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Re-thinking Epistemic Violence through the Becoming of the Researcher

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Participatory research is often considered to reduce epistemic violence. Thus research of people and from people from minor groups could be seen as better than research for the othered people. While this could be the case, this paper questions such assumptions and is sympathetic to Barbara Held's argument that knowledge of, from and for people can create epistemic violence. It is almost as though research, knowledge and science are inherently oppressive. Our reflection falls on the role of the researcher in the research processes. We think that the role of those who research, whether of/from or for, is pivotal, yet we think that this is not very often recognized. The Foucauldian influence of the power of researchers has been discussed voluminously. But we would like to acknowledge the becoming(s) of the researcher as part of the research process. This idea of becoming, influenced mostly from a Deleuzian-Guattarian perspective, questions the binary play between 'making same' and 'othering, and offers the possibility of thinking otherwise from this binary.

Although they are apparently working within a different paradigm, we argue that research of/from or for work within the same distribution of the sensible, in terms of the researcher and the research process (Rancière, 2006). The researcher, working within the established procedures surrounding the research process, approaches her research "think[ing] of it as an order that is all inclusive in that everyone has a particular place, role, or position in it; there is an identity for everyone" (Biesta, 2010 p.48). In such a closed economy (Standish, 2005) everything is made to fit. Even concepts of otherness and othered are imbued with frameworks of identity(ies) and function within that they are trying to escape and deconstruct. The distribution of the sensible has a totalizing effect, where the researcher often approaches research with preconceived meanings and layers of understanding. Deleuze's understanding of the archaeological helps us explain this in research. The archaeological is seen as an understanding as 'a memorial, commemorative, or monumental conception that pertains to persons and object, the milieus being nothing more than terrains capable of conversing, identifying, or authenticating them' (Deleuze, 1997, 63). Here the Foucauldian influence on Deleuze is evident. From our research experience, particularly in our teaching of research methods and supervision of students, research often seems to be an ordered effort to see the meanings and implications of the various linear layers of the researched within particular contexts. Archaeology tries to understand how these layers become so (through solidification) and what they can mean.

The solid established procedures in research come with a promise of safety in the certainty they provide the researcher who is faced with parameters and deadlines. In such scenarios the researcher can easily be led to resist uncertainty as this can be unsettling. Our suggestion is for the researcher to engage with the possibilities which this unsettling brings. When a researcher tolerates the sensations which accompany the state of uncertainty, it can be possible, even if only for a short period of time, to open up the distribution of the sensible. When this happens, and we are able to give attention to what would have been side-lined, we can 'allow ourselves to be provoked' (Standish, 2001, p.503) by it. Rather than staying distant and distinct from the research process and the researcher, we encourage the researcher to engage with the intensities

and the complexities of the research process, allowing it to lead the researcher into new territories yet uncharted, thus engaging in a process of continuous becomings.