the triumph of 'place' over 'time'. It allows people to capitalize acquired advantages on a long-term basis and to prepare future expansions, providing them with a certain independence with respect to the variability of circumstances (De Certeau 1988). A strategy, according to De Certeau, is about "the mastery of places through sight […]. To be able to see is to be able to predict, to run ahead of time by reading a space" (De Certeau 1988:36). Strategies presuppose and, at the same time, produce a certain kind of knowledge sustained and determined by the power to possess one's own place (De Certeau 1988).

A tactic, on the other hand, is a calculus which cannot count with a 'proper 'space. A tactic can only insinuate itself into the space of the other, fragmentarily, without being able to take it over and without being able to keep it at a distance. It has no base at its disposal where it can capitalize on its advantages and secure independence with respect to circumstances. Because it has no place of its own, a tactic depends only on time (not space), being always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized on the wing. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunities. Its victories are temporary and cannot be converted into structural and sustainable changes (De Certeau 1988). Because a tactic belongs to the space of the other, it does not have the option of planning a general strategy. It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. This gives a tactic mobility, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment. Tactics can only take an order or a system by surprise. Tactics are "the art of the weak" (De Certeau 1988:36). Tactical agency is devised for the oppressed and the vulnerable to resist the concrete immediate conditions of their lives in order to maximise the circumstances created by their violent environment. Their actions, however, come from a position of weakness. Strategic agency would require the mastery of the larger picture, of the long term consequences of their actions in the form of political benefits or profits (Honwana 2005). For De Certeau, strategies are about the firm and stable power of dominant groups, while tactics represent the fragile and fugitive forms of resistance of the oppressed.

De Certeau and Scott recognise the possibility of resistance, but, nevertheless, still leave us with the impression that power is the preserve of the dominant. Resistance is possible and domination is never complete, but finally those in power occupy and control space and the

powerless can only do the best they can by cheating and manipulating the system; but they are unable to openly confront it and produce long-term social change (Massey 2000, Raby 2005). They offer a more flexible account of power but they nevertheless remain trapped in a modernist binary thinking that opposes dominance to submission and sets the dominant against the oppressed (Raby 2005, Massey 2000). Power is still considered as a commodity held onto by those in power and which those who are powerless try to wrest from their control (Mills 2003). Their accounts are based on a simplistic binary understanding of the oppressors (the bad) and the oppressed (the good). They too easily assume "the self to be clearly known and unproblematic across vast cultural and historical differences" (Gall 1995:412) and, consequently, "fail to recognize the co-existence of deeply felt, yet contested discourses and intersecting identifications within a single person" (Gall 1995:413). As mentioned in the previous chapter, PAR initially was very much based on such a binary understanding of power and, eventually, has been heavily attacked for this.

Despite these critiques, the work of Scott and De Certeau poses some interesting questions about the nature of resistance that are relevant for this research. Does the notion of resistance necessarily suggest conscious, political and direct actions? Are those involved in resistance able to clearly articulate their local or structural oppositions (and is this necessary?) or are such motives being imputed by others (researchers for example) (Raby 2005, Gelder 1997, Stanley 1997)? Does 'successful' resistance only happen at the level of collective social action or can it also be located in everyday micro-practices (Hooks & West 1991 cited in Raby 2005)? These questions will return in the next chapters when looking at young people's experiences of empowerment.

A structuralist approach, though a bit 'outdated', nevertheless contributes to a better understanding of how power is experienced and perceived by most people in El Salvador, including the young people involved in this research. It helps to explain the context in which the young people's PAR took place and in which empowerment was aimed for. In chapter five of this thesis I describe the socio-cultural, political and economic context of El Salvador. The dominant position of a small rich elite and the negation and violent repression of the will of the majority of the poor is a common thread throughout the country's history until today. Living in a historically instilled authoritarian society, Salvadorans are socialised with the idea of power as domination and force (as always, inevitably, to the detriment of oneself or others) and, as I hope to demonstrate, the culture of violence in El Salvador persists, to a great extent, exactly because of a general failure to understand and exercise power in other than

(structuralist) dominating terms. In the PAR process young people learned, to a certain degree, to experience and exercise power in alternative ways, which constituted an important part of their feelings of empowerment.

3.3   A poststructuralist account of power and resistance: Michel Foucault

A postmodernist account reacts against a binary understanding of power and undercuts the modernist sense of a total dominating power in favour of more contingent and local interpretations (Clegg 1986). Postmodernists do not consider the subject as unitary and autonomous, but as produced in discourse and practice, always changing and becoming, fragmented and contradictory (Tait 2000 cited in Raby 2005). Therefore, they might be less able to celebrate collective, organized, oppositional resistance, but they better address complex flows of power relations, fragmented subjectivities and individualized activities (Raby 2005).

Michel Foucault was one of the most influential poststructuralist thinkers and the importance of his work cannot be underestimated. It is to his thinking and writing that I now turn, describing the evolution in his work on power and resistance. Foucault's thinking facilitated a new way of analysing power and laid the foundation for a different understanding of resistance. He has inspired many writers to think differently about resistance and empowerment and I end this chapter by looking briefly at some of the more recent contributions to the empowerment debate.

3.3.1   The concept of power according to Foucault

Contrary to a modernist account, for Foucault power is not the simple possession of certain individuals or groups. Neither does he believe in a single, originating and decisive unitary centre of power (Foucault 2000c, Clegg 1986). According to Foucault, power is relational (Foucault 1998[1978]). It is not to be understood as one individual's consolidated and homogeneous domination over others or that of one group or class over other groups or classes. There is no binary opposition between the ruler and the ruled (Foucault 1998 [1978]).

"[…] [P]ower is not that which makes the difference between those who exclusively possess and retain it and those who do not have it and submit to it. Power must be analysed as something which circulates, as something that only functions in the form of a chain. Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or a piece of wealth." (Foucault 1980:98)

For, Foucault, power is everywhere, because it comes from everywhere. It is not held, but exercised (Foucault 1998 [1978]). Individuals always, at the same time, undergo and exercise power (Foucault 1980). Individuals should not be seen as the recipients of power, but as the place where power is enacted and resisted (Mills 2003).

In modernist thinking power is equated with the negation of the power of others. Reacting against this idea, Foucault claims that power is not simply constraining and oppressive, but always, at the same time, productive and enabling; bringing about forms of behaviour and events rather than simply curtailing freedom and constraining individuals (Mills 2003, Sharp et al. 2000). "If power was never anything but repressive, if it did never anything but say no, do you really believe that we would manage to obey it" (Foucault, 1978:36). Foucault argues that there must be something else, apart from repression, which leads people to conform (Mills 2003) and that power is not to be solely understood as power *over,* but also as power *to,* as a creative force that produces and gets things done (Clegg 1989).

While modernist theorists endlessly legislated on what power *is*, Foucault is more interested in what power *does*. He reaches far beyond institutional power (Clegg 1989) and looks at power relations extending the limits of the state (Foucault 1979). For Foucault power is not restricted to political institutions. Relations between parents and children, lovers, employers and employees, all relations between people are power relations (Mills 2003). Rather than focussing on the state as the central locus of power and rather than only being concerned with regulated and legitimate forms of power in their central location, Foucault considers power at its extremities, power in its more local and regional forms (Foucault 1980). He is interested in these local forms of power and the way that they are negotiated by individuals and other agencies.

Foucault explicitly links power to discourse, knowledge and truth (Mills 2003, Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982, Prado 1995). In his view, discourses are systems through which power

circulates (Foucault 1972). Discourse is understood as an organizing principle that produces and orders the phenomena of which it speaks, and compels and constrains what can be thought, spoken and enacted (Foucault 1986). Discourse does not simply translate reality into language. Rather, discourse is to be understood as a system which structures the way we perceive reality (Mills 2003). In other words: discourse does not simply reflect or describe reality, knowledge, experience, identity, social relationships, social institutions and practices; it plays an integral part in constructing them. "Discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, of constituting and constructing the world in meaning" (Fairclough 1992 cited in Lupton 1998:24-25). What people say and do is not simply a consequence of direct individual experience, preference or choice, but an articulation of wider cultural and social norms. These norms have been constructed out of processes of domination and sometimes contestation and are reflections of social control in society (Kothari 2001). In each society there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated, nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of discourse. The knowledge produced by discourse constitutes a kind of power exercised over those who are the objects of that knowledge. When that knowledge is exercised in practice those who are known in particular ways will be subject to it and those who produce the discourse have the power to make it true (Hall, 2002). Foucault argues that we cannot exercise power but through the production of truth. Each society has its 'regime of truth', that is, the different types of discourse which it produces, accepts and makes function as true (Foucault 1980).

3.3.2 The possibilities of resistance in Foucault's work

Foucault's genealogical[3] work is concerned with the workings of power and can be divided into two lines of thought. His earlier thinking is concerned with disciplinary power. His later

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[3] At the heart of genealogy is the idea that there are no essences to be discerned behind historical developments and none that explain why things are as they are. Genealogy repudiates the idea that behind events is a guiding hand of regulating principles that are the great determinants of the present (Prado 1995). The point of a genealogical analysis is to show that a given system of thought is the result of contingent turns of history, not the outcome of rationally inevitable trends (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy).

writings are more centred on the concept of governmentality (Sharp et al. 2000). The evolution from disciplinary power to governmentality represents a shift from a principal concern with coercive practices to the practices of self-formation of the subject (Foucault 1988c:2) and gradually allows more space for human freedom and resistance.

I am particularly interested in Foucault's later work in which he more explicitly considers the possibility of resistance through the concept of the technologies of self. Yet, Foucault's reflections on the technologies of self can only be properly understood as an extension of his earlier work and as the result of a continuous process of refining his understanding of the workings of power. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully sketch the evolution in Foucault's thinking about power in order to be able to represent a nuanced understanding of the concept of technologies of self as a potential form of resistance.

3.3.2.1 *Foucault's work on Disciplinary Power*

Foucault's work on disciplinary power comprises *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (1998 [1978]). In these works, Foucault goes beyond an understanding of power as domination imposed from above by force. He widens our understanding of power by including forms of social control in disciplinary institutions as well as different forms of knowledge and discourse. He demonstrates how subjectivities are constituted through regimes of power / knowledge which, in the modern era, are internalized and self-regulating rather than physically coercive and imposed from the outside. By describing the microphysics of power (Sharp et al. 2000), he accentuates a more subtle kind of power functioning through discourse and through the specific arrangement of certain bodies in certain spaces, according to certain rules and principles.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault writes about the production of subjects through the imposition of disciplines (Prado 2000). He describes an evolution in the way power has been exercised in Europe in the 1600s and 1700s and through to the 19th and 20th centuries; moving from the public spectacle of the tortured body of the individual deemed to have committed a crime, to the disciplining, incarceration and surveillance of those convicted of crimes in the present day (Mills 2003, Sharp et al. 2000).

Foucault illustrates how power is increasingly exercised, not by force, but by the implementation of disciplinary techniques operating on the body through the imposition of

schedules, restrictions, obligatory comportment and examinations (Prado 2000). He describes the increasingly calculated manipulation of the body's elements, its gestures and its behaviour and how, as such, subjects are confined and moulded into conformity, into docile bodies (Lukes 2005). He demonstrates how disciplinary power is fundamentally about a concern with control: time-keeping, self-control over one's posture and bodily functions, and the sublimation of immediate desires and emotions (Mills 2003, Sharp et al. 2000).

Foucault presents Bentham's Panopticon as the architectural figure *par excellence* representing disciplinary power (Foucault 1977). Bentham's panopticon is a type of prison of which the design is as such that it allows the guards to observe the prisoners without the prisoners being able to tell whether they are being watched, but knowing that they can be watched at all times. In the Panopticon the inmates are perfectly individualized and constantly exposed to the view of others. They are the object of observation and information, but they are never treated as subjects of communication (Foucault 1977). In the Panopticon, power is visible, but unverifiable.

"Visible, in that the inmate constantly has before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any moment; but must be sure that he may always be so." (Foucault 1977:201)

The major effect of the Panopticon is that it induces in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power, finally rendering its exercise unnecessary. In the Panopticon the prisoners are forced to act as if they are constantly being surveilled. They are forced to internalise the disciplinary gaze. Being aware that they can be seen at any moment, they come to act as if they are surveyed on a continuous basis (even if this is not the case). Knowing that they can be watched at all times, they automatically, without force, submit to the rules of conduct and become active participants in their own subjection (Foucault, 1977). The Panopticon is a powerful mechanism because it automatizes and de-individualizes power.

"Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up." (Foucault 1977:202)

For Foucault, the panopticon is a generalizable model of power that can be implemented not only in the prison, but also in asylums, hospitals, schools, the workplace, etc. The panoptic schema is useful whenever particular tasks or specific forms of behaviour have to be imposed on a multiplicity of individuals (Foucault 1977). According to Foucault, correlating with the shift in punishment, there was a corresponding shift in the forms of power that circulated within society and through which new subjectivities were constituted. Discipline, as an ensemble of techniques for managing people, came to permeate modern societies and developed into a technology for the control of individuals (Prado 2000). Not based on force, but on the specific arrangement of bodies and spaces, the discipline-mechanism made the exercise of power lighter, more rapid, and more effective (Foucault 1977). "It is no longer necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behaviour, the madman to calm, the worker to work, the schoolboy to application, the patient to the observation of the regulations" (Foucault 1977: 202). The disciplinary norms become so deeply internalised by individuals that they are not even experienced as originating from institutions, but as completely innate and natural (Mills 2003).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault depicts the individual subject as totally subjected to disciplinary power. Any resistance to its practices and procedures seems futile, so deeply ingrained they are in the individuals themselves (Mills 2003). He leaves the readers behind with the impression that power is:

"nothing but a sticky pall of domination, something that is always and everywhere present doing the bidding of those in authority - even if it is not at all consciously directed by them - and in the process entering into every tiny pore of the social world in an effective manner […]." (Sharp et al. 2000:15)

Against such kind of power no resistance is possible or all resistance is futile (Sharp et al. 2000). In Foucault's disciplinary rhetoric, there seem to remain little room for the agency of the subject (Lukes 2005) and little hope for individuals and social groups to be able to resist such an all-pervasive, dominant form of power (Sharp et al. 2000).

In the first volume of *The History of sexuality: The will to knowledge* (1998 [1978]) Foucault gives an account of power that is less reductive and physicalist, yet no less uni-directional (Lukes 2005). In this volume he begins to develop the concept of bio-power. In *The will to knowledge* he considers the fact that, since the 17th century, with the Victorian regime,

sexuality had become increasingly repressed and censored. Foucault, however, argues against this repressive hypothesis, claiming that despite the expurgation of authorized vocabulary over the course of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, there was a veritable discursive explosion; a steady proliferation of discourses concerned with sex. Central to this argument is Foucault's analysis of the confession (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). Foucault argues that from the 17th century on, the scope of the confession continually increased, including not just the examination of the sexual act itself, but of all possible desire in thinking and feeling. One had to submit one's self to the:

"obligation of the nearly infinite task of telling - telling oneself and another, as often as possible, everything that might concern the interplay of innumerable pleasures, sensations, and thoughts which, through the body and the soul, had some affinity with sex." (Foucault 1998 [1978]:20)

The technique of confession did not remain confined to Christian spirituality. From the 18th century onwards, it was supported by a public interest; by power mechanisms that functioned in such a way that discourse on sex became essential. A political, economic and technical incitement to talk about sex emerged, not in the form of a general theory of sexuality, but in the form of analysis, stocktaking, classification and specification of quantitative or causal studies. At the same time, the concept of 'the population' emerged as an economic and political problem, formulated in terms of birth rates, life expectancy, fertility, health, etc. At the heart of the problem of the population was sex (Foucault 1998 [1978]). Sex became a police matter (Foucault 1998 [1978]) that had to be regulated through useful public discourses. The sexual conduct of the population was both an object of analysis and a target of interventions. Between the state and the individual, sex became an issue upon which a whole web of discourses, special knowledges, analyses and injunctions settled. A whole series of regulating discourses was produced by a whole series of mechanisms operating in different institutions: demography, biology, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, ethics, pedagogy, etc.

Foucault concludes that, starting in the 17th century and throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, two forms of power evolved as two poles of development. The first of these poles centred on the body as a machine:

"its disciplining, the optimizing of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and

economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the *disciplines*: *an anatomo-politics of the human body.*" (Foucault 1998 [1978]:139)

The second pole focused on the body as the basis of biological processes such as propagation, birth and mortality, health, etc. and on all the conditions that can cause these processes to vary. The supervision of these processes is organised through an entire series of interventions and regulations, defined by Foucault as a 'Biopolitics of the population' (Foucault 1998 [1978]). The concept of bio-power for Foucault means:

"the endeavour to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birth-rate, longevity, race..."(Foucault 2000a:73)

In this work Foucault still represents power as an overwhelming, penetrating force, but he also, for the first time, explicitly mentions the possibility of resistance. He claims that where there is power, there is resistance (Foucault 1998 [1978]). He argues that points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network and can only exist within the strategic field of power relations (Foucault 1998 [1978]). For Foucault, "There is no single locus of great refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary" (Foucault 1998 [1978]:96). Instead, there exist a whole range of different kinds of resistances: possible, necessary or improbable resistances; spontaneous or organised resistances; solitary or concerted resistances; violent or non-violent resistances; resistances that are quick to compromise, interested or sacrificial, etc. According to Foucault, resistance, like power, is distributed in an irregular fashion:

"the points, the knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behaviour. Are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions then? Occasionally yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance." (Foucault 1998 [1978]:96)

In *The Will to Knowledge* (1998 [1978]) Foucault only briefly touches on the theme of resistance, but does not elaborate on it extensively. He will do so in his later work

3.3.2.2   Foucault's work on Governmentality and the Technologies of Self

In his later work, Foucault takes up the issue of power again, but becomes much more sensitive to the possibility of human agency and resistance. He regards human subjects as much more creative beings and more free to choose than was the case in his earlier thinking (Sharp et al. 2000).

In his later volumes of *The History of Sexuality*: *The Use of Pleasure* (1984) and *The care of the self (1986)* and in other writings (Foucault 1988a 1988b 1988c, Foucault and Blasius 1993) Foucault refines (but does not radically change) his understanding of power. He re-insists that when he speaks of power, he always refers to *relationships* of power. Power, he says, is present in all human relationships, because we always wish to direct the behaviour of others (Foucault 1988c). Power functions by structuring a field of possible actions in which a subject must act (Foucault 1982). Subjects always face a field of possibilities that permits a variety of diverse behaviours and reactions (Foucault 1982). This kind of power does not involve any external coercion. Rather, power guides the actions of a fundamentally free subject, always leaving the possibility for the subject to traverse the field in new and creative ways. Relations of power, Foucault says, cannot exist unless the subject is free (Foucault 1992 [1984]). "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" (Foucault 1982:221). Power is inherently related to freedom's refusal to submit, because without the possibility of recalcitrance, power would be the equivalent of physical determination (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). He accentuates that it is not because power is everywhere, that there is no liberty. On the contrary, "if there are relations of power throughout every social field, it is because there is freedom everywhere" (Foucault 1992 [1984:12]).

Foucault's increasing concern with human freedom and agency grew out of his interest in the practices of self-formation of the subject.

"I have tried to discover how the human subject entered into games of truth, whether they be games of truth which take on the form of science or which refer to a scientific model, or games of truth like those that can be found in institutions or practices of control. [] Now I try to grasp what one might call 'a practice of the self'." (Foucault 1984: 1-2)

As described above, in the first volume of *The History of sexuality* Foucault looks at the task of governing whole populations, named bio-power, in which issues of individual sexual and reproductive conduct interconnect with issues of national policy and power. In the subsequent volumes, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self,* Foucault provides a history of 'ethics and ascetics' (Foucault 1992 [1984]); a history of the forms of moral subjectivation and of the practices of the self that are meant to ensure it (Foucault 1992 [1984]). The guiding thread throughout this inquiry is his interest in the technologies of self: certain procedures prescribed to individuals to shape and determine their identity through self-mastery or self-knowledge (Foucault 2000c).

Foucault's project of providing a history of 'the care of the self', finds itself at the intersection of his work about the history of subjectivity and his analysis of the forms of governmentality (Foucault 2000c). The concept of governmentality refers to "the totality of practices, by which one can constitute, define, organize and instrumentalize the strategies which individuals in their liberty can have in regard to each other" (Foucault 1988c:19). Governmentality refers to the ways in which, in modern societies, various authorities administer populations; to the ways in which individuals shape their own selves; and to the ways in which these processes get aligned (Lukes 2005). It is through the concept of governmentality that Foucault conjoins an interest in the government of the body politic with a more novel concern for the government of the self (Sharp et al. 2000).

Foucault defines 'technologies of self' as:

> "practices which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being and so to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality." (Foucault 1988a:203)

The care of the self and the related technologies of the self are about the ways in which individual people become instructed, and learn to instruct themselves, in the crafting of the self as a particular kind of self distinct from other kinds of self (Raby 2005). The practices of the care for the self are closely related to the theme of self-knowledge and self- understanding (Foucault 2000c), but they also involve the knowledge and the carrying out of a certain number of rules of conduct or of principles which are at the same time truths and regulations (Foucault 1988c). The practice of the care of the self is inherently political. It forms part of

the project of governmentality in which power manifests itself positively by producing certain kinds of knowledges and discourses that are internalized by individuals and come to guide the behaviour of whole populations. This leads to more efficient forms of social control, as certain discourses and knowledges enable individuals to govern themselves in certain ways. So, initially, Foucault considers the practices of self as part of the project of governing people. But then, gradually, Foucault also starts to think about practices of self as, at the same time, constituting a potential mode of liberation (Foucault1984). He argues that people are actually much freer than they think or feel. He claims that people accept as truth or evidence things which have been built up at a certain moment during history and that these so-called evidences can be criticized and destroyed (Foucault 1988c). In an interview in 1988, Foucault says "All my analyses are against the idea of universal necessities in human existence. They show the arbitrariness of institutions and show which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made" (Foucault 1988c:10). Foucault starts to suggest that technologies of the self constitute a potential site for resistance, in that individuals can create their own identities through ethics and forms of self-constitution (Raby 2005:162). Through technologies of the self, individuals are not only encouraged to reproduce particular kinds of discourse and subjectivity, but can also start to question the naturalness of their identity and recognize themselves as subjects with resistant agency (Raby 2005:162). Such technologies allow individuals to pursue their own routes within, and to question the standard discourses, practices and technologies of, dominating power (Sharp et al. 2000).

Briefly summarised, Foucault demonstrates that subjectivity is constituted in discourse and through disciplinary power. Initially he leaves little room for freedom and resistance, but at the end of his life he increasingly suggests that, through the practice of self, individuals not only reproduce, but can also come to resist dominant discourses. It is important, however, to understand the resisting potential of the technologies of self within the context of Foucault's earlier work on the profoundly subjugating force of disciplinary and governmental power. With the concept of the technologies of self Foucault does not suddenly suggest that people are completely free to constitute themselves as they wish to. There always, inevitably, exists disciplinary power and the practices of self are also, always, inscribed into the technologies of power (a state's mechanism to control a population, for example). Yet, though practices of self often function to confirm the status quo, they also, at the same time, potentially offer a leeway for recognising and questioning the technologies of power and for challenging dominant discourses through the introduction of alternative practices of self. In this thesis I strongly build on Foucault's work on the technologies of power and the technologies of self.

In Chapter seven I consider how, in El Salvador, the general culture of violence is constitutive of particular emotions and subjectivities and, vice versa, how certain emotions (constitutive of subjectivity) function within technologies of power to reproduce the status quo. In chapter eight I consider PAR as an alternative 'practice of self' through which new emotional subjectivities are cultivated that challenge existing power relations, but which can only be understood in the light of (emerging against and as always entangled with) the specific prevailing technologies of power in El Salvador.

Foucault's ideas that subjectivity is constituted in discourse and that technologies of self constitute a potential strategy for resistance have inspired many others, among which participatory researchers, and form the basis of a new way of thinking about resistance. In the next section I look at the ways Foucault's work has been taken up by other researchers interested in power and empowerment.

3.4   Entanglements of power

Foucault's thinking has inspired many authors who, in turn, forwarded a more subtle understanding of power and empowerment. Sharp et al. (2000), for example, build on a Foucauldian reading of power. They neither understand power as blocs of institutional structures with pre-established, fixed tasks (to dominate, to manipulate) nor as mechanisms for imposing order from the top downwards, but as social relations diffused through all spaces (Sharp et al. 2000). Such a perspective leads the authors to argue that neither dominating power nor resisting power is total. Both are fragmentary, uneven and inconsistent to varying degrees. Such a formulation explicitly acknowledges that domination and resistance cannot exist independently of each other, but neither can they be reduced to one another: they are thoroughly hybrid phenomena. The one is always present in the constitution of the other (Sharp et al. 2000). The authors defend an approach to domination and resistance as occupying a continuum; a continuum running between two idealised poles characterized as 'resistance in domination' and 'domination in resistance' (Sharp et al. 2000). Starting at one end of the continuum, even in the most totalitarian of societies there exists what Vaclav Havel (1985 cited in Sharp et al. 2000) has termed 'the power of the powerless' in that any dominating power is constantly fractured by the struggles of the subordinate. Within all regimes of domination we can find hidden, subtle or indeed confrontational forms of resistance fracturing the façade of totalizing power. Moving to the other end of the

continuum, even the most overt and successful occasions of resistance are scarred by lines of power which reinforce, rather than dismantle, certain forms of domination. Moments of resistance are constantly conditioned by the structures of dominating social and political power, so that resisting power is constantly in danger of replicating the structures of the dominant (Sharp et al. 2000). Thus, empowerment and subordination are not necessarily diametrically opposed conditions (Jackson, 1998 cited in Henkel and Stirrat 2001). Individuals and groups are commonly subject to a contradictory consciousness, supporting some aspects of the social order while, at the same time, opposing others (Sharp et al. 2000). Consequently, we need to give up notions of resistance that assume a subject standing entirely outside of and against a well established structure of power (Mohan 2001). What is opposed is often much less clear, for power is enacted by all, and people occupy multiple subjectivities, or locations, in relations of power (Raby 2005). Reflecting on the entanglements of power, Kesby (2005) argues that the term empowerment better acknowledges these entanglements than the term resistance, because it more effectively emphasises the positive, creative capacities of power than the negative notion of resistance. Nonetheless, a decentred view of power and politics should not lead to ignoring how power sediments itself and concentrates in social institutions and agents (Alvarez et al. 1998 cited in Sharp et al. 2000: 20). "There are still the oppressed of the world" (Said 1983 cited in Sharp et al. 2000:21) and the entanglements of power do not mean that we can no longer tell the difference anymore between domination and resistance.

Many feminist thinkers, from the outset committed to empowering women, have also been strongly inspired by Foucault. Initially, feminists tended to explain women's submission in structuralist terms, through the notion of a universal patriarchal system and with a main focus on the state (Parpart et al. 2002b). But, influenced by Foucault, some feminists started to challenge the dominant assumption that power is a possession, exercised over others within the familiar boundaries of state, law or class. They were attracted to Foucault's focus on the body as an important site of power and to his notion of power as fluid and embedded in struggles for meaning and discourses (Hekman 1996 in Parpart 2002). Inspired, in part, by a poststructuralist approach to power, feminists have started to formulate a more comprehensive understanding of empowerment. Going beyond a one-sided view of power as power *over* - as conflict and as direct confrontation between powerful and powerless groups - they started to consider power and empowerment in more holistic terms. They now accentuate different forms of power and empowerment: power *within*: self-respect, self-awareness, confidence, dignity and a sense of self in a wider context; power *with*: solidarity, alliances, coalitions; and

power *to*: capacity-building, decision-making and leadership (Oxaal and Baden 1997, Rowlands 1997). As I will explain later on in this thesis, the young people's empowerment consisted, in part, in discovering and experimenting with different, constructive forms of power as an alternative for power as domination and violence.

Power *within* - the inner transformation of the individual - is generally considered as the core element in empowerment processes (Rowlands 1997). It is argued that subjective changes, such as increased levels of self-esteem and confidence are crucial for the development of stronger, more assertive personalities (Stromquist 2002). Without empowerment at the personal level, it is very hard for individuals to start conceiving of collective or /and political action (Rowlands 1997). In that sense, empowerment is a process rather than an end-product (Rowlands 1997). Empowerment is a process of self-transformation (emotional, reflexive organizational) to prepare individuals and social groups to fight for a better quality of life (Rai 2002). Individual transformation does not automatically lead to progressive politics, but is a necessary condition that facilitates the ability to work collectively, which can, in turn, lead to politicized power providing the power to bring about structural change (Parpart et al. 2002b).

No longer solely focusing on the state and highly visible forms of resistance, some feminists have become more attuned to more subtle, local forms of empowerment. Empowerment is no longer understood solely in terms of collective action, but also as a process of individual transformation rooted in self-understanding (Rowlands 1997, Parpart et al. 2002b, Kabeer 1994) or as a process of fostering the construction of new personalities (Stromquist 2002). The current interest in identity politics and in shifting and multiple subjectivities further pushed an understanding of empowerment as a process of individual transformation. Particularly influential was the work of Judith Butler (Butler 1990 cited in Atkins 2005). Butler's theory of performativity captures the ways in which gender and sexual identifications are continually remade through repetition, or through the compelled performance of dominant discourses (Nelson 1999). Butler's account of gender identity is in line with Foucault's understanding of subjectivity as the effect of the subject positions articulated in discourse (Atkins 2005). Like Foucault, she argues against the notion of a pre-discursive moment or the idea of a self 'outside' of power/discourse matrices (Nelson 1999). Against the fiction of a substantive identity Butler argues that gender identity has to be understood as a verb, as performative and as realized through repeated acts (reiterations) of cultural norms. She emphasizes the discontinuous nature of identity by claiming that gender is constituted as real only by being continually re-enacted or performed (Atkins 2005). Consequently, identity can

be interrupted and disrupted at any moment and it is in this discontinuity and indeterminacy that she and other poststructuralist feminists locate the possibility of agency as resistance (Atkins 2005). An understanding of empowerment as the construction of new subjectivities is anchored in an understanding of the subject as fluid, decentred, and always in process of becoming and in the idea that people can challenge dominant discourses through alternative ways of self-constitution.

While the recognition of the micro-politics of personal transformation as an integral part of structural processes of social change has resulted in a more holistic understanding of processes of empowerment and resistance, some feminist activists insist that long-lasting change will not occur through individual transformation alone (Desai 2002, Stromquist 2002, Batliwala cited in Parpart 2002b). Empowerment cannot happen simply at the local level, but also requires structural changes at meso- and macro-levels (Parpart et al. 2002b). An individualistic approach to empowerment is, indeed, easily co-opted by neo-liberal institutions and envisaging empowerment as individual rather than as collective goes well with an uncritical belief in capitalism and market forces as the main saviours for poor countries (Oxaal and Baden 1997).

Finally, poststructuralist feminists insist that empowerment as a process is dynamic and changing and varies widely according to circumstance (Rowlands 1997, Parpart et al. 2002b). The strategies through which people seek empowerment vary from one context to another, since people's agency is shaped by different political, historical and cultural contexts (Bodur and Franceschet 2002). What is considered as empowerment in one context may not be so in another (Oxaal and Baden 1997). The specific content of transformation and change (what exact form it will take) cannot be determined in advance (Oxaal and Baden 1997). It is impossible to say where social change is going to emerge (Desai 2002). Neither the process nor the supposed outcomes of empowerment are easily defined or measured and thus best seen as untidy and unpredictable, rather than linear, inevitable and easily understood (Parpart et al. 2002b).

3.5   Conclusions

Foucault's bottom-up model of power and his focus on the way power permeates all relations within a society enables a more nuanced account of the daily ways in which power is enacted

and contested (Mills 2003). Foucault's work has facilitated a more complex and subtle understanding of power and a new way of thinking about resistance. Foucault stands at the origins of an increasing tendency to consider resistance in its more local forms and as a process of personal transformation, rather than mere collective organization. With this shift in understanding, the word resistance (strongly associated with collective opposition) is increasingly being replaced by the notion of empowerment. Foucault's thinking has been an important source of inspiration for an alternative understanding of empowerment (and politics) as a micro-politics of individual transformation and as the challenging of dominant discourses through the cultivation of new subjectivities; though always partial and fragmented. This understanding of empowerment underlies recent contributions in PAR, including my own interpretation of the young people's PAR. However, while most researchers, have focussed on the role of (alternative) discourses in cultivating new subjectivities, this research focuses on emotions and on embodied (practical) knowledges as an integral part of subjectivity and as a potential source for individual and social change.

4 Emotions

4.1 Introduction

One of the main arguments in this thesis is that a full recognition of the link between power, emotions and embodied knowledges is still largely missing in PAR. Looking into the literature on emotion I found some fundamental insights for understanding how the young people's emotions function in power relations and for explaining the fundamental role of emotions and embodied (affective) knowledges in PAR. I do not pretend to give a comprehensive review of emotion theory. This would be a study in itself and goes beyond the scope of my thesis. My concern with emotions is related to my interest in the empowering impact of participatory approaches. I have made a selection here and I focus in particular on those theories of emotion in which the link between emotion and power is made explicit. I start with a broad overview of some of the main recurring issues in emotion theory, particularly within the disciplines of philosophy, sociology and anthropology. I then focus my attention on the literature on emotions and affect in human geography which significantly contributed to this research.

4.2 Emotions in academic research

Emotions have always been a subject of interest: in our daily lives, in literature, theatre, visual arts and cinema. Our human world is constructed and lived through emotions (Anderson and Smith 2001) and emotions clearly are of all times and societies (Van Reijen 2005). Notwithstanding, emotions have long been silenced in both social and public life and in most academic research (Williams 2001, Neu 2000, Anderson and Smith 2001). In spite of a rich history of reflection on emotions in disciplines such as philosophy and psychology (Bondi 2005), within the western philosophical tradition emotions have generally figured as the scandal of reason (Williams 2002). They have been cast as a source of subjectivity clouding vision and impairing judgment (Anderson and Smith 2001). They have been viewed as disruptive to the project of post-enlightenment academic scholarship privileging rational thought over irrational emotionality (Lupton 1998). Historically, emotions have been regarded as the very antithesis of the detached, scientific mind and its quest for objectivity, truth and wisdom (Williams 2009). The marginalization of emotion has been part of a gender politics of

research in which detachment, objectivity and rationality have been valued and implicitly masculinized while engagement, passion, subjectivity and desire have been devalued and frequently feminized (Anderson and Smith 2001, Williams and Bendelow 1996). Consequently, emotions have long been banished to the margins of western thought and practice (Bondi 2005) and most academic disciplines have long presented us with "an emotionally barren terrain, a world devoid of passion, spaces ordered solely by rational principles and demarcated according to political, economic, or technical logics" (Parr 2005 cited in Bondi et al. 2005:1).

But, recently, this has changed. Academic interest in emotion has been gathering momentum since the mid 1970s (Wilkins 1993, Williams 2002) and since then an interest in the roles and effects of emotions has blossomed (Davidson et al. 2005) so that it is now possible to speak of an 'emotional turn' in the social sciences (see also Pain et al. 2007). The booming academic interest in emotions is not an isolated case. It is inseparable from wider social, cultural and political trends in which emotions have moved towards the centre of public life, commercial activity and consumption (Bondi 2005). The rise of academic interest in emotions is part of what has been described more generally as the 'emotionalisation' of culture, politics and social life (Furedi 2003 and Berlant 2004 cited in Bondi 2005).

4.3   Emotion a slippery and multiple concept

Despite the growing academic interest in emotion, there exists no general consensus about what an emotion is (Jaggar 2009, Lupton 1998, LeDoux 1995). This is because emotions are not simple surface phenomena. They are not easy to define, nor easily observed or mapped (Bondi et al. 2005). The concept of emotion is ephemeral, slippery, and difficult to pin down (Lupton 1998). Part of this complexity is the fact that emotions cover a wide range of phenomena extending from:

"apparently instantaneous knee-jerk responses of fright to lifelong dedication to an individual or cause; from highly civilised aesthetic responses to undifferentiated feelings of hunger and thirst, from background moods such as contentment or depression to intense and focused involvement in an immediate situation" (Jaggar 2009:52).

Emotions are not amenable to precise categorization (Lupton 1998) and it is simply impossible to construct a manageable account of emotion covering so many apparently diverse phenomena (Jaggar 1989). The complexity of emotions demands a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives (Williams and Bendelow 1996) and there exists a vast range of academic literature on emotions across such diverse fields as physiology, psychology, psychiatry, history, philosophy, sociology and anthropology, to name but a few (Lupton 1998, Wilkins 1993).

Given the complexity of the concept, emotions have been approached from different perspectives. Within emotion theory, and according to the main focus of attention, Calhoun and Solomon (1984) broadly distinguish five approaches: the sensation, the physiological, the behavioural, the evaluative and the cognitive approach. These approaches are artificially demarcated here for clarity's sake, but actually often overlap. Looking at the different approaches within emotion theory, two particular themes come to the fore. A first principal theme of reflection is the difficulty of distinguishing between emotion and other mental and bodily phenomena. How do emotions differ from sensory perceptions, from purely physical states or agitations, and from cognitive activities such as judging or belief (Calhoun and Solomon 1984)? Within emotion theory we can largely differentiate between two main streams of thought. On the one hand, there are those theorists who argue that an emotion is a physiological reaction, essentially to be reduced to its familiar sensory accompaniment, a 'feeling'. On the other hand, there are those who defend an understanding of emotion as a more or less intelligent way of conceiving of a certain situation. Much of the contemporary debate continues between these two lines of thought (Calhoun and Solomon 1984, Holland 2007, Lupton 1998) representing more of a continuum with significant degrees of overlap (Lupton 1998). A second issue is related to the question of what role emotions play in our moral and practical lives (Calhoun and Solomon 1984).

In what follows I briefly summarize the first four approaches, and I go deeper into the fifth, the cognitive approach, given its particular relevance for understanding how emotion is linked to cognition and to personal and social change. Besides these five classical approaches, I also outline a more contemporary, constructivist account of emotions; an account which partly grew out of the cognitive approach and which is particularly relevant for understanding young people's emotions as social and political phenomena. These different approaches accentuate different aspects of emotions, but when considered all together they give a first idea of what

an emotion is about: a combination of physiological changes, behaviours, evaluations, cognition and socio-cultural influences.

4.3.1   Sensation and physiological theories

Both theories start from the observation that mental and physical agitation, excitement and arousal, frequently, if not always, accompany emotional experiences. In both accounts emotions are understood to be essentially biological sensations (Calhoun and Solomon 1984). They are primarily considered as a *feeling* which happens to us, lasting over a determinate period and having a definite location in the body. They are understood as pre-existing and as located within the individual (Lupton 1998). Sensation and physiological theories differ from one another in that sensation theorists are only interested in the psychology of emotion, with how people *experience* emotion (Calhoun and Solomon 1984). They are interested in the interrelationship between bodily response, context and the individual's recognition of an emotion (Lupton 1998). Physiological theorists, on the other hand, pursue the *physiological* basis of emotional experience focussing on physiological changes and disturbances (Calhoun and Solomon 1984). This kind of theorizing has also been defined as a positivist, essentialist or organismic approach to emotion and is generally directed towards identifying the anatomical basis of emotions, showing how emotions are linked to bodily changes (Lupton 1998). William James most famously represents physiological theory arguing that 'the feel' of emotion (which for him equals the emotion itself) is nothing but the perception of these physiological disturbances (James 1984). In both approaches, emotions are considered as 'not being about anything' and are contrasted with, and seen as potential disruptions, of other phenomena that 'are about something' such as rational judgments, thoughts and observations (Jaggar 2009). The continuing influence of these scientific conceptions of emotion can be seen in the fact that the word feeling is often used as a synonym for emotion, even though the more central meaning of feeling is physiological sensation (Jaggar 2009).

4.3.2   Behavioural theories

The analysis of emotions is not limited to the inner aspects of physiology or psychology. Emotions have an outward aspect as well, that is, their expression in behaviour (in facial expression, for example, or in automatic reactions such as the startle reflex). For behavioural

theorists, observable behaviour, and not private experience, is the basis for analyzing emotions. Emotional behaviours may be learned and culturally dependent where others are innate. Some are voluntary, others involuntary (Calhoun and Solomon 1984). In *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals* Darwin made the first extensive study of emotional behaviour and attempted to explain its origin by its utility for survival (Darwin 1972).

4.3.3 Evaluative theories

Some writers have argued that how we feel about other people, events and things in our lives indicate how we value them. They posit a connection between emotion and our evaluative beliefs. There are theorists who go even further and who hold more straightforwardly that emotions *are* evaluations. They reduce values to nothing more than the expression of certain emotional attitudes and, for them, value judgments are nothing more than "sophisticated grunts and groans" (Jaggar 2009:56). There are different kinds of evaluative theories and just in what sense emotions are evaluations depends on each particular evaluative theory. Central, however, to all these theories is the idea that emotions are directed towards objects in the world. Insofar as emotions are felt about or towards things in the world, they are not just brute feelings or sensations; they are a way of being consciously aware of the world. Far from being 'blind', irrational reactions that prevent us from objectively understanding the world, emotions are considered epistemologically important mental phenomena that complement reason's insight by leading to the world of moral, aesthetic and religious values (Calhoun and Solomon 1984). There is a recognition that values presuppose emotions to the extent that emotions provide the basic experiential basis for values. If we had no emotional responses to the world, it is inconceivable that we should ever come to value one state of affairs over others (Jaggar 2009). Emotion is much more than a sensation or an inner state, it is a relational or inter-subjective phenomenon which joins us to others and is produced via our interactions with others (Crossley 1996 cited in Lupton 1998).

Also psychologists now widely accept that human emotions not only consist of a certain kind of behaviour or physiological arousal, but also of cognition. They broadly agree that a subject's evaluative appraisal of the situation is a necessary part of the emotional state and is central to the identification of an emotion and to the individuation of one emotion from another (Schachter and Singer 1962 cited in Nussbaum 2001). Emotions arise in response to

events that are important to the individual (Frijda 1988). The importance of the event can be appraised differently by different individuals. So, it is not the event as such that counts in emotions, but the relationship between the event and the subject's concerns and interpretations (Frijda 1988). Emotions are appraisals in which an individual recognises that something of importance is at stake in what is going on in the environment. "From an emotional reaction we can learn much about what a person has at stake in an encounter with the environment, how that person interprets self and world and how harms, threats and challenges are coped with" (Lazarus 1991 cited in Nussbaum 2001:108).

4.3.4   Cognitive theories

At the far extreme of physiological theories, in which emotions are considered as immediate reflex responses to a situation without the intermediary of conscious interpretation or cognition, are those accounts called 'cognitive' theories of emotion. In these accounts emotions are regarded as being wholly or partially cognitions, or, as being logically or causally dependent on cognition. Cognitive theorists have sought to identify the extent to which emotional behaviour is mediated through judgment and assessment of the context (Lupton 1998). Cognition here does not necessarily mean a conscious act of knowing, but can be understood as thinking in the broadest sense, including everything (conscious or unconscious) which can pass through our minds such as expectations, memories, associations, assumptions and estimations (Calhoun and Solomon 1984). While evaluative theorists hold that emotions are, in part, beliefs; in more contemporary cognitive theories a logical connection between emotion and cognition is postulated. Cognitive theories argue that, although emotions may be irrational or inappropriate to the actual situation, they are only so because we hold mistaken or unjustifiable beliefs about the situation (Calhoun and Solomon 1984).

The point of departure for a cognitive account of emotions is the medical analogy often referred to in ancient times, and more particularly in Stoic philosophy (Van Reijen 2005a). In the Stoic analysis, emotions are bad directives in life and should be removed in order to obtain a peaceful state of mind (Nussbaum 2001). For the stoics an emotion is but a symptom, in the same way as pain or fever is but a symptom of something more fundamental: a health problem. There are many illnesses but only one physical state in which all these illnesses are absent: health. Similarly, there are many negative emotions, but only one state of being in

which these negative emotions are absent: a peaceful state of mind also called happiness (Van Reijen 2005a). The true cause of a negative emotion is an incorrect thought equalling the disease itself. In the same way as pain and fever always refer to a more fundamental cause or illness, negative emotions are always caused by an irrational thought. Pain and negative emotions are a symptom of collision, friction, stagnation and frustration; of 'incorrect thinking'. Correct thinking is 'understanding the world as it is' (Van Reijen 2005a). Our way of thinking always goes together with certain kinds of emotions, positive or negative, which work through our bodies and have consequences for our actions (Van Reijen 2005a). Negative passions are caused by wrong judgements and, according to the stoics, can be transformed into positive emotions by changing our ideas and by the force of thinking alone (Van Reijen 2005a).

Spinoza, another very influential cognitive theorist, echoes the ideas of the Stoics, but at the same time criticizes and complements them (Solomon and Calhoun 1984). In his *Ethics* (1982), Spinoza defines emotions as modifications of the body which increase or decrease our active powers. "The human body can be affected in many ways, whereby its power of activity can be increased or diminished []" (Spinoza 2003:33). Like the stoics, Spinoza distinguishes between negative, passive emotions and positive, active passions (peace of mind, happiness). The ills of life, Spinoza argues, are due to the passive emotions, which cause pain and frustration and lower our vitality (Solomon and Calhoun 1984). Correct thoughts and adequate knowledge never result in negative emotions (Van Reijen 2005b).

Spinoza (1982) discerns three levels of knowledge: imagination, ratio and intuition (Van Reijen 2005b). Imagination comes from sensorial impressions which are always subjective, partial, and defective and therefore confusing. Imagination does not understand the true causes of things and supposes that what has happened should not have happened or did not have to happen. Imagination happens through our body and tells us more about our physical state of being than about the world. The Ratio or scientific knowledge is the sort of knowledge that traces down patterns and gets to understand the causes of things and how they are related to each other. This knowledge is objective knowledge about facts. Intuition is the highest form of knowledge which allows observing everything in the light of 'an eternal 'godly' point of view'. This intuitive knowledge realizes that 'all is related to all' and understands the necessity of things (Van Reijen 2005b). With this insight comes peace of mind, joy, happiness and love for all beings (Van Reijen 2005b). Spinoza emphasizes that understanding the necessity of all that happens, is not the same as passively agreeing with and

accepting whatever happens. Correct understanding, intuition, is not only the condition for true happiness and inner peace, but also, at the same time, for just and effective action (Van Reijen 2005b).

But, Spinoza (1982) also criticizes the Stoics. He reproaches them for overestimating and absolutizing the power of reason over the passions. Reason, Spinoza argues, is only a step from imaginative to intuitive knowledge. Reason is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for happiness. Reason provides us with adequate scientific and objective knowledge about concrete causes, but hardly has any power over the passions and, as a result, over our behaviour and actions (Van Reijen 2005b). Through reason we can start to understand and learn about the passions, but this does not mean that we control them. Pure theoretical knowing has no power over the passions. Abstract knowledge is not effective and does not work. After all, passions are affectively loaded and rooted in the body. We do not completely understand the way of functioning of the body and, therefore, we do not completely understand ourselves and the way we act. This explains our feelings of powerlessness and frustration when 'our mind says one thing and our heart another'. For Spinoza, reason can only conquer the passions when reason herself becomes 'passionate', affectively-loaded intuitive knowledge or true wisdom (Van Reijen 2005b). True wisdom results in active passions of love, happiness, joy, and kindness towards others and in people feeling allied and connected and caring for one another. At the community level this expresses itself in tolerance, freedom, peaceful co-existence and solidarity; in understanding the value of unity and democracy. A wise person is careful towards others, knows his own and others' limits and does not evoke hate and anger (Van Reijen 2005b).

I have dwelt at length on Spinoza, because I am intrigued by his idea of affectively-loaded, intuitive knowledge as the highest form of knowledge; as true wisdom including, but also going far beyond a critical understanding of objective causes, and resulting in peace of mind, happiness and love for all beings and in just and affective action (Van Reijen 2005b). Paying explicit attention to emotions and embodied knowledges in PAR, I will come back to Spinoza in my conclusions, arguing that PAR might generally focus too much on cultivating critical, (self) reflexive subjectivities and too little on facilitating 'true wisdom' as defined by Spinoza.

4.3.5 A constructivist approach

Cognitive accounts, by linking emotions to beliefs and judgments, have paved the way for relating emotions to broader concepts and frameworks for organizing and making sense of the world (see also Jaggar 2009). These frameworks obviously are different from context to context and from culture to culture, and so are our emotions. While emotions "stubbornly retain their place as the aspect of human experience least subject to control, least constructed and learned (hence most universal), least public, and therefore least amenable to socio-cultural analysis" (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 2009:100), social constructivists argue that mature human emotions are neither instinctive nor biological, but socially and culturally constructed (Jaggar 2009; Lutz and White 1986, Abu-Lughod and Lutz 2009). A constructivist account criticizes a universalist perspective of emotions that regards culture and civilization as conscious, cognitive processes and emotion as the natural complement to cultural processing or as the material upon which culture operates (Lutz 1988). It argues that, on the contrary, emotions are cultural artefacts and moral acts that negotiate aspects of social reality. "Emotional meaning is fundamentally structured by particular cultural systems and particular social and material environments […] Emotional experience is not pre-cultural but *pre-eminently* cultural" (Lutz 1988 cited in Milton and Svasek 2005:9). To describe emotions as socially and culturally constructed means that emotions are always experienced, understood and named via social and cultural process and so they are, to a greater or lesser degree, learnt, rather than inherited responses (Lupton 1998). Social constructivists look at the ways in which norms and expectations about emotions are generated and reproduced and how they operate in specific socio-cultural settings (Lupton 1998).

Within a constructivist approach to emotions there exist different perspectives with a number of different premises, foci and inflections (Williams and Bendelow 1996, Lupton 1998). A 'weak' version of social constructivism, for example, still holds on to a very limited range of natural, emotional responses that are biologically given, universal, and independent of socio-cultural influences (with most cited universal emotions being anger, fear, joy and sadness); while a strong thesis more radically states that no emotion is inherent or pre-existing, but that all are socio-cultural products, wholly learnt and constructed through acculturation (Lupton 1998).

Within the whole variety of constructivist approaches two are of particular relevance here: a structuralist and a poststructuralist understanding of emotions. In a structuralist constructivist account, emotions are viewed as being shaped by social institutions, social systems and power relations. Individuals' emotional states are directly associated with their position in the social system and their membership of social groups such as their gender or social class. Such an approach is interested, for example, in the role played by emotions such as shame, guilt and embarrassment in maintaining social order and underpinning unequal social relations (Lupton 1998). Focussing on the abusive power of macro-institutions, these accounts offer little sense of individual agency in that they tend to represent the subject as passively shaped by feeling rules imposed upon them by powerful institutions in order to regulate and maintain the prevailing order (Lupton 1998).

Secondly, a poststructuralist approach to emotions, rather than focusing on macro-structures, privileges the role played by language and other cultural artefacts in the construction and experience of emotion. Emotions are considered to be discursive practices (Abu Lughod and Lutz 1990:10). "Emotions are simultaneously made possible and limited by the conceptual and linguistic resources of society" (Jaggar 2009:54). They are not mere individual experiences, but reflect forms of social life (Jaggar 2009). Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine Lutz (1990), inspired by Foucault, claim that discourses of emotions actively construct knowledges about self and society that are implicated in the play of power and in the operation of a historically changing system of social hierarchy (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 2009). Emotions are inter-subjective rather than individual phenomena, constituted in (power) relations between people. They are dynamic and changeable according to the historical, social, cultural and political context in which they are generated, produced and expressed (Lupton 1998). Generally speaking, for poststructuralist thinkers, the physical adjuncts of emotions are viewed as rather incidental to the emotional state while the social world, and linguistic practices in particular, are regarded as primary to define emotions (Lupton 1998).

Constructivist approaches to emotions resist a one-sided view of emotions as inherent and purely biological. However, the strongest versions of these approaches risk falling into another form of reductionism (Burkitt 1997). Focussing on cognition, language and discourse these theories risk pushing the embodied and affective aspects of emotions to the margins considering their relevance negligible. Therefore, some authors re-insist on the fact that emotions are multi-facetted phenomena which are irreducible to any one domain whether nature or discourse. They emphasize that in the human species and in emotions biology and

sociality are inseparable (Benton 1991 cited in Burkitt 1997). They insist on the fundamental importance of both cognition and sensation in emotion. They argue that "emotions are multidimensional and cannot be reduced to biology, relations or discourse alone, but belong to all these dimensions as they are constituted in ongoing relational practices" (Burkitt 1997:42). Emotions are "thinking, moving, feeling 'complexes' which sociologically speaking are relational in nature and linked to 'circuits of selfhood' (Denzin 1984); comprising both corporeal, embodied aspects as well as socio-cultural ones" (Williams 2009:141). It is this definition of emotion as simultaneously and inseparably a sensuous, cognitive and social/cultural experience (Burkit 1997) that underlies my approach to understanding the role of emotions in PAR.

4.4   Emotions in human geography

Above, I have offered a broad overview of general lines of thinking within emotion theory. In what remains of this chapter I look more specifically at what has been written about emotions in human geography. This literature broadly reflects the above described tendencies, but also contributes significantly to advancing critical theory.

Following the general academic trend, in recent years, the term emotions has begun to crop up with increasing frequency in the work of human geographers (Bondi 2005). Geographical work has recognised the significance of emotion at a whole range of spatial scales (Davidson and Milligan 2004) so that geographies of emotional life now constitute an important and vibrant new field of research (Davidson and Bondi 2004).

Within human geography a broad distinction is made between geographies of emotion and geographies of affect. Both schools of thought have different histories and theoretical backgrounds and initially developed rather separately, but now cautiously start to engage with one another.

4.4.1   Emotional geographies

4.4.1.1   Sources of inspiration

For a long time, geographers have conceptualized emotions and feelings as inner subjective experiences of a conscious, knowing, and rational individual. Until recently, they paid little attention to problematising emotions and understanding their role in the politics and ethics of research and everyday life (Bondi2005).

This has now changed as the coming into being of the whole sub-discipline of emotional geographies clearly proves. Emotional geographies combine the insights of many disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, etc. (Thien 2005), but also benefit from previous work within geography itself. Geographies of health and illness, for example, were among the first to acknowledge the importance of emotions for conceptualizing and faithfully representing subjects' experiences (Davidson and Milligan 2004, Laurier and Parr 1998). Emotional geographies were also inspired by geographical and other spatially nuanced body work. Clearly, "Our first and foremost most immediate and intimately felt geography is the body, the site of emotional experience and expression *par excellence*. Emotions, to be sure, *take place* within and around this closest of spatial scales" (Davidson and Milligan 2004:523 original emphasis).

There is also a clear connection between emotional geographies and the tradition of humanistic and feminist geography (Bondi 2005). Humanistic geographers have criticized human geography for privileging objectivity and rationality at the expense of subjective aspects of life. They aimed at countering this objectifying tendency by focusing instead on questions of human meaning, perception and values (Bondi 2005). Humanistic geographers have been critiqued for their understanding of individuals as self-contained, self-directing agents capable of self-knowledge and clearly demarcated from other people and their environments, but their focus on the subjective dimensions of human life nevertheless stimulated a substantial body of research attending to how people feel about places and spaces (Bondi 2005).

Poststructuralist feminist geographers in turn, have challenged the idea of the autonomous, bounded, intentional agent as well as the binary structure of much geographical thinking: male/rational/public versus female/emotional/private. They suggested that emotions permeate social and physical environments as well as the subjective experiences of individuals, and argued that emotions are generated by and expressive of wider social relations (Bondi 2005). Feminist geographers have troubled the distinctions between persons and environments as well as the boundaries around individuals (Rose 1993 cited in Bondi 2005). While feminist

geographies remain equivocal about the powerful and widespread tendency to equate emotion with individualised human subjectivity, they have nevertheless offered important resources for the development of relational emotional geographies (Bondi 2005).

4.4.1.2 *Understanding emotions as relational and political*

Inspired by the above mentioned disciplines, emotional geographies investigate the importance of emotions to social processes and landscapes, to subjective experiences of space and place and to the policy arenas which affect them (Anderson and Smith 2001, Davidson and Milligan 2004). Focusing on emotions as experienced by embodied individuals in *particular* spaces, they accentuate the inter-relatedness of people and their environments (Davidson, Bondi and Smith 2005). They principally aim to inform theorisations of emotion as intrinsically relational, as arising and flowing between people, "producing as much as manifesting what may be felt to belong to one person or another" (Bondi 2005: 18).

Emotional geographies explicitly link emotions to power and politics by demonstrating how the relations between individuals are informed by emotions which are themselves always part of constellations of wider individual and collective landscapes (Conradson and McKay 2007 cited in Pain 2009). Emotions are considered as "embodied and mindful phenomena that partially shape and are shaped by our interactions with the people, places and politics that make up our unique, personal geographies" (Davidson and Bondi 2004:374). Besides a focus on the inter-relatedness between emotions, environments and power relations, emotional geographers also increasingly connect and jump scales, arguing that emotions are neither locally nor globally produced, but are simultaneously both local and global (Pain 2009).

4.4.2 Geographies of affect

A feminist focus on the political and ethical potential of emotions is paralleled by non-representational geographies exploring the affective dimensions of social life (Ahmed 2000, Anderson 2006, Anderson and Harrison 2006, Thrift 2004). Geographical work on affect has made a small but noticeable emergence within human geography, most notable through the work of Nigel Thrift (2000, 2004), but also by others such as McCormack (2003) and Dewsbury (2003).

4.4.2.1   Non-representational theory

"Non- representational theory is a radical attempt to wrench the social sciences and humanities out of their current emphasis on representation by moving away from a view of the world based on contemplative models of thought and action towards theories of practice which amplify the potential of the flow of events." (Thrift 2000:556)

Non- representational theory marks both an ontological and epistemological commitment.

"Ontologically, it draws attention to the ways in which the world is emergent from a range of spatial processes whose power is not dependent upon their crossing of contemplative cognition. At the same time, non-representational theory challenges the epistemological priority of representations as grounds of sense-making or as the means by which to recover information from the world." (McCormack 2003:489)

Non-representational theory has its roots in theories of practice; in philosophical schools of thought that challenge the efficacy of representational models of the world (Thrift 1996). Theories of practice claim that nothing in the social world is prior to experience and that people's understanding of the world comes out of their everyday practices. Theories of practice reject the classic Cartesian notion of subjects as isolated, disengaged beings made up of disparate parts: mind and body. Consciousness, they argue, is not primarily a matter of "I think that", but of: "I can" (Merleau-Ponty 1962:137 cited in Simonson 2007).

Non-representational thinking criticizes theories that claim to re-present some naturally present reality, and argues instead that practices constitute our sense of the real (Thrift 1996).

"The traditional emphasis on the cognitive, the attempts to explain all human behaviour in terms of what we believe and how we consciously represent things to ourselves cannot account for the implicit familiarity and competence that are the hallmarks of everyday practical activity". (Hall 1993 cited in Thrift 1996:7)

Non-representational theory is an attempt to develop a body of work that emphasises the development of sensitivities, rather than knowledge *per se*, toward all of the everyday practices that usually go unnoticed in the background of our lives (Thrift 2000). It shows that things that seem small and everyday can be as interesting and complex as phenomena that appear much larger and more general (Gregory 1996 and Peet 1998 cited in Latham 2003). Non-representationalists aim to give meaning to the unnoticed and apparently insignificant activities of everyday life and their main concern is with embodied or practical knowledges (Simonson 2007). They are concerned with thinking with the entire body. They valorise all the senses, not just looking, and consider affect as of primary importance (Thrift 1996). Non-representational theory pays close attention to non-verbal and pre-cognitive knowledges. However, they also insist that "none of the foregoing is to deny processes of cognition or the reality of representations. […] It is, rather, to situate these imagined understandings as only a part of a broader process of knowledging" (Thrift 1996:8).

Non-representational theorists encourage research that is sensitive to and respectful of the social practices through which the everyday unfolds. "Much social practice is different, but not inferior, to more contemplative academic modes of being in the world - embedded as they are in the non-cognitive, pre-intentional and commonsensical" (Latham 2003:1998). They argue that mainstream social science is badly equipped to properly engage with emotions and with the immaterial matters of spirit, belief, and faith (Dewsbury 2003). Non-representationalists aim to take up the challenge of developing the methodological resources and skills that allow researchers to take the sensuous embodied creativeness of social practices seriously (Latham 2003). They argue that there is a need for experimenting with techniques that go beyond the now canonical methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation (Latham 20003). They argue that we need methods that are able to attend to the range of sensory experiences that inform knowledge and action by researching beyond the limits of texts, the verbal and the material and by engaging new media, lived experiences, performative, haptic and embodied knowledges (Pain et al. 2007). Not surprisingly, many non-representationalists have been inspired by the performing arts: theatre, dance, music therapy, etc. (Latham 2003).

4.4.2.2   Affect

Emphasizing everyday practices and embodied knowledges, non-representational theory pays particular attention to affect. Though arguing that there is no stable definition of affect, Thrift (2004) and others (McCormack 2003, Anderson 2006, Dewsbury 2003) clearly distance themselves from the usual association of affect with words such as emotion and the whole repertoire of terms such as hatred, shame, envy, jealousy, fear, love, hope, etc. They identify with accounts that work with a notion of "broad tendencies and lines of force: emotion as motion both literally and figurally" (Bruno 2002 cited in Thrift 2004:60). For non-representationalists, affect is neither reducible to nor interchangeable with emotion. They define emotion as "a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which from that point onward is defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity […]" (Massumi 2002 cited in McCormack 2003:495). Affect, on the contrary, is "unqualified intensity, implicated in the sensible materiality of corporeality, but in a way that opens up the actuality of experience to 'the virtual'" (McCormack 2003:495). The virtual is the realm of the potential (Massumi 2002 cited in McCormack 2003). The virtual dimension of affect is accounted for by the fact that much of what happens in a world of activities and relations happens before it is registered by conscious thought, or in other words: "the skin is faster than the word" (Massumi 2002 cited in McCormack 2003:495). Affect is not reducible to emotion, but is understood as pre-personal category, instilled before the circumscription of identities. The importance of affect is not necessarily its personal or interpersonal quality, but its transversal quality, "the way in which it operates as a catalytically eventful bridge between a multiplicity of movements and relations" (McCormack 2003:496). In non-representational theory, the emergence of affect is about openness, never to be fully captured, always escaping us. Emotion is the intention to capture affect, but trying to do so, something always escapes. (Massumi 2002 cited in Thrift 2004). Thinking in terms of affect means holding on to the notion of a field of sensible experience without placing limits around that field by identifying it through discursive categories as a personally captured emotional state (McCormack 2003).

Non-representationalists strongly rely on Spinoza's understanding of affect and on Deleuze's ethological interpretation of Spinoza (Thrift 2004). Spinoza understands emotion (affectus) as "the modifications of the body by which the power of action of the body is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time the idea of these modifications" (Spinoza cited in Thrift 2004:62). Affect is defined as "the property of the active outcomes of an encounter" (Thrift 2004:62) and takes the form of "an increase or decrease in the ability of the body and mind alike to act, which can be positive - and thus increase that ability […] or negative - and thus diminish that ability […]" (Thrift 2004:62).

Finally, affect is defined as being about "a sense of push in the world" (Thrift 2004:64), "cleav[ing] to a 'transhuman' framework in which individuals are generally understood as the effects of events to which their body parts (broadly understood) respond and in which they participate" (Thrift 2004:60). Yet, equally important, affect is also understood as a form of thinking, often indirect and non-reflective, but thinking all the same. Affect is a different kind of intelligence about the world, but it is intelligence none-the-less (Thrift 2004)

4.4.2.3 The politics of affect

A politics of affect is about an understanding of how relations of affect may be channelled for political purposes. For Thrift, affect has always been a key element of politics and the subject of numerous powerful political technologies which have knotted thinking, technique and affect together in various potent combinations (Thrift 2004). The marshalling of aggression through military training such as drills might be a rather extreme example, but is illustrative of "a tendency towards the greater and greater engineering of affect" (Thrift 2004:64). Clearly, Thrift argues, there are enormous emotional costs and benefits for individuals or groups in being shaped by particular institutions in particular ways. Often it is quite difficult to show what is at stake for an individual or group in submitting to such institutions and embracing certain affective styles that render them deferential, obedient and humble or rather independent, aggressive and arrogant.

> "We can all attest to the fact that there are many 'hidden injuries' in the systems that we inhabit and equally, all manner of proto-political longings to change our situation that we cannot necessarily articulate but which drive us along: 'as you said all along: you were feeling your way toward something maybe, but you don't know why'" (Kipnis 2000 cited in Thrift 2004:69).

Thrift observes that the use (and abuse) of affective practices are increasingly changing what we usually regard as the sphere of the 'political'. What we call the political must increasingly take into account "the way that political attitudes and statements are partly conditioned by intense autonomic bodily reactions that do not simply reproduce the trace of political intention and cannot be wholly recuperated within an ideological regime of truth" (Spinks 2001 cited in Thrift 2004:1). The manipulation of affect for political ends is becoming routine

through new kinds of practices and knowledges which also, in their turn, redefine the sphere of the political (Thrift 2004). These new knowledges and practices are by no means nice or cuddly, and some of them have the potential to be very scary (Thrift 2004). The discovery of new means of practising affect is also the discovery of a whole new means of manipulation by the powerful (Thrift 2004). The state, for example, "may use affective contagion to control emotions and establish political and moral authorities, using bodies as unconscious or semi-unconscious receivers and transmitters of knowledge and feeling" (Pain 2009: 478)[4].

On the other hand, the conscious engineering of affect does not have to be abusive. Affect may also be worked on to brew new collectivities in ways which at least have the potential to be progressive (Thrift 2004). Thrift (2005) forges a politics of affect which he defines as a new politics of hope and compassion. He describes this politics as a politics of imagination, with imagination understood as "the ability to express possible/play/pretend beliefs and emotions that might become the basis of a better world" (Thrift 2007:2). As such, he writes against the grain of much current work on power which has us believe that we live in a world of crushing systems that stamp on all expectation. With a 'politics of hope' he reacts against a tendency in the literature on power that ignores creativity and underestimates the power of imagination (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998 cited in Thrift 2000).

The goal of such a politics of hope, Thrift writes, is some kind of 'emotional liberty' (Thrift 2004). However, he specifies, this emotional liberty involves a navigation of feeling that goes beyond the simple romanticism of maximising individual emotions, and which is no longer attached to a Euro-American individualism that strives for some kind of free-to-do-what-one-likes goal-oriented selfishness which actually flies in the face of all the evidence that human individuals only exist as faint traces in much larger and more extensive circuits of social relations (Porter 2003 cited in Thrift 2004). A politics of hope is firmly placed within a set of disciplinary practices and, therefore, inevitably involves various forms of channelling and repression. In this new kind of politics, affect is associated with embodied practices and with the political goal of "*skilful comportment* which allows us to be open for receiving new affectively charged disclosive spaces. [...] This political project is about making receptivity into the top 'ontological' good'" (Thrift 2004:70). It is about a political ethic based on the

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[4] Rachel Pain refers to the increasing amount of research about how, after 9/11, fear is channelled for political purposes through the 'war on terror' discourse (Pain 2009).

belief that it is possible to *learn to be open*, redefining education so that it emphasises good judgment (Thrift 2004). This implies a move towards a disclosive politics which both valorises and deepens particular intuitive skills (Spinosa et al. 1997 cited in Thrift 2000). Remarkable also is the value placed by some non-representational theorists on the role of affect in the cultivation of an ethical sensibility that moves beyond the limitations of an understanding of ethics as code. Ethical attachments and connections are considered to emerge through the cultivation of the affective dimensions of sensibility. Ethical sensibility is understood as the "particular layering of affect into the materiality of thought" (Conolly 1999 cited in McCormack 495). This is not to denigrate thinking; rather it means to supplement the field in which thinking emerges.

"Changes in thinking affect, over time, the shape and quality of the ethical sensibility from which one acts. Yet, tactical interventions into sensibilities instilled at several layers of being can, in turn, also make a significant difference to the quality of thought and action" (Connolly 1999 cited in McCormack 2003:496).

4.4.3   Emotional geographies versus geographies of affect

One common reaction to the emergence of non-representational theory and related theories of affect has been a vague sense of bafflement (Latham and Conradson 2003). Bafflement has often spilled out into a more general hostility towards these theories and their apparent obsession with 'theory for theory's sake' (Hamnett 2003:2 cited in Latham and Conradson 2003). Non-representational theory is often experienced as completely detached from ordinary, everyday modes of articulating emotions and as "too little touched by how people make sense of their lives" (Bondi 2005:438). Why does non-representational theory, supposedly about all-so-familiar everyday practices, feels so distant, inhuman, unfamiliar and strange?

Non-representational theory has been severely critiqued, most notably by feminist geographers of emotion. Feminist geographers argue that the literature on affect is inattentive to issues of power. They reproach non-representationalists for negating the fact that different geometries of power and historical memory figure and drive affective flows and rhythms in different ways (Thien 2005, Tolia-Kelly 2006, Bondi 2005, Pain 2009, Askins 2009). This

occlusion of matrices of power, they argue, has resulted in universalist and ethnocentric theorizations (Tolia-Kelly 2006).

Geographies of affect involve "an attunement to affect as transpersonal *capacity* which a body has to be affected […] and to affect […]" (Anderson 2006:735 original emphasis). Non-representational geographies have a distinctive, intentional bent towards the 'transhuman' - a state of being 'after' or 'beyond' human (Thien 2005). Divia Tolia Kelly (2006) argues that an enquiry of affect distillates transpersonal embodied experience to geometric modes and textures of feeling, but completely ignores the issue of unequal power geometries and thus fails to acknowledge that such geometries are vital to any individual's capacity to affect and be affected. "Clearly", she writes, "the capacity to affect and be affected by others varies with the nature of power relations in which one is enmeshed, meaning that different bodies have different affective capacities. […] Various bodies through their racialized, gendered and sexualized markedness magnetize various capacities for being affected" (Tolia-Kelly 2006:215). A body that is signified as a source of fear, for example, through its markedness, cannot be free to affect and be affected similarly to one that is not (Tolia-Kelly 2006).

By using mechanistic metaphors like 'pipes' and 'cables' (McCormack 2006) or by formulating a new politics of affect in technological terms such as 'engineering' (Thrift 2004 2005 2007) geographers of affect seem to suggest that deeply human emotions such as compassion and love can be brought upon people, 'engineered' through certain interventions or manipulations in their external environments, rather than through profound (and often difficult and painful) inner processes of learning and experience. Indeed, the concept of affect is often employed in masculinist, technocratic, distancing and in-human ways (Thien 2005) and a politics of hope and compassion is disappointing in that it remains abstract and vaguely formulated (Pain 2009).

Turning away from such a technocratic and distancing perspective, feminist geographers defend that the concept of emotion is more able to attend to power relations than the notion of trans-personal affect (Thien 2005). They contend that emotions are not free-floating or trans-human, but, on the contrary, are always part of inter-subjective, relational processes (Thien 2005, Tolia-Kelly 2006). Emotional geographies, feminist geographers argue, are explicitly underpinned by theories of social difference, that is, they are more attentive to the unequal exercise of power and more easily recognize that positionality (in terms of ethnicity, race and gender) signifies the body unequally and therefore influences people's affective capacities

differently (Conradson and Mckay 2007, Tollia-Kelly 2006). Therefore, they say, emotional geographies offer more politically relevant and emphatically human geographies (Thien 2005).

Besides blaming geographies of affect for ignoring issues of power and inequality, feminist geographers also challenge the binary distinction between emotion and affect. They accuse geographers of affect of re-enforcing the (old) binary between the personal and the political, thereby repeating the familiar process of holding emotion at a distance (Thien 2005). "The jettisoning of the term 'emotion' in favour of the term 'affect'", Thien writes, "seems compelled by an underlying revisiting, if in a more theoretically sophisticated register, of the binary trope of emotion as negatively positioned in opposition to reason, as objectionably soft and implicitly feminized" (Thien 2005:452). This model of affect easily falls into the all-too-familiar pattern of distancing emotion from 'reasonable' scholarship, at the same time implying that the realm of personal feelings is distinct from wider (public) agendas (Thien 2005).

Catherine Nash (2005) similarly argues that geographies of affect risk reinforcing, rather than deconstructing, the binary opposition between the sensual/practical and the intellectual, thereby downplaying the thoughtfulness of non-verbal practices. The turn away from language and texts towards expressive body practices, while challenging and valuable, seems to require a new version of an old division between body and mind (Nash 2000).

> "[T]he energy spent in finding ways to express the inexpressible, to 'touch the invisible in the invisible' (Thrift 1997:25) seems to imply a new (or maybe old) division of labour separating academics who think (especially about not-thinking and the non-cognitive) and those 'ordinary people' out there who just act'" (Nash 2000: 662).

Finally, some feminist geographers such as Kye Askins (2009) have argued that, after all, there is no reason to differentiate between affect and emotion. Thrift and other non-representational theorists associate emotion with specific nameable states such as, for example, joy, shame, and anger which are empirically attributable to or claimed by individualised subjects, while affect is about that which is pre- or extra- discursive, non-individualised and mobilised conceptually rather than empirically (Bondi 2005). As such, they actually follow the nomenclature followed by psychologists who tend to associate emotion with cognition and affect with the body (Probyn 2004 cited in Bondi 2005). Since

non-representational theory seeks to challenge the privileging of cognition, they prefer the term affect (Bondi 2005). For non-representational theorists emotion seems to involve the conscious perception of affect (Conradson and Mckay 2007). They describe affect as a sensory perspective of the social world or as an 'excess' that cannot be fixed in a particular body and they define emotion as conceptualized and as qualified intensity that is personal (Massumi 2002 cited in McCormack 2003). Kye Askins (2009) responds that if we hold onto the notion of emotion as both physically embodied (personal) and reflectively constructed (social), then the binary between emotion and affect is no longer useful. "It could be convenient to say that emotion refers to the social expression of affect and affect, in turn, is the biological experience of it" (Askins 2009:9). She continues to argue that, actually, we can't even distinguish between conscious recognition (emotion) and 'direct' physical feelings (affect) as this negates how what is not consciously experienced may still be mediated by past experiences (Ahmed 2004 cited in Askins 2009). Even unconscious, physical responses are embedded in past histories through embodied memories and impact upon our actions just as cognition does via social construction. So, affect cannot be reduced to the personal / biological any more than emotion, in that it is caught up in the memory making of our bodies in the world (Askins 2009). According to Askins (2009), emotions are how I respond (how I care about/show interest in something), affect is what intensifies my response (or my capacity to be affected). Both are physiological (pre-consciously bodied) and socially circulating, both are caught up in past associations/experiences/histories and both are dynamic and emergent.

4.5   Conclusions

In this chapter I have tried to give the reader a general idea about what emotions are and how they are possibly linked to power and politics. I have focused on cognitive and constructivist approaches to emotions, because they contribute to understanding the young participants' emotions within the specific socio-cultural context of El Salvador and as expressive of the existing social relations within that context. I have looked at emotional geographies and geographies of affect, and, despite the apparent hostility between both, each made a particularly valuable contribution to my research and to thinking about the role of emotions in PAR. Emotional geographies, on the one hand, show how emotions connect and flow between people and are particularly helpful in connecting the young people's emotions to the existing power relations and injustices in El Salvador. Geographies of affect, on the other hand, shift the focus of attention from representations of feelings to 'feelingness' itself (Bondi 2005).

They challenge the privilege of cognition and encourage us to take embodied and practical knowledges more seriously. Most importantly, they also explicitly recognise the political potential of these knowledges. In that sense, Thrift's new politics of hope and compassion is refreshing, exciting and challenging, even if, in the end, he remains vague about how it can be put into practice. But, as I argue in this thesis, participatory researchers, in turn, might be able to contribute to non-representational theory, advancing the project of a new politics of hope and compassion, by bringing it back to earth and rendering it more practical and concrete.

In the following chapters I use the term emotion rather than affect. I agree with feminist geographers that making a distinction between them is both useless and counter-productive. I understand emotions as multi-facetted phenomena consisting of varying combinations (depending on the specific emotion and the specific moment in time) of physiological, cognitive and behavioural aspects which are all, to a certain degree at least, influenced and affected by specific historical and socio-cultural contexts. I see emotions as cognitive and constructed through discourses and social and cultural processes and, at the same time, as deeply rooted bodily sensations (Bennett 2004). The very fact that emotions are located between mind and body (but irreducible to any of them) is precisely what makes them such a challenging starting point for considering power and empowerment in PAR and beyond.

5 Doing PAR with young people in El Salvador

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I aim to describe the PAR processes in which the young people participated and the particular context in which they took place. I begin by explaining the socio-cultural context of El Salvador. I look at the country's history to understand its present situation and the historically instilled and continuing culture of violence and fear. Relying on a poststructuralist account of power and empowerment and on an understanding of emotions as relational, socially and culturally constructed and as functioning within power relations, the provision of a detailed understanding of the particular socio-cultural context and the existing power relations in El Salvador is absolutely fundamental for understanding the young people's PAR and the role of emotions in it.

In a second part, I introduce the reader to the Centre for Training and Orientation (CFO), the organisation where I worked and where I did my fieldwork. I describe the PAR processes that were facilitated by CFO's Youth Participation Project and in which four groups of young people participated, prioritising a social problem, doing research about it and preparing for action. I aim to provide the reader with a good understanding of these processes, because, after all, they form the empirical basis of my research.

5.2 The socio-cultural context of El Salvador

A good comprehension of the broad socio-cultural context and of young people's everyday reality is crucial for fully understanding the young people's PAR and the ways they felt empowered by it. I first introduce the country by offering a brief summary of its main demographic, political, economic and social characteristics. I then go deeper into the history of El Salvador as well as taking a closer look at its present situation.

5.2.1   El Salvador in a nutshell

The Republic of El Salvador is the smallest (with a total area of 8, 124 sq mi), most densely populated (341/sq km) country on mainland Latin America. Its capital is San Salvador. El Salvador is located in the middle of Central America, south of Guatemala and east of Honduras. It has a population of 7 066 403 inhabitants (White 2009).

Indigenous peoples (Pipiles, Nahuas, Chortis) used to comprise hundred percent of the population for a thousand years, but in the last century their numbers have dwindled to the point of complete marginalization. Today, El Salvador's population comprises ninety percent ladino (mixed indigenous and white race), nine percent Caucasian and one percent Indigenous (White 2009). As a result of a civil war, Salvadorans began leaving the country, displacing one fifth of the population (White 2009). After the signing of the peace accords in 1992 this trend continued as Salvadorans fled poverty and crime. A transnational Diaspora became a central feature of Salvadoran life (Santiago and Binford 2004).

El Salvador is a presidential, representative, democratic republic with a multiform, multi-party system. The two major political parties are ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance) and the FMLN (Farabundo Martí Nacional Liberation Front). ARENA represents the right wing of the government and was founded in 1981 by death squad leader Colonel Roberto D'Aubuisson (White 2009). The FMLN began officially in 1980 as an umbrella organisation uniting five guerrilla factions: The Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), National Resistance (RN), The Central American Workers' Party (PRTC) and the Communist Party. The group borrowed its name from the leftist insurgent leader Farabundo Martí, who was executed in 1932 during the massacre of some ten thousand to thirty thousand indigenous people by government forces (White 2009). Until today, Salvadoran society is extremely polarised with both the left and right being regarded as the most extreme in the region (Hume 2004). El Salvador was governed by ARENA from 1988 until 2009. In 2009, for the first time in the country's history, the FMLN-candidate, Mauricio Funes, was elected president gaining just over fifty-one percent of the ballot. The results overturned twenty years of dominance by the radically free-market ARENA (Moodie 2010).

Traditionally, El Salvador possessed an agricultural economy (corn, coffee, sugar, cotton, beans), but at present the service and industrial sectors account for a much higher percentage of the national GDP (Seelke and Meyer 2009). With a per capita income of $ 2. 850 El

Salvador is considered by the World Bank to be a lower middle-income country. It achieved some stability and economic growth in the 1990s following the Salvadoran government's embrace of a neo-liberal economic model, cutting government spending, privatizing state-owned enterprises, and adopting the dollar as its national currency (Seelke and Meyer 2009).

El Salvador's economy has fared better than some other nations in the region, yet the country's growth rates have not been high enough to produce dramatic improvements in the standards of living of the country's seven million people. With forty percent of the population living in poverty and twenty-five percent reportedly feeling they must migrate abroad in search of a decent life, the average Salvadoran household does not seem to have benefited from neo-liberalism (Seelke and Meyer 2009). The number one contributor to the country, remittances from the two million Salvadorans living abroad, makes up over sixteen percent of the GDP (White 2009). Although migration has reduced rural unemployment and infused some households with extra income from the remittances, it has caused severe social disruption and resulted in a dangerous dependency in some communities (Seelke and Meyer 2009). Between 1989 and 2004, poverty levels rose from forty-seven to fifty-one percent. The fruits of stable economic growth have not been equitably distributed as the income of the richest of the population is forty-seven times higher than that of the poorest ten percent (Seelke and Meyer 2009, White 2009).

Economic inequality is deeply rooted in the country's history. Since the beginning of the Spanish presence in El Salvador in 1524, the country has been run by a highly concentrated elite class with an inordinate amount of power (Whilte 2009).

> "El Salvador is burdened with the most rigid class structure and worst income inequality in all Latin America. For over a century, the social and economic life of the nation has been dominated by a small landed elite known popularly as the fourteen families (Los Catorce), though their actual number is well over fourteen. The family clans comprising the oligarchy include only a few thousand people in this nation of nearly five million, but until recently they owned sixty percent of the farmland, the entire banking system and most of the nation's industry" (Foreign Affairs 1980 cited in White 2009:13).

Elections and political liberalization have not resolved the nation's chronic pre-war social and economic inequality. Today, the historically dominant elite controlled by the fourteen families

has experienced a shift in structure, but they still dominate the country. Many of the former coffee and sugar producing oligarchs have branched out into other businesses to adapt to the new globalization movement (White 2009). Over almost two decades, since the formal cessation of its political conflict, El Salvador remains one of the most unequal societies in the world.

Conjoint factors such as the widespread availability of guns and high rates of unemployment have combined with structural problems and the legacy of authoritarianism to create a climate of fear and violence which undermines efforts to build a more peaceful society (Pearce 1998). Since the 1990s, El Salvador has experienced a pandemic of violent crime. Murder rates remain among the highest in Latin America, with more violent deaths in the 1990s than during the twelve years of civil war (Ramos 2000 cited in Hume 20007a). In 2008, El Salvador had a murder rate of fifty-three per hundred thousand inhabitants, one of the highest in the world (Seelke and Meyer 2009). Particularly worrying has been the rapidly expanding phenomenon of youth gangs[5]. In El Salvador between ten thousand and thirty thousand young people belong to the *maras* (street gangs) (WOLA 2005 cited in Hume 2007b).

Today, Salvadorans live in what is called a 'culture of violence'. They live in a culture in which different manifestations of violence overlap, contrast and interlink with each other: the structural violence of poverty and exclusion; direct interpersonal violence such as domestic violence, gender related violence, and youth gangs; and cultural violence or the symbolic and

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[5] The history of youth gangs in El Salvador is traced back to the 1970s and 1980s when, during the civil war, many families fled the country and resettled in U.S. cities where youth street gangs were already an established feature of urban life. Many Salvadoran youth integrated into the existing gangs in the U.S. or formed their own gang for self-protection. They were particularly involved in two increasingly organised youth gangs: The 18th street gang (Mara 18) and the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). Youth gangs also existed in Central America but they tended to be smaller and less organised. In 1996, U.S. immigration laws changed, resulting in the exportation of thousands of Salvadorans in the years after. Some of them were gang members and became the catalyst for the development of gang culture in El Salvador. Yet, the gang phenomenon in El Salvador is not simply a foreign problem imported by deportees, but has evolved and grown in response to domestic factors and conditions. In El Salvador the Mara 18 and MS-13 are the main gangs operating in the country and in most countries of Central America such as Guatemala and Honduras. Both gangs are characterized by their fluid, dynamic organisation and complex, clandestine hierarchies. Territorially bound, the gangs have a complex vertical structure, defined member roles and consolidated chains of command. They involve local subgroups within the gang, *clikas*, generally consisting of young people from a common neighbourhood. The leadership roles within the hierarchy of each gang are clearly defined and each gang operates according to strict internal rules and values. Each gang has its own initiation rites. Once officially initiated, they become a member for life. Once a young person is considered to be affiliated with a gang, regardless of whether he has officially become a member (by initiation), he or she is marked by the other gang as a target for life. Gang members seeking to withdraw from active gang life increasingly face the threat of fatal retribution from their fellow members. (see International Human Rights Clinic 2007). For a better understanding of gang culture, see also the documentary 'La Vida Loca' from Christian Poveda.

ideological sphere of existence that is often used to justify structural and direct violence (Moser and McIlwaine 2004*)*. Not only are there multiple forms of violence, but as the types proliferate, violence becomes 'routinized' and 'normalised' (Scheper Hughes 1992, Torres-Rivas 1999). In a sense, violence has gone through its own process of 'democratization' being increasingly viewed as a normal option for many citizens with which to pursue interests, attain power, or resolve conflicts (Howard et al. 2007, Koonings and Kruijt 1999).

State responses to the problem of violence and crime have been highly inconsistent and repressive and have served to further exacerbate tensions and conflicts among different social groups. The government's response has focused on youth gangs (though these are only part of the criminal problem) through a series of heavy handed anti-gang measures (Hume 2007a, Hume 2007b) arbitrarily targeting poor young people.

The current situation of increasing social and criminal violence cannot be divorced from the political history of the country in which violence has always been pivotal in shaping society (Holden 1996 cited in Hume 2007a). In El Salvador, violence has been the cornerstone of political life for decades, and although democratic reform has transformed the political context, a worrying legacy of authoritarianism remains (Hume 2007a). Contemporary government responses to youth gangs cannot be isolated from a historic state project in which terror and violence were used indiscriminately to assure the hegemony of elite interest (Alvarenga 1996 cited in Hume 2007a).

5.2.2   A history of violence

In El Salvador, terror and violence has always characterised relations between the state and society and shaped the formation and reproduction of society itself. The implication of this history of violence (or violent history) is far reaching and its legacy can be seen in contemporary relations (Hume 2004).

Before setting out to recount El Salvador's history, it must be mentioned that relatively little historical research has been carried out about El Salvador. The country's authoritarian legacy has contributed to a weak historiographical tradition and to limited programmes in higher education, the first bachelor's degree in history being introduced only in 2002 at the National University of El Salvador (Lauria-Santiago and Binford 2004). El Salvador also fell behind as

war and repression kept away most foreign researchers and forced the emigration of many students and established academics (Lauria-Santiago and Binford 2004). Currently, however, there exists a growing academic interest in this tiny country and it is on this relatively recent work that I base the following historical overview.

5.2.2.1   From Spanish Colonisation to La Matanza

The Spanish conquest: roots of inequality

The colonial period of El Salvador's history lasted from 1524 to 1821, the year in which El Salvador declared its independency from Spain with the rest of Central America. The history of Salvadoran indigenous people in the five centuries since the conquest represents one of the most intense cases of loss and displacement witnessed in all of Latin America, continuing into the 20th century and leading to their virtual elimination (White 2009). During almost three centuries of colonization, the indigenous population, who had spent the past several thousand years building their own societies, experienced the complete destruction of their culture. Land distribution, forced relocations, forced labour, and church activism led to the loss of their identity and to the breaking down of their resistance to oppression and exploitation (White 2009).

As a small country with little room for economic diversification, El Salvador's development rested on semi-feudal foundations depending almost entirely on the cultivation and sale of indigo for over three hundred years. Later, after the decline of the indigo production, El Salvador changed to another monoculture, coffee, well into the 20th century (White 2009). A fundamental aspect of this monoculture economy was the *hacienda* or great estate (White 2009). The Spanish introduced large-scale farms and profoundly altered the traditional, indigenous use of the soil. Crops such as indigo and coffee exploited by non-native landowners occupied large swaths of land previously used by indigenous peoples for subsistence and for their own trade networks. The *hacienda* was owned by the Spanish and creole elite sectors of society and tended to have up to several hundred workers, most of them living on the land owned by the *hacendado* without ownership of their own land (White 2009). The *hacienda* system strongly contributed to establishing the privilege of the Spanish rooted minority over the indigenous and ladino majority that has become the foundation of Salvadoran inequality to this day (White 2009). This situation has been difficult to alter and

has been symbolized by such conflicts as La Matanza in 1932 and the civil war from 1980 to 1992.

Independence

In 1823 El Salvador joined La Republica Federal de Centro America, together with Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. Together they declared their independence from the Spanish crown. There was little unity within the Central American Republic, because each nation held a special hostility for at least one other nation and these animosities lasted well into the 20th century (White 2009). In 1839 El Salvador gained its independence but conflicts, both internal and external, continued unabated (White 2009). Between 1841 and 1890 El Salvador fought five times with Guatemala, four times with Honduras and once with Nicaragua. During this same period the federal government was replaced thirteen times by military coups (White 2009). These internal conflicts fit with the increasing militarism of Salvadoran political culture throughout the 19th century. El Salvador's beginnings were militaristic and increased in this fashion throughout the 20th century until the civil war of the 1980s. The power struggles of the initial decades of independence did not yield a freer, more pluralistic society, but instead led to the validation of a more hierarchical political system. The ruling elite had little interest in fomenting a democratic citizenry that participated with any degree of agency in the organization of the country. Instead, it suited them well to have a hierarchical oligarchy that controlled the government and the means of production and that kept a largely ignorant majority well below them (White 2009).

La Matanza

One big story reverberates through 20th century Salvadoran history: *La Matanza*, the massacre of ten to thirty thousand indigenous and ladino peasants who participated in a communist uprising in 1932 (Moodie 2010). Increasing numbers of indigenous peoples had been forced into landlessness and peonage by a small, greedy group of landholding families that wanted to insert El Salvador into the rising economy of the late nineteenth century (Moodie 2010). In the period from 1871 to 1932 El Salvador changed from indigo producer to coffee producer. During this period the country became more liberal economically, yet less democratic, more militarized and thus more violent. Four fifths of the land was already in the hands of several hundred coffee growing families, making the country completely dependent on coffee production (White 2009). In 1929, with the Wall Street crash, the great depression started and El Salvador's national income dropped by half as coffee prices began falling. This caused

dramatic suffering for Salvadoran workers: malnourishment, migration, the break up of families, and other problems (White 2009).

So, by the time of the 1931 elections, the political left in El Salvador as well as indigenous groups were ready for revolt and popular unrest increased. El Salvador's national hero Agustin Farabundo Martí led the dissident movement, pointing to the coffee-based economic system as the number one problem. As ordinary Salvadorans began to ask for change, so did some politicians. Arturo Araujo, the candidate of the New Salvadoran Labour Party, insisted on the state's responsibility in safeguarding everyone's right to the minimum necessities of life, putting issues of land reform and social welfare first in his political campaign. Araujo won the elections, yet in December 1931 his presidency came to an abrupt end when the military overthrew his government and hard-line general Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez took over (White 2009, Moodie 2010).

The military coup strengthened the already ongoing popular resistance and a series of revolts burst out. On the 22nd of January 1932, a well planed uprising was carried out and a group of insurgents attacked army garrisons, telegraph offices and city halls and briefly held a dozen towns in the western coffee growing region (Moodie 2009). The military response to these uprisings was excessive. The rebels killed fifteen to twenty people, but General Martinez responded with what has been described as hysteria, ordering the immediate execution of all rebels and killing many innocent people (Moodie 2009). The result of the massacre was a heightened culture of fear for government forces (White 2009). The massacre devastated indigenous communities and demolished all political dissent. Martinez's rule began fifty years of direct military domination characterized by coercive labour practices and repressive policing (Moodie 2010).

5.2.2.2 The civil war

In the 1960s, for a while, the space for democratic energy widened. The electoral system had changed in 1963 permitting proportional representation giving opposition parties, led by the newly formed Christian Democrats, a voice in governance. The Salvadoran state also invested more in education, initiating more literacy programmes, grade schools and universities. A collective energy spilled across the nation and political activism filled the streets, fuelled in part by a growing university population. More labour unions formed and Christian based

communities started to organise, inspired by the new ecclesiastical doctrine of liberation theology, emphasizing social justice and a preferential option for the poor (Moodie 2010).

Despite this democratic opening, astounding social and economic inequality still marked El Salvador (Moodie 2010). The government indulged some political liberalization, but did not forget the threat of subversion. It reorganised its intelligence activities with technical assistance from the U.S. A paramilitary network known as the Democratic Nationalist Organisation (ORDEN) was founded in the mid-1960s to survey suspicious activities in the countryside (Moodie 2010). The members of this organisation tended to be former or current army force officers who could operate with impunity due to their intimate connections to the oligarchy and the military within which and for whom they functioned (White 2009).

The 1972 presidential elections became a defining moment in Salvadoran's faith in the possibility of democracy. A progressive coalition headed by Jose Napoleon Duarte is widely believed to have won, yet the military party and their presidential candidate Colonel Arturo Armando Molina, declared victory. Thousands marched in protest and opposition candidate Duarte was arrested, tortured and forced into exile (Moodie 2010). The electoral fraud galvanised many activists and some sought out the clandestine revolutionary organisations (Moodie 2010). President Molina set in motion a wave of anti-communist nationalism targeting guerrilla fighters and students alike. He promulgated the idea that students associated with the University of El Salvador were subverting the system with communist agitation. He ended the University's independence by placing a government official in charge of the university and by ordering the military to occupy the campuses. In response, students began to protest in Santa Ana and San Salvador resulting in yet another massacre with thirty-seven students killed by government forces (White 2009).

The elections of 1977 signified another crucial year. Election Day was, again, full of fraudulent actions. The presidential candidate of the opposition party (the National Opposing Party - UNO) and his followers staged a demonstration at La Plaza Libertad. The protesters were attacked by the National Police killing close to fifty people (White 2009). The massacre signalled the beginning of a downward spiral of violence (most of it carried out by the government) that soon engulfed most of the Salvadoran countryside (White 2009).

In the same year armed forces assassinated priest-activist Rutilio Grande, close friend of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Rutilio Grande, like many others of his fellow church workers,

had taken up the mantle of liberation theology and represented the interests of the poor majority of the population. His death sent shock waves through the church and the whole country, because it showed the absolute lack of limits of the armed forces in El Salvador (White 2009, Moodie 2010).

The slight democratic liberalization of the 1960s had sustained the growth of civil society and social movements. In the subsequent political closure and growing repression of the early 1970s these groups radicalized (Almeida cited in Moodie 2010). The first group to be formed was the Popular Liberation Front (FPL), created from the remnants of the outlawed Salvadoran Communist party. By 1972 an additional revolutionary group emerged, the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP). Roque Dalton, El Salvador's most beloved poet joined the ERP in 1973. By 1975 he was at odds with the leadership who finally condemned him to death. Over time, other guerrilla factions came into existence such as, among others, the National Resistance (RN), a group broken off from the ERP after Roque Dalton's murder (White 2009).

In 1979 a series of crucial events intensified the war in El Salvador. Firstly, there was another government-staged bloodshed in May 1979 during a protest of hundreds of people in El Salvador. Secondly, in Nicaragua, the end of the Somoza dictatorship was heralded as one of the most successful Latin American revolutions of the 20th century. Yet, the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua also strengthened the determination and counterrevolutionary spirit of the Salvadoran elite and military sectors who feared the same would happen in El Salvador (White 2009).

It was the martyrdom of Archbishop Romero that left no question about war in El Salvador (Moodie 2010). Romero became archbishop in February 1977. It was the assassination of his good friend Rutilio Grande later that year that transformed the archbishop. Following Rutilio Grande's death, Romero became the voice of 'the people', 'those without a voice'. His sermons were full of what many people, especially the poor majority, saw as the reality of El Salvador (Moodie 2010). In his homilies the archbishop listed the names of all the disappeared people. He was murdered on the 24th of March 1980 while saying mass at the chapel in the Hospital Divina Providencia in San Salvador. More than twelve yeas later the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador would conclude that Colonel D'Aubuisson had planned the murder. During Romero's funeral mass a week later, a bomb went off in the plaza

outside the Metropolitan Cathedral. Snipers shot into a crowd of fifty thousand, forty died and two hundred were wounded (Moodie 2010).

These events only solidified the resistance movement. By October, the guerrilla organisation Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) was formed from the five dominant guerrilla groups: Popular Liberation Force (FPL), People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), National Resistance (RN), the Central American Revolutionary Workers Party (CRTC) and the Communist Party (White 2009, Moodie 2010).

The Salvadoran armed forces also grew tremendously at that time. Over the next eleven years the U.S. government sent six billion dollars in economic, military and covert aid to the tiny Central American nation of six million people (Moodie 2010, White 2009). The money would go to increase the size of the military from fifteen thousand to sixty thousand; to augment military power with helicopters and gun-ships; and to restructure and professionalize the forces by creating groups such as the Rapid Deployment Infantry Battalions specializing in counterinsurgency tactics. Within a year, on the 11th of December 1981, the first of those groups, the U.S. trained Atlacatl Battalion, carried out the largest atrocity of the war, in northern Morazan. It killed more than a thousand men, women and children in an event known as the El Mozote Massacre (White 2009).

In 1982, Napoleon Duarte, back from exile, became president. Nevertheless, the century-old allegiance between the military and the oligarchy persisted, holding the fundamental power in the country. The 1982 elections also introduced a new political party, The Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), founded by death squad leader Colonel Roberto D'Aubuisson. ARENA received support from right-wing elements in the U.S. and was inspired by Neo-Nazism (White 2009).

By then the story of saving El Salvador had become an all-consuming project for the U.S. The U.S. increasingly aimed not only to empower the military to defeat the guerrillas, but also to establish a legitimate government through democratic elections (Moodie 2010). The U.S.-backed president Duarte carefully started to propose peace dialogues and held several summits with the FMLN and the military (Moodie 2010).

Spectacular acts of intimidation decreased in El Salvador after 1984 as the U.S. strategy of democracy promotion and low intensity warfare began to show results, but violence was still

out of control. Larger numbers of people fled the country, became displaced internally, were conscripted into the military or continued to join the guerrillas (Moodie 2010).

The elections of 1988 spelled the first victory for ARENA with President Alfredo Christiani, beginning a wave of ARENA dominance of the presidency (White 2009). In the meantime atrocities continued unabated. In 1989, six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter were brutally murdered by the Atlacatl battalion. Again, most of the officers in charge of the murders were former trainees of the School of the Americas, as was the case with the El Mozote massacre (White 2009).

In November 1989 The FLMN launched their final offensive in San Salvador (Moodie 2010). With the offensive it was obvious that the capacity of the FMLN had not diminished and that it had created a large civilian base of support. But the power of ARENA had also endured. The offensive forced all the parties to recognize a stalemate. ARENA, dominated by a faction of financial elites, wanted to make a deal. Many of its leaders were more interested in getting on with business in a globalising economy than in fighting (Moodie 2010). The FMLN and the Salvadoran government met over a period of nearly two years to negotiate the end of the war. Their discussions were mediated by the United Nations. On the 16th of January 1992, in Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City, the peace agreements were signed signalling the end of a twelve year civil war (Moodie 2010).

The war had claimed the lives of more than seventy-five thousand people, left eight thousand 'disappeared', and displaced one million Salvadorans (Silber 2004). Though the war ended about two decades ago, it continues to have a profound effect on current social relations and on Salvadoran society in general. The war taught people that everybody (neighbours as well as government forces) is capable of betrayal, extreme violence and duplicity. During the years of war, all that was necessary to have someone killed was to point the finger and to accuse the individual of belonging to one political faction or the other (Dickson-Gomez 2002). This traumatized worldview of fear, pessimism and violence has been strongly socialized in the current youth generation (Dickson-Gomez 2002). Fear, the expectation of violence, the pervasive distrust in one's fellow human beings, and a profound disillusion with politics transmitted from generation on generation are important factors in understanding the current situation in El Salvador (Dickson-Gomez 2002).

5.2.3 A violent present

Since the day in 1992 that guerrillas and government officials shook hands in front of the cameras, the United Nations repeatedly referred to the Salvadoran peacekeeping and human rights monitoring missions as paradigmatic and pioneering. El Salvador, it was concluded, evolved from a country torn apart by conflict into a democratic and peaceful nation (Moodie 2010). But, what were the social terms of that success? What kind of peace was agreed to (Moodie 2006)? What kind of democracy had Salvadorans desired and why is it that soon after such a so-called 'successful' conclusion to a globally storied conflict, so many Salvadorans started to feel it was getting 'worse than the war' (Moodie 2010). Why is it that, eventually, life in peace feels more risky and dangerous for the majority of people in the country (Moodie 2010)?

Immediately after signing the peace accords, a Truth Commission was established to report on human rights abuses that had taken place during this period. In its report *From madness to hope: the 12 year war* (March 1993) the commission concluded that the Salvadoran State, through its systematic institutionalisation of violence, was the overwhelming agent of terror (Silber 2004). Only five percent of the reported violations against human rights were committed by the guerrillas. The Salvadoran government immediately critiqued the Truth Commission's findings. They argued that, rather than building peace, the Truth Commission instigated a desire for vengeance and would derail the still very fragile democracy (Silber 2004). Prior to the report's publication, a general amnesty law granted absolute and unconditional amnesty to all those involved in human rights abuses before January 1992 (Silber 2004, Hume 2004). So, the signing of the peace accords did not mean justice.

The accords also failed to encompass any real measures aimed at socio-economic reform (Hume 2004). The agreements maintained El Salvador's unjust structures of power (Moodie 2010). Political scientists tend to delimit democracy to regular, competitive elections with universal suffrage as well as political accountability of the state to the population. But, when the United Nations were founded in 1945 democracy was broadly understood as entailing human freedom *and* social equality (Moodie 2010). The 1992 peace accords ended the war, but they did not initiate an era of greater social and economic justice (Moodie 2010). The FMLN guerrillas had gone to war with an emancipatory politics proposing to radically

restructure the economy. But, in the end, it was ARENA that radically restructured the economy. ARENA launched the 'liberation movement' (for elites only) for a continued unconstrained accumulation of capital (Moodie 2010). The 1992 peace accords have been lauded as a model for negotiated revolution (Moodie 2006), yet William Robinson writes of "a peace pushed by a transnational, technocratic faction of elites, who formed a 'polyarchic democracy' in which a select group of leaders rule and mass participation is limited to voting" (Robinson cited in Moodie 2010:40). Robinson demonstrates that the larger goal of the U.S. involvement in El Salvador was not so much to stop the insurgency as it was to re-articulate the state's relationship to capitalism and the global market. The pursuit of this goal was ultimately to promote a transnational model of neoliberal reform (Robinson 2003). Robinson points to the year 1983, one of the bloodiest in the civil war, as the beginning of this transition to a new mode of governance. In 1983 a new constitution was written, preparing the country for elections. But, 1983 was also the year in which the Foundation for Social and Economic Development (FUSADES) was founded. FUSADES, funded by USAID, aimed to establish a consensus for the development of neoliberal social and economic policies, representing the U.S. stance that economic liberalization had to accompany the counterinsurgency policy. Already in 1985, The U.S. government began to attach conditions to support to the Salvadoran government, demanding structural adjustment toward a more open economy (Moodie 2010). Thus, the peace accords marked but a midpoint in the implementation of a series of market-oriented reforms in governance commonly known as 'structural adjustment' towards a neoliberal economy. "Even before the war ended, El Salvador was well on its way to becoming a model - not of peace - at least as imagined by revolutionaries and progressive movements, but of neoliberalism" (Moodie 2010:42). Despite national indicators of 'economic growth', the majority of Salvadorans continue to live in poverty with poor access to ever decreasing social services resulting from neoliberal structural adjustment policies (Silber 2004).

Besides poverty and inequality, violence continues to dominate life in El Salvador.

> "The concern about the so-called problem of crime has reached such a level that Salvadorans have become more alarmed about crime than they were worried about the war in the second half of the 1980s. Peace, then, may have meant the absence of war, but it did not *feel* better or more secure than before. It did not mean the end of violence" (Moodie 2010:47).

Salvadorans still live in "a world in which suffering and its ultimate consequence - death - are always there, intransigent, defying peace accords and hopeful post-war political and economic initiatives" (Moodie 2006).

In El Salvador, poor young people in general and youth gangs in particular are targeted as the main actors responsible for perpetuating the culture of violence. Soon after 1992, transnational gangs were constructed as a national threat and this discourse became so naturalised, so dominant, that almost no other public narrative of post-war danger in El Salvador could be summoned (Moodie 2009). After the war, the dominant public sign of danger shifted from the image of the armed combatant to that of the transnational gang member (Moodie 2009) and poor youth came to represent "the ideological 'conductor' of citizens' fear in the new El Salvador" (Hume 2007a:746).

As a reaction to rising crime, in 2003, right-wing president Fransisco Flores announced a series of sweeping anti-gang proposals. He introduced the *Plan Mano Dura* (The Iron Fist legislation) advocating the immediate imprisonment of gang members who from then on could be arrested "simply for having gang-related tattoos or flashing signs" (Boraz and Bruneau 2006:38). When Tony Sacca, presidential candidate of ARENA, won the 2004 elections, one of the first things he did was introducing *Plan Super Mano Dura* (the Super Iron Fist legislation) sending ever more police and military into the streets and filling jails far beyond their capacity (Moodie 2009). Young people do not have to have broken the law or have been engaged in actual offensive behaviour before they are subject to intrusive intervention into their affairs. It is the markers of gang membership, such as tattoos, dress style, hand signs, illicit association, etc. that are criminalized. The legislation targets certain bodies as degenerate rather than particular acts as illegal (Moodie 2009). Amnesty International condemned the *Mano Dura* legislation as discriminatory, because of their focus on controlling bodies and excluding populations rather than on confronting crime (Moodie 2009). As the *Mano Dura* legislation authorizes the military and the police to work together, they also break a central principle of the state created by the peace accords: the demilitarization of the police (Moodie 2009). Since the implementation of the *Mano Dura* and *Super Mano Dura* crime rates began to spiral up again. By 2005 already, the murder rate was the highest in seven years (Moodie 2009).

As in many societies undergoing a shift to neoliberal globalization, in El Salvador public attention became obsessed with youth; with the 'surplus' of poor young men loitering on the

streets "insolent in their excess, refusing to disappear even as post-war economic equations rendered them neoliberal rejects, bio-political debris, latter-day lumpen proletariat" (Moodie 2009:83). Poor Salvadoran children and youth increasingly emerge as "one of late capitalism's residual or superfluous categories, its quintessential non-productive 'parasitical' Other" (Scheper-Hughes 1998:2). The construction of poor youth as violent criminals, as 'superfluous' is symptomatic of wider attempts to stigmatise and control new 'dangerous classes' of late capitalism, the members which are overwhelmingly young and on the margins (Wyn and White 1997). Targeting poor youth serves to allow the blame for global inequalities to be placed on local pathologies completely disconnected from any past or present patterns of domination (Gledhill 2003 cited in Moodie 2006:63).

So, alongside living in poverty and getting used to high levels of violence, poor young people are stigmatized as the main perpetrators of violence and are the first to be (arbitrarily) targeted by the repressive *Mano Dura* legislation. Unsurprisingly, young people's daily reality of violence and discrimination permeated the PAR. I will now consider young people's PAR processes and describe them more in detail.

5.3   Doing PAR with Poor Young People

5.3.1   The Centre for Training and Orientation Padre. Rafael Palacios

For almost two years I worked at the Centre for Training and Orientation (CFO) located in Mejicanos, a poor and violent municipality of the capital of El Salvador. CFO is a social service organisation coordinated by Spanish and Salvadoran Passionist priests inspired by liberation theory. Liberation theory is a Christian movement in political theory which interprets the teachings of Jesus Christ in terms of liberation from unjust economic, political, or social conditions. The Centre aims to contribute to the construction of a culture of peace and justice in El Salvador and is grounded in values of cooperation, equality, equity, justice and dignity. CFO consists of a variety of different social projects of which the Youth Participation Project in which I did my fieldwork is only part.

Mainly funded by Spanish development agencies, CFO provides short term vocational training sessions in, among other things, computer science, patisserie, cosmetics, jewellery, etc. In these sessions, the focus is on teaching participants the necessary skills to set up their

own small micro-projects. CFO also runs a small workers' office functioning as a mediation agency between enterprises and jobseekers. It accompanies individuals during their search for work. It helps them through the different phases of writing a CV, applying for a job, and going to a job interview and, as such, guides them into the labour market.

CFO also coordinates a Women's Office advocating women's emancipation through a variety of workshops (such as literacy classes) in different communities, and providing individual, legal, psychological and financial assistance for maltreated and abused women. It also organises emancipatory workshops on 'new masculinities' for men.

CFO's Civil Participation Project works with community and municipality directives to strengthen local community organisation. It offers leadership training with the aim of promoting and consolidating social movements.

CFO also aims at empowering children and young people. On the one hand, CFO organises participatory workshops with small children from age three to twelve. In these workshops the particular focus is on violence prevention and the promotion of children's rights. On the other hand, CFO wants to give young people a voice and facilitate their active participation in their communities. In 2007, CFO's Youth Participation Project started organising a PAR process with young people from different communities in Mejicanos. Through PAR, the youth project aimed to better understand young people's problems and needs and to engage young people as active agents in a process of critical reflection and community development. Considering PAR as a form of popular education, CFO wanted to stimulate young people's social and political engagement. The PAR process was principally conceived of by CFO as a long-term process of critical consciousness raising, grounded in young people's daily reality and evolving according to their own needs and capacities. Through PAR, CFO hoped to stimulate young people to question unjust and oppressive structural power relations and social systems and to take up a social engagement. However, because the project was funded by foreign donor agencies it actually turned into a time-bounded development project having to respond to well-defined project objectives and (financial and time) indicators, leaving little room for flexibility and adaptation when confronted with unforeseen opportunities and difficulties. Consequently, it was not always possible to fully respond to young people's interests and needs.

As a development agent for a Belgian NGO, I coordinated CFO's youth project from June 2006 to March 2008. I was involved in the process of planning and facilitating the young people's PAR. As the project's coordinator I was part of a team of three educators and two volunteers and I was accountable to the director and co-director of CFO. The youth project started in 2006 with a completely new team of facilitators. The challenge was to establish a team spirit and a shared vision on youth participation and participatory work. There were some disagreements within the team about the meaning of a participatory approach, but also, especially, between the youth project's facilitators and CFO's management team, often disagreeing about the meaning of participation and about the related priorities in our work with young people.

5.3.2 Young People's PAR Process

Four groups of young people participated in CFO's PAR process. Some of them had been participating in CFO's activities before, while others were contacted through schools, NGOs, community directives and street work. Initially, the PAR process was planned as follows: In the first two workshops we would use participatory methods such as mapping, life histories and ranking to help the participants prioritise the social issues of most interest and relevance to them. Then would follow a series of participatory workshops in which they critically reflected about these issues through methods such as participatory drama, drawing, cooperative games, etc. Finally, the young people would propose and carry out some concrete actions or projects.

The PAR process was meant to be fully owned by the young participants themselves. It soon became clear, however, that the majority of the young participants needed and wanted more assistance and direction from the part of the team facilitators. Initiatives, proposals and actions most often did not come from the participants alone, but grew out of the interaction between the project's team and the young people involved.

Two of the four groups brought the PAR to a successful conclusion. Two of them did not continue the process. The participants from the two last groups did not (want to) participate in the evaluation process and so, unfortunately, their reflections and opinions will not return in the following chapters. Therefore, when describing their PAR processes I include a critical reflection about the different reasons and causes (as evaluated with the team facilitators) for

ending the process. I begin, however, by describing the PAR process of the two groups of young people who did continue the process.

5.3.2.1 Group 1: La Uruguay[6]

This group consisted of ten to fifteen boys and young men between fourteen and twenty years old. They prioritised the issues of youth stigmatization / discrimination and violence towards young people as the main problems they were confronted with in their community. They mainly reflected on these problems through music and dance.

This group consisted of young people who had one big passion in common: break dance and their interest in Hip Hop culture. This group of boys had known each other for a long time and came together once or twice a week to dance in the community centre of the Passionist congregation. Some of them had already participated in other activities and projects of CFO and had known one of our facilitators very well. We contacted these young people first and then talked with the other boys of the group. Most of them immediately decided they wanted to participate in the PAR process.

Most of the participants came from La Uruguay, a very poor and conflictive neighbourhood with a long history of youth gang violence. More than half of the group had one or more family member (brothers, father, nephews) who had been killed; many had been detained or arrested various times (sometimes on their way to the project) for 'illegal association' (walking in public spaces with more than two persons), and most of them had left school at an early age. Some of them had been involved in the gang, but had distanced themselves as much as possible.

This group of participants had emerged out of an already existing group of boys and young men dancing and hanging out with each other. When we met them, there were no girls in the group. During the PAR process, we tried to motivate them to introduce girls both in the PAR process and in their break-dance sessions. Two girls joined us for a while. They were the girlfriends of two boys in the group and when the relationship ended, they no longer wanted

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[6] The communities where the young people lived, as well as the young participants themselves and the team facilitators have been given pseudonyms.

to participate. Most boys were rather sceptical about having girls in their group. They all had quite a macho attitude, not encouraging girls to feel at ease or to participate. It was also very difficult to involve girls in the process, because their parents generally did not agree with the idea of their daughters hanging out with a group of boys, some of whom had a bad name in the community.

In the beginning this group of young people proved to be difficult to work with. Though they insisted they wanted to be part of the process and though they always showed up at the workshops, they initially did not show any interest and seemed to be terribly bored. They said they wanted to continue, but for quite a long time they were not able to express their interest and they did not take any initiative. They just seemed to agree with whatever we proposed and did not speak up (with some exceptions). They first prioritised all kinds of problems related to sexuality (such as HIV) as the issue of most interest to them. Once we started to explore these issues they did not respond at all. It took some time before they recognised that they were actually not interested. So, we started all over again. They knew they wanted to participate, but they had no proposals on what and how. We suggested they make their own rap song, with the help of two professional musicians, about their own life experiences and on young people's problems in their neighbourhoods. They liked the idea. We organised three participatory workshops in which they talked about their families and their neighbourhood. We used mapping, drawing, graffiti and games. The lyrics of the song were based on the reflections and testimonies gathered during these workshops. This short process helped them to open up and to express themselves. Though extremely happy and proud with their song, they did not really know what to do next. We suggested they could do some more research on Hip Hop culture. They agreed, but they never really got involved. Then they where invited by a friend of CFO to facilitate two workshops during a special one-week Hip Hop event. They were enthusiastic to cooperate and agreed to facilitate workshops on the origins of Hip Hop culture as a form of social communication and as an alternative to youth violence. They also agreed to participate in other workshops such as, among others, a workshop on Hip Hop and women. In order to facilitate the workshops they had to look up a lot of information and for the first time they really took initiative and started to search for, summarise and analyse information. Most importantly, during these preparations, they were able to explicitly relate their passion for Hip Hop to their experiences of 'being discriminated' against or 'being harassed' by the police all the time, and of not having spaces of their own. These workshops helped them reflect on these experiences, to express their problems and needs and to defend their ideas in public. The process of preparing and giving these workshops represented a great

change for most of the boys. While being rather apathetic at the beginning, they now had become much more involved and expressive. Yet, now it seemed the group would fall apart because of internal conflicts, rising from relatively innocent problems such as the lack of responsibility of some group members, but ending up in huge and aggressive discussions. From not being able 'to talk' and express themselves at the beginning of the process, they now all ended up expressing (shouting and threatening each other) a lot. They were now able to say what they wanted and what they liked (or not), but their aggressive and violent way of handling conflicts almost tore the group apart and many subsequent workshops had to be spent on constructive evaluation and resolving conflicts.

After a brief evaluation period, they suggested organising a Hip Hop festival in their community to promote Hip Hop as an alternative to youth violence and discrimination and to claim more public and safe spaces where young people could freely express themselves. During the festival they organised a short public debate about young people's daily reality.

For the year 2008, the participants offered to give break-dance workshops combined with critical reflection on youth violence and discrimination to young people in other communities. Two of them are now engaged as youth educators in CFO's Youth Club.

5.3.2.2   Group 2: La Bolivar

This group consisted of fifteen to twenty-five participants, out of which eight were girls and seventeen were boys. They chose early pregnancy and sexual discrimination as the main issues they wanted to research. During the process the problem of sexual abuse came up so strongly that specific attention was also given to this issue. They mainly reflected on these problems through participatory theatre and drama.

We reached the young people of La Bolivar with the help of another NGO who had been working in this community for many years. Their social worker introduced us to Niña Nicoleta, a fifty year old woman from the community who knew the young people very well and who was very concerned about them. She facilitated the first contact, calling the young people together in the small community house for our first visit and continued to help us during the whole process. She provided us with a lot of valuable information about the community and she often assisted with workshops and excursions. It was in great part thanks

to Niña Nicoleta that so many young people participated. She was known by all people in the community and parents entrusted their children to her.

More girls participated in this group than in the group of La Uruguay. Yet, eight girls compared to seventeen boys is still very few. It was easier for the girls from La Bolivar, because they became part of a newly formed group and did not have to integrate into an already existing group of only boys as was the case in La Uruguay. This made it less scary and more comfortable for girls to participate. Some boys also brought their sisters. Though we put in a lot of effort to invite the girls from the community and to facilitate their participation, it remained difficult to involve them. Many did not get the permission of their parents to participate, because they did not want them to hang out with boys or, because they had to do household chores. During the workshops we paid special attention to the equal participation of girls. Most girls were rather shy and found it hard to express themselves in front of the group. We sometimes organised parallel workshops for the female participants in order to give them more space and to make them feel more comfortable to express themselves. During the mixed workshops we mostly started with separate girls and boys groups, but ending the discussion together.

La Bolivar is a poor, dangerous, isolated/closed and crowed community with tiny houses separated only by very small passages. There is no public space available for young people (no park, little field or square) and the participatory workshops were organised in the small community hall where all other community activities where organised, including the vigils for (young) community members who had died. The community has a long history of youth gang violence and many of the participants were slowly getting involved with the gang or strongly sympathised with it. The majority of the participants had lost several friends or one or more family members in the gang war. Their community had been hit hard by violence with seven young people being killed in 2006 leaving its residents traumatised and in constant fear. Two of our young participants were killed by the rival gang in April 2007. The community is completely surrounded by communities ruled by the rival gang and young people are afraid to enter and leave their community.

Despite these particularly harsh circumstances and though they had never participated in any similar process before, this group participated actively and enthusiastically from the beginning to the end. They firmly decided they wanted to do research on sexual discrimination (homosexuality) and early pregnancy (insisted on by the girls of the group). In

the first phase they participated in a series of participatory workshops exploring the importance of these issues in their daily lives. During the first workshops sexual abuse seemed to be a recurring problem in the community and the team decided to give more attention to this delicate issue as well. We used different methods to help young people to express and reflect on these issues in a safe and relaxed manner such as drawing, storytelling and participatory drama. We invited external experts to provide more information about these issues to the participants. These external people (a psychologist, the coordinator of CFO's Women's Office and someone from a homosexual activist organisation) were used to do counselling and give participatory workshops to young people. Because this group showed a great potential for theatre and drama, in the second phase we hired an artist and actor who further explored these issues with them through corporeal expression and participatory drama and who, based on their reflections, expressions and testimonies, prepared a theatre piece together with the participants. This resulted in a very touching theatre piece expressing their and their community's difficulties and worries and demanding change. They presented this theatre on different occasions and in various communities.

The PAR process with this group of young people was very much guided and directed by the projects' facilitators, since the young participants did not feel prepared to take more ownership of the research process. Unlike the young participants from La Uruguay, they easily expressed their needs and interests, but they needed us to guide the critical reflection process, prepare workshops, propose methods and explore different opportunities.

5.3.2.3   Group 3: Santa Monica

This was a group of about ten to twelve participants, out of which ten were boys and two were girls. They prioritised the issue of youth violence as their main research topic. They painted two community murals and started to make a documentary about youth violence in their community.

This group initially responded best to the PAR. They exposed a high level of critical consciousness and were very articulate and expressive. Some of them had been members of leftist political youth movements such as the FMLN or the Popular Youth Block. Most of them went to school and some of them studied at the university. Apart from one boy, they were less involved or directly affected by youth gang violence. They lived in a neighbourhood

affected by gang violence, but they did not identify with the gang in any way. They were a group of rather alternative young people interested in reggae and ska music.

These participants knew each other long before their participation in the PAR process and formed a close group of friends. Some of them had been involved in other activities of CFO and introduced us to the rest of the group. They had a particular close contact with one of our team facilitators, Rutilio, who had been living in the Passionist congregation's community for years and who had known some of them for a long time.

There were only two girls in the group, but despite their small number, they were considered as absolute equals by all of the boys. They were strong and self-confident girls who participated with ease and were respected by all of the boys. They had constructed a true and equal friendship and were not treated differently as was the case in the other groups. No special effort was needed for these girls to express themselves and be listened to. Yet, because they formed a close group of friends, it was difficult to involve new persons in the process, boys or girls alike, because they easily felt like outsiders.

This group of young people was particularly interested in art and painting. We facilitated a process of critical reflection through the elaboration of community paintings. They started by painting two wonderful community walls expressing the violence in their neighbourhoods and their wishes for a more peaceful future. In the second phase they planned to make a documentary about youth violence, remembering El Salvador's violent history, recollecting their own testimonies and doing interviews with community members and local authorities. They participated in several workshops in which they learned how to carry out interviews, how to film, and how to use a simple computer programme for making and editing a documentary. These young people, while being very confident and expressive, had little patience and found it difficult to put their ideas into practice. Yet, with the help of the team facilitators and some professionals (experienced in making documentaries) I believe they would have overcome these difficulties.

However, because of a (minor) conflict with the team about drinking alcohol during the project's activities the group stubbornly refused to continue the process. The conflict represents yet another example of how the cultural/educational system in El Salvador teaches young people that power is domination and that conflicts can best be resolved through force,

not dialogue. On the other hand, I believe that, as a team, we did not know how to handle this conflict successfully and we needed a little more training in conflict resolution.

This particular tension was part of a longer story. Throughout the process there had been various minor conflicts between the participants and the team facilitators. The conflicts were always about little things which young people then turned into huge issues. For example: We had organised a two-day camp to initiate the PAR process. On our way to the camp site we distributed sandwiches in the bus. By accident we had started to distribute them at the back of the bus where the other groups were sitting. The young people from Santa Monica immediately accused the team of preferring the other groups over them. They reacted rather 'childishly', and became really angry. It was impossible to talk with them and they remained angry for almost the rest of the weekend. During the rest of the process a few more little tensions emerged over similarly little issues. They were always rather stubborn and not really open to dialogue, but we always managed to overcome our difficulties. Finally, we had some issues about alcohol drinking. CFO allowed young people to smoke, but not to drink (and certainly no strong alcoholic drinks) during its activities. On several occasions we caught the participants of Santa Monica with alcoholic drinks. We did not make too much of a fuss about it, but we did talk to them about the fact that we were a bit disappointed that we could not organise any activity without bringing alcohol behind our backs. They did not really listen. When we caught them once more, as a team, we decided that we might have to be somewhat firmer and have a more serious dialogue with them. We thought about cancelling their upcoming night-party (a one night stay over in CFO with music, drinks, food, movies and no sleep), yet, after a long discussion, the team decided to talk once more with them. We informed them that we were actually thinking about cancelling the party, but that we wanted to talk one last time with them, hoping we would be able to talk it through in a constructive dialogue. It did not work out. They got very angry and left. The next day they did not show up for the workshop and they refused to talk to us for several weeks. We told them that, if they wanted, we were still open for discussion and for continuing the process, but they remained resentful for quite a long time.

Evaluating what happened, the team came to the following conclusions. First of all, we recognised that we had not handled the situation well and regretted having lost a group of talented young people. Secondly, we felt that the problem was related to the difficulty of doing participatory work in an anti-participatory context of authoritarianism and domination. It is hard to work according to a participatory understanding of power (empathy, tolerance,

dialogue, democratic decision-making) with young people who are used to engaging in social relations in which contrary values (domination, force) prevail. Several times we asked ourselves what to do when working according to participatory norms does not work out and the group does not respond. Most members of the team felt we could not work in a participatory way with young people without trying ourselves to be 'examples' of participatory behaviour. Yet we also felt that, in some cases, and in particular with the group of Santa Monica, they just 'walked all over us'. We sometimes had the impression that the only way to make them respect some basic values such as, among others, listening, respecting others, and caring for their environment, was by imposing them. At times we even wondered whether it would be better and more realistic to start working in a less-participatory way (imposing rules and values) in order to slowly evolve to a more participatory atmosphere.

Thirdly, most team members, including myself, believed that the conflicts with the young people from Santa Monica could be traced back to one important underlying cause: that of different team members having different concepts about youth participation and participatory work. Rutilio, one of the team's educators, had known them for a longer time and was the main facilitator of the group. He understood youth participation in terms of letting young people completely free to do whatever they feel like without establishing any rules. The other facilitators understood participation as a process of equal decision-making in which young people are involved as active social agents and which is necessarily based in values of respect, tolerance, dialogue, equality and democracy. They agreed that, for a process to be truly participatory, some basic rules (such as listening to one another, respecting one another and their environment, not ridiculing or being aggressive towards others) had to be established together with the young people. Young people had to adhere to these agreements so as to ensure that all young people could participate fully and feel comfortable. When Rutilio returned to his homeland, the two other facilitators took over the facilitation of the PAR process. They insisted more on young people's compliance with participatory values of tolerance, dialogue and respect and the young participants suddenly felt they had lost some of their freedom to do whatever they wanted to. They resisted the project facilitators, giving them a hard time, lacking respect and refusing any dialogue. The minor controversy about drinking alcohol during project activities escalated, in great part, because of this disagreement among team members about what it meant exactly to work in a truly participatory way and because young people, from the beginning had got used to a complete lack of rules.

5.3.2.4   Group 4: El Huembes

This group consisted of eight to ten boys between ten and eighteen years of age. They prioritised violence and sexuality as the social issues of main importance and relevance to them.

They were a very united group of friends living in the same neighbourhood and knowing each other since they were born. Among the group members there was a strong solidarity, but also a lot of bullying against one of the youngest group members, a little boy aged ten. We had got to know this group of young people during our outreach work in the evening. They said they felt bored and were interested in any kind of process that would be fun and entertaining.

There were no girls in the group. The boys were not welcoming girls at all despite our encouragement to invite female friends. They were a very closed group of boys behaving in a very macho and sexist way towards girls. This discouraged the girls of the community from participating. Rather than trying to involve girls, we decided to focus on trying to change their ideas and attitudes about girls and women.

These boys had never participated in any other organised activities before and this experience was new for them. Initially, the group was very motivated to participate. We started with several participatory workshops on violence. The first workshops went well. We used drama and drawing and they actively participated. But, after a while they lost interest, started to come late to the workshops and seemed to come just to have some fun and joke around. We evaluated the workshops with them and it turned out that they got rather bored of the theme of violence. They preferred to continue to work on sexuality and sexual relations. Given their rather extreme sexist attitudes, the team agreed that working on sexuality, including boy-girl relationships, was not a bad idea. In the beginning they were again a bit more involved in the workshops, but then they lost interest again. Another evaluation led to the conclusion that they enjoy drawing, but that they were not interested in researching or reflecting on any particular topic. What they were really interested in was sports and playing football. The team had invested a lot of time and energy in the group and started to feel a bit tired and discouraged. We played with the idea of looking for an artist who could teach them to draw

cartoons, allowing them to combine their humour with their interest in drawing and, maybe eventually, motivating them to draw cartoons about their everyday reality. Yet, the project's funds were limited and we did not find a teacher. We decided to stop the process. We talked honestly with the young participants explaining to them that, unfortunately, our project could not offer them what they needed and wanted. CFO had opted for a 'critical consciousness raising' project and while sports activities were occasionally organised, these were not part of our main project goals. We told them we felt it made no sense to continue, given the fact that some of them did not show up most of the time, that often they came late, did not participate and seemed to be interested only in refreshments. Most of them understood our decision. They said they would miss the fun, but were not sad about not continuing the PAR.

So, finally we had to admit that PAR was not what these boys were interested in. While PAR can be fun and exciting, eventually it also demands a lot of effort and concentration. The PAR process did not form part of their school programme, but was organised in their leisure time. As a leisure activity it asks a lot of engagement. For the young people of El Huembes PAR was not what they preferred to do in their free time. Although PAR worked out fine with two other groups of young people, even with those groups we had to acknowledge the difficulty of finding an equilibrium between just relaxing and having fun and moments of serious effort and engagement. PAR can be rewarding but is, after all, a demanding undertaking that asks a lot of concentration and perseverance.

5.4   Conclusions

My research is entirely based on the young people's PAR processes. My conclusions emerged out of my participant observation in the young people's PAR and out of the young people reflections on its empowering impact. As such, this chapter functions as an important background for understanding the next ones in which I analyse and interpret my research data and formulate my main arguments.

In this chapter I explained that the young people involved in this research lived in an extremely unequal and authoritarian society and in an enduring culture of violence and fear. Growing up in such a context profoundly shaped their worldview and strongly defined how they thought, felt and acted. Young people's everyday experiences of violence and discrimination spilled over into and strongly influenced the PAR. Not only did the different

groups prioritise different forms of violence, they had also strongly internalised prevailing values of domination and authoritarianism and often behaved accordingly in and beyond the PAR process. PAR fundamentally starts from the daily reality of the participants involved. Without taking into account the historical, socio-cultural and political context of El Salvador, it would be impossible to properly comprehend the young people's PAR, the difficulties encountered in the process and its empowering impact.

6   Methodology

6.1   Introduction

In this chapter I outline the methodological framework of my research. However, it is important to re-emphasise first that the young people's PAR and my own PhD research are two different processes. The young people conducted PAR about violence and discrimination. My own PhD study looked at the outcomes of the young people's PAR in terms of empowerment. I aimed for my research to be as participatory as possible, so, in a sense, it is possible to say that I did participatory research about (the transformative impact of) young people's PAR.

My research is firmly grounded in a participatory and feminist methodology, both of which largely share the same principles of equality, reciprocity, partiality and valuing the voice of ordinary people (Pain et al. 2007). Since I have elaborated in detail on participatory research elsewhere in this thesis, I have not organised this chapter around the description of the main characteristics of participatory and feminist methodology respectively. Rather, referring back simultaneously to both methodological frameworks (sometimes accentuating both, sometimes drawing more on one or the other) the remainder of this chapter is built up around three important participatory and feminist themes: engagement / reciprocity, positionality / reflexivity and ethics. I commence with a theoretical outline of each of these themes in order to draw them all back together in the second part of this chapter justifying my own research decisions and practices.

Because children and young people are at the centre of my research, before touching upon any methodological issue, I start this chapter by considering the different ways in which children and young people have been perceived in the past and with positioning myself in respect to these different perceptions. This is important, because the way we look at children and young people affects the way we listen to them, and the ways in which researchers perceive the status of children and youth influences their choice of methods and methodology (Punch 2002, James 1995).

6.2   Understanding and doing research with children and young people

Children and young people have always been ambiguously represented as intrinsically good and vulnerable or inherently bad and a threat to society (Wyn and White 1997). Children and young people have been viewed simultaneously as creative and destructive forces (De Boeck and Honwana 2005), as our hope and future, but also as some kind of dangerous and violent monstrosities (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005). "Young people stand for many things at once: the errors of the past, the terrors of the present, and the prospect of the future. They are an ambiguous threat and promise" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005: 33).

The academic study of childhood and youth reflects this ambiguity. In the childhood literature the evil child is set against the innocent child. Jenks (1996) refers to these representations as the Dionysian and Apollonian child respectively. The Dionysian image of childhood assumes that evil and corruption are primary elements in the constitution of 'the child' (James et al. 1998). They are drawn to pleasure and self-gratification and lack any kind of self-control and sensitivity to others' needs. Childhood is therefore to be exorcised by programmes of discipline and punishment (James et al. 1998). The innocent or Apollonian child on the contrary, is essentially pure in heart and uncorrupted by the world they have entered. The Apollonian child has a natural goodness and clarity of vision (Jenks 1996, James et al. 1998). Rather than being shaped, controlled and constrained, as in the Dionysian model, they are to be nurtured, protected and enabled to develop their own innate natural goodness. The discourse of the evil child is echoed in contemporary criminology and public moralising (James et al. 1998), while the discourse of the innocent child laid the foundations of contemporary child-centred education, special needs provision, and a whole host of adaptive childrearing practices that are tailored to the needs of the individual (Murphy 2007). Both discourses about childhood are variously supported and are reinforced by different religious and political ideologies and scientific doctrines at different moments in time (Jenks 1996).

We find the same ambiguity in youth cultural studies. In the 1950s and 60s in the United States and in Britain, the academic interest in youth developed within criminology, fuelled by moral panics concerning the nuisance value of young people on the urban streets of western societies. Initially, research on youth was marked by a preoccupation with delinquency and associated with the study of other so-called condemned powerless groups such as the working class, migrants and the criminal (Valentine et al. 1998). The message seemed to be that all young people were potentially delinquent or deviant (Valentine et al. 1998). In the mid 1970s

a distinctive contribution to youth cultural studies was made by members of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). Inspired by a Marxist or Gramscian perspective, these studies accentuated young people's agency and emphasized young people's capacity for rebellion, opposition, resistance and counter-hegemony to dominant cultures (Valentine et al. 1998, De Boeck and Honwana 2005).

Despite a longstanding interest and preoccupation with children and young people, the voices of children and young people themselves have often gone unheard within policy and academic forums (Barron 2000 cited in Gaskell 2008). Children and young people have not just been excluded from academic research and policy matters; their voices and experiences have been controlled (and manipulated) (James and Prout 1990, James et al. 1998), because traditionally children and young people's lives have been explored through the views and understandings of their adult caretakers (Christensen and James 2004, O' Kane). Childhood and youth have generally been perceived in opposition to adulthood (De Boeck and Honwana 2005); as a permanent state of becoming rather than as a legitimate state of being-in-and-for-the-world (Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1998). Adult cognition, morality, and emotions were the golden standards against which children's and young people's ways of thinking, feeling, responding, and being in the world were measured (Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1998). Because of this traditional socialization perspective, children and young people tended to be viewed as incomplete adults and not as real, full persons who understand what life is actually about (Wulff 1995).

In the 1990s, with the 'new social studies of childhood', a different view of children and young people emerged. Insisting on the importance of understanding children and young people as active agents (James et al. 1998), these studies call for children to be understood as social actors shaping (at least at micro level) as well as shaped by their circumstances. This 'new' paradigm (James and Prout 1990b) represents a move away from the concept of socialization in which children and young people are seen as mere adults-in-the-waiting (James et al. 1998). The new social studies of childhood insist that children and young people are actively involved in the construction of their lives and their worlds and that they should be treated as people of substance and not as the receptacles of socialisation and education by adults (Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1998, De Boeck and Honwana 2005, Wulff 1995). As a result, the new social studies of childhood involves an important shift from research *on* to research *with* children (James et al. 1998).

At the same time as recognising children and young people's agency, the new social studies of childhood insist that childhood and youth are historically situated social and cultural constructions (Aries 1962, James and Prout 1990, De Boeck and Honwana 2005). The process of transition between childhood and youth and the period where youth ends and adulthood begins are not the same everywhere, but varies across and within societies and cultures over time (De Boeck and Honwana 2005). Each culture defines childhood and youth in terms of its own set of meanings and practices (James and Prout 1990). But, even within the same culture, children and young people cannot be considered a homogeneous group. Children and youth are heterogeneous categories impacted by age, gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality (Matthews 2001, Young and Barrett 2001) and with varied and multifaceted experiences and expectations (De Boeck and Honwana 2005).

I identify with an understanding of children and young people that fully recognises their agency. But, at the same time, I believe it is important also to admit that young people's agency is subject to pressures and limits arising from their material position and relations in society (Wyn and White 1997). I agree with De Boeck and Honwana (2005) that children and young people are *both* makers and breakers of society and, simultaneously, are made and broken by it (De Boeck and Honwana 2005); that they are "at once an emergent influence and submerged by power" (Coulter 1998 cited in De Boeck and Honwana 2005:3). I consider young people to be diverse among themselves, similar to adults, not inferior, but often possessing different competencies (see also James et al., 1998). They are vulnerable, because they are enmeshed in unequal power relations and social structures, but also, and above all, they are eminently capable (see also Winton 2005). This way of approaching young people ties in with a poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity as constituted in discourse, as multiple and as always in the process of becoming. It acknowledges that society profoundly shapes subjectivities through disciplinary power (including discourse), but also recognises the ever present possibility of agency and resistance, albeit within certain constrains. As will be outlined below, I have tried to convert such an understanding of children and young people into my research practice.

6.3   Engagement and reciprocity

Contrary to more conventional extractive research systems, both participatory and feminist research aim at generating and constructing knowledge from below *with* the researched, rather

than about them (Beazley and Ennew 2006, Kesby et al. 2005, McDowell 1992). Such an approach explicitly values the voices of ordinary people as experts and authoritative on their own lives (Pain et al. 2007, Kobayashi 1994). Consequently, feminist and participatory epistemologies, more than other research approaches, validate alternative sources of knowledge such as subjective experiences, (WGSG 1997:87 cited in Parr 1998) the personal, the private, and the everyday, and both feminist and participatory researchers focus on disempowered social groups.

Importantly, feminist and participatory research approaches do not simply aim at describing or analyzing social reality, but also imply a commitment to changing that reality (Kesby et al. 2005). Feminist scholars have been "unabashedly forward in using their work to engage the political by challenging academic norms and by aiming to bring about social transformation" (Rose 1993 cited in Kobayashi 1994:73). Feminist researchers have always insisted that their research projects are meant to have practical implications for the improvement of women's lives and they developed the controversial notion that research can and should contribute to the liberation of women and other socially excluded groups (Harding and Norberg 2005, Gibson-Graham 1994). Feminist methodology and methods, then, are not just an alternative research practice, they are part of a political project and define an approach to political change (Kobayashi 1994). Feminists have contributed to politics by jumping scales (Cahill 2004, 2006) and by binding everyday, personal experiences to wider networks of power and privilege (Pain 2009).

Similarly, participatory researchers are most explicit about their aim of facilitating empowerment and instigating action. They measure the validity of their research not only in scientific terms, but also by the extent to which the research process results in positive outcomes for participants including, among others, a sharing of experiences, a process of collective learning, the challenging of harmful myths and behavioural norms, and improved communication and organisation skills (Kesby et al.2005), all of which enable them to take action on issues and problems that arise (Pain and Francis 2003). Rachel Pain and Peter Francis describe PAR as a social justice and feminist project that is concerned with shifting power and bringing new voices into the academy. They insist that PAR is about unmasking exclusionary practices that reproduce and maintain structural inequities (Pain and Francis 2003, Pain 2003).

Valuing subjective, personal and everyday experiences and aiming to bring about individual empowerment and social transformation, feminist and participatory research generally appeal to qualitative methods. Feminist and participatory researchers coincide on an insistence on collaborative methods; methods in which the typically unequal power relations between the researcher and her or his informants are broken down. The most common methods advocated by feminists are in-depth interviews and ethnographic research (McDowell 1992), because, so they argue, these kinds of research methods allow for less exploitative and more egalitarian relationship between the researcher and the research participants. Feminists challenge the myth of detachment and the 'conventional' argument that involvement and closeness to those with whom we are doing research 'biases' the research results (McDowell 1992). They encourage a deeper connection with the communities involved in research (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1988 cited in Kobayashi 1994). For feminist scholars, inter-subjectivity rather than objectivity characterizes the ideal relationship between the researcher and the researched (McDowell 1992).

Participatory researchers also explicitly aim at bringing about equal, caring and responsible relationships with their research participants. Inspired by participatory approaches to development (Pain et al. 2007), participatory researchers traditionally appeal to participatory techniques such as diagramming and mapping (Kesby 2000a 2000b, Moser and McIlwaine 1999, Young and Barrett 2001), but also increasingly experiment with drawing, drama, photovoice, music and video (see also PLA notes 29 special issue: Performance and Participation, Leyshon 2002, O'Kane 2004). These methods are considered to have 'empowering potential' and to be particularly suitable for conducting research with hard-to-reach groups (Pain and Francis 2003, Kesby et al. 2005) such as, among others, marginalised young people.

6.4 Self-reflexivity and Positionality

6.4.1 Situated knowledges

The need to be reflexive has been most thoroughly defended and explicated by feminist geographers (Rose 1997). Reflexivity is advocated by feminist writers as a strategy for situating knowledges, that is, as a means of avoiding the false neutrality and claimed universality of much academic knowledge (Rose 1997). Behind this claim for greater self-reflexivity lies the common interest of feminist, post-modern and poststructuralist theorists in

the social construction of knowledges and discourses and the relations of power embedded within them. In this line of thinking, feminist scholarship has questioned the political basis of knowledge, or more specifically, the relationships between epistemology, power and knowledge (Nast 1994). Feminists have claimed that the sort of knowledge made depends on who its makers are and that all knowledge is produced in specific circumstances and that those circumstances shape it in some way (Rose 1997). The two most cited feminists challenging the idea of objective and value-free science, Donna Haraway (1991, 1998) and Sandra Harding (1991), fiercely argued that all knowledge is marked by its origin. They insist that to deny this marking is to make false claims to universality which is typical for knowledges that subjugate other knowledges and their producers (Rose 1997). Oppressive knowledges, indeed, are knowledges that pretend to be universal and that claim to see everything from nowhere (Rose 1997). Haraway refers to this so-called universality as the 'god-trick' (Haraway 1988:582) and argues that such a view of an infinite vision is an illusion. Both Donna Haraway and Sandra Harding prefer knowledges that are limited, specific and partial (Haraway 1988 1991, Harding 1991, Rose 1997). Contrary to the god-trick of claiming to see the whole world while remaining distanced from it; limited, subjugated and critical knowledges work from their situatedness to produce partial perspectives on the world. They see the world from a specific location, embodied, particular and never innocent (Rose 1997)[7]. The aim of situating knowledges is to produce non-overgeneralizing knowledges that can learn from other kinds of knowledges (Rose 1997). Situated knowledges are about "elaborate specificity and difference and the loving care people might take to learn how to see faithfully from another's point of view" (Haraway 1991:190).

6.4.2 Co-constructed knowledges

Situated knowledges are negotiated and constructed in the research encounter in a dialogue between researchers and research participants, resisting the single authority of the academic.

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[7] Donna Haraway understands relativism as the perfect mirror twin of totalization in the ideologies of objectivity. Relativism and totalization are both 'god tricks' promising vision from everywhere and nowhere (Haraway 1988). Relativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally (Haraway 1988). The alternative to relativism is partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology (Haraway 1988).

For poststructuralist feminist academics, research does not transparently mirror selves and context, since there is no prior reality or self to gain access to (Gibson Graham 1994). Instead, "Researcher, researched and research make each other" (Rose 1997:316). Research is not a process of discovery or revelation; rather, it is a process of conversation, (dialogue) and performance, both metaphors of creation and interaction (Gibson-Graham 1994). Accounts of a 'real' world, feminists argue, do not depend on a logic of 'discovery', but on a power-charged social relation of 'conversation' (Haraway 1988).

While early versions of participatory research and practice held a presumption of collaborative knowledge *discovery*, most participatory researchers now consider the research process as a process of collaborative knowledge *production* (Pain et al. 2007). They increasingly agree that knowledges are performed inter-subjectively in and through the research process (Kesby 2007b, Gibson-Graham 1994, Jupp 2007).

6.4.3   Self-reflexivity and power differences

Situated, co-constructed knowledges are not given, but must be carefully developed and their technologies revised and invented (Haraway 1991). For feminist writers, reflexivity is one of those situating technologies (Rose 1997). Reflexivity means that "[w]e [] recognise and take account of our own position, as well as that of our research participants and *write this in to our research practice"* (McDowell 1992a:409 original emphases). McDowell's use of the term 'position' is key here. Positionality means considering "the role of the (multiple) self, showing how a researcher's positionality (in terms of race, gender, age, nationality, social and economic status, sexuality) influences the 'data' collected and thus the information that becomes coded as 'knowledge'" (Madge 1993 cited in Rose 1997:308). All these different facets of the self are articulated as 'positions' in a multidimensional geography of power relations (Rose 1997).

Arguing for the necessity of clearly articulating our critical positioning within existing power structures (McDowell, 1992), feminists have been acutely sensitive to their own privileged relation to the women they have studied. Very often, extreme power differentials are the norm when working with oppressed groups (Nast 1994) and it is difficult to escape the unfortunate irony that research and political action meant to shift the social balance of power often begins

from a position of differential power between researcher and research participants (Kobayashi 1994).

Researchers' privilege is not only understood as entailing greater access to material resources and status, but also as the power inherent in producing knowledge about others (Rose 1997) also referred to as the 'politics of representation' (Kobayashi 1994). Most often, the researcher occupies a privileged position in that she or he decides what questions to ask, interprets interviews and observational material and decides what, where and in what form it should be presented (McLafferty 1995).

> "In producing representations of women [or other socially marginalised groups], we are inextricably bound up with questions of authority, communication and representations and the positions generated by such questions are inherently political" (Rose 1997:307).

These debates about authority, communication and representation have contributed to a greater self-consciousness about research methods (McDowell 1992, Nicholson 1990). They confirmed the need for methods that allow academics to engage constructively with power differences between researchers and researched (Harding and Norberg 2005). While earlier feminist attempts to eliminate power differences have proved impossible (Harding and Norberg 2005), there do exist more collaborative and responsible ways for researchers to negotiate relations with their research participants through, for example, the use of qualitative methods recognising the relationship with others as one of mutual concern and trust (Kobayashi 1994). Of course, the adoption of qualitative methods alone does not release the scholar from exploitative relations (McDowell 1992) and the acceptance of subjectivity, involvement and interpersonal relationships in the research process is as likely to raise difficult questions for researchers as do conventional methodologies (McDowell 1992, Holland 2007).

> "It is in the nature of ethical problems that they are not generally clear-cut and readily or finally resolvable. It is in the nature of fieldwork that you are likely to find yourself up to the waist in a morass of personal ties, intimate experiences and lofty and base sentiments as your own sense of decency, vanity and outrage is tried" (Daniels 1983 cited in McDowell 1992:408).

6.4.4 Recognizing the limits of Self- Reflexivity

The feminist starting point is the recognition that both researchers and researched are situated in power relations (Nast 1994) that have to be made explicit through self-reflexive positioning. Recognising that research is a messy business (Parr 1996 cited in Rose 1997), the imperative of transparent reflexivity seems to assume that this messiness can be fully understood by a transparently knowable self, separate from its transparently knowable context (Rose 1997). Some feminists, however, have pointed to the difficulty of actually being self-reflexive. Rose (1997) for example, cautions against an understanding of reflexivity in which the researcher-self is understood as a transparently knowable agent (Rose 1997) that "looks outward, to understand its place in the world, to chart its position in the arenas of knowledge production and to see its own place in the relations of power" (Rose 1997:309). Rose argues that it is impossible to fully know self and context. Assuming that self and context are transparently understandable would be as insidious as the universalizing certainty that so many feminists have critiqued (Rose 1997). Influenced by feminist reworkings of Foucault and by Butler's conceptualization of subjectivity (Butler 1990 cited in Rose 1997), Rose argues that a fragmented self can never be completely revealed by a process of self-reflection (Rose 1997). Similarly, also the research space is a "fragmented space, webbed across gaps in understanding, saturated with power, but also, paradoxically, with uncertainty: a fragile and fluid net of connections and gulfs" (Rose 1997:317). Therefore, instead of the all-seeing reflexive gaze, we can only "glance uncertainly and the fractured spaces we see [] are also part of a fragmented self" (Rose 1997:316). Recognising the fragility of research and of our own capacity to be self-reflexive, feminist research, then, is always, necessarily, about "interpretation, translation, stuttering and the partly understood" (Haraway 1988: 589).

6.4.5 Emotions

Emotional detachment, rather than engagement, has been actively encouraged within academic research. However, through the notions of positionality and self-reflexivity the research practice is now increasingly acknowledged as a personal journey and, as such, feminist epistemologies have facilitated an attention to the role of researchers' emotion in the research process (see Hubbard et al. 2001, Widdowfield 2000, Bennett 2004, Bondi 2005).

While feminist researchers challenge the possibility and indeed the desirability of objectivity and neutrality in the process of knowledge production (Rose 1997, England 1994), the act of self-reflexive positionality is often restricted to the social and political self of the researcher and rarely includes an intimate understanding of the emotional self (Gaskell 2008) (with the noticeable exceptions of Wilkins 1993, Bennett 2004 2009, Gaskell 2009, Lobo 2010). Despite feminist researchers using critical self-reflexivity as a tool to underline the personal (and political) nature of research practice, emotions are still rarely conceptualised as productive in research (Lobo 2010).

Yet, research is undoubtedly an emotional experience (Kleinman and Copp 1993, Bondi 2005, Parr 1998). Emotions affect the research from beginning to end (Bennett 2004). Firstly, even before data collection begins, something about the emotional subjectivities of academics motivates them to engage with specific issues and adopt particular research agendas (Bennett 2004). Such an emotional engagement also, in part, defines our philosophical and methodological frameworks (Gaskell 2008). Secondly, an emotional relationship between researcher and participant is likely to develop when research is based upon qualitative research methods which entail a close and intense contact between researcher and researched. Thirdly, also the act of writing-up research after fieldwork is, for most, an enduring emotional activity (see Tolia-Kelly 2006).

As mentioned above, feminist and participatory research alters the way in which knowledge is produced through a focus on relationships. Paying explicit attention to relationships, they prioritise mutual respect, dignity and connectedness between researcher and researched which "requires researchers to act from our hearts and minds, to acknowledge our interpersonal bonds with each other" (Ellis 2007:4). Consequently, the most significant principles of feminist and participatory research are closely related to the personal behaviour and attitudes of the researcher such as careful listening and being empathetic (see Beazley and Ennew 2006). Acting from our hearts and trying to empathically listen to and connect with our research participants, we rely not only on our cognitive functioning, but also on our emotional capacities.

The greatest challenge, however, remains in recognising that emotions have epistemological significance; to understand what role emotions play in producing critical research (Bennett 2004). Being emotional is a way of knowing about and acting in the social world and is just as significant for how we make sense of our respondents' experiences as our cognitive skills

(Hubbard et al. 2001). "Knowledge is not something objective and removed from our bodies, experiences and emotions but is created through our experiences of the world as a sensuous and affective activity" (Hubbard et al. 2001:126). Just as our observations direct, shape and partially define our emotions, so too our emotions direct, shape, and partially define our observations (Jaggar 2009). "Observation is not simply a passive process of absorbing impressions or recording stimuli: instead it is an activity of selection and interpretation. What is selected and how it is interpreted are influenced by emotional attitudes" (Jaggar 2009:56). The emotions of both the respondent and the researcher influence and inform the understandings of the topic under investigation and so researchers have to look at the ways in which emotions impact their understanding of the data (Hubbard et al. 2001). Emotions that mediate fieldwork through both the researched and the researcher can provide our research with clues, insights and information that help to better understand the social worlds of those we study (Bennett 2004). As researchers, our emotions are crucial in what we allow ourselves to hear and for how we make sense of information within our own personal frame of reference (Gaskell 2008). Researchers do not simply have to explore their own emotions and those of others, but should also explore how their feelings connect with those of their research participants (Bondi 2005). If researchers understand why they feel as they do towards what is being raised by the research participants, analysis can be more intimate, without appropriating the voices of the participants (Gaskell 2008). Recognizing that emotions are always present in research relationships anyway, it is a lack of awareness of emotions that constrains us in our research, rather than the emotions themselves (Gaskell 2008).

The reluctance to engage with, and write explicitly about, emotions and the emotional self obviously relates to the historical association of emotion with irrationality (Lloyd 1984 cited in Gaskell 2008), but also, importantly, to feelings of vulnerability that manifest from emotional expression (Kleinman and Copp 1993). An academic environment that is not supportive of emotional awareness and expression is more often than not experienced as an unsafe emotional space (Gaskell 2008) and does not encourage researchers to critically engage with their most intimate feelings. The challenge is how to critically engage with our emotions in an academic environment that, on the whole, trains researchers to be objective and extract out emotion; "How to explore and use emotions that appear and are felt so personally, within an academic discipline that requires us to structure our communication in such a way that others can make sense of it" (Hubbard et al. 2001:135). Katy Bennett (2009) remarks that, though recognising that her feelings affect her understanding and writing, she is not sure how and she feels ill-equipped to be particularly rigorous in explaining how emotions

matter in her research. How to reflect on and critically engage with our emotions in the research context becomes ever more complicated if we take into account Rose's insistence on recognizing the uncertainty and fragility in every act of self-reflexivity, being particularly relevant for something as complex and elusive as our emotions.

6.5 Ethics

Leaving ethics to the end of this chapter I do not mean ethics to be of less importance. Undeniably, ethics is central to all research and to all we do, and not do, in daily life. I believe ethics has been the leading thread throughout this whole methodology chapter and this last section is to be considered as a summary and complementary note to what has run through all the previous ones.

Generally speaking, ethics is defined as "a framework of thought concerned with morality and with moral choices between things and actions seen as good or bad" (Stanley and Wise 1993 cited in White and Baily 2004: 131). In research, it is "the application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful and to be fair" (Sieber 1993 cited in Morrow and Richards 1996:313). According to Cloke et al. (2000) the main ethical considerations in social research are:

- Informed consent: the researcher informs the researched about the research in a comprehensive and accurate way, and the research participants give their unconstrained consent
- Privacy: the researcher resists making things public which are said and done for private consumption
- Harm: the researcher avoids negative consequences both for the people studied and for others
- Exploitation: the researcher avoids 'using' respondents to gain information whilst giving little or nothing in return.
- Sensitivity to cultural difference and gender

Seemingly straightforward in theory, these issues are much more complex in practice. Ethics, after all, covers a much broader domain that cannot be reduced to the above mentioned issues.

6.5.1 Feminist and Participatory Ethics

Morally adequate research practices include an understanding that ethics and epistemology are intertwined. Knowledge building is not just about constructing ideas or theories, but is also concerned with who is constructing knowledge, how it is done and for what purpose (White and Bailey 2004). Ways of doing (methodologies) need to reflect a sense of moral responsibility for all parties involved in the research process, which, in turn, constitutes morally responsible ways of knowing (epistemologies) (White and Bailey 2004). Participatory and feminist researchers have, as outlined above, a lot in common, and this is no less so in regard to ethics. What makes participatory and feminist research distinctive are not just the methods used to gather data, but the philosophical orientation of the researcher, the altered relationships between the researcher and the research participants and the unique purpose of inquiry (see White and Bailey 2004). Feminist and participatory researchers advocate non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian and non-exploitative research relationships (Reinharz 1983 cited in White and Bailey 2004) and the act of self-reflexivity itself is a way of acknowledging ethical concerns about 'unequal positioning', 'partial knowledge' and 'unfair representation' (White and Bailey 2004). Replacing the search for an essentialist truth by a desire "to see the world through different windows and to hear the world via a polyphony of different voices" (Cloke et al. 2000: 136), feminist and participatory research reject the idea of neutrality partly on the grounds that a positivist, universalizing gaze treats people as objects instead of treating people as people (see Cloke et al. 2000).

Also central to participatory and feminist ethics is a presumption of engaged scholarship. Both participatory and feminist researchers believe in the transformative potential of research and argue that it is unethical to look in on circumstances of pain and poverty and yet do nothing (see Cahill et al. 2007). Feminist and participatory ethics involve an ethical stance against neutrality and relativism (Cahill 2007) while at the same time (through their recognition of the richness of learning between differently positioned knowledges) inviting radically different cultural and philosophical sensibilities to participate in academic thinking (see also Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1998).

Many researchers choose participatory/feminist methodologies for ethical reasons, yet this choice does not circumvent ethical dilemmas (Cahill 2007). A feminist-inspired and participatory ethics raises new ethical dilemmas which often collide with the conventional conception of ethics as a universal code or with institutional ethics procedures (Cahill et al.

2007). Researchers are increasingly subject to a restrictive, inflexible, and top-down view of what ethics should be, while a participatory ethics emphasizes an emergent process of negotiating research ethics with participants (Cahill et al. 2007). This reveals the contradictions between a view of ethics as embodied, engaged, and negotiated collectively, and the view of ethics as "a universal one-size-fits-all code of practice" (Cahill et al. 2007:307). In opposition to such a fixed universal code, and as an alternative, feminists have proposed an ethic of care and responsibility involving fundamentally different moral concepts (Lawson 2007, Halse and Honey 2005, Gilligan 1977). An ethic of care "comprises a morality based on responsibility and relationships rather than rights and rules, is grounded in concrete circumstances rather than abstractions, and is expressed as 'an activity of care' rather than a set of rules" (Halse and Honey 2005:2157). An ethic of care has produced much polemic (White and Baily 2004) and has been criticized for being susceptible to being reduced to a vague, unruly form of empathy (Halse and Honey 2005), but, most importantly here, an ethic of care is a about concern for others, particularly those least mobile and vulnerable (White and Bailey 2004). A care ethics approach to research demands that we take seriously the ways in which our work is 'for' others, and build connection and responsibility as key values in our research approaches (Lawson 2007). It is a source of inspiration for feminists and participatory researchers alike who challenge an understanding of research ethics as a set of law-like moral principles and procedures that are trans-historical and trans-cultural (Walker 1997 cited in Halse and Honey 2005). A participatory/feminist ethics argues that notions of ethics are multiple and contextual and best understood in practice (Cahill et al. 2007) and is in favour of adjusting research practices according to different contexts/times and different interpersonal circumstances (Cloke et al. 2000). Such an ethical view recognizes the fact that ethical decisions are fluid, ongoing and situated in everyday life (White and Bailey 2004) and therefore should be addressed in a situated manner (Cloke et al. 2000) often needing on the spot solutions (White and Bailey 2004). The ethics process should be an ongoing collaborative process shaped by dialogue and caring, responsive relationships. A participatory / feminist ethics of care points to the centrality of emotions, in that ethical openness is only possible if we develop an emotional openness towards others (Lobo 2010). Morality is not a purely cognitive process, but has strong affective components as well (Thrift 2005).

6.5.2 Ethics in research with young people

In terms of methodology, researchers need to think carefully about the standpoint from which they are studying children and the ethical implications of that standpoint. Mainstream developmental psychology often perceived children to be less competent than adults and this reflected a cultural reluctance to take children seriously (Morrow and Richards 1996). With the paradigm shift to considering children and young people as social agents and eminently capable, research with children increasingly claims respect for children's and young people's competencies and allows young people's voices to be heard.

There has been a growing debate about the extent to which research with children and young people differs from research with adults or with other vulnerable groups (Morrow 2008). Arguments about the need for specific ethics in social research with children relate to questions about the difference of doing research with children and adults (see also Punch 2002). Because of the power differences between the adult researcher and the young research participants, it is generally accepted that some ethical issues present themselves differently or more sharply when the research participant is a child or a young person (O' Kane 2004). While ethical considerations applying to adult research participants can and must apply to children, some extra care and attention are to be given to ethics in research with children and young people (Morrow and Richards 1996), because they are potentially vulnerable to exploitation in interaction with adults and therefore adult researchers have more responsibilities towards them.

6.5.3 Ethical Modesty

As researchers we are not all-knowing and all-seeing (Rose 1997). We must be able to admit that we cannot know or control all the consequences of our research actions (White and Bailey 2004). Certainly, we cannot but impact on those with whom we come into contact and those we have talked to, but often much of this impact is unknown (Cloke et al. 2000). Each research process has a multitude of effects on all involved, but we might be unaware of these effects in the medium or long-term (Gibson-Graham 1994, White and Bailey 2004). The negotiations that are part of the research process are not fully knowable and the effects of an interview, a publication or a presentation are impossible to fully predict. This impossibility does not absolve researchers from the obligation to work in an ethical manner (Karaway 1991

and Keith 1992 cited in Rose 1997), yet, again, it urges us to remain modest of what we are capable of (in terms of controlling harm, for example).

6.6   Doing Research with Young People in El Salvador: Methodological issues in researching the empowering impact of PAR

In what follows I outline my research approach. I start by justifying my research methods and ethical decisions. I then continue by reflecting on my positionality and on how different aspects of my identity have influenced the research process. Finally, I end this chapter by questioning the 'ultimate goal' of my research, that is, whether or not my research made a difference for the young people involved.

6.6.1   Methods

As an academic researcher interested in the empowering impact of the young participants' PAR, I based my research on a combination of qualitative methods: long-term participant observation, a series of participatory evaluation workshops, and individual interviews. Here I elaborate on each of these methods, discussing their particular contribution to my research and the ethical questions they posed.

6.6.1.1   Participant Observation

I lived in El Salvador from September 2005 until March 2008. In June 2006 I started to work in the Centre for Training and Orientation (CFO) where I coordinated the youth participation project and helped organise and facilitate the young people's PAR process. At the same time I conducted participatory observation of the project and of the young people's PAR process. From the beginning, permission was asked from the centre's director to conduct participatory observation and conduct research about the empowering impact of the PAR and all team members were fully informed about the aim of my research. All young people involved in the PAR process were informed and received a letter with the nature and objectives of my research. The letter was written in easy, understandable language. Because of the relatively 'harmless' nature of my research (not requiring the disclosure of any intimate information) the young participants did not object.

Participatory observation has its origins in the ethnographic work of nineteenth century Western anthropologists and was initially defined as a descriptive account of a community or culture, usually situated outside the West. Central to ethnography is an intensive period of participatory observation which means that the researcher lives with a group of people for an extended period of time (over the course of one year or more) in order to understand their way of life and the beliefs and values integral to it (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Today, participatory observation is no longer limited to research in non-Western, 'exotic' cultures, but increasingly involves research in Western societies about, among others, ethnic minorities, subcultures, marginalized groups of people, business cultures, and different work environments. The method of participatory observation has spread outside anthropology, into psychology, sociology and, also, human geography.

For more than two years I actively participated in the daily experiences and routines of the youth participation project, observing what happened and talking and listening to the young participants and the team facilitators in order to understand how they perceived and experienced the process. The young people's actions and accounts were studied in the everyday context of the project, rather than under conditions created by me, the researcher, such as experimental setups or highly structured interviews. I opted for an open-ended, flexible and exploratory approach and my data collection was initially unstructured and did not follow a fixed and detailed research design specified at the start (see also Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Because of its adaptability and open-endedness, participatory observation more easily allowed for the research participants' voices to be heard and for them to co-decide the research focus. As is usually the case for participant observation, and in order to facilitate more in-depth study, my research was small-scale, centring on four small groups of young people living in the same municipality and participating in the PAR process.

While by no means evident or straightforward, my position as the youth project's coordinator allowed me to more easily find my 'place' in the field and to take up an involved role in the project and in the young participants' daily lives. It allowed my presence to be perceived as quite 'natural' since I was considered part of the project rather than an outside researcher. Before me, many foreigners had been working or volunteering in CFO and young people were already used to the presence of foreign people. Through my work I was closely involved with the young people and had a stake myself in the PAR process. I was not an external researcher looking at the process from the outside. Some would argue that this must have

influenced the data collected and even that it must have troubled my view. While not denying that it has influenced my data, I do not agree with the 'troubled view'. On the contrary, I believe that being part of the project facilitated a deeper understanding of the complexity of the PAR process, a complexity I could never have fully grasped through participatory workshops or interviews alone. Without my direct involvement in the process and in the young people's lives, I would have easily overlooked the more subtle and intangible aspects of the process.

My participant observation in and beyond the youth project allowed me to develop a long standing relationship of trust with the young participants which made it possible for young people to express themselves more confidently. It facilitated mutual and honest dialogue about their lives in general and the empowering impact of PAR in particular. I believe it allowed me to ask different questions and provided me with more thoughtful answers.

Living in El Salvador for some years and participating in (though clearly only to a certain degree) the young people's daily lives and troubles, provided me with a better understanding of the young people's daily experiences and sufferings. Their everyday reality figured as the background for their PAR process and getting to know this reality facilitated a more ample, holistic view of the PAR process and its empowering results. Furthermore, being part of the project and their daily lives, I was not only able to facilitate reflections on how they felt empowered through the process, I was also able to observe these changes myself.

In my experience, participatory observation allows for a proximity, sensibility and subtleness that cannot be replaced by any other method. The political aspect of participatory observation, I believe, lies exactly in this relation of trust and sensibility and turns it into one of the most suitable methods for understanding the lives of people who live on the margins of a society that is hostile to them (see also Bourgois 2003). It is this proximity (including emotional proximity) of the participant observer that makes it possible to prioritize experiences of injustice and oppression and to understand the very real personal experiences of pain and suffering that are imposed socially and structurally across race, class, gender, sexuality and other power ridden categories. For me, participatory observation is an unique form of research for understanding how power is carried through, and potentially transformed by, the body and the everyday (see also Nast 1994), providing me with the necessary background for understanding the empowering impact of PAR in a context of exclusion and oppression.

6.6.1.2   Participatory Evaluation Workshops

I conducted six participatory evaluation workshops with twenty-five young participants between twelve and twenty-three years old. Ten of them participated in every single workshop, the others participated in most of them. Because of financial and practical constraints, initially eight young people of each group were selected based on their regular participation and engagement in the PAR process. Once we started with the participatory workshops, however, the same young people could not always participate, so some flexibility was necessary and another participant could replace them. All the young people who participated in the PAR process were asked whether they were willing to participate in a series of about 6 workshops. I explained them that I was interested in understanding what the PAR had meant for them and what they considered its most important results, if any. I also clarified that the insights generated in the participatory workshops would be used both by CFO to evaluate the impact of the youth project and to adapt/ameliorate its programme in the future and by myself, as an academic, for my doctoral research project.

Young people were free to participate and could opt out at any moment during the process, as some participants did at certain times for practical reasons such as work or church duties. I believe all young people, including the youngest one, had achieved sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable him/her to understand what I proposed and to decide whether to participate or not (see also Morrows and Richards 1996 about 'Gillick competence'). Children's and young people's competence to consent to participate in research depends partly on the context and partly on precisely what they are consenting to undertake (Morrow and Richards 1996). In this case it was about a rather straightforward participation in a series of workshops to evaluate the PAR process which did not imply the disclosure of personal, delicate or painful issues. For the youngest participants of about twelve years old, explicit oral consent was asked from one of the parents or an adult caretaker. For the older participants the project did generally not ask explicit permission from their parents and the project director and other team members considered it would have been strange and unnecessary to do so for these particular workshops. Some girls however asked me to talk to their mothers, not so much in order to explain the evaluation process, as to assure them they would be properly supervised (to prevent 'dangerous' interactions with boys). Young people were assured that all they said during the workshops would remain confidential and that they and their communities would be given pseudonyms to assure this confidentiality.

All workshops were organised on Sundays because young participants confirmed this was the day which suited them best and which would be least interfering with school or work activities. The workshops were organised every two weeks so as not to overburden the young people or claim too much of their time. The workshops were organised in relaxed, green spaces outside their communities, where the young people could feel comfortable. I tried, as much as possible, to vary the location to give the young people the opportunity to discover new places, given that they otherwise hardly left their neighbourhoods. The workshops took place in the morning for about two hours. In the afternoon, the young people were free to enjoy themselves, swimming, playing or having a walk around. The young people were not paid for their participation in the workshops, but discovering new places and having an opportunity for recreation was considered a small reward for their participation in the evaluation workshops. Lunch and refreshments were also provided.

During the workshops I used different participatory techniques such as painting and drawing, some games, and an interactive questionnaire to learn about the young people's experience and feeling of empowerment (individual and collective) and about the main difficulties and opportunities encountered during the PAR process. Initially the idea was to organise conventional focus groups to discuss the different aspects of the empowering impact. However, I soon realised that evaluating the PAR process was not something young people were very passionate about. In order to motivate them (to facilitate a more active participation and to make the evaluation less boring for them) I used/experimented with participatory methods. It was not easy always to find creative methods suitable for evaluating the PAR process. Some workshops and methods turned out really well, such as games, drawing and drama, others turned out a little less satisfactorily such as the interactive questionnaire which besides the use of stickers and colours also involved writing skills. Drawing and painting worked particularly well, even with the older participants, because in El Salvador there exists a tradition of mural paintings. Cooperative games were very popular because of their spontaneous, practical and surprising nature. They helped the young people to 'open up' and motivated them to talk and reflect about issues related to solidarity, trust, cooperation and dialogue.

Besides motivating the young people, I used these alternative techniques because not all young participants felt comfortable with talking. Using a variety of alternative methods allowed young people to express themselves in different ways. Different young people preferred different ways of expressing (drawing, writing, playing or talking). Of course, it was

impossible each time to find the ideal technique for all the young people involved (see Punch 2002), but using different kinds of methods allowed for all young people to find a means of expression they felt comfortable with during the process (see also Morrow 2008). Generally, young participants communicated more easily through mediums other than the verbal (see also Chawla and Kjorholt 1996, James and Alderson 1995). These non-verbal techniques provided a source of data in themselves, but were also used to stimulate dialogue and further (verbal) explanation (see also O' Kane 2004). While some young people were more eloquent than others, non-verbal techniques facilitated verbal expression for some and allowed others to express in a different way.

The data collected during the participatory workshops complemented and enriched my participatory observation in many ways. Young people were able to formulate clearly what mattered to them and to point out feelings of empowerment which I might have underestimated through participant observation alone.

I would not argue however, as Claire O'Kane (2004) does for example, that participatory techniques are an alternative to ethnographic methods. O'Kane (2004) argues that participatory methods are less invasive and more transparent in comparison with participant observation where the relationship between the researcher and the researched is less defined. In her experience, the use of participatory techniques allows for a formal relationship to be established assuring a more transparent role for the researcher as the facilitator of well-defined (in time and space) activities. I agree that participant observation might sometimes create confusion among research participants. The young people easily forgot I was doing research and sometimes entrusted me with certain things as a friend and not as a researcher. However, I found that participatory techniques were easily combined with participant observation (see also Punch 2002). For me, both methods complemented each other. Participant observation allowed to me to develop a relationship of trust with the young people and to be more understanding and sensitive to their daily experiences. It allowed me to better understand the general context against which the PAR process evolved. This would by no means have been possible through a series of participatory research workshops alone. On the other hand, using participatory methods allowed the young people to express themselves in ways they felt more comfortable or familiar with and to formulate their own opinion about the impact of the PAR process. Through these workshops I came to understand various aspects of the process differently.

6.6.1.3 Individual in-depth Interviews

At the end of my stay in El Salvador I conducted in-depth individual interviews with eleven out of twenty-five young people who had participated in the evaluation workshops (ten of them having participated in all the participatory workshops). We met in a cosy, calm little cafe in the city, where the interview could be conducted in a relaxed, informal way, over food and drinks. At the moment of the interviews, the young participants had known me for two years already and this facilitated more relaxed, personal and profound conversations. The young people were free to participate in an interview and were repeatedly told that they could stop the interview at any time and did not have to answer questions they felt uncomfortable with. The boys and girls who agreed were happy and excited to participate, apparently feeling good and important for being interviewed. As with the information gathered during the participatory workshops, the young people were assured that all information would remain anonymous and that they and their communities would be given pseudonyms. I asked all interviewees for permission to record the interview and insisted that at any time during the interview they could ask to turn off the recorder. The young people easily forgot about the tape recorder. So, when talking about violence in their community and about themselves or others being involved, I always explicitly asked again whether they were sure this information could be tape recorded. After some reflection, they sometimes decided it would be wiser not to do so. So, giving consent for interviewing was not a cut-and-dried event at the beginning of the interview (see also Cloke et al. 2000), but an ongoing consensual decision-making process through which participants had repeated opportunities to withdraw or qualify consent (see also Halse and Honey 2005).

The interviews did not really provide new information, but allowed me to confirm and to elaborate on issues that had come up during the participatory workshops. During these interviews I focussed slightly more on the culture of violence and on whether the young people considered that the PAR process had contributed in any way to a culture of peace. Rather unforeseen, some young people brought up sensitive issues and became quite emotional during the interview which, in turn, also caused some anxiety and distress in me.

Generally speaking, because of my focus on the PAR process rather than on personal or delicate issues, my research was not supposed to involve any risk for the participants. Only during the individual interviews did I start worrying about the unforeseen, potentially distressing impact of the interviews. At the beginning of the interview I included some

general questions about violence in their communities (things we had often talked about in more informal ways). I did not ask for any personal experiences and did not expect them to disclose intimate information. Yet, maybe because they had known me for a long time and/or because of the intimate setting and private nature of the interviews, some young people did start to talk about instances of violence in which they were very personally involved. Some girls told me about their brothers being killed and became distressed when talking about this. Two boys talked about their personal involvement in the gang. These interviews confused and worried me for two reasons. First of all, the girls apparently found it very hard to put into words what happened to their brothers and their families and they told me they had actually never had an opportunity to talk about this with anybody. Consequently, during the interview I suddenly felt very unsure about whether talking with me for them was such an opportunity and whether I had to go deeper into it and ask further questions. Yet, at the same time, I was worried about the young girls opening up and recalling traumas during the interview, but then feeling left alone with their feelings of pain and hurt after the interview. I was no psychologist, had no counselling skills and was going to leave the next month. I was worried about the immediate and long-term effect of the interview on the girls. Some researchers have argued that participating in research and interviews can be beneficial for the respondents in terms of being listened to, having a voice, catharsis and healing (Hubbard et al. 2001), however this might not always be the case (Bennett 2009). I decided not to go much deeper into the subject and to bring the interview back to more general issues. After the interview, however, I told the girls that I noticed that they found it difficult to talk about the deaths of their brothers. I asked them whether they felt the need to talk about it with somebody and I proposed they could meet the project's psychologist. If they agreed (which they did), I helped them to arrange a counselling session and accompanied them on their way to the first meeting.

The interviews with the two boys confronted me not so much with the issue of trauma and distress, but with the issue of safety. They talked about themselves and others being directly involved in the gang. I had talked with these and other boys about their involvement in different forms of violence during informal discussions, but was not prepared for these revelations to happen in this particular research /'interview' setting. Suddenly I felt nervous about the possible consequences of recording this kind of information. Together with one boy we decided not to record anything about actual persons (whether himself or others). The other boy however insisted I should record it all. I was doubtful, but being in the middle of the interview, I agreed. I lived just next to their community and I did not have to travel far. I did not re-use the tape, kept it at home and did not circulate it afterwards. No names were

mentioned on the tape itself. While the chance that these tapes would fall into the hands of police or other gang members was really very small, had I been able to give it more thought, I might not have taken the risk.

6.6.2   Self-reflexive positionality

I was drawn to the topic of my research through an emotional commitment to social justice for vulnerable children and young people. Initially my interest in the young people's empowerment grew out of my personal experiences as a volunteer, street worker and student in anthropology with street children and youth in Nepal, Romania and Nicaragua. These experiences radically confronted me with inequality, injustice, poverty, violence, human suffering, as well as human strength and creativity in the midst of highly adversive circumstances. These experiences made me question processes of exclusion and marginalisation, the nature and impact of a whole range of development interventions, the possibilities of hope and humanity, and opportunities for agency, resistance, solidarity and change. My starting position has always been that of an engaged activist / practitioner aiming to make a difference. As with many other researchers, I found my passion for my research in my emotional and caring responses to the people I had encountered. In each of these encounters emotions of outrage and indignation were impossible to ignore and had epistemological power in that they that prompted a 'gut-feeling' (Jagger 2009) that something isn't right and should be interrogated. My interest in young people, participation and empowerment was pushed by sorrow about so much human pain and suffering, anger at so much social injustice, but also by deep joy at young people's strength and resilience. My personal values and emotions played a significant role in "the identification of problems considered worthy of investigation []" (Jaggar 2009:58). When planning PhD research with poor young people in El Salvador, opting for a participatory / feminist research approach was a logical step, because it allowed me to remain faithful to both values of critical understanding and personal engagement.

Contextualizing and admitting to the power I brought to bear as the multiply positioned author of a research project (see also Nast 1994), being a middle-class, academic, European, white woman had certain consequences for doing research with poor, Salvadorian youth, the majority of whom were boys and young men. My identity influenced my entrance into the field and the ways I could speak, listen and be heard (see Gibson-Graham 1994). During my

research I grappled and tried to come to terms, in far as this was possible, with these power differences and identity issues. I experienced most of these identities as contradictory, as simultaneously complicating and facilitating my research in different ways.

Living in a macho-culture and working mainly with boys and young men made me particularly aware of (and sometimes feel highly uncomfortable with) being a woman. During the first months I had a difficult time trying to strike the right balance between becoming closer to the boys and gaining their respect as a woman. During this time I often felt I had to act more seriously than I actually was (not making too many jokes, no friendly physical contact, not being too nice) so as to first make my boundaries clear (about seduction and sexual comments for example) and to be respected (being worthy of saying something, having the right to be listened to, and gaining a certain kind of authority as the project coordinator). Performing such kind of 'emotional labour' (see Hochshield 1983) was tiring and sometimes left me frustrated at not being able to 'simply be myself'. Yet, this kind of emotional labour was inevitable and necessary for a certain period of time in order to be taken seriously as a woman surrounded by mainly 'macho' men. It took quite some time, but once I was and felt accepted, it was possible to establish a close, unambiguous friendship relationship of dialogue and trust with most of them and then 'acting' was no longer necessary.

It is difficult to say how far exactly the fact of being a female researcher has influenced the data I collected. It is often assumed that women speak more easily to women and men to men. However, in practice this is not so straightforward, depending on the topics of discussion and the personal histories of the men and women involved. Having worked hard to be taken seriously as a woman and having established a close relationship with most of the participants, I did not feel an enormous difference between girls and boys. A few boys did not feel comfortable talking to me and this might have been due to the fact that I was a woman. On the other hand, some girls also needed a lot of time to trust me and found it difficult to talk openly even though I was a woman. On the other hand, some boys found it easier to confide in me precisely because I was a woman. They felt less pressure to behave in the traditionally masculine/tough ways and felt more comfortable to show themselves as vulnerable or emotional. Generally speaking, I got close to most of the young people involved (boys and girls alike), but of course not to all of them and some of them were less willing to open up.

My white skin and European/Belgian nationality clearly marked me as 'an outsider'. Given the country's history of Spanish colonisation and intense U.S. support for the contra-

revolution during the civil war, my European identity sometimes caused resistance. Given their particular history, many Salvadorans were rather distrusting of foreigners' good intentions to come to their country and always expect them to want to take profit in one way or another. Europeans and Americans were generally considered as arrogant. As a Belgian citizen we had little common history, but foreigners were often lumped all together as 'gringos', and so I too raised some spontaneous feelings of suspicion in people. The strongest resistance came from some team members who, quite understandably, found it hard accepting being coordinated by a white / European women. I felt uncomfortable about this situation myself. While considering it myself an uneasy and somehow unjust situation, I also sometimes felt disappointed or angry for being too quickly categorized or judged. I tried to be honest, transparent and open for (sometimes painful) questioning. Though far from easy, talking openly and honestly about these issues brought us closer together and helped us to partly overcome the foreign-local divide.

Similarly, most young people were both curious and distrustful. The young people initially must have felt that I could not possibly understand their problems and I did not pretend I did. It took time for the young people to know me and to get used to me. With time I grew very close to some young people and established a friendship with most of them by spending time with them, listening and talking for long hours, trying to be honest and non-judgmental, and being genuinely interested in them. Of course I was different (and I remained different) but sometimes difference provided opportunities. Being honest and straightforward about our differences generated discussions and dialogue that would not otherwise have been possible. Some young people actually felt they could talk more openly with me than with someone from the same cultural background, in particular about taboo subjects such as, among others, violence. Being a *Foreign/ European* women also made it a little bit easier for me to be respected and accepted by the young male participants because, somehow, they seemed to find it easier to accept a European woman as their equal than Salvadoran women. My Salvadoran and Nicaraguan female colleagues confirmed this. Of course, at the same time, this also represented an uneasy feeling of injustice. Last but not least, humour helped a lot. Not taking myself too seriously and having a good laugh at myself, laughing together with them about everything, our differences included, was probably what finally brought us closest together. It allowed us to accept our differences (also the difficult ones) and to establish true friendships beyond these differences.

Besides being white, European and female, I was also an *adult* doing research with children and young people. The disparities in power and status between adults and children is considered to be one of the biggest challenges for researchers working with young persons and children, even more so in a historical and cultural context in which children's voices have been repeatedly marginalised (O' Kane 2004). In El Salvador youth are categorised as persons between fifteen and twenty-five or even thirty years old. When I started my research I was twenty-eight, and still 'relatively' young compared to the oldest participants who were about twenty-two years old. Of course, there clearly was an age difference between me and most of the children and young people involved, but this was particularly accentuated by the fact that I was the project coordinator and thus occupied a 'responsible' position with some kind of authority within the project. More than my age, I experienced my position within the project as a particular challenge and, sometimes, a constraint. Being aware of my 'status' and of how this might be perceived by others (taking into account their experience of power in an authoritarian society) I became extra careful and sensitive. Children and young people in El Salvador are not used to adults treating them as equals and taking their voices into account. Many children and young people were not used to expressing their views freely because of their subordinate position in an adult dominated society. Again, it was a gradual process of trust-building, of learning together to work in participatory ways, of proving to them that it could be different. The fact that I had a relatively powerful (not to be exaggerated though!) position within the project made it even more important to be conscious and careful about participatory attitudes such as being empathetic, trusting them, listening carefully, encouraging them to express themselves and question our work, taking into account their critiques, and again, just having a good laugh together. Eventually, I feel that, generally speaking (but with some exceptions nevertheless) the young people trusted me and were honest with me. In response to the questions I asked them about whether they had changed through the PAR and how, I think the young people had no problem in telling me honestly how they thought and felt about that. When they were asked what they did not like about the project or what they would do differently next time, some young people were critical, but most were not really so. While no longer working for the project at the time of asking these critical questions, I assume that for them I continued to represent the project and this might have impeded them to respond more critically.

These last observations also touch on another difficulty I experienced during my research, namely that of occupying a hybrid position of a researcher and youth project coordinator at the same time (see also Leyshon 2002). Parr (1998) distinguishes between overt and covert

ethnography, but remarks that sometimes there does not exist such a clear dividing line, either for the researcher or for the research participants. Much consensual participant observation involves the recording of social moments and processes of which the research subjects are unaware. While I explained my research interests to the young people, I was never sure that they got much beyond my identity as project coordinator / facilitator. I think they often just forgot that I was doing research. These multiple identities and the multi-functional roles and positions I found myself in also had ethical consequences (see also Cloke et al 2000) and at times generated some uncertainty and anxiety. I built up close friendship relations with quite a lot of the young people who trusted me with deep personal and confidential information. In those moments they were certainly not talking to me as a researcher. This information was most often not directly relevant for my research about the empowering impact of PAR, but I was nevertheless worried about abusing the young people and taking advantage of their trust. In one case a young man shared some very personal issues with me about his involvement in youth gang violence. What he told me would have been relevant for my research, yet I decided not to use it because of its highly personal nature and out of respect for his pain and suffering at the moment of disclosure. I could have asked his permission to use this information, yet at that moment I was so touched by his distressing story that even posing this question to him felt unethical to me.

All these identity and power differences made approaching and understanding poor young people something of a challenge. There were many differences between me and my research participants and this of course complicated a 'view from below' (Haraway 1988). Because of my different background and life history, I never became an 'insider' in the sense of 'becoming like them' or being able to see 'through their eyes'. Yet, on the other hand, I did not feel a complete outsider either. I felt part of the youth project, of the PAR process and of the young people's lives in general. I did not experience the self/other binary as very representative of my fieldwork experience. Rather, I felt my position to be constituted in spaces of betweenness, in that I never felt an 'outsider' or an 'insider' in any absolute sense (see also Nast 1994). I experienced 'the field' as a place in-between that which is foreign and that which is familiar and recognizable (see also Nast 1994). I agree that the self/other - insider/outsider binary is no longer relevant when understanding subjectivities (both 'them' and 'me') as partial and fragmented; as "unbounded, intersecting, socially and spatially contingent and always in the process of becoming rather than centred within discourses that fix otherness" (Lobo 2010:103). In my experience, it was this 'in-betweenness' that made it possible to join with my research participants; to see together with them without claiming to

be them (see also Haraway 1988). Seeing together, for me, also meant *feeling* together. Being involved in the project implied being entangled in close relations with all the emotions this inevitably involves: feeling happy, excited, crazy, hopeful, tired, angry, frustrated, disappointed, etc. The other team members, the young people and I shared (or were confronted with) each other's emotions. 'Feeling together' did not mean we always felt the same. During the process we felt the same or different, 'with' or 'against' each other. We did not only experience happy times. We went through conflicts and sometimes felt angry and completely fed up with each other. Nevertheless, emotions, 'negative' and 'positive' alike, bound us together. Recognising and engaging with each other's emotions made us realise that we were not so completely different after all. Engaging with our emotions contributed to a better understanding of each other and, for me, facilitated a better understanding of the young people's experiences.

I have mentioned emotions of anger, frustration and disappointment. I accentuate these emotions to somewhat problematize the feminist / participatory claim for closeness and connectedness between researcher and research participants. Openness and a genuine intent to listen are considered basic attitudes in research with vulnerable people (O' Kane 2004, Kesby 2005) and both feminist and participatory researchers insist on the importance of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence (authenticity, transparency) (Bondi 2005, Bennett 2009). The idea of establishing close relationships often sounds nice and cuddly, but is rarely a smooth process. Just as Katy Bennett (2009), who admits that she found it really difficult to always be genuine and non- judgemental in research relationships, I too sometimes felt angry, impatient, anxious and disappointed with the research participants and with myself. Yet, looking back, I would not have wanted to have missed these moments of conflict and emotional discomfort. In my experience, closeness often comes with moments of conflict filled with anger, frustration and sadness. For me and for the research participants (both young people and team members) it was important to live through and overcome these conflicts and to get to know each other in all kinds of emotional states. Acknowledging that none of us was able to be always genuine, open and empathetic was also, in part, what brought us close. Of course, without a constructive engagement with our anger and frustrations we would not have been able to 'connect' and keep 'connecting', yet part of our closeness was also accepting the gaps and distances between us without essentialising them.

6.6.3 Data analysis

Data analysis is about categorising, interpreting and verifying data. It is an iterative process of reading, thinking and writing; of categorising and discovering new patterns and themes and of continually reviewing and cross- checking results (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011). Data analysis is about gaining new insights, formulating coherent arguments and drawing clear conclusions.

 The process of interpreting, drawing (temporary) conclusions and attempting to verify them started already, in part, during my fieldwork. Doing participant observation I changed my research questions and design in response to the evolving events pointing to new hunches, questions and hypothesises. Important also for advancing my analysis and understanding of the young people's PAR process were what DeWalt&DeWalt call 'breakdown experiences', experiences in which I suddenly realised that things were not what I expected them to be and that some things did not make sense. This happened for example when, building on the literature on PAR with its focus on critical consciousness and critical analysis as key to empowerment, I was confronted with the fact that in the young people's PAR processes there seemed to be relatively little reflection and analysis. It is here that emotions and embodied knowledges emerged as an important new aspect demanding a different frame of analysis and shedding a new light on the young people's PAR process and the data collected thus far.

However, a good deal of analysis took place when I had left the field during the process of writing-up. Once back home, I started analysing by reading and organising my materials (field notes, interviews, participatory focus groups) into broad categories (such as, among others, participation, power and empowerment, violence) reducing them to a limited (and manageable) number of central concepts. These broader categories evolved in great part from the initial conceptual framework with which I had started my research and which, in great part, had guided my fieldwork. Carefully re-reading these materials again and again, new categories and sub-categories emerged out of the data and which were more closely linked to the understandings and experiences of the young people themselves (such as emotions of anger, fear, distrust and apathy, and embodied aspects of empowerment for example).

Going through my data again and again refining categories and sub-categories, gradually certain themes and patterns emerged which were cross-checked repeatedly. Based on these regular themes and patters I have built up my arguments and formulated my conclusions. I

repeatedly critically reviewed my data in the light of my arguments in order to verify their validity and to be sure to remain close to my data.

While analysing huge amounts of data is always already an intense and demanding work, analysing and interpreting data with a focus on emotions and embodied knowledges is particularly complex. Make sense of our own emotions is a complicated task and interpreting and understanding those of others is even more so. Emotions are no straightforward, tangible phenomena and are difficult to categorise and interpret. 'What exactly is an emotion and how to categorise it?' is a central question different researchers in different fields have struggled with. It is difficult to clearly distinguish between closely related emotions such as, for example, anger, rage and hate or fear and distrust. Emotions are also often entangled and mixed up and there might only be a thin line between, for example, anger and grief or love and hate. Furthermore, sometimes it is not always that clear which phenomena should be categorised as an emotion or should rather be considered an attitude, a behaviour, etc. As explained in chapter four of this thesis, emotions are highly complex and messy phenomena, and this certainly made it more difficult to analyse my data. In writing about the young participants' emotions I have stayed as close as possible to their own wordings and explanations complementing these with my own observations (of body language for example) and by building on the critical debate within emotion theory.

6.6.4 The final test: How participatory and empowering was this research for the young people involved?

The research methods that I used provided me with a lot of information about the PAR and its empowering potential. I have chosen these methods because they felt most natural within this particular research setting and because they seemed most fitted to the research participants. The combination of traditional qualitative research techniques (originally designed for adults) such as participant observation and individual interviews with 'alternative' methods (such as drawing, games and drama) allowed the young participants to be treated in the same way as adults without being patronized by using only 'child-friendly' techniques. At the same time, using innovative and creative methods made the young people feel more comfortable to express their views (Punch 2002). This combination of techniques was useful to prevent boredom (see also Hill 1997); to triangulate and cross-check data (see also Luchini 1996

Morrow 1999); and to evaluate the usefulness of different methods (see also Hazel 1996, Morrow 1999).

However, framing my research within a feminist and participatory methodology implies that it should be more than just about obtaining the right information. Participatory and feminist research particularly demands a commitment to reciprocity and change and so I end this chapter with critically reflecting on how truly participatory my research was. What did my research participants get out of it? Did my research, in any way, contribute to change?

If I am honest, I should be rather modest about both the level of participation and the empowering impact of my research. Truly participatory research ideally involves research participants at all stages of the research process, including the process of defining research questions and collecting and analysing data (Beazley and Ennew 2006, Kesby et al. 2005). In relation to my research, the young people could not decide the research subject, nor formulate the research questions. If they had been able to decide the topic of most interest to them (as was the case in their PAR process) I doubt they would have chosen to reflect on the issue of empowerment or on the impact of PAR. So, while 'emergence' is considered as an important characteristic of participatory research, when the emphasis would actually have been on the participants raising issues they wanted to raise, the goals of my research (reflecting on the empowering potential of participatory research) would probably not have been met (see also Pain and Francis 2003). Similarly, in relation to interpretation and analysis, the young people had little say. During the individual interviews at the end of my fieldwork, I tried to check my preliminary analysis with them, but their participation in data analysis remained limited to this very modest attempt. Their active participation was sought only for data-gathering for which I tried to use participatory methods they felt comfortable and familiar with. Yet, the simple use of qualitative, participatory techniques does not make my research project genuinely participatory. Some researchers have warned against the mechanical application of participatory methods (Pretty et al. 1995 cited in O' Kane 2004, Boyden and Ennew 1997) claiming that there is a distinction between alternative participatory techniques and a participatory approach (Kesby et al.2005, Pain and Francis 2003). The successful use of participatory techniques, they say, lies in the process, rather than simply in the methods used and requires a commitment to an ongoing process of information-sharing, dialogue, trust, reflection and action (O' Kane 2004). The young people's active participation being limited to data gathering, I was nevertheless aware of, and did my best to imply, the basic values of dialogue, openness, not rushing, and empathetic listening, not only during the participatory

workshops, but also during my participant observation, and in my daily contacts with the young people.

I hope I did justice to what the young people said and I hope I did not erase their voice, yet I cannot but admit that the last word in this thesis is mine. I tried as honestly as possible to understand and represent the young people's experiences of the PAR process. Yet, representing young people's voices is a difficult task and I often felt anxious about misrepresenting their accounts. Inevitably, there was some interpretation involved from my side, maybe adding layers which were not intended by the young people themselves. Deciding which data goes in and which one goes out, which words are worthy of quoting and which ones not, I believe, is a manner of constructing knowledge which goes beyond representing the 'original' voice of youth. Added to this comes the fact that I found it difficult sometimes to translate form Spanish to English (neither being my mother tongue) and from oral/slang conversation to written language. I am not familiar with English slang and so, when the young people used Spanish slang I translated it into 'regular' English. Doing so, I did not intend to 'clean up' their language as if they were somehow failing to express themselves 'properly'; on the contrary, it is no more than a sign of my own shortcomings to translate their words correctly. Therefore, I have included the original quotations in Spanish for any Spanish readers to be able to look at the original and decide for themselves about the adequacy of translation.

To conclude, I believe the outcome of this research is neither the young people's voice nor mine, but, maybe, rather 'ours'. It is the result of our interactions and dialogues at that specific moment and place. I would not have been able to write this thesis on my own and I owe most of it to the young people involved. However, the last words and interpretations are mine and I cannot be absolutely sure that the young people would always identify with these.

Last but not least: what about reciprocity and empowerment? Did the young people gain anything by participating in my research besides discovering new places, making new friends and having fun? Again, I have to be rather modest. The research did not result in any big changes in their lives. Yet, although I did not explicitly evaluate the empowering impact of my own research with the young participants, I did observe some little changes, however small they might be. I noticed that evaluating the empowering impact of the PAR process had a small empowering impact in itself. It helped the young people to realise how they had changed and to clearly formulate and express changes they might not have been be fully

conscious of before. Becoming more conscious of these changes, to a certain degree, seemed to reinforce the changes. As such, the participatory evaluation process confirmed the empowering impact of the PAR process and talking about how they felt empowered seemed to be empowering in itself. Furthermore, the workshops united young people from different communities in moments of reflection and recreation facilitating a sense of trust and friendship among young people who normally profoundly distrust each other. The young participants told me that creating a bond with young people from other communities was an empowering experience for them.

Compared with participant observation, the use of participatory methods was more explicitly empowering for the young participants. Participant observation allowed me to become close to the young people, and to better understand their experiences and daily reality, but, involving young people in participatory methods was a more explicit and intentional way of enhancing their different capacities for reflection, expression, creativity, dialogue, etc. This would not have been possible through participant observation or interviews alone.

Finally then, my research was participatory and empowering, but only to a small degree. For the research participants my research offered no big changes, but did provide some small opportunities for learning and growing. On a broader scale, my research did not contribute in any clear or visible way to more equality or more social justice. I do hope however that my research contributes (however modestly) to the already ongoing critical process of aiming to render participatory research and practice ever more effective in giving poor (young) people a voice and in facilitating individual transformation and collective resistance.

6.7   Conclusions

In summary, in this chapter I have explained the process through which I gathered my data and through which the insights presented in this thesis were produced. I opted for a participatory and feminist methodological approach using qualitative methods such as participatory observation, participatory workshops and individual interviews. I positioned my research by describing how my identity as a European, middle-class, female academic has possibly influenced my relations in the field and my data-collection and I reflected on how my emotions influenced the research process. I discussed important ethical issues and I evaluated the possible empowering impact of my own PhD research. In the next chapters I

will now analyse the data that I gathered and present the insights produced throughout the research process described above.

7   Young people's Everyday Feelings of Fear and Anger: The Politics of Emotions

7.1   Introduction

Initially, the word emotion did not appear in my research proposal. Theoretically, I focussed on participation, power and empowerment as the basic concepts of my research. Reading through the literature on participatory methodologies, critical consciousness, rather than emotions, seemed to be the core element in facilitating empowerment. Generally, PAR is described as a process in which creative, dynamic and participatory methods are used to stimulate marginalized people to *reflect* on their daily reality. This is supposed to result in a critical *understanding* of everyday experiences of exclusion and oppression, which, in turn, should motivate them to take effective action (Reason and Bradbury 2001, Cahill 2004, Cahill 2007a). While PAR counts with a long history of using alternative research methods that engage emotional and affective registers (Cahill 2007a, Cameron and Gibson 2005, Pain et al. 2007), for most participatory researchers, critical reflection and achieving change at the level of 'thinking' still seems to be the *first* step towards empowerment and social change, whatever alternative methods may be used (see for example Kesby 2007b). Consequently, I did not expect 'emotions' to be of any particular importance for my research.

However, emotions played a fundamental role in the PAR process. Because of my initial focus on critical consciousness, it took me some time to become fully aware of the role of emotions in the young people's empowerment. Towards the end of my fieldwork, while conducting individual interviews, I felt particularly touched again by the young people's stories and emotions. I suddenly realised that we, the team facilitators, had never consciously given emotions a 'proper' place in the PAR process. Not that emotions were not there, or that we didn't do anything with them! On the contrary! Both participants and facilitators had been very emotional during the entire process. We, the facilitators, strongly sympathized with the young people's joy, anger and grief and often struggled with, and talked about, young people's and our own emotions. We listened to and talked with the participants about their pain and suffering and actually spent a considerable amount of time on managing and overcoming anger, rage, apathy, resignation and fear together with the participants. But, despite the fact that the whole process had been highly emotional, we never explicitly

considered emotions as *part of* the PAR. We rather experienced them as 'external' influences 'hindering' or 'slowing down' the 'real' work of critical reflection and empowerment. We had no clear vision on emotions and on their role in the PAR process and we had not developed any explicit strategy for including and working with emotions as an integral part of the empowerment process.

While not considering emotions as an integral part of the young people's PAR, during my fieldwork I was particularly confronted with participants' distress in the form of fear, rage, hate, distrust and apathy. I could not but notice how these emotions influenced their decisions, behaviours and actions and, consequently, had an undeniable qualifying impact on their lives and on the PAR. In this chapter I look at the young people's emotions and I explain why they were so important in the PAR process and so fundamental to their empowerment. To be able to make my argument I describe what these emotions 'do' to the young people and how the young participants' emotions play out 'locally', in their daily lives. I begin with looking at the young people's feelings of fear, distrust, anger, resignation and apathy and the concrete impact of these emotions on their personal lives, their communities and the PAR process. Then, as a second step, I relate the young people's personal emotions to the broader socio-cultural context in which they live. Considering emotions as, in part, socially and culturally constructed and functioning within existing power relations, I aim to demonstrate that the young people's anger, hate, apathy, fear and distrust originate in a historically instilled culture of violence and, at the same time, function to underpin and confirm such a culture. Most importantly, this perspective allows us to go beyond an understanding of the young people's anger, distrust and anxiousness as mere signs of individual pathology. At the same time, it helps us to understand how emotions can function to confirm the status quo and deepen oppression. A socio-political understanding of emotions recognises that we are deeply subjectified (and subjugated) through our most intimate emotions. Inevitably, then, they form an important focus of attention in participatory processes striving for empowerment and liberation.

7.2   Young participants' emotions on a local scale

During the PAR process the young people had different emotions in different situations, with different intensities, influencing the process in different ways, resulting in different behaviours and inciting them to take a variety of actions. The young participants shared all

kinds of emotions: joy, excitement, happiness, hope, euphoria, sadness, disappointment, frustration, etc. However, the prolonged experience of deprivation and exclusion and the direct experience of traumatic violent events such as the killing of family members, friends or neighbours generated high levels of personal anxiety and distress in the young participants. The young people particularly displayed strong emotions of fear, anger, mutual distrust, and apathy. Not that they were no more than a bunch of sad and angry young people! Absolutely not! Yet, feelings of fear, distrust, anger and apathy were more than just passing, superficial or coincidental phenomena; they were deeply embedded in and profoundly shaped the young people's daily lives.

As I mentioned already in chapter four, there exists no fixed definition of what an emotion is. The concept of emotion does not refer to a group of neatly defined phenomena, but refers to a broad variety of feelings, thoughts and behaviours that we interpret as an emotion or as the consequence of an emotion (Fischer 2010). It is widely accepted that emotions consist of different components to various degrees (depending on the emotion and the situation): thoughts, judgments, physical changes, and different modes of behaviour, acting and reacting. Some emotions are more 'basic' in that they are strongly physiological; others are more 'refined' or 'constructed' because more mediated by cognition (see also Goodwin et al. 2001). Some emotions result in specific behaviour, while others are less clearly related to particular actions. It is broadly agreed upon that emotions are appraisals arising in response to events and people that are important to the individual and that are of a certain concern (Frijda 1988). From an emotional reaction we learn how a person or a group of persons interprets self and the world (Lazarus 1991 cited in Nussbaum 2001). Indeed, by starting from the young people's emotions we can learn a lot about their everyday lives and about how they feel about themselves, others and the world.

7.2.1 Fear

The young people, their families and their communities lived in constant fear. Poor young people, particularly young men, are the ones most feared in El Salvador today. It is easily forgotten however, that they are, more than anyone else, most likely to be victims of crime. The poor are routinely written out of fear (Pain 2009), but for our young participants fear was a constant and intimate companion. The young people experienced all kinds of violence

(domestic violence, sexual abuse, drugs, theft) but their stories pointed in particular to the perceived centrality of gang and police violence to everyday life (see also Hume 2007b).

The young people described their communities as terrorized by fear for both the local and the rival gang. Alma, one of the participants, told me about the life in her neighbourhood and about a fourteen year old boy she grew up with. That boy had joined the gang and had killed several people from their community. Some people from the community had witnessed the murders, yet nobody dared to denounce him.

Alma: *"When they [the people from her community] see the police coming, they prefer to go inside. If they [the gang] see them talking [with the police]… They [the gang] killed a man because they saw him talking with a police man. They thought he was talking about them. The next day they killed that man. The man lived alone. His wife had died earlier. He was about 50 years old. So, then, people are even more afraid. When they see the police coming they go inside so that nobody can ask them anything. And even if they [the police] would ask them something, they won't say anything because if they [the gang] see you talking with them, even for just five minutes [they think] 'Aaah, they must be talking about us!' because they suppose that people know what they are up to, you see. So they are afraid that people will denounce them, because…shit…too much is happening around here!" […] "Among us we talk about it [about what is happening], but not openly. But like [here she starts whispering] 'Oh my God…what are they doing!', like secretly, so that the boys [from the gang] won't notice that we are talking about them. Because if they do, they might kill you or they might menace you and a menace already means a lot! So people are like that, they do not like to talk about it too much. Maybe like us, you know, only with the ones you trust, that's all. But we also don't mention everything we know. If we know something, we better shut up and don't say anything. They haven't harmed us [yet], and if we start talking, something might happen to us or to our family. It's better to shut up and not mention anything". […] "Some people had a little business that was going well and they [the gang] started to notice that, because they [those people] bought a plot, built a house, or bought a car with what they earned with their business. The gang started to notice that and started to ask them for money. People just got bored of giving them money all the time […] and they preferred to just leave. A lot of them left, about five families have left […] because the gang*

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told them: 'Either you pay us or we kill you!' […] So people decided to leave".
(Alma, individual interview, 16th February 2008)[8]

Alma not only talks about people's fear of the gang, but also about the consequences of that fear. She describes how silence has become the main way of coping with violence in order to secure their safety. She talks about how fear separates people in her community and results in social fragmentation and isolation. Nobody dares to raise their voice to denounce what is happening. People in her community do not dare to talk with the police out of fear of the gang, but also because they do not trust the police and because they do not believe that the police are able to protect them. Neighbours do not share and communicate their worries and preoccupations, but retreat into the private sphere. People have to leave the communities where they grew up, leaving their families and friends behind. Alma's own uncle illegally migrated to the U.S. and her brother had to hide for several weeks with family in another village, because they had had problems with the gang over some minor issues.

The young participants had to negotiate risk and uncertainty on a daily basis. Living in a gang-related neighbourhood, participants who did not want to enter the gang had to constantly manage a sensitive balance between being just close enough to the gang to avoid conflict with them and keeping the right distance in order not to become too involved either. The young people learned to walk this slippery rope in order not to attract the gang's explicit attention. In order to maintain the right equilibrium, they had to know where to go and where not to go and at what time; what to say or not to say and how to say it (each gang has its own vocabulary and some words are taboo); how to behave in what circumstances and even, to a certain

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[8] Alma: "Cuando veían a la policía mejor se iban para dentro porque cuando lo ven platicando... A un señor lo mataron por eso, porque lo vieron platicando con un policía. Pensaron que él les estaba diciendo algo de lo que ellos andaban haciendo. El siguiente día lo mataron al señor. El señor vivía solito. Ya se le había muerto la esposa. Tenía sus 50 anos. Entonces la gente más con miedo va. Ellos ven la policía y se van para dentro para que nadie les pregunte nada. Y aunque les preguntaran, no les dijeran nada va. Porque si ya lo ven unos cinco minutitos hablando con la policía, 'ay no, de nosotros están hablando', porque sospechan que saben lo que están haciendo va y tienen miedo que la gente, puya, los denuncian va, porque demasiado hacen allí. […] Entre la gente si se comenta [de lo que está pasando] pero tampoco muy abierto va. Si no que 'puya lo que andan haciendo!', calmadito va. Para que los bichos no se dan cuenta que uno habla de ellos. Porque si se dan cuenta, también lo pueden matar a uno va o lo amenazan y ya una amenaza ya quiere decir mucho. Por eso...porque también la gente es bien así que no le gusta andar hablando con cualquier gente, si no que quizás como nosotros va, que con confianza, pero no lo decimos todo y si sabemos las cosas para que va...mejor lo callamos y no lo decimos. A nosotros no nos han hecho nada va y si nosotros estamos diciendo cosas más que nos puede pasar algo va a nosotros o a las demás familias. Mejor nos quedamos callados, no decimos nada. Habían personas que tenían negocio va, negocios que si le daban dinero. Y ellos se daban cuenta porque poco a poco iban levantando su terreno va, su casa, compraban caro de lo que les iba dando su negocio. Entonces ellos se daban cuenta y le empezaban a pedir dinero y la gente se aburre de estarle dando […] y entonces la gente mejor lo que hacía es que se iban de las casas. Se fueron varios, como cinco familias se han ido fíjense. […]Vaya, a esa gente la decían 'o pagan o los matamos'. […] Entonces ellos mejor optan por irse." (Entrevista, 16 de Febrero 2008)

degree, how they should look. Two of our participants, for example, had problems with the local gang because their haircut too much resembled the style of the rival gang. On another occasion, we participated with the group of La Uruguay in a cultural event. The event finished late in the evening, after dark, and we brought the boys home by car. Some of them lived in a rather isolated, gang-controlled neighbourhood where you are not supposed to go after dark.

We [CFO's driver, my boyfriend and me] brought them home [by pick-up] around ten o' clock in the evening. It was kind of an 'adventure'. It left me quite sad for the rest of the weekend. We climbed the bumpy, dusty road up the hill. There is no street-lightening in this part of the city so it was dark. Most of the boys had got off when we almost arrived at the top, where the road stops and where sandy little roads revolve around the hilltop and into what is supposed to be the most dangerous neighbourhood in this area. Moises, Brian, and Fernando had remained in the car, while Netto, Jorge and 'the smiling one' (I do not remember his name, he's not so often with us) were sitting behind in the back of the pick-up. Brian, Moises and Fernando actually live down the road, but they would get off on the way back. First we had to drop of Netto, Jorge and his friend. We arrived at the end of the road. Moises told me that normally Netto, Jorge and his friend always get of here. But it was already late and I had promised Jorge that we would bring him all the way to his house. As soon as we entered the sandy road into Jorge's neighbourhood, Moises, Brian and Fernando got really scared. Moises, who sat next to me, sighed and whispered: oooooh no!', closed the window and locked the door. He hunched up in his seat. The two others did the same, they quickly locked the doors. They made themselves as small as possible. Nobody talked and there was an anxious and nervous atmosphere in the car. Brian and Fernando laughed nervously. Apparently, normally the driver never gets down here [but this was a new driver, quite scared too it seemed]. I got scared too. The little street was really dark, and here and there we saw faces shining up in the dark. Moises told me that the place is full of mareros keeping watch. They must have recognised our car [being the car of the parish] and let it pass. Jorge insisted that we drop him of in front of his house and not at the entrance of his street. Just in front of his 'pasaje' eight men sat on the pavement. The atmosphere in the car was getting even tenser. We entered Jorge's street and he and his friend quickly got off the truck (not even saying goodbye). When we drove out of the pasaje one of the men got up and came our way. We all froze.

Total silence! For a moment everybody was paralyzed. The men just asked for a ride and Moises, very relieved, told me they were just a bunch of drunk people. We left the neighbourhood and we suddenly all started breathing freely again. Nothing had happened. I had been afraid, but I was particularly shocked by the silent, instant fear of the three boys in the car; by their reaction when entering Jorge's neighbourhood and by the atmosphere in that neighbourhood. Most of all, it was the young people's fear (and their relief when leaving the neighbourhood) that saddened me. It is difficult to describe what happened, because actually nothing happened. Yet, the way Moises, Brian and Fernando reacted told me more about their lives and the places they live in than a thousand stories of violence and crime. (Fieldnotes 03/09/07)

For the young participants, leaving home and returning safely was an everyday issue; a routine preoccupation. None of the participants felt free to go wherever they liked, neither during the day, nor at night. Simple things such as hanging around, playing outside, and going to school, were complicated and sometimes even impossible.

In a meeting with parents of the young participants (with only mothers and grandmothers participating) women complained about the egoism and the lack of solidarity of some community members who refused to pay their share for the iron fences around the community and the iron gates at the entrances. Obviously these people did not receive the keys to the gates. They not only don't lock the gates, but also leave the doors wide open. Yet, they are very well aware of the risk that strange people, such as rival gang members, may enter and kill somebody. These women are afraid to let their kids play outside, in the small passages between the houses. But their children get bored and feel suffocated in the very small and very hot (due to the tin roofs) houses. Cecilia (one of our girl participants) told me she has to pass every day through rival gang territory to go to her school just down the road. The rival gang directly threatens boys and girls from her community. She is afraid, but she has to walk to school because her family cannot afford the bus fare ($0.25). Another woman told me she has problems with her little son of eight years old. She does not send him to school anymore because of the many shootings lately in front of his school. She prefers to keep him home so as to keep him alive. (Fieldnotes, 14/10/2006)

Olivia [one of the participants] is not going to school anymore since Angel and Julio [two other participants] were killed. Every time a young person is killed in her neighbourhood her mother takes her out of school. She has lost many years now. (Fieldnotes 29/05/07)

"Some young participants from Santa Monica helped out twice at CFO's children's group at La Bolivar. They enjoyed it a lot and proposed to volunteer for a longer period of time. This was a great proposal from their part and it would have been an excellent opportunity to create a bond between young people from different communities. Yet, because of safety issues, CFO did not want to assume the responsibility of exposing them to the risks of going weekly to La Bolivar. (Fieldnotes 22/06/08)

These quotations show how fear destabilizes the young people's normal social life. Parents prefer their children to stay at home rather than to go and study, not because they consider studying as unimportant, but because they fear losing their child. Social commitment and organisation is discouraged, because (young) people from different communities cannot meet without running the risk of physical harm. The young people lived their lives with fear as some kind of constant 'background' emotion (see also Nussbaum 2001). The young people were not scared or did not consciously worry about danger all the time. Nevertheless, their daily lives were strongly guided by a latent fear and a constant awareness of potential threats. Fear as a background emotion (intensified in particular situations) shaped their lives into the smallest details: How do I look? Where do I go? At what time? How should I behave? And what do I say (or not)? These daily preoccupations became a habit, a way of life.

Most young people learned to live with the gang and found some kind of balance. Yet, some other participants were in more personal danger. The ones who hung out with the gang were directly targeted by the rival gang and feared for their lives. Some participants had been involved with the gang, but had withdrawn. While always running the risk of being recognised by the rival gang, they also at times feared that their own gang would claim them back or even turn against them[9]. Pablo and some other boys told me about their previous or present involvement in the gang and the dangers this posed for them.

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[9] Individuals who are officially initiated in the gang are supposed be a member for life. If they leave the gang, they sometimes risk getting killed by their own gang.

B: "So you used to help them [the gang] out with some things they asked you to do?"

Pablo: "Yes."

B: "Wasn't that dangerous?"

Pablo: "Yes, I was very afraid. Well, the truth is… I am still involved in this [in the gang]. And it makes me afraid… it makes me afraid… it makes me afraid to walk [around]. Sometimes I say: 'shit'! I imagine that they [the rival gang] are following me, that they want to kill me … and it is true, 'los de abajo'[the rival gang from the community down the road] really want to kill me. […] But thank God! I ask God to always protect me and thank God, until now he has kept me alive." (Pablo, individual interview, 6th of March 2008)[10]

Marcos told us the situation was getting really difficult in his neighbourhood. They [the local gang] killed 'un cherro' [a friend] some nights ago. He told me that they [the gang] 'andan matando a todos', 'they are killing everybody'. What happened is that some gang members came out of jail, but they do not want to hang out with the gang anymore. The gang now threatened to kill all the 'betrayers'. Marcos used to hang out with the gang. He is not sure whether he is in danger too. Sometimes he thinks he is, sometimes he thinks he isn't and most of the time he feels it might be better just to leave. But, he has no safe place to go (Fieldnotes, 23/11.2006).

Boys such as Marcos and Pablo are familiar with death from an early age having lost close friends and relatives. They talked about death as a real possibility and not as some imaginary threat. Knowing that here is not much they can do, but 'trusting in God' and hoping that the situation will calm down, there is some passivity or fatality in their words and attitude. Sometimes they went to live with their family in another neighbourhood for a while or they stayed at home. During these periods they also could not come to the workshops.

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[10] B: ¿Les ayudaba en cosas que te pedían?
Pablo: Si.
B: ¿No era peligroso eso?
Pablo: Si me daba miedo. Bueno yo siempre… Yo la verdad todavía ando en esto. Y me da miedo… y me da miedo…me da miedo andar. 'Puya' me digo por veces. Pienso que me andan siguiendo y ya me quieren mandar. Y es cierto, me quieren matar los de abajo ya. […] Pero gracias a dios! Pero yo le pido a dios que siempre me guarde va, que me proteja y gracias a dios el me tiene vivo todavía. (Entrevista, 6 de Marzo 2008)[10]

While the Salvadoran government gladly points to the youth gangs as the main responsible perpetrators of violence, for most participants, and for the young men specifically, the police constituted an equally important factor of fear and discrimination. At regular times the police and the military surrounded and aggressively searched their communities and arbitrarily detained young men. Young men are not allowed to walk around in groups of more than two persons. If they did, they could be arrested for 'illegal association' and put into custody for three days. The 'illegal association' law is only applied in marginalised areas of the city and indiscriminately targets poor youth. The young men were constantly on their guard for the police because, whether actually belonging to a gang or not, *Looking like* a gang member (anything close to Hip Hop style) was reason enough to be stopped, searched and arrested.

> *Marcos: "sometime, you … your family sometimes is afraid that when you go out on the street you will not come back anymore. Sometimes… it is not that only los mareros [the gang] are to blame, because the police have something to do with it too, because of the abuse and everything that happens. And that makes you afraid. And that sometimes makes me afraid to leave my colonia [the part of the neighbourhood were he lives]. [Afraid] to go out of my colonia and to bump into the police and that they notice me, aha.' (Marcos, individual interview, 8th of January 2008) [11]*

Marcos describes how their mobility is restricted by different factors. They are not able to leave their neighbourhoods without worrying about rival gang members, but also within their own communities they cannot move freely. They are constantly targeted from all directions, including by legal institutions such as the police.

> *The electoral campaign has started! The police want to demonstrate that they are 'actively combating violence' and assuring the safety of 'good' citizens by ostensibly searching and detaining young people in the streets. Some days ago, the police forced their way into Alex's house. Marcos was there when it*

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[11] Marcos: Por en veces, uno…los familiares de uno por en veces tienen miedo a que uno salga a la calle y ya no vuelva otra vez a entrar va. En veces, no es que solo le echan la culpa a los mareros, por veces la policía tiene que ver con algo. Por el maltrato y todo lo que hay. Y eso da miedo. Y por en veces es lo que me da miedo a mí de salir de la colonia. De la colonia para fuera y que me encuentre con la policía y que me diga algo. Aha. (Entrevista, 8 de Enero 2008)

happened. One police man has beaten them with his gun, on their heads and in their backs, for no obvious reason. Alex and Marcos hardly leave their houses now, because of the constant police patrolling in the neighbourhood, but they are outraged. They want to join the gang again to take revenge and to give the 'juras' [the police] a real reason to come after them. (Fieldnotes 24/01/08)

Marcos and Alex were angry and enraged. They felt humiliated and powerless. CFO accompanied them in the legal procedure of filing a complaint, but they (rightly) felt justice would never be done. Feeling powerless, humiliated and enraged, they felt that only by (re)entering the gang they would have the power to 'do justice' and take revenge.

The young people worried about the dangers posed by both gangs and police alike. Most young participants were caught in the middle. They had to constantly and carefully negotiate their attitudes and behaviours in public spaces supervised by both the gang and the police. Fear also shaped, in great part, the PAR. For the participants, violence and fear of violence were the most important obstacles during the action research process. At the beginning some of their parents did not allow them to participate in our activities out of fear that something would happen to them. This was particularly true for La Bolivar. Several young people had been killed recently within the community or just in front of the entrance gates. Parents and the young people themselves were afraid that the rival gang (living just one block away) would find out that a group of young people from the neighbourhood gathered every Wednesday in the community house. They feared that some gang members would take advantage of this to come and kill them. The community house soon became too small for our workshops and we proposed to move to the old school building which was much bigger and more comfortable. However, the school stood in direct view of the rival gang and we were told that it was too risky to have our workshops there.

It was also almost impossible to organise public activities. Even organising a community festival just in front of the project centre, for example, was preceded by long discussions about safety (for people and materials), the necessity to ask for police security, etc. Each excursion and every activity organised outside the young people's communities was complicated by safety issues. We tried as much as possible to take the young people outside their crowded communities. But, each time we had to find out first whether the place in question was in a neighbourhood belonging to one of the gangs and whether it was a private

or public space such as, for example, swimming pools, beaches and cultural centres. And still, sometimes unforeseen safety issues interfered during the workshops.

"They were so excited this morning when leaving their community. On arrival at our destination we got a little disappointed at the view of the rather dilapidated buildings and the dirty swimming pool. Still optimistic we quickly headed to the beach thinking we could still have a lot of fun there later on. Getting there however, the boys directly noticed that the place was occupied by a group of 18 gang member having a little party. The quick view of their gang tattoos was enough to get the boys terrified. Within a few seconds, and without drawing attention to themselves, they returned inside the centre. They all got very silent. Most of them just sat down on the pavement, worried and disappointed. Moises snatched angrily that Brian had to take of his blue bandana [a colour related to the 13 gang] right now. Brian laughed as always when he is nervous. One of the other facilitators and I left to look for another place close by. There was a private beach club where we could have the workshop, but which was slightly expensive. The boys were 'soooooo' relieved when we finally left for that club. Pedro came to thank me about a thousand times. It is amazing how those boys just can't go anywhere without safety being a major issue (Fieldnotes 05/05/07)

Wherever the young people went, some risk seemed to be involved. Fear of violence and everything that goes with it (silence, fragmentation and constrained mobility) complicated working with the young participants and made it very difficult to facilitate young people's active participation in society. Clearly, violence and fear of violence profoundly shaped and seriously affected the young people's lives. It influenced their behaviour and actions, constrained their mobility, eroded their social life and limited their opportunities for, among other things, education and collective organisation. At times, the young people found themselves in acutely threatening situations in which they felt strong emotions of fear. But, most of the time their fear was latent and not directly noticeable, though it continued to influence the way they lived and the way they related to others. Nico Frijda's (Frijda 2008) distinction between emotions and sentiments is illuminating here. Frijda defines sentiments as long-term emotional states or enduring emotional attitudes (Frijda et al. 2000, Frijda 2008). Emotions, he writes, have a limited duration and are more intense, while sentiments are much less pronounced and may persist over a life time. Sentiments easily turn into actual emotions when their objects are encountered with sufficient urgency or proximity (Frijda et al. 2000).

While most young people involved in this research had gone through traumatising events experiencing deep and intense fear, they were not constantly afraid and had learned to live with the daily dangers as usual and expected (see also Scheper-Hughes 1992). On the other hand, their fear was not just a punctual and passing emotion, being too deeply embedded in their daily lives. The young people's fear can be better understood in terms of a long-term emotional attitude towards other people in particular and life in general. Living with fear seemed to have become part of their emotional *habitus* (Goodwin et al. 2001) which was, in great part, unconscious and unarticulated.

Building on Frijda, Keith Oatley observes that sentiments profoundly structure our (long-term) relationships with other people, affecting what we believe about them and how we behave towards them (Oatley et al. 2006). According to Oatley, different sentiments serve different social goals (see also Fischer 2010). He distinguishes three important social goals: attachment, affiliation (also described as human warmth or affection) and power. He argues that some sentiments more easily promote cooperation, affiliation and pro-social behaviour, while other sentiments more often result in competition, dominance and conflict. Love, compassion and sensitivity, for example, generally result in cooperative behaviour, kindness and acts of benevolence. The emotion most often related to power and conflict is anger and our propensity for aggression (Oatley et al. 2006). He associates warmth, love and compassion with trust, and anxiety and fear with distrust and suspicion (Oatley et al. 2006). From the young people's accounts it becomes clear that, in the Salvadoran context, fear functions to separate people, literally and figuratively, and erodes social life. As will become clear below, in the young people's lives fear goes hand in hand with distrust, feelings of powerlessness, apathy and self-destructive rage and hate, feelings mutually re-enforcing each other and functioning to tear people apart, rather than bringing them together.

7.2.2 Distrust

Distrust clearly is not as intense an emotion as fear, anger or sadness can be. The word 'distrust' seems more 'rational'. Distrust may be less intensely 'felt', because less physiological changes occur and because it needs more cognitive elaboration. Therefore, some call distrust a belief (see also Oatley 2006), while others do consider it to be an emotion (Fischer 2010). Whether an emotion or not, distrust, more often than not, is more than a purely cognitive reaction. Distrust is not just about how we perceive people, but also,

inseparably, about how we feel about them. The young people in Mejicanos grew up with violence and fear and, consequently, had learned to deeply distrust most people.

The young people told me that in their neighbourhoods everybody, even close neighbours, distrust each other. They indicated that violent conflict between neighbours and among families is a recurrent problem. In the community La Bolivar, for example, some families were involved in long disputes and suspected each other of employing gang members as *sicarios* (contract killers) to resolve their conflicts. As a result, even young people living in the same community distrusted each other and safely kept each other at a distance.

> *Jessica: [Talking about violence in her neighbourhood.] "It's bad, because they [people in her neighbourhood] don't live in peace, because if their children leave the house they are worried that something could happen to them. They are afraid."*
>
> *B.: Do people share their fears? Do they talk to each other about their worries?*
>
> *Jessica: "No! No, they don't talk, because there is no help [solidarity] in the community, so they don't talk to each other. People distrust each other. You can't trust them." (Jessica, individual interview, 26th of February 2008)[12]*

Young people from different (mostly gang related) neighbourhoods profoundly distrusted each other. This was not true only of young people close to the gang. Also the young people who did not belong to or did not hang out with the gang distrusted young people from other neighbourhoods because, generally speaking, they were 'somehow' related to the gang through their brothers, nephews and friends or through the simple fact that they lived in, and thus were identified with, a particular neighbourhood with a particular gang affiliation. The young people grew up in a general atmosphere of rivalry and distrust towards other young people. Tonio, for example, one day told me about a new project that aims to bring together young people from his neighbourhood and young people from the neighbourhood a little further down the road which belongs to the rival gang. He explained to me that he would like to participate in the project, but that he just cannot trust the young people from the other

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[12] Jessica: "Esta mal, porque no pueden vivir en paz porque si los hijos están afuera están preocupados porque les puede pasar algo. Y...si, tienen miedo."
B: ¿La gente comparte sus miedos? ¿Hablan uno con otro de de lo que les preocupe?
Jessica: "No! No hablan porque como no hay apoyo en la colonia, no hablan. Se desconfían entre ellos. Como la gente toda allí, uno no puede confiar en ellos." (Entrevista, 26 de Febrero 2008)

neighbourhood.

Tonio: "Remember that you should never trust others, because they might appear ok, but you never know what is really going on in their heart. Because they [the young people from the other neighbourhood] might tell [their local gang] who is going [to the project], who is family with whom, because some [of us] are brothers or sisters of 'mareros' [gang members]; others are nephews or friends, and you know, you always remain their friend. For example, those little children that live over there at the corner [he points at one of the houses]. They are the brothers, well they were the brothers of a [marero]...their brother died already. You know, just because you're their brother, they'll [the rival gang] always hate you." (Tonio, individual interview, 2nd of March 2008)[13]

Tonio's doubts demonstrate how a deeply ingrained distrust among young people is a result of a long-standing rivalry between different gangs, but also how, at the same time, distrust functions to confirm the circle of violence and fear. The young people sometimes wished to be friends with young people from other communities and to participate together in social activities, but were held back by distrust and suspicion. Most young participants felt that even if they would befriend young people from rival-gang neighbourhoods, deep down in their heart there would always remain a glimmer of doubt. Fear and distrust instilled a distance between the young people that was difficult to overcome. Fear and distrust were closely related. The young people distrusted other young people, because they learned to always expect a potentially violent reaction. The young people also acknowledged that, distrust, like fear, silences people and results in a lack of solidarity. It separates people.

Fernando: "There are a lot of people who live… Yes, there are a lot of people who live like…too close together. But I think that if they are from the same family they support each other. The problem is money or maybe that some persons want to set up their own home. Imagine one house with four rooms and one woman that has five sons and two of them sleep together in one room. Then one of them has a

[13] Tonio: "Acordarte que no hay que confiarse porque 'cara vemos, corazones no sabemos'. Porque en veces ellos pueden decir quiénes van a ir, quienes son familiares porque hay unos que son hermanos de mareros de acá, hay unos que son primos, hay unos que son amigos, tu sabes que uno sigue amigos va. Por ejemplo los niños que viven allí en la esquina, [], vaya ellos son hermanos de un, eran hermanos de un marero....que el hermano ya se murió. Tu sabes que aunque sean hermanos, siempre te quieren llevar odio." (entrevista, 2 de Marzo 2008)

wife, and a kid, and brings them over to live in the house and this might create
problems. Maybe…this might create problems because his wife might not want the
others to see her naked, or when she is taking a bath, or when she is wearing a
transparent nightgown, and then her husband…well finally, because here we are
[laughing out loud]… If you're not careful! … That woman better look out,
because if she doesn't, we might all 'pass over her'. That's how it is! We know
who we are and that is maybe why we are protecting ourselves, even from our
own brothers." (Fernando, individual interview, 15th of February 2008)[14]

Fernando points to fact that distrust is not just something they feel towards strangers. He explains how distrust has entered their most intimate relations and stands between close neighbours and family members and is therefore all the more disruptive. Many young people told me that, ultimately, they felt they can't trust anybody.

In such a context it was difficult to organise activities with different groups of participants coming from different communities. We started the action research process with a two-day camp with three different groups of young participants. During this camp we were immediately confronted with the rivalry and distrust between different groups of young people.

In the bus on our way to the camp the different groups sat apart and completely
ignored each other. During the introductory ice-breaking games most of them
gave fake names. During the whole weekend, the boys from El Huembes avoided
all contact with the other groups. The young people from La Bolivar and Santa
Monica got involved in mutual conflict from the moment they met each other. It
started with menacing looks, calling each other names and scolding, and ended
with so called death threats. The boys and girls from Santa Monica made a scene
and demanded that Rutilio [one of the facilitators] call the police or that we at

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[14] Fernando: Hay muchas personas que viven…si hay personas que viven así como muy, demasiado juntas. Pero yo creo que en parte si es de la misma familia, de la misma familia pueden suportarse un poco. El problema es lo monetario o quizás que algunas personas hagan su propio hogar. Digamos que una casa de unos cuatro cuartos, una señora tenga cinco hijos. Entonces digamos que dos duerman en un solo cuarto y de allí venga uno de ellos y tenga una mujer y tenga un hijo y se la traiga para la casa. Entonces esto quizás pueda causar... no quizás, es que causa problemas. Porque ya está la mujer y no quiere que la vean desnuda o cuando se está bañando o que se pone en camisón y es transparente entonces el esposo… Y como por fin aquí somos [se ríe] somos... allí el que se deja! Allí la mujer que se ponga viva porque si no le pasamos encima. Así es! Aquí más que todo por... Sabemos quiénes somos, entonces nos andamos protegiendo hasta de nuestros hermanos quizás." (Entrevista, 15 de Febrero 2008)

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least search all the bags of the boys and girls from La Bolivar to be sure they did not have any arms on them. They saw how two boys of La Bolivar had signed that they were going to kill Marcos [one of the boys from Santa Monica] and that they had a knife. They were angry and panicked. Their panic was soon passed over to some of the facilitators who started to fear the worst. Rutilio said we [but looking at me] should not be naïve because 'those things' [young people getting killed] happens every day. Marta [the project's psychologist] wanted to go and count the kitchen knives to be sure none of them was missing. Fortunately, Larry and Karla [both facilitators] remained calm. We did not search their bags, because that would stir up too much negative emotion. Larry who had known the kids from La Bolivar for ages said that probably they brought some knives, but that nothing would happen. I had the impression there was maybe some exaggeration in the reaction of both young people and facilitators, but their fear was nevertheless real. The different groups of young people came from different neighbourhoods, but their neighbourhoods all belong to the same gang. Yet, they distrust each other anyway. Bringing together young people from rival gang neighbourhoods would have been much more complicated still or maybe even impossible. Finally, the different groups did not befriend each other. They did not communicate much. But, they passed time and participated in activities together, which was a first start! (Fieldnotes 28/02/07).

The 'camp-experience' demonstrated how a deep feeling of distrust made it difficult for the young people to truly 'meet' and connect with each other: giving fake names, avoiding others to be sure not to get into trouble, etc. This is one of the many examples of how, in El Salvador, fear and distrust raise physical and psychological boundaries that instill and confirm social fragmentation.

7.2.3   Anger / Rage

Anger is generally considered an immediate, very physical emotion. Like fear, it can rise very suddenly in certain situations and become very intense. In relation to the young participants, I would not describe their anger as a sentiment. The young people did not have an angry attitude towards others or towards life in general. Nevertheless, their anger was easily triggered and could become quite violent in situations of conflict.

The young people grew up in a culture that promotes violence as the most effective way to resolve tensions and problems with others and this was also how the young participants most often handled conflict with others.

> *After the workshop the boys and girls from La Bolivar headed straight to the swimming pool. We were all having fun and were splashing around. Tonio started teasing Liliana. He splashed water in her face and laughed at her clumsy swimming style. She told him to stop and to leave her alone. He pulled her under and suddenly she yelled at him in anger: "Hijue puta, le dire a mi familia que te mate"! [Son of a bitch, I'll tell my family to kill you]. Tonio is close to the gang and Liliana's family already had many problems with the gang. Afterwards Jessica came to me and seemed to be very worried about what happened. She said that threatening Tonio is dangerous for Liliana. Many young people get killed in La Bolivar. She said that if now something happens to Tonio some of them would easily remember what she had said and blame Liliana's family for what happened. This would have serious consequences for them, even if they had nothing to do with it. (Fieldnotes 28th of October 2007)*

Besides demonstrating that the young people often reacted rather violently compared with the actual cause of conflict, the quote above and Jessica's worries are also an example of how life taught the young people to expect bad things (such as a violent death) to happen anytime. Fear and distrust were never far away and, in the young people's experiences, anger and rage rarely had positive consequences, but, most often, instigated a chain of ever more destructive reactions.

> *Fernando: [Talking about his community] Even me, I do not like my country. Even me, I do not like this part of my country, because here you have people who are even poorer than we are, but they are much more aggressive and conflictive than anybody else. If you notice, Jorge is one of them. Jorge, instead of resolving a problem and telling me this and that [is the problem], he told me he would send somebody to kill me just because he can't stand me. Instead of just saying to me that he can't stand me. […] But, he (Jorge) resorts to this [fighting and menacing] as if his mind resembles that of an animal. [That's what happens] when everything is against you [referring to poverty and lack of opportunities].*

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(Fernando, individual interview, 15th of February 2008)[15]

Fernando refers to poverty, a chronic lack of opportunities and accumulated frustrations as the underlying reason for excessive aggressive behaviour. He remarks that the people in El Salvador are not used to communicating and talking about their problems and grievances, but immediately fall back on violence and revenge to resolve disagreements.

Some participants, boys in particular, struggled with strong emotions of rage, resentment and hate. They got easily swept away by their anger and this often got them involved in violent conflicts at home, at work, in school and in their community, with negative destructive consequences for themselves and others. Some participants were attracted to the gang for many reasons (belonging, identity, power, and money) but most of them told me that they felt that it was anger and hate that finally pushed them over the edge.

Alex, Marcos and Tonio told me about the friends they lost, because they got killed. Alex and Marcos were about to enter the gang, but then didn't really want that kind of life. Tonio likes to hang out with them [the gang]. They're his friends; they have a good time together. But he also has his doubts. He knows he ought to stay away[16]. He says he really hopes he'll be able to keep his calm. He is afraid that in moments when he feels angry and fed up he can easily be convinced to 'do it' [get initiated] and then it's for life! Marcos and Alex were lucky to be able to step back a little, but still, sometimes they feel so much hate and anger, when friends get killed, or just like that, apparently for no reason. Alex told me he actually feels angry most of the time. In moments of anger, they say, they just can't think straight anymore, and then again the gang becomes like the only option; the only way to live out their rage. Then they just 'lose it'. (Fieldnotes, 14th of April 2007)

Pablo: […] "Look, I did not like … really enter the gang, I am not initiated yet. I

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[15] Fernando: "Ni yo quiero a mi país. Ni yo quiero a esta parte de mi país, porque allí hay personas que son un poco más pobres que nosotros, pero son mucho más agresivas y mucho más conflictiva con cualquiera. Si te fijas, Jorge es uno. Jorge en vez de solucionar un problema y decirme esto y lo otro, dijo que me iba a mandar a matar solo porque le caigo mal. En vez de decirme que le caigo mal. […] Pero el recurre a eso entonces su mente ya casi se vuelca a lo animal. Cuando uno no lo encuentra salida a nada." (Entrevista, 15 de Febrero 2008)

[16] 'Brincarse' is the ritual through which young people officially enter the gang. The ritual consists of a 13 / 18 seconds – depending on whether you belong to the 13 or 18 gang - beating by other gang members.

am just hanging out with them. But, other boys they really went the whole way, because sometimes their loved ones were killed, and shit … they just want to take revenge". (Pablo, individual interview, 6th of March 2008)[17]

In these cases some of the young people experienced anger as an overwhelming force that blinds them and pushes them to make decisions they know they'll probably regret later. Their anger, they say, urges them to take revenge and they feel like they can only 'lose' their anger through aggression and violence. Anger is not constructively dealt with and turns into rage, uncontrollable and (self) destructive. In the quotations above the young people also talk about anger in relation to feelings of deep pain and sadness, because of, for example, the loss of a family member or a friend. This relates to the lack of dialogue and communication that Fernando talked about. The young people did not learn and were not offered the opportunity to talk about how they feel or to process their grief in any other way. Some girls confirmed this by saying that they never had the possibility to talk about the violent deaths of their brothers. For some of them, boys in particular, rage and aggression seemed to be the only way they knew to exteriorize their pain.

Of course, not all young people enter the gang or 'live out' their grief and rage through aggression.

Cecilia: "They … Well, sometimes they say: "What the hell, I wish I had a weapon to go and shoot them, because it's too bad what they have done to [our] young people. They want to take it out on them … But then they think: "One against all of them" … […] So, they better stay with that bitterness in their heart, and they don't do anything." (Cecilia, individual interview, 27th of February 2008)[18]

[17] Pablo: "Mire ve, yo no me he metido así a la pandilla de que ya me brincaron va, pero… Yo solo ando con ellos va. Ya los bichos se meten así, se meten del todo ya, porque algunas veces les matan a sus seres queridos, también ellos, puya, se quieren vengar." (Entrevista, 6 de Marzo 2008)

[18] Cecilia: Ellos…bueno, por veces sí, dicen: "Putchika quisiera tener una arma por irles a disparar porque no se vale lo que le han hecho a los jóvenes!". Y ellos quisieron desquitársela pero…dicen 'solo uno para contra todos ellos… […] Como se quedan mejor con esa amargura en el corazón pero no hacen las cosas.

Cecilia talks about the young people's sense of powerlessness in the face of injustice. She talks about acute pain and grief and the impossibility of doing anything with it so that, finally, it transforms into a lasting 'bitterness in their hearts'.

During the PAR itself, we were regularly confronted with the young people's extreme reactions to conflict. With the group of La Uruguay conflict resolution became a real issue during the PAR process. The boys had overcome their initial passivity and had started planning and organizing some community activities. But, then there was a lot tension because some of them did not fulfil their responsibilities and always counted on the others to get things done. We tried to channel these tensions and to find solutions by facilitating dialogue among them. This nevertheless often ended up in huge and aggressive discussions and confrontations that the team could hardly manage. The group almost fell apart. Some of them were fed up and almost left the group. We had to 'interrupt' the process (postponing some activities) to explicitly work on peaceful conflict resolution for a while.

> *Marcos: [Talking about previous conflicts in the group] "Let's say … aha … I noticed that one of us was talking and the other as well and we always, because of our macho culture, almost want to hit each other. So that is why … sometimes there were difficulties … and that is why sometimes I said: "I am not going anymore!" I said: "I am not fucking going anymore to these meetings! Because it's all for nothing". Because of that macho thing we are having, because sometimes I also have it right." (Marcos, individual interview, 8th of January 2008)[19]*

During the PAR there were also some disagreements between facilitators and participants. During these conflicts too, some young people could react in quite radical ways. It never went any further than verbal threats, but this behaviour was significant demonstrating that violence (or the threat of it) had become a spontaneous reaction in conflictive situations.

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[19] Marcos: "Damos, en parte… aha… yo me fijaba que uno a veces hablaba y el otro hablaba y uno, siempre con el machismo, le salían hasta queriendo pegar al otro va. Por eso por en veces había dificultades. Por eso yo decía por veces 'ya no vengo'. Decía 'no vengo ni mierda a estas reuniones'. Porque por gusto estoy viniendo. Y damos el machismo que uno tenía, porque aun por en veces lo tengo va." (Entrevista, 8 de Enero 2008)

For already some time now Jorge and Moises are disturbing the workshops and often lack respect towards the team (Karla in particular) and the other boys [of the group]. They come to the workshops, but they hardly participate and disturb the others. They are totally passive and don't make any effort for the activities the group tries to organise. On the contrary! They disturb the activities and then criticise their friends for not doing a good job. They are always there for receiving the rewards (meals and excursions), but they do not seem to care about the process itself. It seems like they want to take advantage of the work of the others and get the benefits of it. This has created tensions in the group. We have talked with them several times. We have tried to work this out in a constructive way (the dialogue thing). But they just go on and now [during the last participatory workshop] we just had enough! They were really rude the whole afternoon. They insulted Karla and then refused to participate in the workshop. Not participating is not the problem! But they started dancing and laughing and intentionally made a lot of noise while the others were trying to concentrate. This was our last workshop and to celebrate the participants' efforts and a successful process, we were going to eat pupusas [traditional local dish]. We were fed up with Jorge and Moises. They really had gone too far. We discussed a long time about how we should react. We decided not to take them to eat pupusas and decided to send them back home by taxi directly after the workshop (given this was really not the first time and nothing had changed). We did not send them home by bus to make sure they arrived home safely. I told them and I explained to them very clearly why. We expected them to be angry, and they were. But we were a bit surprised when Moises threatened Karla. Just before he got into the car he said to her "le vamos a mandar a matar!', "We'll send somebody to kill you".
(Fieldnotes, 22th of November 2007)

Powerlessness, frustrations, the impossibility to process their grief and the inability to talk and communicate were important aspects of the young people's anger and aggression in situations of conflict. Anger is not necessarily a negative emotion and, when channelled in positive ways, can lead to positive changes. Anger can serve to readjust something in a relationship that has gone wrong and can lead to successful repair and a reinstatement of trust (Oatley et al. 2006). Anger can become the basis for social mobilization (Goodwin et al. 2001). Yet, anger can be fatal if mechanisms to restore positive interaction are not present. Anger then

turns into long-term aggression and violence. Anger, when not constructively engaged with further strengthens feelings of suspicion and distrust (see also Oatley 2006). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the young people involved in this research lived in a country with a long history of authoritarianism, inequality and disrupted social relations. In the case of El Salvador, few constructive mechanisms for restoring justice and reconciliation exist. Alex and Marcos know that the policeman that has beaten them up will never be punished. The young people knew that the murders of their brothers and friends would never be examined. They feel that those in power are untouchable. Furthermore, they grew up in a culture that promotes violence rather than dialogue and communication. They were not raised with the necessary skills to engage with anger and conflict in constructive ways and, worst of all, very often they directed their anger and rage against themselves and those close to them. Unsurprisingly then, peaceful conflict resolution became an essential component of the PAR process.

7.2.4   Apathy

Apathy is not an emotion, but refers to the absence or repression of emotions. Apathy refers to a sense that nothing is of particular interest or concern, and consequently, often results in a lack of engagement.

At the beginning of the PAR process, the young people's apathetic behaviour constituted quite a challenge. This was particularly so for the group of young people from La Uruguay. For a long time, they were passive and seemed indifferent. They nevertheless insisted they wanted to participate in the process and they always showed up for the workshops. They wanted to participate, but they had no proposals on what and how. They mainly just 'sat there, looked at us and said nothing'. They seemed to be uninterested and fatalistic towards their situation. They could not express any real social interests. It took some months of prioritising and re-prioritising issues of importance for them (and us) to slowly discover and express their needs and wants. For a long time we were worried about the fact that maybe we did not know how to approach and motivate them. Yet, after a while we also realized that this was maybe part of 'their situation'. Freire recognized this kind of passivity among many oppressed people and wrote that "a group which does not concretely express a generative thematic - a fact which might appear to imply the non-existence of themes - is on the contrary, suggesting a very dramatic theme: the theme of silence. The theme of silence suggests a structure of

mutism in the face of the overwhelming force of the limit situations" (Freire 2003 [1970]:64). Fernando, talking about the main problems in his community, formulated it as follows:

Fernando: I think it's a lack of space. For example, La Uruguay … euhm … football fields would help a lot. But, also, [there is] a lack of spaces for education. A lot of people do not study because they do not have the money for it. It is not only about the money for registration fees, but also for uniforms and books you have to read. So we come back to poverty. So that is why a lot of boys don't study. A lot of girls don't study because they can't afford it or because their parents do not want to send them to school. Because of a lack of culture too. Because, their parents say: "You have to learn a job! School is useless anyway!" They don't believe their children will go to university. But, they can't imagine that maybe they won't go to university, but that that paper [diploma] will be useful for something. They could choose for a technical career for example which is a little faster [than university]. I feel it is all about … a lack of hope… probably. Maybe, maybe …they just feel everything is lost. There is nothing left to fight for. A broken spirit! I think that's the problem." (Fernando, individual interview, 15th of February 2008)[20]

Some authors have argued that apathy weakens the human capacity to be compassionate with the suffering of others (Tedesco 1999). Apathy and the loss of compassion for the suffering of others is "a form of violence that manifests itself especially in the loss of the culturally acquired sense of respect for oneself and for others, and thus in a feeling of indignity, impotence, and loss of worth" (Tedesco 1999: 287). Apathy sometimes becomes a way to live and cope with violence and deprivation, and the young people as well, often reacted with indifference towards the suffering of others.

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[20] Fernando: Falta de espacio creo que seria.
 Como por ejemplo la Veracruz...euhm canchas si ayudarían bastante. Pero, también falta de espacio para educación. Como muchas personas no van a estudiar porque no tienen dinero, y no solo el dinero para la matricula si no también el dinero para comprar los uniformes, y algunos libros que les dejen. Entonces ya volvimos a toda la pobreza. Entonces por eso es que muchos chavos no estudian, muchas chavitas no estudian tampoco porque muchas no pueden ir o los papas no las quieren mandar. O por la falta de cultura también que los papas dicen "ay que aprender un oficio y la escuela de todo modo no sirve para nada. No creo que vayan a la universidad". Pero no visualizan que tal vez no vayan a la universidad pero este papel sirve para algo. O pueden agarrar alguna carera técnica que es más rápida. Yo siento que falta de...falta de esperanza quizás. Quizás, quizás lo sienten ya todo perdido. Ya no hay porque luchar. Ya se sienten demasiado sumidas en el fondo. Espíritu quebrantado. Yo creo que es el problema. (Entrevista, 15 de Febrero 2008)

Angel and Julio got killed and we [the team] were very sad and upset. I told the boys of La Uruguay and Santa Monica but they didn't care. I know they didn't know them well, but they had done some activities together. I did not expect them to be sad, but maybe just to care a little. But they couldn't care less! Complete indifference! Most of them shrugged their shoulders: "Si los mataron es por algo", "If they got killed there must be a reason for it". Some of them said they deserved it because they hung out with the gang. Some just laughed a bit. (fieldnotes, 25ᵗʰ of April 2007)

Apathy and a certain loss of empathy and compassion erode feelings of solidarity and hamper organisation and collective action. The young people often regretted living in an increasingly cold, careless and individualistic society.

Fernando: "Here everybody is looking out for themselves. To say it like this: everybody is trying to save their own skin. There aren't many people who care for the others or who say: "I will do this and I will give to these and these persons because I am able to do so and they do not have anything and that is why I am going to fight because I want everybody to have enough." There aren't many. Actually, all of us are apathetic. We are apathetic. I think I have never fought for other people and maybe I would, but only when I have obtained for my family what I proposed to myself for my family. (Fernando, individual interview, 15ᵗʰ of February 2008)²¹

Cecilia: well … nothing has been done [about violence in my community] because people, instead of looking for a solution, they open the gates [of the community] so that bad things happen to the people [who live there] and to the young people … so that young people suffer, [so that they] are part of violence. Instead of helping them, they say … it's like they say: "Ok, it's better they leave so they don't bother us anymore!" People from our own community do not help them [young people].

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²¹ Fernando: "Aquí cada quien anda buscando por su propia mordida por así decirlo, a halar o salvar su propio pellejo. No hay muchos que luchen por otros o digan "yo voy a hacer esto o les voy a donar a tales personas esto porque yo puedo porque yo tengo y otra persona que no tenga pero digo yo voy a luchar porque quiero que todos tengamos esto". No hay muchas, de por si todos son apáticos. Somos apáticos. Yo quizás, nunca he luchado mucho por las otras personas y quizás lucharía pero hasta que ya haiga obtenido las metas que me he propuesto con mi familia." (Entrevista, 15 de Febrero 2008)

B.: So, there is a lot of … [Cecilia interrupts me]

Cecilia: "A lot of selfishness among people here. It's like: "Let's see who survives." and they just don't care about others. […]As I told you, [people think] it's better to lock themselves in [in their houses] and they say: "We should keep the children inside! As long as we are safe!" and they don't care about the others. If a person needs help, most often, they don't help them. Some do, but most of them don't, they would even prefer they die. It's very hard! Very hard! (Cecilia, individual interview, 27th of February 2008)[22]

Cecilia talks not just about violence and a lack of solidarity in her community, but about a lack of empathy and compassion. In her experience and in the experience of most young participants, the majority of people do not want the best for others. On the contrary, according to most young participants, living with violence is a terrible think, but living among people who are indifferent to your suffering is what makes it really hard.

In the young people's accounts fear, distrust, anger, apathy and grief are feelings that are closely related. In their experiences, they work together to separate people, disrupt society and break down solidarity and collective action. They form some kind of vicious circle which is hard to breach especially when not offered the opportunity to engage with these feelings constructively and to channel them in positive (transformative) ways.

7.3 Young participants' emotions and the culture of violence in El Salvador

7.3.1 Emotions, culture and society in El Salvador

Writing on anger, hate, apathy and fear in poor young people is a delicate matter. Emotions are generally considered something personal, individual and private, as something apart from economics and politics; something that does not substantially infuse the public / policy sphere

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[22] Cecilia: "Bueno, no… no se ha hecho nada porque las personas en vez de buscar una salida ellos como que abren las puertas para que a las personas, a los jóvenes les vaya mal y que a los jóvenes sufran, sean parte de la violencia. En vez de darles una mano no, ellos como que, como que dicen 'vaya, mejor que se vayan para que allí ya no estén!'. La gente de la misma comunidad, ellos no los apoyan."
B: Entonces, hay como mucho…
Cecilia: Mucho egoísmo entre las personas allí. Que solo allí a ver quien sobrevive y las demás personas les vale. […] Como le conté, que mejor se encierran y dicen 'hay que meter a los niños, con solo que nosotros estamos adentro, ya las demás personas da igual'. Si alguna persona digamos, necesita auxilia ellos en la mayoría de los casos no se la dan. Algunas sí, pero no todas, mejor quieren que se mueran. Es muy fuerte! Es muy duro! (Entrevista, 27 de Febrero 2008)

and vice versa (Anderson and Smith 2001). Therefore, this could easily be understood as pathologizing poor youth, holding them responsible for their own marginalisation because of some kind of innate disposition for a-social, destructive behaviour; as if something is wrong with them, rather than with society (Bourgois 2003). Yet, an understanding of emotions as relational and as socially and culturally constructed urges us to look beyond the young participants' anger, distrust, apathy and fear as mere signs of individual pathology. It ineluctably points to a critical understanding of the young people's emotions as produced by and productive of a historically instilled culture of violence and fear.

Influenced by a constructivist, poststructuralist approach, emotions can be seen as discursive practices (see Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990), recognising that language, discourses and social practices simultaneously frame and affect what can and should be felt (Harding and Pribram 2002). Emotions are also intrinsically relational. People and their environments are interrelated in that "what appears to be outside impacts profoundly on our emotional interiors, getting through us" (Davidson et al. 2005: 7). Environments have the capacity to transform people's lives and places and can be directly health promoting (Davidson et al. 2005). Yet, the opposite is also true in that certain places can have a devastating and destructive impact on people's minds and bodies.

The young people's anger, mistrust, fear and apathy have to be understood as generated by, and expressive of, the particular socio-cultural context in which they live. Their emotions tell us something not only about themselves, but also about their social worlds, their relationships with others, and the social rules and structures that enable or prevent them from feeling in particular ways. Recognising that particular cultural, social and historical contexts affect what people feel and how they manage their emotions (Bondi et al. 2005), the young participants' feelings of anger, fear, distrust and apathy are to be understood in the light of a multiplicity of mutually reinforcing socio-cultural factors: a long bloody history of dictatorship, civil war and authoritarian regimes; a historically polarised society; poverty in the face of abundance; machismo informed by aggressive notions of masculinity; a hierarchical educational system pursuing repetition and obedience rather than autonomous critical thinking; increasingly mediatised discourses of dangerous poor youth; and repressive zero-tolerance policies. In short: a deeply entrenched, enduring culture of violence.

> Fernando: "Violence! Violence is something very much rooted in our culture.
> Violence! I feel it is very difficult to change [that]. You are asking me how

violence has complicated the [PAR] process, but when you talk to me about violence, my mind wanders to the parents because, in part, you are as your parents have educated you. If you had been raised by Salvadoran parents you would have been [violent] like us, or worse [laughs out loud]. Or, if we would have been raised by Chinese parents, we would not have been the same, or a Japanese person or an American one or by someone from the Middle East, then we would have been suicidal [laughs loudly with his own joke]. It has to do a lot with our culture. Because our parents, our parents… you [young people] can't talk with adults. You are not allowed to intervene in a conversation because you are a child and so: "Oh no, I'd better not say anything". You can't do this and you can't do that and so [young] people start to be all inhibited. They start to be inhibited and scared. They don't dare to talk. So that's it: violence. [Violence] means that we don't progress, because many people are afraid to express themselves or they are not able to express themselves. They can't express themselves because they did not have a good education. Not even excellent, just a good education… so many things they did not learn. Because of ignorance or fear or… I think that's why." (Fernando, individual interview, 15th of February 2008)[23]

7.3.2 Emotions and power in El Salvador

The young participants' emotions are not only expressive of wider social relations; these relations are also, always, power relations (Burkitt 1997). Harding and Pribram (2002) argue that emotional responses are culturally and historically produced in specific cultural and historical contexts *and* power relations; and that power, as a web of unequal relations, works through specific articulations of emotions. They consider emotions as mechanisms of force, as a means of deploying power relations. "Emotions are part of the reproduction of culture and

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[23] Fernando: La violencia! La violencia es algo muy arraigado en nuestra cultura, la violencia. Yo siento que es difícil para cambiar. Me estas preguntando como dificulto pero yo, cuando me hablas de eso, mi mente anda a los papas porque en parte uno es porque como los papas lo crearon, porque a vos si te hubieron creado papas salvadoreños fuera igual o peor que nosotros. O, ponerle que nos hubiera creado un chino no fuera igual, o un japonés, un estadounidense o algún de oriente medio fuéramos suicida. Pero tiene que mucho que ver la cultura nuestra. Porque los papas, nuestros papas no, no podes hablar con los adultos, no podes meterte en una conversación porque vos sos niño y entonces 'hay no, ya no hablo' entonces no puedes hacer esto no puedes hacer lo otro y allí los bichos y las personas se empiezan a hacer cohibidos, se empiezan a cohibir así, que son todos asustados, que no quieren hablar. Entonces eso, la violencia. Ayuda mucho a que no se progresara porque muchos tenían miedo para expresarse o no podían expresarse. No podían expresarse por lo mismo interior o porque no se les dio una buena crianza. No excelente va, pero buena… no se les enseñaron bastantes cosas o quizás por ignorancia porque […] Entonces por ignorancia o por miedo o por...yo creo que por eso.

subjectivity - emotions are constitutive of culture and subjectivity, and culture and subjectivity are constitutive of emotions - always within power relations" (Harding and Pribram 2002:421). Harding and Pribram use Foucault's thinking about 'technologies of power' as a conceptual tool for investigating whether and how emotions may be instrumental in the reproduction of power relations. Looking at emotions from this perspective, it is possible to question how and to what degree the young people's emotions are to be understood as techniques of discipline that help forge what they do and who they are (See Harding and Pribram 2002). Paying explicit attention to how their emotions function within constellations of power leads to a critical consideration of the crucial role that the young people's most intimate emotions came to play in further shaping the oppression that larger forces imposed upon them, making them 'accomplices' in their own marginalisation in very subtle ways (Bourgois 2003:17) and constituting the worst form of oppression.

The young people's every day fear and distrust have to be situated in the broader historical and political context. In El Salvador, authoritarianism and violence have been key features of Salvadoran political culture since independence (Hume 2007a). The maintenance of a culture of violence is part of a historic state project to assure the hegemony of elite interests (Hume 2007a). Conflict and fragmentation are far from new in Salvadoran communities. Well documented stories of everyday life during the civil war reveal historic mistrust, silence and isolation between neighbours (Hume 2006).

In El Salvador today as much as before (and as described by the young people above), the culture of violence and fear results in the disintegration of collective life and the breakdown of basic solidarity, and functions to paralyze any form of protest (see also Torres-Rivas 1999). Even worse, the enduring experience of violence and continuous deprivation often results in poor and marginalized social groups "internalizing their rage and directing their anger and despair against themselves and their immediate community rather than against their structural oppressors" (Bourgois 2003:326). "Chafing under the restrictions of [a violent and oppressive] order, they often manifest a type of horizontal violence, striking out at their own comrades for the pettiest reason" (Freire 2003 [1970]: 62). In El Salvador, for example, the increasing number of young people opting for gang life is a clear sign of "the anger of the dispossessed turned inwards upon themselves, among equals, permanently and fatally" (Torres Rivas 1999:288). Although gang culture partly emerges out of a personal search for dignity, it ultimately becomes an active agent in personal degradation and community ruin

(Bourgois 2003: 9) as desperate young people come to act as agents in their own extermination (Hume 2007b).

A culture of violence thrives on fear, distrust, rage, hate and apathy and without its emotional foundation a culture of violence would not be able to exist. In El Salvador, the powerful class has a strong interest in fomenting violence and inciting fear, hate and distrust. It *needs* outraged, angry young men and frightened, apathetic citizens to strengthen its power. The highly mediatised discourse of dangerous poor youth and the *Mano Dura* and *Super Mano Dura* legacy all form part of the same project in which terror and violence are used indiscriminately to assure the hegemony of elites (Hume 2007b). Since 2003, the right wing party's electoral success is completely based on the security debate and the promotion of zero-tolerance policies. After almost six years of repressive policies, homicide rates have increased and youth gangs have become better organized and more violent than ever before (Rodriguez-Lopez 2010). The public (and arbitrary) targeting of poor young people has fed the vicious circle of violence and has contributed to the further polarization of (and distrust within) society (Hume 2007a). The heavy-handed *Mano Dura* legacy has stirred up the young people's rage and hate and, in combination with multi-layered exclusion and a complete lack of justice; has facilitated the appeal that gangs represent for young people (Hume 2007a). At the same time, this legacy deflects attention from other types of embedded violence, such as, among many others, corrupt institutions and heightened inequality (Hume 2007a, Hume 2007b).

7.4 Conclusions

Being at the wrong end of the spectrum of social inequality is emotionally damaging (Wood and Smith 2004). In this chapter I have described how the young people feel about their daily lives and their everyday relations with others. I have looked more closely at the young people's emotions of fear, distrust, rage and apathy and at what these emotions do with them and their communities and what their social consequences are. I have tried to demonstrate how the particular historical, social and political context of El Salvador permeated the young people's consciousness, morality, sense of security, and ways of being in and feeling about the world (see also Scheper-Hughes 1998). Dominant discourses and social practices functioned as technologies of power that, in very subtle and complex ways, not only shaped the young people's minds, but also their most intimate emotions (Elliot 2002). Emotions

clearly are not neutral or purely psychological phenomena, but a political force, moving us and influencing our actions in a number of ways (Solomon 2003). Social relations are produced through emotion and emotional connections (or the lack of them) are also sites of power (Lawson 2007). The young people's emotions of fear, anger, distrust and apathy were situated, historicized and relational and affected politics as much as they were affected by it, at a whole range of scales (see also Pain 2009).

In this chapter I have focused on the young people's emotions as socially produced and productive of subjects and the power relations that constitute them (see also Harding and Pribram 2002). But, human subjects are never simply the passive victims of social practices of power and domination. They are also, at the same time, active, creative and knowledgeable agents (Elliot 2001). I have described how the young people's emotions of anger and fear were political and functioned to maintain the status quo (Illouz 1997, 2007). Yet, "[i]f emotions are bound up with the securing of social hierarchy (Ahmed 2004:4) then it follows that emotions must also be bound up with the destabilizing of social hierarchy" (Wilkinson 2009: 36). Emotions are also a powerful force for positive social change and can be nurtured to challenge the status quo. It is to young people's emotions as a domain of creativity and freedom and on their empowering role in PAR that I now turn in the next chapter.

8 Cultivating New Subjectivities: Empowering Emotions

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I focussed on how the young people's emotions of anger, hate, mistrust, apathy and fear functioned to reproduce the status quo of inequality and oppression. In this chapter I focus on the young people as actors of change and on emotion as a catalyst for personal and social transformation.

I begin this chapter by considering the participants' experiences of empowerment and their perception of the results and the impact of the PAR. Noticeably, most young participants didn't say much about having become more critically conscious or about having acquired new insights or having changed their ideas about their daily reality. They evaluated the empowering impact of PAR in emotional, embodied and practical terms, in terms of *feeling*, *behaving and doing* things differently.

In a second part, I complement the young participants' evaluations of the PAR process with my fieldwork observations pointing to the limits of critical consciousness for effecting personal and social change. As I have argued in the previous chapter, power works through emotions. Therefore, considering emotions and emotional transformation is fundamental in empowerment processes. I also mentioned that, generally speaking, PAR accentuates critical reflection and understanding as the first step in facilitating change. Yet, in this particular PAR process, many young people did not feel like participating in reflection and analysis, but they did change by participating in methods (cooperative games in particular) that allowed them to 'be', 'do' and 'feel' different, without necessarily always being involved in reflection or analysis. Furthermore, gaining critical consciousness was often insufficient to effectively transform the young people's emotional lives. Critical understanding was often powerless in the face of overwhelming emotions such as anger, fear, distrust and rage.

In a third part, I interpret these evaluations and observations from a poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity, also engaging with some of its critiques. I argue that participatory researchers, though increasingly using alternative qualitative methods that engage the tactual and emotional and considering 'action' as an integral part of the PAR

process, still highly prioritise 'conscientization' and 'discourse' as the first and principal step towards empowerment. As a consequence, PAR potentially ignores practical and embodied ways of knowing and being in the world and the opportunities these knowledges offer for alternative ways of empowerment.

8.2   Young people's experiences of empowerment: 'feeling' and 'doing' differently

During the participatory evaluation workshops and the individual interviews it became clear that the young people felt that they had changed. They described these changes in terms of feeling and embodied practices, rather than in terms of having changed their ways of thinking or having acquired new insights into their reality. More than as a place of reflection, the young participants considered the PAR project as a space where they were valued, where they could be themselves, where they felt free and where they were treated as equals.

All the young people said that they felt more self-confident. They had overcome feelings of shame and felt better about themselves. They were less embarrassed to talk to others, even in other spaces beyond the PAR process. The young people felt they had opened up.

> *Cecilia: "I have been thinking that I feel much surer about myself now. I learned that I have valid opinions and that I deserve respect and that others have to take me into account." [24] (Participatory evaluation workshop, individual questionnaire, 28th of October 2007)*

Cecilia expressed that she started to evaluate herself more positively and started to feel more valued by others. As Cecilia, the other young people increasingly believed in their own ideas and capacities and gradually started to claim the right to be listened to and to be taken into account. This is what feminist writers have defined as 'power *within*' and as the basic fundament of all empowerment processes.

Believing in themselves and being able to express their feelings and ideas made it easier for the young people to also be more open to what others feel and think.

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[24] Cecilia : Si, he pensado que me siento mas segura de mi mismo
 He aprendido que tengo opiniones (que) son validas (y que) merezco respeto y me deben de tomas en cuanta.

Marcos: "Aha. Like,...in part… taking away that feeling of shame. Aha! (When you are) with other people. And little by little the feeling of shame was taken away and we learned how to express ourselves. And (we learned) also to understand how others feel."[25] (Marcos, individual interview, 8th of January 2008)

As other young participants, Marcos talked about the fact that, by participating in the PAR process, he has learned to express how he feels and what he thinks. But, he also talked about the fact that he got to know himself better and, in turn, also learned to better understand how others feel. During the PAR the young people became more in contact with their own feelings and, consequently, also with those of others. Throughout the PAR process the young people felt increasingly connected to others.

"We have learned to value ourselves as persons. We learned to defend our ideals, no matter what other people think. We learned to share, communicate and help each other and we have learned more about Bboying [related to Hip Hop]. We realise that we are able to achieve even more. Some of us have left and the group has become smaller, but no matter what people say about us, we know we are great pals. Friendship is the most important value we have cultivated."[26] (Participatory evaluation workshop III, Group 1, 14th of October 2007)

All the young participants mentioned friendship and better communication as important results of the PAR process. They said they felt closer to others and better able to share and communicate.

The young people also said they learned to trust others more. For most of them, this was the result of a stronger sense of connection (friendship). For most young people, the fact that they had learned to trust each other, was one of the most significant results of the research process. They learned to trust young people from their own neighbourhoods. But they also learned, to

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[25] En parte quitarse la pena a uno. Aha, entre otras personas. [ ] Y poco a poco uno se ha ido quitando la pena, y ha ido aprendiendo como expresarse. Y los sentimientos de las personas como descubrirlos.
[26] Hemos aprendido a Valorarnos como personas. Hemos aprendido a defender nuestras ideales a pesar que a otros no les parezca. Hemos aprendido a Convivir, comunicarnos y ayudarnos y hemos aprendido más del tema Bboying. Nos damos cuenta ahora que tenemos capacidad de hacer mas cosas. Algunos se han alejado porque no les interesa preparar, aprender o hacer y el número de jóvenes en las actividades disminuyo. A pesar de lo que la gente diga o piensa de nosotros sabemos que somos Bboys y grandes cheros. El valor más importante que hemos cultivado es la amistad.

some degree at least, to trust young people from other neighbourhoods. Given the general atmosphere of rivalry and distrust in which they grew up, they felt that being able to connect with and build bonds with other young people was very important.

> *Liliana: "I feel I have changed. Before I didn't have any friends, and now I have. I have lived here [in this community], but I only knew them [other young people] by face, I did not talk to them. Yes, but now we get on along well. There is more trust. […] Young people have changed [in that] they trust each other more, and before this was not the case."[27](Liliana, individual interview, 10th of February 2008)*

> *Tonio: "I liked it a lot because we got to know more young people that we did not know before. We went on excursions with them. We talked. We shared experiences. We even shared our things together! We even danced together! We passed through nice experiences together like games; [like] strong challenges like when they blinded us and we had to follow a rope and we walked all over the place and held each other's hands. Different groups of young people participated and it was great to participate with them."[28]*
> *(Tonio, individual interview, 2nd of March 2008)*

Both Liliana and Tonio implicitly referred to the importance of physical closeness in becoming more familiar with each other. Mentioning that now 'they talk to each other', they did not really refer to the fact of sharing ideas or getting to know particular things about each other, but to the actual (physical) act of speaking to each other. Tonio typically talked about sharing things, dancing, and holding each other's hands. For most young participants, a growing closeness and connection had more to do with doing things together and physical communication, rather than with verbal dialogue and critical understanding.

Feeling connected and more able to trust, the young people felt they started to cooperate more

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[27] Liliana: Yo sí, siento que he cambiado. Que antes no tenía amigas, hoy si ya tengo. Vivía aquí pero solo les miraba, pero no les hablaba. Si, como ahora nos llevamos más bien. Hay más confianza. [] (Los y las jóvenes han cambiado en) Que tienen confianza con uno, antes no había.
[28] Tonio: Me ha gustado porque hemos ido a conocer a jóvenes mas, que no conocíamos. Hemos ido a pasear con ellos. Hemos conversado, hemos convivido, hemos hasta compartido nuestras cosas! Hemos hasta bailado junto! Hemos pasado en situaciones bonitas, como en dinámicas, en retos muy fuertes como nos amarraron los ojos y pasamos por unos lazos y fuimos a dar vueltas y todo y nos apoyamos y todos fuimos agarrados de las manos. Habían varios grupos que fueron va, y era tan bonito participar con ellos.

easily with each other to achieve common goals.

> *"Our group has become bigger and the young people always show up despite the problems they confront every day. There is more cooperation among us. We now help each other out to achieve our goal which is to make a theatre piece. Before, we did not talk to each other. We only knew each other by face, but now we get on well together. There is some solidarity now. Before, there was more indifference among us, young people. Also among boys and girls there is a little more trust now. We changed a little bit because of the confidence they [the team] had in us. We have developed friendship relations with other groups of young people [from other communities]."[29] (Participatory evaluation workshop III, Group 2, girls, 14th of October 2007)*

> *Marcos: "Maybe change…You don't change suddenly, but little by little you have to start changing and I notice that we do not think like before anymore. We think differently and for better. I notice that the majority of the group think differently now. Let's say that before each of us only thought about himself. But, now when we want to do something, we ask each other. It is as if there is more trust now. It's like "Hey look, we are going to this or that!", and if the other agrees: "Ok, but let's do it like this!" and like that we achieve a solution."[30] (Marcos, individual interview, 8th of January 2008)*

> *Alma: "Equality! I learned a lot about equality. That is … to get along with more people. That I should not only think about myself, but also about others. Collaboration! That's it!"[31] (Alma, individual interview, 16th of February 2008)*

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[29] "Nuestro grupo ha crecido y los y las jóvenes siempre vienen a pesar de los problemas diarias que tienen. Ya hay más cooperación entre nosotros. Ahora nos ayudamos para lograr el objetivo o meta que es realizar una obra de teatro. Antes (los y las jóvenes de nuestra comunidad) no nos hablamos, solo (nos conocemos) de vista, pero ahora nos llevamos bien. Hay algo de solidaridad ahora. Había más indiferencia antes entre los jóvenes.
También entre chicos y chicas se siente un poco mas de confianza. Hemos cambiado un poco debido a la confianza que nos han dado. Hemos hecho amistad con otros grupos y personas."
[30] Marcos: Quizás, el cambio… uno no va cambiando de la noche a la mañana, pero poco a poco uno debe de ir cambiando y me he fijado que por en veces como uno pensaba antes ya no piensa lo mismo. Piensa distinto y para mejor. Me he fijado en la mayoría del grupo que piensa distinto. Damos, antes cada quien pensaba en individual va, pero ya cuando llegamos a hacer una cosa uno pregunta a los demás. Como ya hay más la confianza. Como 'hey mira fíjate vamos a hacer tal cosa, y si el otro está de acuerdo 'pero lo vamos a hacer así va' y se llega a una solución.
[31] Alma: A la igualdad. Aprendí mucho la igualdad. Este... a llevarme con más personas, conocer a más gente. A saber va, que no me tengo que preocupar solo por mí, pero por los demás también. El compañerismo, va. Sí, eso.

The young people insisted on friendship, trust and confidence and related these emotions to growing feelings of solidarity as opposed to the indifference / apathy before. They also referred to enthusiasm, identification and cooperation and their capacity to achieve something together. For the young people all these different things were linked: connection (closeness), friendship, trust, enthusiasm, solidarity and cooperation. For most young people the feeling of connection and trust was an important condition for a growing solidarity, facilitating a learning process of cooperating and working together. This broadly confirms Oatley's (2006) ideas about the social consequences of emotions and sentiments: with warmth and affection there is more trust, without there is often distrust. With enthusiasm there is hope, without there is ennui or apathy (Oatley et al. 2006). Sentiments of human warmth (friendly affection), enthusiasm and empathetic identification increasingly committed the young people to connect with others, to trust, care, and cooperate (Oatley et al. 2006).

Noticeably, the young people did not just say that they started to trust others they got to know better; they also seemed to refer to a more trusting attitude towards 'others' and 'the world' in general. Many young participants argued that they have become more comprehensive, tolerant and open, or as Fernando expresses it, they have become a bit 'rounder'.

> *Fernando: "[I changed] in my way of looking at others. Others who are not …
> who are not … who do not think the same as I do. For example, my way of looking
> at the mareros. I do no longer consider them as (social) waste. I do not see them
> like that anymore, but more like poor persons who because of their parents or
> because of many other things are who they are. They don't see any other way out
> and that is why they choose the gang where they feel safe."*
> *B: Do you feel this process has helped you to discover new things?*
> *Fernando: "Yes, I feel it opens us for many things. It … maybe … we are more
> open to talk to other people. When they [others] tell us: "Look at this or that!" we
> do not simply react anymore like: "Oh Come on! They just say whatever!" We
> become more absorbing (more open). We are not so 'square' anymore as our
> society has been moulding us. We have become a little bit 'rounder."*[32] *(Fernando,*

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[32]Fernando: (he cambiado) En la forma de ver a los demás. A los demás que no son....que no son...que no piensan igual que yo. [] Pero, por ejemplo la forma de ver a los mareros ya no lo veo mucho como una lacra quizás, escoria. Entonces la escoria de la sociedad, entonces ya no los veo así si no que los veo como pobrecitas personas que por culpa de sus padres o por culpa de muchas cosas son como son. No le sienten salida a nada y por eso se van a meter en una pandilla donde se sienten seguro. (Fernando, individual interview, 15th of March 2008)

individual interview, 15th of March 2008)

"We learned to respect each other, to share and to live together. We now trust each other more, as well as our facilitators, our parents, brothers and sisters and people we don't really know. We have learned to listen to each other (though only just a little bit because it is very hard) and to share. We learned to be more responsible. We learned to be more responsible for our own things, but also those of others and we have learned to listen to the ideas of others and to respect those ideas."[33] *(Participatory evaluation workshop III, Group 2, Boys, 14th of October 2007)*

In the above cited quotations some of the participants mention that they became more tolerant towards people that are not like them and that they are better able to listen to others. They now try to feel more often how others feel: empathy. They are more open for difference and they are more able to imagine how someone else feels. As a result they feel that they have become more loving and caring towards others.

Tonio: "Through theatre I learned to express myself and to love others more. Ehm, [I learned] to make people laugh that usually do not like to laugh, that are always bored. Ehm, you have to care for all people, all the same."[34] *(Tonio, individual interview, 2nd of March 2008)*

Fernando: Yes! I have friends and more and more and more! I have learned about Hip Hop culture and I have learned to relate to people who are different from me

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B: ¿Sientes que este proceso ha ayudado al grupo a ver y descubrir nuevos caminos?
Fernando: Si, yo siento que nos abre a muchas cosas. Nos abre… ya quizás… ya soportamos mas la idea de estar hablando con otras personas. Ya cuando otros nos dicen: 'mira ve esto y lo otro' y ya no decimos simplemente 'ah vos! Son culeradas lo que estás diciendo vos!'. Si no que siento que ya absorbamos más. Ya no somos tan cuadrados como nuestra sociedad nos hace, como nos molde. Ya somos mas redondos.
[33] Hemos aprendido a respetarnos, a compartir y a convivir. Tenemos más confianza en nuestros compañeros y orientadores también en nuestros padres, hermanos y personas desconocidas. Hemos aprendido escuchar – aunque sea solamente un poco ya que es difícil - y compartir.
Hemos aprendido a ser responsables. A ser responsables con las cosas de otros y los nuestros también y (hemos aprendido a) escuchar las ideas de los demás y respetarlas.
[34] Tonio: A través del teatro he aprendido a expresarme, a querer más a las personas. Este...hacer reír a las personas que no les gusta andar riendo, que siempre andan aburridas. Este...a las personas tienes que recibirlas con cariño, a todas iguales.

and I have learned to try to see things through their eyes."[35]   (Participatory evaluation workshop, 28th of October 2007)

Ronaldo: "Well, as for me, I learned more in the workshops and I analyse more what I do. I feel bad because some people say CFO is just taking us out to have fun, but thanks to the workshops I have learned to value different people."[36] (Participatory evaluation workshop, 28th of October 2007)

Some of the young people also mentioned that they learned to deal differently with conflict, because they learned to remain calmer and are less aggressive towards others.

Tonio: "I have learned to be friendlier and to live peacefully with others and not to fight with people I do not know. [] We [young people from his neighbourhood] used to solve our problems fighting and then we were friends again. Now we solve our problems by talking. Well, and if it doesn't work out … well then some of us just [still] fight and others solve their problems by talking and then they are friends again. Now we are always able to resolve our biggest problems through talking. We even organized a break dance group and we do everything together. We even cleaned the neighbourhood together; we took out all the dirty stuff and everything. We worked together taking up very big challenges. We went over to CFO where we participate with other groups [from other communities] who came over to dance as well!"[37] (Tonio, individual interview, 2nd of March 2008)

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[35] Fernando: Si: Tengo amigos y más y más. He aprendido que es la cultura Hip Hop y he aprendido a relacionarme con personas diferentes a mi y (he aprendido) a tratar de ver las cosas como ellos las ven.

[36] Ronaldo: Bueno por mi parte porque conozco mas cosas de los talleres y analizo mas sobre lo que hago. Me siento mal porque hay personas que dicen que los del CFO los llevan a pasear pero por los talleres he aprendido a valorar más la gente diferente.

[37] Tonio: Hemos aprendido a respetar a las personas adultas, no maltratar a los mismos amigos, así ya pegándoles como antes hacíamos? Dándonos duro arreglábamos todo y después éramos amigos otra vez. Ahora, los problemas los arreglamos hablando. ¿Y si no se arreglan? ... entonces ni modo hay unos que se dan duro y otros que los arreglan (hablando) y vuelven a ser amigos. Ahora los mayores problemas que han habido, siempre los hemos arreglado hablando. Hemos hasta hecho un grupo de break ahora, y ahora todos hacemos las cosas juntos. Hasta hemos barrido hasta la colonia juntos ya, hemos limpiado, hemos sacado ripio y todas las cosas. Hemos trabajado en cosas muy fuertes! Hemos ido allá, al CFO! Hemos ido a participar con varios grupos que llegan a bailar también allí!

Jonathan: "I feel happy because I became a little bit less violent and get along better with others. []"[38] (Participatory evaluation workshop, 28th of October 2007)

Marcos: "I have changed and I understand others better. I am happier with myself because I am calmer. I am happier with my relations with the people around me and I thank them for understanding and helping me. I have changed and I do not want to go back (as I was earlier). […] I have changed. I am different now with people. Before, I solved everything by blows and fights, but not anymore. I communicate better with people and I express myself in a different, calmer way."[39] (Participatory evaluation workshop, 28th of October 2007)

Some participants, as Marcos, mentioned that feeling calmer and being able to have more open and caring relationships with others also makes them feel happier. A certain level of calm seemed to allow some of them to better engage with their anger and to channel it for more constructive purposes (to claim more public spaces for young people for example). This, in turn, reduced their feelings of powerlessness and increased feelings of hope.

Reflecting on the difficulties they encountered during the process, both groups clearly mentioned violence and fear for violence as the main obstacle. One girl explicitly mentioned that she felt that they all had to overcome their fears to be able to participate in the workshops. She also talked about the joy and happiness they felt during the workshops.

Cecilia: "Well, I have noticed that most of the young people, we get along well. And that young people, when they go to the workshops, do not feel that fear anymore to go over to the community house. They do not feel that fear anymore.

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[38] Jonathan : Me siento contento porque en los talleres he devenido menos violento y me relaciono mejor con los demás

[39] Marcos: Hay un cambio de mi personalidad y mas compresión hacia lo demás personas. Ando más alegre con migo mismo porque estoy mas tranquilo. Y (estoy mas alegre) con la relación con las personas que están alrededor de mi vida y les agradezco por comprenderme y apoyarme. […] En mi hay un cambio y no quiero volver atrás. He cambiado. Soy muy diferente ahora con las personas. Antes resolvía todo a golpes ahora ya no. Me puedo comunicar mejor con la gente y expresarme de otra manera mas tranquilo. Hay un cambio de mi personalidad y mas compresión hacia lo demás personas. Ando más alegre con migo mismo porque estoy mas tranquilo. Y (estoy mas alegre) con la relación con las personas que están alrededor de mi vida y les agradezco por comprenderme y apoyarme. [] En mi hay un cambio y no quiero volver atrás.

They say: "Okay, We are going to be in the workshops and there will be adult people with us and people who are not from here (the community) and we are going to play and have fun for a while. You can see that when they go to the meetings they feel that they can escape that sadness and when they go to the workshops it is like it makes them feel like smiling … and to be happy … even though they are often molesting each other…but you can see the happiness, though it is just a moment …because afterwards when they leave it is like again... they go back to the same (troubles). But even if it is only for a while, that happiness serves them to …. I don't know."[40] (Cecilia, individual interview, 27th of February 2008).

In the last workshop, each group of participants summarised what the PAR process had meant for them recalling how they have changed through the PAR and also relating these changes to the general context of violence in which live.

Young participants from la Uruguay: "During the action research process we learned about Hip Hop culture and by making our own song we have reflected on the daily violence that we, young people, live with. We have learned to express our ideas, to defend them and to defend our own spaces (cultural spaces, referring to the value of youth Hip Hop culture, rather than material spaces they didn't have). We have learned to resolve conflicts in less violent ways. We are now organizing activities introducing Hip Hop culture to other young people. Police violence against us, such as arbitrary arrests and physical violence has made our participation in the process difficult, as well as the discrimination against us [by adult people and authorities alike] for how we look [and therefore being confused with gang members] and the fact that we do not have our own space to meet. [What also makes it difficult for us to participate] are the discriminatory attitudes of adult people of our communities who treat us like layabouts and the little help we receive from national and local

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[40] Cecilia: Bueno, yo he visto que ahora la mayoría de los jóvenes nos llevamos allí… bien. Y que los jóvenes como que, cuando van a las reuniones, como que ya no sienten este miedo de no salir tan siquiera allí a la comunal. Ya no sienten este miedo. Dicen: 'Vaya vamos a estar en las reuniones pero va a estar gente grande y gente que no es de aquí. y vamos a jugar, vamos a divertirnos tan siquiera un rato. Como se mira aquí cuando van a las reuniones, sienten como que han salido de este, de esa tristeza y como que cuando van a las reuniones como que les da mas ganas de sonreír y… y estar felices…bueno aunque molestan a otros pero también…se mira la alegría, tan siquiera un momento va pero…pero cuando salen de allí como que otra vez… entran en lo mismo. Pero tan siquiera un ratito les servia la alegría para… no se.

governments[41]."(Participatory Evaluation Workshop La Uruguay, 22nd of November 2007)

Young participants from la Bolivar: "We learned to participate in a more inclusive and active way. Before we did not talk to each other, although we live in the same community, but now we are more like friends, we trust each other more and we understand each other better, as well as young people from other communities. We have reflected on our daily reality through drama and theatre. We learned to express ourselves, to listen to each other and to be more understanding. Through theatre we have informed others about the reality of young people. The support of Niña Nicoleta [a women from their community] has been very important for us. Fear of violence has made it difficult for us to participate in the activities (of the PAR process)."[42] (Participatory Evaluation Workshop La Bolivar, 14th of November 2007)

The importance and relevance of these apparently 'unspectacular' transformations can only be understood within the particular context of El Salvador. As described in the previous chapter, these young people grew up with fear and distrust. They learned that being young is to 'shut up' and being safe is to be silent. In their socio-cultural world, it is 'the survival of the fittest' and conflict is solved through violence or the threat of it. It is no coincidence, then, that it was feelings of dignity, trust, calm and care that made them feel empowered. The young people generally referred to many of these emotions at once: self-esteem, affection and closeness, care, and compassion. For them, these feelings seemed to be mutually re-enforcing. They resulted in the young people trusting each other more and being more empathetic towards

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[41] En el proceso de investigación acción hemos aprendido sobre la cultura de Hip Hop y a través de la canción hemos reflexionado sobre nuestra realidad de violencia que vivimos como jóvenes. Hemos aprendido a expresar nuestras ideas, a defenderlas y a defender nuestros espacios. Hemos aprendido a resolver los conflictos de una manera menos violenta. Estamos organizando actividades con otros jóvenes para dar a conocer la cultura del Hip Hop. violencia hacia nosotros de parte de la policía como las detenciones arbitrarias, golpes no ha dificultado participar en el proceso; también la discriminación por nuestra apariencia y el hecho de no contar con un espacio propio para reunirnos. Además también la discriminación de las personas adultas de la comunidad que nos ven como vagos y el poco apoyo del gobierno local y nacional.

[42] Hemos aprendido a tener una participación más incluyente y activa.
Antes no nos hablamos mucho en la comunidad, ahora somos mas amigos y amigas, nos tenemos mas confianza y una mejor comunicación tanto entre nosotros-as como con los y las demás jóvenes de otras comunidades.
Hemos reflexionado sobre nuestra realidad a través del teatro
Hemos aprendido a expresarnos, escucharnos y a ser mas comprensible
A través del teatro hemos sensibilizado sobre la realidad que viven los y las jóvenes
El apoyo de la familia y de una mujer en la comunidad ha sido muy importante
El miedo por la violencia nos ha dificultado participar más en las actividades.

others and, as such, they facilitated solidarity, cooperation and peaceful conflict resolution. These empowering feelings eventually also resulted in empowered actions at the individual, but also the collective level.

The young people's evaluations point to different human capacities for resistance than the ones usually focussed on in the literature on participation and social change. The results of their evaluation do not re-accentuate critical insight and understanding. Rather, the young participants remind us of the crucial importance of our capacity to *feel* and, most importantly, to the transforming (and political) power of being able to feel *in certain ways*: to feel connected, love, be compassionate and care.

8.3   Critical reflection, emotions and embodied knowledge in the PAR process

As mentioned in the previous chapter, initially we, the team facilitators, did not explicitly consider emotions as of any particular importance. Because of that, we might have overlooked some opportunities to engage more profoundly with the young people's emotions. We could have, for example, explicitly politicized their feelings of anger, fear, etc. *with* them. Critically reflecting on how they feel, why they feel that way and the individual and social consequences of their emotions might have provided the participants with new insights (and new feelings) about themselves and their social environment. On the other hand, because emotions were always there anyway, we did include and attend to the young people's emotions (though probably in a more improvised way) and, as the young participants mentioned, they did change 'emotionally' throughout the PAR process.

Looking back at the PAR process three main observations stand out, two of which are directly related to the issue of emotions. Firstly, instead of being an orderly phased process of prioritising, research and action our PAR necessarily evolved in a chaotic, unpredictable and spiral-like way. The different phases intermingled, overlapped and sometimes were inverted or repeated. Secondly, although a few young participants seemed to possess a quite critical insight into their daily lives, nevertheless, such 'critical consciousnesses' did not necessarily lead to personal empowerment. Thirdly, for many young people, learning and change seemed to occur without the intermediation of much critical reflection and representation, but through methods directly involving the body and emotions: through doing, feeling and experiencing.

Initially we planned the PAR to evolve in three phases: prioritising issues of importance; research/reflection; and action. However, adapting to the rhythm of the young participants, we quickly abandoned the idea of a linear, sequential process. Sometimes the young people prioritised issues that after some time did not interest them anymore. So, then they re-prioritised and even re-re-prioritised all over again. Initially most participants were only interested in 'action'. They jumped into action quickly and only started to reflect in the course of their actions or when the action was already finished. The boys from La Uruguay, for example, decided to do research on Hip Hop and youth discrimination. Yet, they only really got involved and motivated to reflect on Hip Hop and youth discrimination when they had already decided to co-organise a one-week social Hip Hop event and to facilitate two workshops on Hip Hop culture as a form of social communication and resistance. Only then, in the course of preparing the workshops and actually facilitating them, did they start to reflect more profoundly on what Hip Hop meant for them and on how it related to their experiences of marginalisation and exclusion. Though we sometimes desperately tried to, it was not possible to organise the PAR process in a more purposeful way. Being messy and chaotic, and seemingly without either head or tail, the process generated some anxiety and frustration in the team facilitators and project directors, but, more than anything, it allowed for the PAR to be a constant flow of surprise, creativity, experiment and invention.

During the PAR process I noticed that a few young participants had changed their ideas about some aspects of their lives and about themselves and were quite able to critically analyse their situation. However, this did not necessarily result in progressive behaviour and actions. Despite critical consciousness, there seemed to be some kind of 'unconscious' resistance to change that could not be located in the mind, but in the body and in emotions. The following excerpts from my fieldnotes illustrate this.

> *"Through working on concrete examples in their daily lives, most young boys have learned something about discrimination against women. They start to think a bit differently about the girls in their group and in their community. Two of them did some additional participatory workshops on masculinities with another organisation and they now look differently at what it means to be a man or a woman. They made a lot of progress. They are convinced about the need for change and the need for equal rights. They absolutely agree that men do not know better than women. However, Karla [the other female facilitator] and I often notice that when we reprimand them they [these boys] still get very upset, while*

they do not mind at all when Larry or Walberto [the male facilitators] do so. They would never admit that it has something to do with the fact that we are women, on the contrary, they agree it does not matter. But, still they just, instantaneously, get upset and feel angry. Karla and me we also notice (and regularly get angry about it) that when Larry or Walberto are talking they all [all the boys] pay attention naturally. But, when we start talking, on the contrary, suddenly they change their bodily postures: they go and sit more comfortably, like hanging lazy in their chairs, some start to look at the ceiling, others suddenly receive a message on their mobile phone, at least one of them goes outside to smoke, others move closer to each other and eventually start whispering and talking among each other. They do not do this intentionally or consciously; it seems more like an intuitive spontaneous reaction, a long lasting habit." (Fieldnotes, 23rd of June 2007)

"I had a long discussion with Alex today. We talked about the gangs and about his former involvement and strong identification with the x gang. He told me he is very well aware of the fact that the whole gang war has no sense, because there truly is no real difference between young people from the 18 and the 13 gang. They just hate each other for living in the 'wrong' neighbourhood. He admits it is just sheer coincidence that he got involved with the x gang, and had he been born in a rival gang neighbourhood he would have entered the rival gang and his now-worst-enemies would be his best friends. He says he knows it makes no sense. He realises that they are all the same desperate, frustrated poor young people killing each other and digging their own graves, while those in power are looking at it and having a good laugh. "But", he says: "I just have to think about them [the rival gang] and immediately I get sooo angry. So much hate, I can't control. I realise [that it makes no sense], but I still hate them too much. In such moments I can only think about getting back into the gang and killing them all". (Fieldnotes 20th of February 2008)

Learning and personal change also seemed to happen without much critical reflection and representation, but through methods directly involving the body and emotions. In relation to the methods that we used during the process, each group and each individual had their own preferences, but most young participants clearly preferred those methods that involved them in *doing, experiencing* and *feeling*, such as drama, cooperative games and painting. They found the more traditional focus groups, diagramming and ranking methods rather boring.

Generally, we used drawing/painting, drama and games with the aim of stimulating critical reflection. However, most often, the young people were only interested in acting and playing. The young participants actively participated in the 'doing' part (playing, drawing, acting, improvising) yet, during the moments of 'critical reflection' most of them did not say much, and some systematically left because they did not like the 'thinking and talking' part. As a researcher and facilitator this often worried and frustrated me. What was supposed to be the 'climax' of the exercise, the moment in which 'change' was supposed to happen (through reflection and understanding) just didn't work out. Over time, however, I started to notice that also just by playing, acting and improvising the young participants changed in positive ways (changes observed by all the team members) even without the young people critically reflecting on what they did and without them always being able to consciously articulate how and why they changed. The young people became calmer, more able to listen, to dialogue, to care and share. Often, these were unspectacular changes only noticeable in subtle gestures, facial expressions and spontaneous reactions which are difficult to represent for research or funding purposes. The process facilitators, parents or friends who were close to the young people and who spent most of their time with them in and beyond the research process, rejoiced in these changes. Others, like short-term volunteers, the programme coordinator (worried about project indicators) and outsiders, often desperately complained about the lack of outstanding and representable results.

So, on the one hand, the empowering impact of critical reflection and analysis turned out to be more limited than expected. Apparently critical consciousness has little say over (often unconscious) emotions and bodily dispositions. On the other hand, many young people did not actively engage in critical reflection, but through playing and physical expression they learned to 'do' and 'feel' differently (dialogue, trust, calm, confidence, tolerance) and these brief instances of 'doing' and 'feeling' differently turned out to be powerful instances of change, despite the fact that they could not always be consciously articulated.

8.4   The empowering potential of emotions and embodied knowledges

8.4.1   PAR and the cultivation of new subjectivities

Starting from a poststructuralist approach to subjectivity is illuminating and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the PAR and the changes the young participants mentioned. Poststructuralists reject the notion of a unified, essential true self that exists separately from

social and cultural processes. They argue that subjectivity is fragmented, multiple and produced, negotiated and reshaped via discourse. Different social practices and discourses construct the self in different ways (Lupton 1998, Raby 2005, Cameron and Gibson 2005). Poststructuralist feminists emphasise the dynamic and performative nature of subjectivity (Lupton 1998, Colebrook 2004, Atkins 2005). They understand subjectivity as unstable, contradictory and always in process; as continuously being shaped in discourse and other material social practices as we interpret and act upon the world (Cahill 2007). Discourses produce people assumed to be subjects, but are also produced by people assumed to be subjects (Hearn 1993 cited in Lupton 1998). Discourses and social practices are social products. They are constantly shifting and changing and competing with each other for competence. There are always alternative positions and locations from which different subjectivities can be taken up, interpreted and understood. People may choose from the discourses available to them or seek to resist dominant discourses, albeit within certain constraints (Lupton 1998).

In the previous chapter I focused on technologies of power and on emotions as disciplinary mechanisms. In this chapter I pay more attention to Foucault's later thinking about the 'technologies of the self'. Briefly re-summarised: technologies of the self are techniques which "permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being and so to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immorality" (Foucault 1988:203). Technologies of the self concern "those forms of understanding which the subject creates about himself" (Foucault 1993 cited in Atkins 2005:208). They allow individuals to effect changes to their bodies, thoughts, and conduct, and in doing so; transform themselves (Atkins 2005). Technologies of the self are complementary to the technologies of power, as they open up other possibilities in the cultural construction of emotions and subjectivity (Harding and Pribram 2002) and, as such, leave more room for freedom, agency and resistance. In poststructuralist terms, personal transformation (a fundamental aspect of empowerment) can be understood as the cultivation of new forms of subjectivity (Cameron and Gibson 2005). Poststructuralists recognise the micro-politics of self-transformation as an important part of larger social change and of the macro-political agenda (Connolly 2002 cited in Gibson and Graham 2005). After all, social change is about changing ourselves and our everyday practices in order to create a better world; "the journey is the revolution" (Franks 2003 cited in Wilkinson 2009).

At first sight, poststructuralist conceptualisations of subjectivity appear to be at odds with participatory approaches that foreground the authentic or essentialist identities of 'local' people, and whose goal is to emancipate 'the oppressed' (Cameron and Gibson 2005). However, participatory researchers have increasingly argued that poststructuralism and participation can be reciprocal and interactive (Cahill 2007, Kesby 2005 2007, Cameron and Gibson 2005). Instead of focusing upon participation as 'revealing' subjugated knowledges and accessing silenced voices, it is now broadly accepted that participatory technologies actually create new forms of knowledge and new ways of knowing (Kesby 2005). PAR is not about the return to authentic identities, but about the constitution of new subjectivities. As such, PAR can be defined as a process of reflexive self-construction (a technology of the self) aiming at empowerment and 'liberation' (though always partial and often contradictory) through the cultivation of new subjectivities. In relation to the young participants in El Salvador, the participatory action research process offered them the opportunity to negotiate and experiment with new ways of being and, gradually and within certain constraints, to perform new subjectivities: they learned to trust and cooperate with each other, and to be more open for new people and new ideas despite the general atmosphere of hate, fear and distrust; they learned to express who they are and defend their ideas in public despite an authoritarian hierarchical (educational) system; and they started to resolve conflict in more calm and peaceful ways despite the prevailing culture of machismo and violence.

8.4.2   The (limited) role of alternative discourse in cultivating new subjectivities

How exactly are new subjectivities cultivated? In much poststructuralist thinking and participatory research alike the focus is on discourse, critical reflection and analysis as the propelling force for personal transformation. Foucault wrote:

> "[] [S]elf-cultivation has a curative and therapeutic function. […] The individual must be given the weapons and the courage that will enable him to fight all his life" (Foucault 2000c:97). "We must only learn what will enable us to bear up against events that may occur, we must learn not to let ourselves thrown by them, and not let ourselves be overwhelmed by the emotions they may give rise to in ourselves. […] [w]hat we [] need in order to keep our control in the face of the events that may take place are '*discourses*': *logoi*, understood as true discourses and rational discourses" (Foucault 2000c:99, my emphasis).

Similarly, for many participatory researchers and practitioners, reflection, discourse and analyses are crucial 'techniques of the self' in processes of personal transformation. Freire, for example, wrote that "it is in speaking […] that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings" (Freire 2003 [1970]:88). More contemporary participatory researchers have continued this trend. For Mike Kesby, for example, the constitution of new subjectivities is only possible by introducing alternative discourses (such as the discourse of participation and non-violence) that can replace the old and familiar ones (Kesby 2007b). He argues that in PAR the meta-narrative resources of equity and participation are deployed to encourage participants to reconstitute themselves as equal and as self-reflexive agents capable of critical analysis (Kesby 2007b). Similarly, Caitlin Cahill (2007) has argued for PAR's potential for producing new subjectivities, considering it a site for *consciously* negotiating multiply-situated positionalities. Conscientization, as described by Cahill, is no single turning point or a revelatory 'big bang' where everything becomes clear. Rather, it is an iterative long-term, shifting process of learning, making sense of one's subjectivity and reworking it through collective *dialogue*, ongoing *reflection* and *analysis*. It is about "the conscious negotiation of particular cultural narratives and positions, defying dominant social constructions" (Cahill 2007: 275). So, while counting with a long history of using methods that draw on emotional and affective registers (Cahill 2007a, Cameron and Gibson 2005), participatory research is still very much associated with strategies of structured representation as key to empowerment and personal and social change (Jupp 2007).

Participatory researchers recognise emotion as part of subjectivity, but still seem to assume that we change and govern our emotions principally through analysis and understanding. Caitlin Cahill, for example, in her inspiring works (2004, 2007a) with young women of colour, explains how the emotion of anger fuelled the research process and how the group of research participants tapped into their collective anger to move forward. She describes the PAR process as saturated with emotion, anger in particular, and as an often painful process of coming to terms with these emotions through 'praxis' (Freire 2003 [1970]), through reflection and action upon the world (Cahill 2007a). In Caitlin Cahill's experience PAR is cathartic and therapeutic (Cahill 2004), but she does not make explicit how exactly, in her opinion, reflection and action relate to and (re)shape participants' emotions. Implicitly, she gives the impression that the act of conscious articulation is the first step towards emotional healing, which then has to be reinforced by action (Cahill 2007a). So she writes that "*putting into*

words complicated feelings about experiences of racisms is not only to release, but a way to make sense of experiences and emotions that are confusing and personalised" (Cahill 2007a:280 my emphasis).

As outlined in chapter four on emotions, how our ways of thinking and feeling relate to each other has been the object of reflection of many philosophers for many centuries. These reflections are helpful to try to make explicit some possible implicit assumptions about the relation between emotion and reflection in PAR. Despite an insistence on 'action', participatory researchers seem to strongly follow cognitive philosophers in their idea that understanding can set us free and can also transform our emotional lives. Cognitive theorists argue that beliefs are an essential element of emotions and that a change in the belief will typically alter the emotion (Calhoun and Solomon 1984, Van Reijen 2005a). They are convinced that understanding the beliefs underlying our emotions is a first step (Calhoun and Solomon 1984) and that realising that a certain belief is 'false', will automatically change the emotion. For cognitive theorists it is the power of reflexive (self) knowledge that makes room for human freedom (Neu 2004) and personal transformation. Many scientific approaches to therapy rely on such an insistence on the power of the mind to theorize persons as governed by perception and cognition which may be defaulted, but which can usually be corrected, at least partially, by cognitive methods (Bondi 2005).

However, others have opposed or nuanced this line of thought, noticing that even with a radical change in knowledge/understanding, the emotion often remains (Calhoun and Solomon 1984). They argue that people change the beliefs that underlie their emotions, but continue to have the same emotions nonetheless. This is particularly true for the beliefs that we lay down in childhood in connection with attachment relations of deep intensity (Nussbaum 2001). Furthermore, some authors argue, it is impossible to become fully aware of the beliefs and thoughts underlying our emotions (Davidson et al. 2005). "Through memory (conscious and unconscious, psychic and somatic) we all carry traces of past geographies, in ways that are always emotionally colored in hues ranging from pale to vivid" (Davidson et al. 2005:12). These living emotional depths frame our conscious selves and our rationality (Davidson et al. 2005). Emotions can be triggered by seemingly unrelated events and then influence unrelated judgments, such as our evaluation of a situation or a person (Forgas 2000). "Emotions experienced in the present moment are never free of the past, but are instead always re-encountered, in ways that simultaneously evoke familiarity and freshness. […] We are not, and cannot be, reflexively aware, or in control, of how emotions are mapped

onto us at the moments of our experience, or of how they are retained and retrieved through differing forms of memory" (Davidson et al. 2005:12).

These critical arguments reflect my fieldwork observations that while some young people did change their ideas and beliefs about some aspects of their reality and gained new critical insights in themselves and their everyday lives, this did not automatically result in empowered behaviour and actions. Often, these young people continued to be overwhelmed by emotions such as rage, hate, fear and distrust which, as described in the previous chapter, most often resulted in (self) destructive actions. In relation to this particular PAR, critical reflection and understanding often turned out to be powerless in the face of emotions and long-term sentiments.

With these fieldwork observations I do not mean to deny the possible transformational effect of critical reflection on emotions. I do think, however, that they urge us to more fully recognise that processes of critical analysis and conscientization often fall short in liberating us from emotions (such as hate, fear and rage) that impede human flourishing, solidarity and supportive actions and that therefore constitute important obstacles to empowerment and social justice.

8.4.3 The role of emotions and embodied knowledge in cultivating new subjectivities

During the PAR process I became particularly aware of some durable emotional and bodily dispositions that are hardly conscious or controllable and that make individual transformation and social change such a slow and complicated process. This reminded me of the fact that although subjectivities are formed through discourses and social and cultural processes, they also become like a second nature to us. They imply more than just discourse and knowledge repertoires; they are embodied. Similarly, emotions are not mere discursive phenomena. Emotions are, also, deeply rooted bodily sensations. "[They] derive from the depths and fleshiness of bodies as people respond to scenarios before the brain seems to have time to process or consciously think through the event" (Bennett 2004:415).

During my research with the young people, I became aware of these emotional and bodily dispositions, not only as phenomena that complicate the process of empowerment, but also as potential thresholds that can facilitate change. I mentioned that most young participants

enjoyed participating in drawing, painting, corporeal expression, improvising and playing, but that many of them did not feel comfortable and were a lot less motivated to engage in moments of critical reflection and analysis. I also mentioned that, nevertheless, change happened. The young participants changed by participating in methods (and cooperative games were particularly appropriate and successful here) that allowed them to 'do' and 'feel' things differently; by offering them a direct embodied experience / experiment of how things can be / feel different. Through these methods new forms of subjectivities were cultivated, not at the level of discourse, but by directly engaging emotional registers and tapping into pre-cognitive states. New subjectivities seemed to emerge through unexpected shifts in the affective registers freeing embodied practices from their usual sedimented patterns (see also Cameron and Gibson 2005, Gibson - Graham 2003). These changes were, of course, more difficult to codify. Most often they were only noticeable in small gestures, spontaneous reactions, facial expressions, body language, and gradually changing ordinary habits. The participants were not necessarily consciously aware of, or able to explicitly articulate, these changes. Yet, new embodied experiences of being able to connect, care, hope, and trust had a significant impact on their well being and on the ways they related to others.

For a few participants, unexpected shifts in affective registers also seemed to create more openness at the level of thinking. Experimenting with new ways of 'doing' and 'feeling' seemed to result in new ways of 'thinking' and 'understanding', rather than the other way around.[43] This implies that new subjectivities cannot only be cultivated through the introduction of alternative discourses, but also through the cultivation of certain 'unconventional' emotions (calm, trust, love, compassion) creating a new affective 'openness' that only then paves the way for accepting new discourses. It is "through the play of affect […] that the creative element of thinking finds its most energetic impetus and possibility" (Connolly 2002 cited in McCormack 2003:495).

All these observations led me to reconsider the role and importance of discourse and critical consciousness in PAR. It made me want to focus more on embodied and affective knowledges and practices and on the doors these knowledges open to personal change and social justice. Eleanor Jupp (2007) has already suggested that PAR needs to pay more attention to other forms of knowing and experience which are, perhaps, more difficult to represent within

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[43] See also Damasio (1994) and Forgas (2000) about the fact that that emotions assist reasoning and that an openness to feelings is a necessary adjunct to cognition and to effective social thinking.

research, but which may generate potential for new forms of collective action and interaction and new feelings of empowerment. According to Jupp, PAR's emphasis on conscious articulation potentially ignores the fact that most knowledge is "non-linguistic, tacit and generated in practice" (Mohan 1999:45 cited in Jupp 2007).

Recent discussions in human geography around non-representational theory (e.g. Latham and McCormack 2004, Lorimer 2005, Thrift 1996 2004) have explored the potency of such forms of knowledges and experiences and counterbalance PAR's focus on conscientization and discourse[44]. As explained in chapter four, non-representational theory is based in 'theories of practice' arguing that subjectivity and meaning are basically constituted in practice (Simonson 2007). In this line of thinking, the French sociologist Bourdieu (1990) developed the concept of *habitus*, a concept I found useful for making sense of my fieldwork observations. According to Bourdieu, *habitus* is the ability to function effectively within a given social field; an ability that cannot necessarily be articulated as conscious knowledge, but that is indicated in the bearing of the body and in deeply ingrained habits of behaviour, feeling and thought; in durable embodied dispositions such as ways of walking and talking, taste, and the 'feel for the game' (Lovel 2000). These markers are almost impossible to learn or to consciously imitate, because they never come fully under self-surveillance and control (Lovel 2000). *Habitus* is an informal and practical rather than a discursive or conscious form of knowledge (Swartz 1997). The schemes of *habitus* owe their efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will (Bourdieu 1984a:466). Similar to poststructuralists, Bourdieu is resolutely non-essentialist in that he recognises that we are always dealing with cultural arbitraries. However, his account of the acquisition of social identity through practice - *habitus* - emphasizes its corporeal sedimentation beyond consciousness and discourse. Bourdieu also criticised Marxist traditions and feminist theories for expecting resistance and liberation to come from the raising of consciousness alone, arguing that they ignore the extraordinary inertia which results from the inscription of social structure in bodies (Bourdieu 2000 idem:143).

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[44] Theories of practice also counterbalance a poststructuralist, feminist focus on discourse and flexibility (see also Lovel 2000).

In the previous chapter I have tried to describe the young people's emotional *habitus* exteriorized in daily routine and ordinary practices indicated in the body and in deeply ingrained habits of behaviour. The concept of *habitus* also helps to explain the fact that although some young participants acquired new critical insights (about gender relations for example) this did not necessarily have any influence on certain deeply ingrained, unconscious, bodily habits and emotions through which they continued to reproduce macho culture and the culture of violence. The concept of *habitus* also supports the argument that a process of conscientization can never fully answer the expectations of empowerment and change.

A focus on unconscious bodily dispositions might seem to lead to political pessimism, but this is not necessarily so. On the contrary, it might actually open new doors to empowerment. Non-representational theory and related theories of affect foreground ways of knowing that are non-verbal, pre-cognitive and depending on direct experience, rather than on reflection, abstraction, translation and representation (see Anderson and Smith 2001). They encourage us to experiment with alternative approaches to change. McCormack (2003), for example, looks at dance movement therapy. This therapy is founded on the principle that there is a relationship between motion and emotion and that by exploring a more varied vocabulary of movement people experience the possibility of becoming more securely balanced yet increasingly spontaneous and adaptable. Dance movement therapy uses movement experimentation to explore new ways of being and feeling and to gain access to feelings that cannot be verbalized. "Dance movement therapy engages directly with the productive force of the unconscious in ways that can, but do not necessarily need to be brought into a relation of verbal or linguistic specification" (McCormack 2003:492).

Similarly, by participating in cooperative games, corporeal expression, improvisation theatre and drama the young participants were able to explore and experiment with new way of being and feeling, unmediated by reflection and representation. These methods provided important moments for the young people to attend to their own emotional well being. They allowed the participants to immerse themselves completely in the world of emotional geographies and to experience what it means to be part of that world in positive, life enhancing ways (see also Wood and Smith 2004). Such methods tapped directly into the power of emotions to shape social life. Surely, these methods did not result in direct structural changes; they did not make the poor young people rich, or their risky environments safe, but they did give the young people clues about what emotional well being is, what happiness, contentment, hope, trust,

compassion, etc. *feel* like, and they show how powerful these emotions can be (see also Wood and Smith 2004). For the young people this was a first step towards imagining and creating a different world from which new actions (individual and collective) emerged.

9   Conclusions

9.1   Introduction

For two years I worked for a local youth organisation in San Salvador, planning and facilitating a PAR process with poor young people. This process has been the focus of attention of this PhD study. I started my research with two main questions: 'Do the young people participating in the PAR process feel empowered by it and, if so, how?' and 'Does the PAR process contribute to social change and, if so, how?'. Originally, I did not plan to focus on emotions and embodied and practical knowledges. However, in an inductive fashion, emotions and embodied knowledge evolved from my fieldwork as crucial elements for understanding power and empowerment. As such, a third important question emerged: 'what role do emotions and embodied knowledges play in the PAR process and in empowering poor young people?'

In this thesis I have tried to provide careful and nuanced answers to these questions. In what follows I briefly review the theoretical approaches which I drew on and the principal insights gained during my research with the young people. I thereby clearly articulate the continuous interaction between theory and fieldwork carefully tying together different research findings and weaving them into a coherent story. Pointing out the main conclusions, I signpost some future research directions in PAR that I consider to be potentially enriching for both researchers and participants alike. I end this thesis by sharing some last self-critical thoughts and by formulating new questions raised by this research.

9.2   Briefly summarized: PAR, power and emotion

I have started this thesis by defining what PAR is and what its main goals are. I explained that PAR has been the subject of both great praise and heavy criticism. Proponents have promoted PAR as an approach that empowers socially excluded groups of people; challenges unjust power relations; and facilitates democratic social change by shifting the balance of power in favour of the poor. Opponents, inspired by poststructuralism, have fiercely critiqued PAR on precisely these points. They have argued that there is no empirical evidence of the long-term changes and of the real difference that PAR makes for disadvantaged peoples. They have argued that, though claiming to challenge unequal power relations, PAR is just another form

of tyranny, domination and subjugation and they have identified a naïve and simplistic understanding of power as one of the most fundamental flaws in PAR (See Cooke and Kothari 2001). In response, participatory researchers have continued to argue for the liberating potential of PAR precisely by taking seriously and critically engaging with these poststructuralist critiques (Hickey and Mohan 2004, Cameron and Gibson 2005, Kesby 2005, 2007b). In great part inspired by poststructuralism, they have re-examined and revised their understanding of power and empowerment resulting in a more holistic and radically oriented participatory research practice. They have argued that, to be truly transformative, participation must be understood as a human right and be part of a radical project of social change and challenging unequal power relations. Participation must be considered at different scales encompassing both the individual and the local, the institutional and the structural. They agree that participation is a form of power that has to be looked at very critically and that has to be exercised very carefully. However, they also conclude that participation's failure to escape from power and its association with governance does not prevent it from being an empowering discourse for marginalised people in the pursuit of a transformative political praxis. The empowering potential of PAR remains the subject of debate and is the central focus of this research.

As the concept of power is central to PAR I have explored different, structuralist and poststructuralist, perspectives on power in chapter three. Since my own research strongly builds on recent work by participatory researchers engaging with poststructuralism, I have particularly focussed on the poststructuralist perspective and on Foucault's groundbreaking work on power and resistance. I have looked in detail into Foucault's inseparable and entangled concepts of the technologies of power and the technologies of the self. Foucault has been particularly successful in demonstrating the penetrating force of disciplinary power and in illustrating just how deeply this kind of power becomes ingrained in the subject itself. I have built on his work on disciplinary power in order to explain how unequal power relations work through the young people's emotions and their everyday practices and social contacts. In his later work, Foucault paid more attention to how, through the technologies of the self, individuals not only reproduce, but also challenge dominant discourses. His work has facilitated a more complex and integrated understanding of empowerment as the micro-politics of individual transformation and as the challenging of dominant discourses through the cultivation of new subjectivities. It is also in these terms that I have analysed the young people's PAR and their feelings of empowerment.

Although my research was originally about PAR, power and empowerment, eventually, it turned out to be, also, all about emotions. In the course of my fieldwork I became increasingly aware of the fundamental importance of the young people's emotions both in confirming the status quo and in challenging the existing power relations in El Salvador. Yet, I also found that poststructuralist thinkers and participatory researchers focus most of their attention on discourse, critical analysis and linguistic representation saying relatively little about emotions and embodied knowledges and about their role in power relations and empowerment processes. Therefore, to better understand the role of the young people's emotions in and beyond the PAR process, I turned to emotion theory. In chapter four, I took a closer look into cognitive and constructivist approaches (Van Reijen 2005, Jaggar 2009, Abu-Lughod and Lutz 2009, Lutz and White 1986). Such approaches understand emotions as mediated by cognition, judgment and assessment and as socially and culturally constructed. They consider emotions as inter-subjective and as dynamic and changeable according to the historical, social, cultural and political contexts in which they are produced and expressed. Secondly, I have engaged with (feminist) emotional geographies (Bondi 2005, Davidson et al. 2005). These geographies define emotions as relational and explicitly link them to power, politics and injustice. They argue that emotions are neither locally nor globally produced, but are simultaneously both local and global (Pain 2009). Thirdly, I have considered non-representational geographies of affect (Thrift 2004, McCormack 3003, Dewsbury 2003). Non-representational theory focuses on everyday practices and aims to demonstrate that small and ordinary things are as relevant and complex as phenomena that appear much larger and more general. They insist that most of our everyday practices are embedded in practical and embodied knowledges that are non-cognitive, pre-intentional and commonsensical and that are fundamentally different from contemplative modes of being in the world. They note that mainstream social science is badly equipped to properly engage with these everyday social practices and embodied knowledges. They conclude that we need to experiment with alternative techniques that go beyond the 'classical' research methods (interviews, focus groups, and participant observation) and that allow researchers to go beyond the limits of texts, the verbal and the material (Latham 20003). They also foreground the empowering and political potential of affective and embodied knowledges (McCormack 2003) arguing that they can be worked with to forge a new politics of hope and imagination (Thrift 2000 2004 2005). Finally, concluding this chapter, I broadly defined how the notion of emotion (that I prefer over the term affect) is applied in this thesis. I clarified that I understand emotions as multi-facetted phenomena consisting of varying combinations of physiological, cognitive and behavioural aspects which are all, to various degrees, influenced by specific historical and

socio-cultural contexts. I have insisted that I consider emotions as *both* cognitive and constructed through discourse and socio- cultural processes *and*, at the same time, as deeply rooted bodily sensations (see also Burkitt 1997 and Bennett 2004).

9.3 Power and empowerment: understanding the everyday, the ordinary and the insignificant

Trying to understand the empowering impact of the young people's PAR, I have been concerned with the entanglements of power and empowerment and with how they function through the everyday and the ordinary; through personal emotions and embodied practical knowledges. I have followed Foucault in his idea that particular possibilities of resistance are always entangled with particular technologies of power depending on the specific context in which they take place. This explains why, before considering the different ways in which the young people felt empowered by participating in PAR, I have spend time explaining the particular socio-cultural context of El Salvador (in chapter five) and illustrating the young people's everyday reality and the subtle ways violence and oppression function through the young people's most intimate emotions and profoundly shape their daily routines and social relations (in chapter seven).

The young people's everyday lives and social relations were strongly affected by emotions of fear, distrust, anger and resentment. Doing participant observation and becoming closely involved with the young people, I strongly empathised and connected with their grief, anger and fear. This allowed me start to imagine and understand (not just intellectually, and without claiming that I fully do) how it is to live their lives and what it means to live with the reality of violence as something normal and to be expected. Living in El Salvador and working with poor young people I certainly learned something about violence with a capital V. I learned about the sound of gunshots (and how to distinguish them from small fireworks), about small children getting hurt and young people getting killed, their dead bodies lying on the sidewalk. I heard the sad lamentation of family and friends during nightly vigils, the loud desolate crying of mothers burying their teenage sons and daughters and the ecstatic shouting of evangelical priests calling for the acceptance of God's inscrutable will. I saw the military encircling and closing down the entrances of poor neighbourhoods, masked policemen banging in doors with iron bars in the middle of the night, and young men lying on the ground in their underwear, head down and handcuffed. And, of course, not to forget the continuous and excessive display of bloody murders and mass arrests in the media. Yet, sharing (a bit of)

the young people's lives did not just teach me about violence in its most excessive, intense and visible form. It also taught me about another kind of violence, 'the violence of the ordinary'[45], much less obvious and not directly noticeable, yet no less dramatic. The better I got to know the young people the better I started to understand how violence has discretely slipped into the smallest and subtlest details of their everyday life. In chapter seven I have tried to convey the young people's fear for violence and their deep-rooted distrust in others. I explained how fear and distrust have turned into long-term emotional attitudes expressed in small routine habits, ordinary practices, everyday movements and daily social contacts. I illustrated how the greatest violence and the deepest fear are often in the smallest things: in ways of walking and talking, the manner of dressing, the choice of a haircut; in silences and things not said or spoken about; in everyday movements and daily time schedules, the daily path taken or avoided to go to school or work, staying at home at certain hours, not leaving the community at all, avoiding certain everyday places (always, or only at certain times of the day or night), ending workshops in time for everyone to go home safely; in absences, temporary stays with family elsewhere, permanent relocations, not going to school or not accepting a particular job in a particular neighbourhood, some young people not showing up on days that police are patrolling; in always being cautious, instinctively distrusting all people, giving fake names when meeting young people they don't know, not talking to neighbours, closed doors, and children kept inside. Violence and fear were deeply embedded in the young people's routine occupations and influenced every aspect of their daily lives.

I have also written about the young people who were close to the gang and who described their rage as something overwhelming and as something pushing them into self-destructive gang life, knowing no other way to cope with grief and anger than through violence and revenge. I described how relatively small conflicts easily escalated and how violence, or the threat of it, had become a normal way for most of the young participants to resolve problems and handle conflict. The young people grew up with violence as something normal and, to a certain degree, became indifferent to it. Talking about fear, distrust, rage and apathy, the young people often pointed to a lack of community, solidarity and social organisation.

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[45] Professor Alma Gottlieb used the expression 'the violence of the ordinary' in her lecture 'First Acts of Violence: Reflections on Breastfeeding and Enemas in West Africa' during the ESRC Seminar Series Violence and Childhood: International Perspectives.

To understand the young people's emotions of fear, anger and distrust, I have started at the most local scale by looking at their everyday lives and personal experiences. Yet, at the same time I have argued that the young people's emotions of fear and distrust, rage and apathy can only be fully understood in the light of the broader socio-cultural context and by considering power and politics on a larger scale. It would be incorrect and unfair to individualise and pathologise the young people's emotions. Their fear and anger are also, in great part, socio-culturally constructed and relational, meaning that the particular cultural, social and historical contexts in which they grow up strongly shape how they feel and how they manage their emotions. Emotions of fear and distrust are nothing new or exceptional in El Salvador, but have been part of (poor) Salvadorans' lives for centuries. In that sense, the young people's emotions of fear, distrust and apathy are not recent phenomena, but are expressive of a historically installed culture of violence and oppression reaching far back in time. In chapter Five I have recounted the country's history in some detail to illustrate and emphasize just how deeply violent conflict, fear and distrust are ingrained in Salvadoran history and culture.

The young people's emotions of fear, distrust and anger are not innocent or neutral. Emotions always function within power relations. The young people's fear, apathy, rage and distrust are produced by and reproductive of a culture of violence resulting in social disintegration, paralyzing any form of protest and functioning to confirm the power of a small elite over the majority of the poor. The young people's anger, fear and apathy are social and political and function within highly unequal power relations to maintain the existing social hierarchy. They are disciplinary mechanisms strongly shaping the young people's subjectivities. They are all the more powerful and effective because they seep into the smallest pores of daily life: in everyday habits and routine practices becoming part of the young people's *habitus*.

Influenced by Foucault's work on disciplinary power, I have argued that the young people's everyday reality of violence can only be fully understood by paying careful attention to the microphysics of power. Oppressive power relations work through the young people's most intimate emotions and through the imposition of daily disciplines that become internalized and self-regulating. They inscribe themselves directly in the young people's bodies, gestures and behaviours through the (self) imposition of schedules, restrictions and obligatory comportment. The culture of violence and its hegemonic power is most effective where it is most subtle: in everyday habits and embodied practices that too easily go unnoticed.

It is within this context (of violence and fear) that the young people's PAR evolved and within which its empowering impact has to be understood. As the empirical evidence I have presented in chapter eight shows, the young participants felt that they had changed by participating in the PAR process. They expressed that in the course of the process, they have begun to feel and behave differently towards everyday things and people. They said much less about having changed their way of thinking. They mentioned that they have learned to overcome feelings of shame, that they feel more self-confident and more connected with others. They learned to trust other young people, started to empathize more with them, and learned to be more flexible and tolerant. As a result, they said, there now exists more solidarity among them and they learned to better cooperate and work together. While the PAR process did result in a few concrete end products and in some collective actions (a theatre piece, a song, music festivals), most of its empowering impact was only noticeable in subtle, embodied changes which, at first sight, could seem trivial: in speaking rather than not saying anything, in talking differently to others, in listening or paying attention (to women and girls included), in reacting in more caring ways when others were sad or hurt, in helping each other, in sharing problems and material belongings, in being more open for new people and ideas, in being more active and taking more initiative, in being more positive and hopeful, etc. Only by acknowledging the deeply penetrating force of oppressive power relations and by fully understanding how they function through the young people's most intimate emotions, embodied habits and everyday practices, is it possible to recognize the importance of such 'insignificant' changes. Only then is it possible to see how, through so-called 'trivial' changes in the way they feel and behave, the young people come to challenge powerful discourses and contribute to a process of social change.

The young people's PAR was not so much about radical activism and political organisation as about the micro-politics of personal transformation. It was about what Foucault has defined as the 'politics of ourselves' (Foucault and Blasius 1993), a politics concerned with the social and political consequences of '*who I am*' (Foucault and Blasius 1993). The PAR process demonstrated that participation, peace, democracy and justice are just as much about emotions and everyday, embodied practices as about critical ideas and radical actions. Influenced by Foucault and by recent (poststructuralist) contributions to PAR, I have described the young people's PAR as a practice of the self and as a process of cultivating new subjectivities by using methods that allowed the participants to transform their beliefs, values, emotions and behaviour and, by doing so, to challenge dominant discourses and unequal power relations.

Also in chapter eight I have critically reflected on the methods used in the PAR process and on how exactly new subjectivities were cultivated. I have argued that most poststructuralist thinkers and participatory researchers alike accentuate critical (self) reflection and the introduction of alternative discourse as a first and principal step in the process of cultivating new subjectivities and as key to empowerment. However, although initially intended otherwise, the young people's PAR did not involve much critical reflection and understanding. The young people liked to participate in alternative methods such as painting community murals, cooperative games, drama and theatre, but were a lot less motivated to participate in moments of talking and reflecting. Nevertheless, the young people changed. They changed by painting, playing, acting and improvising, also without much dialogue and critical analysis. By using performative methods new forms of subjectivities were cultivated, not through critical reflection or by introducing alternative discourses, but by directly engaging emotional registers and embodied knowledges and by tapping into pre-cognitive states. At this point, I have turned to non-representational theory, explicitly challenging the privilege of cognition by focussing on everyday practices and on the empowering and political potential of affective and embodied knowledges. I have built on non-representational theory to illustrate the limitations of critical (self) reflection and critical discourse in facilitating personal and social change and to argue for a better recognition of the empowering potential of emotions and embodied knowledges in PAR. I have argued that performative methods such as painting, cooperative games, drama and theatre were able to directly engage with the empowering potential of emotional and embodied knowledges by offering the young people a direct embodied experience / experiment of how things can be / feel different. Such methods provided the young people with an important opportunity to feel and experience what it means to be part of the world in positive, life enhancing ways, being a first and important step towards imagining and creating a different world. I have argued that new subjectivities can be cultivated not only or principally by introducing new discourses and raising critical consciousness, but also by directly engaging with embodied knowledges and by facilitating new affective experiences.

9.4 'Becoming more fully human': a holistic approach to empowerment

Based on an extensive analysis of the young people's PAR, I have concluded that although participatory researchers have increasingly extended and refined their understanding of power, they still focus too much on critical reflection, discourse and conscious/linguistic

representation as key to personal and social change. This focus has distracted their attention from the way power works through emotions and embodied knowledges. I believe that participatory researchers (including myself) should become more sensitive still to the subtleties of power and become more fully aware of how emotions and embodied knowledges function within power relations to reproduce or challenge the existing status quo. PAR has to become more attentive to the way emotions and affective knowledges are both locally and globally produced and to how they affect and are affected by politics at a whole range of scales (see also Pain 2009).

Arguing for a wider glance beyond a too narrow focus on critical reflection and discourse I do not mean to undermine PAR's particularity or to completely deny the importance of critical discourse and analysis. PAR is conceived of as a process of critical reflection resulting in personal transformation and social action. PAR aims at empowering marginalised groups of people by stimulating them to lay bare the structural roots of oppression. It is difficult to apprehend how this can happen without *any* form of 'conscientization'. Facilitating personal change beyond consciousness and representation at the embodied and emotional level, whatever their social and political consequences, does not, in itself, allow for formulating a structural critique of unequal power relations (although it is often a necessary first step). So, by arguing that participatory researchers tend to give too much weight to critical consciousness at the cost of fully acknowledging emotions and embodied, practical knowledges, I do not mean to say that our human capacity to critically reflect and understand is irrelevant or superfluous or of any less importance than our practical and embodied ways of knowing the world. I argue, rather, that we should reflect more critically on the limitations of critical understanding in facilitating personal and social transformation and integrate emotions and embodied knowledges more fully into our research practices. Clearly, I do not aim for completely abandoning the project of facilitating critical reflection in PAR, nor do I mean to radically oppose critical reflection to feeling. Our emotional and cognitive functioning are inseparable and mutually constitutive and our thinking and feeling are intimately connected (Damasio 2000, Hubbard et al. 2001, Holland 2007). In this thesis, I have started from an understanding of emotions as cognitive and socio-culturally constructed *and*, at the same time, as deeply rooted bodily sensations (Bennett 2004). Such an understanding accentuates the fact that emotions are located 'in between' the sensational body and cognition, without being reducible to either of them. Emotions transcend dualisms such as mind/body, public/private, nature/culture, conscious/unconscious (Williams and Bendelow 1998 in Hubbard et al. 2001) and involve different (cognitive, affective and embodied) knowledges at

once. The 'inbetweenness' of emotions is also precisely what turns them into such an extremely relevant starting point for understanding issues of power, oppression, resistance and social justice, all of which are central to PAR.

Acknowledging that emotions can be potentially world-building or world-destroying (see also Williams 2009), participatory researchers should engage more critically with emotions at different scales. Together with research participants they should try to understand which emotions are disempowering (for ourselves and others) and which ones are enabling and conducive to more just societies in which *all* beings can thrive (see also Jaggar 2009). Although it is impossible to judge which emotions are inherently 'good' or inevitably 'bad' (Wilkinson 2009) and while there are no straightforward guidelines for achieving emotional liberation from existing power hierarchies (King 2005 cited in Wilkinson 2009), together with the participants we should constantly challenge and rework dominant understandings of emotions and affective ties and radically re-imagine what we are capable of emotionally (Wilkinson 2009). Recent academic work on activism has already made a significant contribution to this (see Wilkinson 2009, Berlant 2004, Goodwin et al. 2001).

Emotions function within power relations and can be channelled for political purposes. Therefore, participatory researchers have to critically reflect and experiment with how empowering and politically progressive emotions can be triggered and nurtured. Emotions can be worked with in many ways. Emotions can be transformed through critical analyses and by putting them into words. But, as demonstrated in this thesis, emotions can also be evoked and cultivated by using alternative methods and new media that directly engage with embodied and affective knowledges. Many participatory researchers already integrate these kinds of methods into their research practice, yet they could engage more fully still with their empowering potential beyond cognition and conscious representation. In that respect, Non-representational theory is inspiring and encourages us to continuously push our (discursive and representational) limits.

Reflecting on the possibility of nurturing and channelling emotions and affective relations for politically progressive purposes, Nigel Thrift's 'new politics of hope' strikes me as an exciting project. While Thrift's 'politics of hope' remains abstract and vaguely formulated (see also Pain 2009), I believe participatory researchers are better placed than anyone else to concretize it. Participatory researchers engage with real people in the real world and are directly involved in processes of change. More than other social researchers, they experiment

with alternative methods tapping directly into the power of emotions to shape and transform social life. Therefore, participatory researchers may contribute to taking the hitherto abstract politics of hope out of its ivory tower and back to earth, making it relevant for 'ordinary' people (not just highly abstract thinking philosophers) and rendering it more practical in its application.

Already about four decades ago, Orlando Fals Borda and Paolo Freire defined PAR as 'a fulfilling way of life' (Fals Borda 2001) and as a process of 'becoming more fully human', (Freire 2003 [1970]). Eventually, they perhaps best express the central argument of this thesis. Although participatory researchers have traditionally focussed on critical understanding and discourse, for me, 'becoming more fully human' clearly refers to *both* our human capacities to think *and* feel. In chapter four I have elaborated on Spinoza's understanding of emotions and on the distinction he made between three different forms of understanding: imagination, ratio and intuition or wisdom. 'Becoming more fully human', is also precisely how I understand Spinoza's longing for 'affectively-loaded, intuitive knowledge' or 'true wisdom' as a necessary condition for just and radical action and for achieving peace and social justice. I believe that PAR, to be truly empowering should be concerned not just with cultivating self-reflexive subjectivities capable of critical analysis, but with cultivating 'more human' and 'wiser' (as understood by Spinoza) personalities.

At the beginning of this thesis I mentioned that PAR explicitly aims to empower *poor* and *oppressed* social groups. However, understanding empowerment as a process of becoming more fully human (and wiser), it feels arrogant and patronizing to insist that it is *marginalised* people that have to be empowered as if *they* are the only ones, or even the first ones, in need of becoming wiser and more fully human. Consequently, understanding PAR in terms of becoming wiser and more fully human has made me reconsider the divide between those who are traditionally considered as in need of empowerment: marginalised people (traditionally the target group of participatory approaches), and more 'powerful' others, such as elite groups, white, middle-class people and the 'educated' ones. Aiming at facilitating justice, equality, and sustainable social change, I now think we have to widen our scope and increasingly include (powerful) 'non-marginalised' groups of people in our PAR projects.

9.5 Some last self-critical thoughts and new questions

I have understood the empowering impact of the young people's PAR process in terms of the micro-politics of personal transformation being part of a broader socio-political agenda. I argued that 'small' (embodied) changes in the way the young people felt about themselves and others and changes in their everyday habits and practices were important moments in a broader process of social change. However, these changes were often difficult to quantify and represent for research and funding purposes. It was also difficult to define to what degree exactly it was the PAR process that had contributed to these changes and how far other factors had to be taken into account. Furthermore, while the PAR process made a difference for the young people at that very moment, it is impossible to provide empirical evidence of (or in any way to predict) the long-term impact of the PAR process on the young people's lives.

In relation to the difficulty of representing emotional and embodied changes, in writing up my research, I have been strongly confronted with the questions of how to convey the young people's deeply embodied experiences of domination and empowerment in words and how to express their fear, anger and hope in an academic text. I felt it was impossible to write about something as profound and elusive as emotions without any degree of distortion. I have written eighty thousand words about the importance of emotions and embodied knowledges for understanding power and empowerment and yet I still haven't got to the essence of it all! I have been writing in small circles around it, but something fundamental always escaped. Non-representationalists have already pointed to the fact that mainstream social science is badly equipped to properly engage with the everyday and with practical and embodied knowledges (Dewsbury 2003). They argue that we need to experiment with new media that can better attend to sensory and embodied experiences (Latham 20003). Poetry, painting, photographs, video, theatre, dance or music might have been more adequate for making my point. However, because initially I did not plan to focus on emotions and embodied knowledges, consequently, I did not sufficiently foresee the difficulty of 'representing' and writing about them. But, even so, a PhD is still supposed to be a written thing (preferably not written in verse or as an imaginary story). So, finally, I cannot but admit that this thesis can never do full justice to the young people's fear and hope and to their deeply embodied experiences of oppression, violence and resistance.

Finally, while I have tried to formulate some thoughtful answers to burning questions about the empowerment impact of PAR and about the role of emotions and embodied knowledges in facilitating processes of personal and social change, this research is only a small step towards a better understanding of power of empowerment in PAR, and, as such, it also raises

many new questions: How exactly are we subjugated through our most intimate emotions? What exactly is at stake for an individual or a group consciously or unconsciously embracing a particular affective style (rendering them docile and humble or independent, aggressive or arrogant for example)? How exactly are emotions channelled for political purposes? What powerful interests are invested in our everyday practices, social contacts and intimate relations? What role do our everyday (unconscious) emotional attachments play in preventing social change, despite critical ideas and radical convictions? What kind of emotions are generally considered politically progressive and why? Are certain emotions more conducive to social justice than others and, if so, how can they be raised and nurtured? How do emotions travel between different scales and how do they simultaneously affect (and become affected by) both the local and the global? What can a politics of hope and imagination concretely look like? How can such a politics be implemented and with what results? Some human geographers and participatory researchers have already started to take up these issues, but more in-depth (participatory) research, critical reflection and creative experiment are necessary in order to provide more complete answers to these questions.

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<u>Appendices</u>

Appendix 1: Information letter for the young participants

Hello everybody,

As you all now, different groups of young people (like you) are participating in CFO's PAR project. Together with friends and in a fun way they talk and reflect about their daily reality and about their problems and needs. Together, young people think about possible solutions and propose and organise activities and actions.

I already talked to you about the fact that I am studying and doing (PhD) research at the Brunel university of London. For my research I'd like to evaluate the PAR process together with all of you, the young people participating in it. I am interested to know whether you enjoyed the PAR. Did you learn something by doing PAR and, if so, what? Did you change by participating in the PAR and if so, how? Did it change something in your life? I'd also like to find out what you did not like about it and what you would change next time.

For my research, I would like to organise some focus groups with about five participants of each group that is participating. During these focus groups I would like to talk with you about how you feel about the PAR and about how it helped you or changed you. I'd also like to conduct individual interviews with some of you at the end of the PAR process. Of course, you are completely free to decide whether you want to participate in the focus groups and/or in the individual interviews or not. It is no problem at all if you do not feel like it.

A the end of my research, I will write a thesis about the results and about the empowering impact of the PAR based on your evaluations, reflections, ideas, doubts and critiques. When writing about the PAR process or about your communities or when quoting some of you, I will always use different names for each of you and your communities so that nobody will be able to recognize who you are or where you live. Your evaluations, opinions and ideas about the PAR will also be taken into account by CFO in the process of evaluating, changing and ameliorate its work with young people in Mejicanos.

If you have questions about my research project or about the evaluation process, just come and ask me. If, for whatever reason, you feel uncomfortable with it, do not doubt to tell me about it and together we can sort it out.

I hope you feel like participating. I will let you know in time about the focus groups and the individual interviews!

Barbara

Appendix 2: Participatory focus groups

Participatory focus group I

16th of September 2007
Introduction, (re)presenting the young people and making them feel comfortable with each other

TIEMPO	ACTIVIDAD	DESARROLLO
10 min.	Arrival - getting installed - welcome	
15 min.	Presentation game	Each participant makes his/her own name card, drawing or painting something they identify with. Each of them presents themselves to the others by explaining what they have painted and why.
5 min.	Briefly re-explaining the goals of the participatory focus groups.	
10 min	Game 1: misiyamiyami	The young people walk in a circle and sing the 'misiyamiyami' song putting their hands on their hips, hands on their knees, on their feet, on the shoulders of the person in front of them, etc.
15 min.	The dating clock	Each participant receives a sheet with three dates: at nine in the morning, two in the afternoon and nine in the evening and some questions: how old are you? Where are you coming from? Where do you study? With whom do you live? What do you like to do in your free time? They walk around in the room and have five minutes to arrange a date with three other boys or girls. Each of them writes down on their sheet at what time they have a date with whom. Music is played and they are asked to walk around in the room. When the music stops the young people who have a meeting at nine are asked to sit together and ask each other questions (question from the list or any other questions they feel like asking). After some minutes the music plays again and the participants walk around in the room again? The music stops and the young people having a meeting at two o'clock are asked to sit together and talk to each other. The same for the nine' o'clock p.m. date. At the end we go and sit in a circle and the young people share what they have learned about each other.
15 min.	Game 3: the sock	Young people stand in a queue. Each person passes his /her right hand under his/her legs and gives a hand to the person behind him or her (so taking the hand of the person in front with his/her left hand and passing his/her right hand under/between his/her legs to the person behind). Beginning with the person in front they all have to pass under the legs of all the participants without releasing each others' hands. If they release hands they have to start all over again.
15 min.	Pause – snack	
20 min.	Cooperative chair	The young people make a circle with chairs. They each go and sit on a chair. The music plays and they walk/run/dance around the chairs. Each time the music stops one chair is taken away. Each time a chair is taken away the participants have to manage to go and sit all together on the remaining chairs. At the end they sit all together on one chair.
20 min.	Group reflection	Sitting in a circle, the participants are asked three general questions to discuss and share in the group - How did you feel during the PAR? - What did you like most? Why? - What didn't you like? Why?
5 min.	Brief evaluation	

Participatory focus group II

30th of September 2007
How did they like the PAR process?

TIEMPO	ACTIVIDAD	DESARROLLO
10 min	Arrival – getting installed	
15 min.	Introduction game: 'Do you like me'	The young people go and stand in a circle with one of them standing in the middle. The person in the middle goes and stands in front of another young person in the circle and asks: 'Do you like me'. That person answers 'yes'. The person in the middle asks again: 'But do you really like me'. The person in the circle again says 'yes'. The person in the middle asks: 'But why?. The person answers: 'I like you because of your …. (hair, eyes, toes, fingers, smile etc….)
20 min	The square Objective: Asking questions about the PAR and facilitate discussion among the young people	Draw a big square on the floor divided into four little squares. In square 1 is written 'I totally agree', in square two: 'I totally disagree, in square 3: 'a bit', in part 4: 'I don't know'. The young people are asked different questions about the PAR and they are asked to go and sit in the part of the square that best represents their answer. They are asked to explain their answer and the others can comment. - PAR is fun? - PAR is boring? - PAR is about who we are and what we want? - PAR is about our needs and problems? - PAR is learning new things? - PAR is about power? - PAR is about change and resistance? - PAR really helps young people? - PAR doesn't change anything?
10 min	Pause – snack	
30 to 40min.	Group discussion	The young people sit in a circle. In the middle of the circle there are different pictures from different moments and activities from the PAR. They can choose and pick up the pictures as they like and discuss the ones they want. - What do they think and feel when they look at these pictures? - Why do they like a particular picture? - Why do they not like a particular picture? - What did these moments mean to them? - What do they remember most and why?
15 min.	Brief evaluation	

Participatory focus group III

14th of October 2007
How did they change personally / individually?

TIEMPO	ACTIVIDAD	DESARROLLO
10 min	Arrival – getting installed	
10. min	Introduction game: Little goat get out of your stable	The young people stand in a circle holding hands. One person stands in the middle. Everybody sings: 'little goat get out of your stable' and the person in the middle has to try to escape (out of the circle).
5 min.	Brief meditation and respiration exercise	The young people lie down on straw mats, eyes closed. They are asked to focus on their respiration by putting their hand on their stomach, their chest and by focussing on how the air enters and leaves the nostrils.
10 minutes	Visualization and imagination of the PAR process	Directly following the respiration exercise. The young people lie down comfortably on straw mats eyes closed. They are asked to remember and visualize the PAR from the beginning to the end. They are guided through different workshops and activities, and remembered of the different things that happened during the PAR (the first workshops, the camp, excursions, making a song, making a theatre piece, festivals, etc.). They are asked to remember who was there, what happened, and how they felt. What did they do? How did they think, feel and behave?
	Individual Reflection:	1) Each participant chooses a place where they feel good and comfortable. they are asked to answer two open questions: - How did I feel during the PAR workshops and activities? - Did I change during this process? Am I different now compared to the beginning of the process? 2) Each participant is asked to answer a list with questions about personal changes. They can use stickers with laughing faces if they agree, sticker with sad faces if they disagree. They are asked to explain their answer if they feel like.
	Pause – snack	
	Group discussion	Group discussion: the young people share (and discuss) their reflections on how they have changed throughout the PAR process.
	Brief evaluation	

Participatory focus group IV

28th of October 2007
Collective / group changes?

TIEMPO	ACTIVIDAD	DESARROLLO
10 min	Arrival – getting installed	
5 min	Introduction game: 'Do you really like me'	Idem participatory focus group II, only now they have to say something they like about the person's character
30 to 40 min	Cooperative chain	The young people are blinded and, with one hand, they hold on to a long rope stretched over the whole area passing different obstacles (the swimming pool, fallen threes, etc.). The participants have to follow the rope and *reach the end point all together*. Nobody may be left behind! If the group falls apart, all the participants have to go back about 10 meters and start together again from there.
15 to 20 minutes	Group discussion	How did it go? How did they feel? What were the difficulties? Did they help each other out? How? How did they communicate? How does this game relate to the PAR? Are there any resemblances?
15 min.	Pause – snack	
20 min	Group reflection	The young participants sit together in little groups: the boys from La Uruguay, the boys from La Bolivar and the girls from La Bolivar. They each think about the following questions: Did we change as a group? How? What changes did we notice? Each group is asked to dramatize the group changes.
20 to 30 minutes	Plenario	Each group presents its drama about how the group has changed. The other young people can comment, ask questions and discuss.
5 min.	Brief evaluation	

Participatory focus group V

12th of November 2007
Opportunities and difficulties during the PAR process?

TIEMPO	ACTIVIDAD	DESARROLLO
10 min.	Arrival and getting installed	
10 min.	Introduction game: The bridge	The young people lie on the floor side by side, their head next to the feet of the person beside them. They lift their hands in the air. One person (each in turn) slowly lies down on his/her back on the others' hands and is passed over to the other side.
1h. 30 min.	Painting on large canvases visualizing the difficulties and opportunities during the PAR process	The young people paint on two big canvases: on the first one they can paint all the difficulties (things, events and people that made the PAR more difficult) they encountered during the PAR process. On a second one they draw and paint all the things, events and people which they felt were most helpful for advancing the PAR process.
	Pause – snack	
20 to 30 min.	Group discussion	Taking a close look at the canvases what do we see? The young people comment and discuss
5 min.	Brief evaluation	

Participatory focus group VI

19th of November 2007
Changes beyond the PAR?

TIEMPO	ACTIVIDAD	DESARROLLO
10 min	Arrival and getting installed	
10 min	Introduction game	
30 min - 1 hour	Group reflection	I briefly resume the main conclusions of the previous focus groups about how they have changed and the things they learned. Are these changes useful in other spaces, beyond the PAR? How?
	Pause – snack	
10 min.	Game	
15 min.	Brief evaluation of the evaluation process	Each participant receives a sheet with different faces with different expressions (angry, sad, happy, etc.). The young people are asked how they felt during the evaluation focus groups and to encircle the face that best represent their feelings (or different faces). Each participant is invited to share his/her conclusions in the group. All the young people are thanked for their participation and efforts. Small celebration - meal

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Appendix 3: Semi-structured individual interview (guiding questions)

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your life history?

2. How is the community you live like? How would you describe it to an outsider? (What do you like most about it? What you like less about is?)

3. How are the people in your community like and how do they live? (How do they live with the violence going on? How do they cope with that violence?)

4. What did you like most about the PAR process?

5. What did this process mean for you personally? (What did you learn? How did it change you?)

6. How did it change the other young people involved? (Did they change? What changes do you see in others? How did you change as a group?)

7. Did the PAR process have an impact on your community in any way?

8. Did help in any way to prevent or reduce violence?

9. What did you like less about it? What would you change next time?