Participatory Research, Capabilities and Epistemic Justice

A Transformative Agenda for Higher Education

Edited by
Melanie Walker · Alejandra Boni

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"Alejandra Boni and Melanie Walker's marvellous collection assembles a set of highly insightful essays that blend the capability approach and participatory action research in order to fight epistemic injustices in higher education contexts. Highly congenial to Freirean pedagogy, the collection vividly demonstrates the epistemic and emancipatory power of participatory knowledge production from below."

—Julian Culp, *The American University of Paris*

"This is a splendid book which makes a significant, important and original contribution to the broad field of education and social justice in eight exciting cases of substantial projects which involve participants who have been traditionally silent or silenced in different global contexts. It is a particularly timely book because debates about what it means to decolonise in educational settings is intensifying, and it shows both practically and theoretically how spaces can be created to give groups with traditionally little voice the means and opportunity to speak, to be heard and to become knowledge creators."

—Professor Monica Mclean, *University of Nottingham*

"If our Universities are courageous enough, they will make the pursuit of wellbeing and social justice their primary purpose. To truly do this, however, Universities must acknowledge a plurality of knowledge systems, knowledge-making practices and communities of knowers. This requires a decolonial pathway grounded in accepting unjust histories, questioning and replacing existing unjust epistemic commitments and (as the authors demonstrate) building epistemic functionings and capabilities. This book shows us many of the ways that this can be done by exploring rich cases with communities in Africa, Latin America and Europe. A must-read for anyone interested in transforming higher education for just futures, grounded and engaged community research and furthering our understanding of knowledge and capabilities."

—Krushil Watene, *Massey University*

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Editors

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Acknowledgements

This is now the third book that we have worked on together. Beginning in 2008 when we were brought together for the planning of what became the EDUWEL project led by Bielefeld University and funded by the EU Commission, we have enjoyed a generative academic partnership and a warm friendship. Somehow, both seem important for the work we do together. With Sandra working mostly in Spain and Melanie from 2012 in South Africa, our very different country contexts have been a source of challenge, while our shared commitment to socially just forms of development informed by human development and the capability approach has enabled a rich and continuing exchange of ideas and practices. We recognise the limits of what higher education can do to bring about a more just world. But we also believe that higher education has an important part to play and that it can, and indeed should, be a space of more justice. In this book we particularly address this concern in relation to research processes, which we have discussed at length over the years and written about previously together. In September 2018 we began a discussion about epistemic justice at the Human Development and Capability Association annual conference in Buenos Aires by which time we had both begun reading and thinking about epistemic justice in relation to our own work. We thought it would be timely to work together on an edited book in the light of the very interesting work we were aware of. To this end, we began work on the book in March 2019 in our usual

cross-continental way—first in South Africa, then in London and what would have been in Valencia in April 2020, if Covid-19 had not interrupted all international travel and placed us in 'lockdown'.

We have found editing this book quite fascinating and feel that the book brings together a remarkable group of authors and ideas—we thank all of them for agreeing to contribute. There are many others whom we also wish to thank. Respectively, our colleagues and graduate students in the higher education and human development research group at the University of the Free State, and INGENIO at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, as well as students and teachers on the Master's Degree in Development Cooperation. Other colleagues—in addition to those whose chapters we include in the book and from whom we have learnt so much—whom we would like to acknowledge as a source of ideas and generous conversations include Monica McLean (most especially for drawing our attention to Fricker's epistemic capability), Mikateko Mathebula, Patience Mukwambo, Faith Mkwananzi, Pablo del Monte (for bringing narrative capability to our attention), Monique Kwachou, Fenella Somerville, Bertha Kibona, Stephanie Allais, Lesley Powell, Joan DeJaeghere, Leon Tikly, Moon Hong, Frederick Brossard, Julian Culp, Emily Henderson and the late Brenda Leibowitz. In addition, we have presented our ideas on epistemic justice and higher education in various places: Seoul, Bratislava, Vaxjo, London, Bristol, Pretoria, Lancaster and Paris. We thank the various audiences at these conferences, lectures and seminars for many stimulating conversations.

Jenny Lake assisted us with the meticulous preparation of the book manuscript saving us much stress! Our thanks also to Eleanor Christie and her successor, Rebecca Wyde, at Palgrave for their enthusiasm for the book.

Finally, we both want to thank our much loved animal families. In Melanie's case neither Milo nor Lexie was around for the final publication of the book; they are dearly missed and always remembered. Another pup (not named as yet) arrived as the book went off to the publisher. I hope he will be around for many more books. For Sandra, Isis is still around, with her constant presence, making the quarantine and social

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Epistemic Justice, Participatory Research and Valuable Capabilities

Melanie Walker and Alejandra Boni

In this book we take up the challenge of conceptualising and demonstrating in eight empirically based chapters how non-ideal epistemic justice in real-world education settings might be fostered though participatory research. We further make the claim that being able to make epistemic contributions is fundamental to human wellbeing, to a dignified human life and to wide freedoms (Fricker 2007, 2015) and that such contributions and the corresponding capabilities and functionings can be fostered in and through participatory research processes. Although we see Amartya Sen's (2009) capabilities and functionings as the ends of human development (Ul Haq 2003), in the specific space of education, Sen does not talk about epistemic justice although he does emphasise participation in

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public reasoning practices. At the same time, we are aware, and the chapters demonstrate, that participation in itself does not guarantee egalitarian epistemic outcomes. Projects may both reinforce and undermine reproduction in and through higher education, depending on multi-level contextual influences and the depth of participation. Sen has also said little that could address structural injustices flowing specifically (but not only) from the epistemic domain. Thus in the book, we go beyond Sen in taking participation and deliberation to also have the role of advancing epistemic justice, with a distinctive educational focus on epistemic functionings and not just the capability. This concern with functionings enables us to interrogate and expose the external conditions which may place obstacles in the way of realising epistemic capabilities and hence educational development. To this end, we show through the book chapters the potential to expand people's multi-dimensional capabilities and functionings in and through participatory processes and projects.

The Aims of the Book

A key concern in the book is with epistemic in/justice (Fricker 2007; Kidd et al. 2017) as foundational to a reflexive, inclusive and decolonial approach to knowledge and for its importance to democratic life, deliberation and participation in higher education (Walker 2019). At stake are whose voices are enabled, who gets to tell their stories and who is heard and listened to. The basic challenge posed by a specifically epistemic form of justice is how some persons—and not others—are advantaged in influencing and contributing to public discourse whether at the micro, meso or macro level and hence in contributing epistemically. We understand this to be important for wider justice. Anticipating many of the current debates on epistemic justice, the late South African activist and philosopher Steve Biko (1978, p. 49) wrote of apartheid, 'that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed'. Biko points compellingly to why the epistemic matters—those who hold political and social power, whether in the broader society or in higher education institutions (or both), also wield epistemic power, and such epistemic power holds relations of oppression in place. For example,

under apartheid black South Africans were deliberately prevented from placing their stories in the dominant public sphere; under imperial conditions local and non-Western knowledge was (and is) not legitimate for the colonisers (De Sousa Santos 2014). Epistemic injustice may thus preclude some people from speaking for themselves or formulating their own legitimate knowledge claims. Moreover, such exclusions are not abstractions but active and relational in our lives; our epistemic lives involve being, doing and acting with others (Barker et al. 2018). Our ideas and knowledge matter for participation in inclusive meaning-making (and hence to politics, education, the professions, and so on) so that who has access to these epistemic goods at various layers of society is then a matter of justice.

Take this shocking higher education example where epistemic injustice manifested in physical violence. On December 6, 1989, Marc Lépine entered a mechanical engineering class at the École Polytechnique in Montreal and ordered the women and men to opposite sides of the classroom. He separated nine women, instructing the men to leave. He stated that he was 'fighting feminism' and opened fire. He shot at all nine women in the room, killing six (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/03/montreal-massacre-canadas-feminists-remember). This is a dramatic example and, while higher education does not normally operate in such a life or death way in most countries, access to higher education curricula and participation in pedagogical arrangements is meant to enable worthwhile epistemic goods, including independent, critical, subject-based and interdisciplinary knowledge. Higher education ought to foster a transformational relationship of students to knowledge that potentially changes how they think and understand their worlds. Thus substantive knowledge concerns (the episteme) are needed to give content to epistemic justice in higher education, for example, a decolonised curriculum. Recently Fricker (2016, p. 3) has elaborated on the knowledge elements of epistemic injustice, pointing out that epistemic injustice not only blocks the flow of knowledge but also 'the flow of evidence, doubts, critical ideas and other epistemic inputs'. The resulting epistemic oppression constitutes a 'persistent epistemic exclusion that hinders one's contribution to knowledge production, an unwarranted infringement on the epistemic agency of knowers' (Dotson 2014, p. 115).

With this in mind, we aim to bring together three areas of interest to us—epistemic justice (incorporating discursive knowledge; see Walker 2019), participatory research and capabilities formation—and place them in conversation with each other in global South and global North settings in order to challenge the oppressions generated through the exclusion of the less powerful from processes of knowledge-making (see, e.g. Soldatenko 2015 on philosophy) and to work towards a decolonial praxis relevant for both North and South. The point is, as Andrea Pitts (2018, p. 150) makes clear, that knowledge practices 'have never existed merely as forms of abstract argumentation about belief, truth, justification, or cognition'. Rather, knowledge production itself—in and through universities—'is a materially embedded set of social and historical phenomena' embedded in a political economy of knowledge-making. Even in participatory research, we need to be vigilant about how power relations work. We thus work towards De Sousa Santos (2014) inclusive 'ecology of knowledges' which admits excluded voices, subjugated knowledges and disqualified knowledges into knowledge decisions and knowledge production, against colonial productions in which the 'subaltern' cannot speak (Spivak 1994). This should not be confused with the global North (or indeed any researcher with more power) 'allowing' the oppressed to speak for themselves or 'giving' them voice, within unchanged local or global knowledge relations. Thus if we truly value participation and participatory research, it must be located also in reflexive decolonial practices and commitments to epistemological decolonisation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018).

Such an approach does not assume that Western knowledge is either universal or better; it can and does draw productively on Western knowledge and ideas—as we do in this book. It is not about closing the door to European or other traditions. It is about defining clearly what and where the centre lies (Mbembe 2016, p. 35). Thus De Sousa Santos (2014) proposes a contextualised 'pluri-universitary knowledge', a plurality of ways of knowing. The possibilities and limits of understanding and action of each way of knowing can only be grasped to the extent that each offers a comparison with other ways of knowing. Nonetheless, the comparison is difficult because the relations among ways of knowing are asymmetrical, because of history, politics and epistemology. 'Sacred' scientific

knowledge is considered to be of greater epistemic worth and credibility than that of other non-esoteric knowledges (such as community-based knowledge or student knowledge). Some academic disciplines may ignore or distort particular intellectual traditions (e.g. treating non-Western philosophy as ethno-philosophy). An ecology of knowledge is contrary to the epistemological exclusions that seek to conceal (even destroy) other ways of knowing, and looks to a reorientation of the relationship between university and society towards solidarity.

Similarly, post-colonial theorists such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012, p. 2) argue that research (the space of knowledge production) is a site of significant (epistemic) struggle 'between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of knowing of the other'. While we can generally claim that research aims to add value to and benefit society (and we have many good examples of this in health, engineering and other fields), research also 'exists within a system of power' (Smith 2012, p. 226) and, in contemporary times, within globalisation flows and neo-liberal higher education policies. This requires that knowledge-making through research 'talk back to and talk up to power' in order to get the story right and tell the story well (Smith 2012, p. 226). Epistemic injustice need not be a given, it can be contested so that epistemic failure (Fricker 2007) is seldom complete and structural possibility seldom entirely open—both have implications for more expansive and generous ways of seeing, thinking and knowing in universities—for the potential of participatory research.

Forms of Epistemic Injustice

Drawing substantially on Miranda Fricker (2007), we outline two forms of epistemic injustice, both of which reveal how epistemic oppression is realised through domination and marginalisation practices, suggesting how epistemic justice can be frustrated. Testimonial injustice occurs when a hearer gives a reduced level of credibility to what someone says due to prejudice against the speaker (e.g. of status inequality, race, class, gender). They may regard them as incompetent, stupid or dishonest or all three. For example, a deficit of credibility because of race-based prejudice

on the part of white South African students might generate everyday 'pinpricks' of testimonial injustice (if white students insist on checking the work of black students in group projects; e.g. see Kessi and Cornell 2015) or more dramatic race-based conflicts in which racial remarks end up being a substitute for reasoned discussion. Testimonial injustice can occur when knowledge produced through experiential pedagogies is seen as second-class knowledge—and hence speakers or producers are second-class too—where a more codified form that follows the academic formal structure for its construction is predominant and seen as valid when compared with other types of knowledge (see Boni and Velasco 2020). In this epistemically narrow approach, what counts as legitimate knowledge is decided only by an inner community of scientists who claim that only they can contribute legitimately and rationally to a knowledge consensus. This is not to claim that one way of knowledge-making is better than another, rather it is to argue for a more inclusive and democratic approach that is more epistemically just in its processes and impact.

While testimonial injustices take individual form, they can become systemic (e.g. in accepted knowledge practices) and embedded in the social structure, rather than only transactional. Indeed, it is hard to see how everyday exclusionary patterns do not become structural if secured by multiple repetitions over time. Essed's (1991) concept of 'everyday racism' is helpful in explicating the everydayness of this kind of testimonial injustice. It is the everyday that can reinforce bad epistemic behaviour. Everyday racism (and other exclusionary practices), according to Essed (1991), has pervasive effects on daily experiences shaped both by the macrostructural and by micro-experiences. As she explains it, 'the integration of racism [and other exclusions] into everyday practices becomes part of the expected, of the unquestionable, and of what is seen as normal by the dominant group…racist notions and action infiltrate everyday life' (p. 50). We could advance similar claims for gendered power relations, or South-North exclusionary epistemic governance relations (Walker and Martinez-Vargas 2020). Indeed, Fricker (2016, p. 4) has recently agreed that testimonial injustice 'where it is persistent and socially patterned' will increase hermeneutical marginalisation (discussed below) and hence be structural and not only transactional.

The second form is hermeneutical injustice. This, according to Fricker (2007), is evident in attempts to make an experience intelligible to oneself or to someone else. It turns on legitimacy and on how structural power influences some understandings as legitimate and excludes others if one belongs to a group which does not have access to equal participation in the generation of social meanings (here Boni and Velasco's case study might sit at the boundary of the testimonial and the hermeneutic). As Fricker (2007, p. 152) explains, 'we try hardest to understand those things it serves us to understand'. Moreover, a social group might be hermeneutically marginalised without individual members necessarily being aware or being able to name the exclusion they experience. It can take another form too where hermeneutical injustice arises because the injustice is understood (e.g. historically by activists in South Africa) but is not communicable to those with power (the apartheid state) because experiences that are outside of what has been marked out as the norm are not heard or acknowledged. This unequal participation in generating social meanings generates hermeneutic marginalisation of a person or group (e.g. black university students in South Africa) in the absence of non-distorted discursive resources among the dominant. This would be the case even where those subject to the oppression are strongly aware of the injustice. In both cases of hermeneutic injustice, some would be denied wide epistemic capacities. Moreover, in some cases it may be that people are prevented even from developing and exercising a voice (Medina 2017; Spivak 1994). Take, for example, the inhabitants of slums in Lagos, Nigeria, who have been systematically denied their hermeneutical power and equal access to participation in the generation of social meaning. There is an intentional act of the government and other official stances to label the slums inhabitants terrorists, criminals and kidnappers in order to legitimise and therefore proceed with eviction plans against them (see Boni and Velasco 2020).

Yet, as Barker et al. (2018, p. 13) point out, ignorance (intentional or not) 'is not merely a passive lack of knowledge but an active and persistent impediment to true belief' such that 'social injustice and ignorance walk in stride, enabling and reinforcing one another'. It adds something to hermeneutic injustice when a society, or a part of that society, refuses to embrace the conceptual resources that would allow full understanding

of domination and epistemic inequalities. This applies as much in the space of higher education where well-off students, for example, may resist or be unconscious of their own familial privilege and their social advantages, rather than framing their success as being down to individual talent and 'merit'. Privilege is then elided with ability. Such ignorance sustains unequal education relations. The counter position is that privileged students would be 'epistemically culpable' (Fricker 2016, p. 13) if the 'shared hermeneutical repertoire [of social inequalities] was quite rich enough' (p. 16). Quite simply, if one could have known better, then one should have known better (Fricker 2016).

We can find examples of what Fricker (2007) calls 'failure first', that is, by attending to where we fail, we are alerted to what we need to change but also to the counter pressures that we face. Failure first exposes dependence on external conditions so that 'While some people are enabled by evenly spread social uptake to make their epistemic contributions across the board, others find their capability thins or vanishes altogether in some contexts' (Fricker 2015, p. 83). In a research development process, epistemic injustice, and especially prejudice-based testimonial injustice, unfairly increases labour for those whose epistemic contributions are filtered when participants come together pedagogically, such that this can be identified as 'an epistemic agential injustice' (Pohlhaus 2017, p. 21), that 'divert[s] epistemic attention in the service of dominance'.

For example, in South Africa, Pedro Mzileni (2017) reported on his experiences of attending a conference on inequality at a leading South African university, one at which he and his colleague were the only black participants. Echoing Biko—some 40 years later—he writes (2017, p. 26) that 'White students [at the conference] seemed to be an intellectual elite: highly educated, very bright and, for the most part, very liberal people'. Yet no one raised the issue of the connections between race and inequality, and when his colleague did raise it, 'the white students felt accused of being racists…[they] failed to include the reality of others in their plans'. One of the white students argued that it was unnecessary to bring race into the inequality problem. 'In other words, the debate was "subconsciously silenced"' (2017, p. 26). Mzileni and his colleague were not recognised as credible knowers or as persons who could raise legitimate questions. Nor could they make their experiences understood to the

dominant group at the conference. In Kessi and Cornell's (2015) account of black students' experiences at the elite University of Cape Town in South Africa, students struggled to make their own distinctive university experiences of 'feeling black' intelligible to themselves and to others. They said they had been made to feel as if they were taking the places of white students; they experienced isolation, not feeling as if they belonged; and they suffered from diminished confidence exacerbated by race-based encounters in learning and social spaces such that they were not fully included in the epistemic community at university. Take also the case of a network of communitarian researchers in Medellín in Colombia that struggled to be recognised as researchers because they do not have the necessary academic requirements (a high school degree or similar) to be considered members of a research group. Ironically, the theme of the research is how inhabitants of popular neighbourhoods (like the communitarian researchers) in Medellín are conceptualising the different dimensions of human security. A question of (socio-economic) status intersecting with academic power structure is preventing the communitarian researchers from being part of an 'official' research project. However, despite these epistemic barriers, the network of communitarian researchers are producing (collectively) epistemic outputs[1] in an exercise of capability and functioning expansion in a non-ideal context of epistemic contribution.

Expanding Capabilities and Feasible Functionings

To be marginalised or excluded as a knower affects dignity, a shared way of life and a person's humanity and is contrary to fostering the critical knowledge and reasoning capabilities or freedoms to be and to do in ways that we value (Sen 2009), which ought to be available to all higher education students as participants and agents. Thus, realising epistemic justice

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[1] See this publication as an example of outputs produced by the network https://www.repensandolaseguridad.org/publicaciones/cartillas/item/hacia-una-agenda-de-seguridad-para-medellin-desde-la-perspectiva-de-sus-comunidades.html?category_id=26.

requires that we foster the morally relevant appropriate capabilities and functionings as a development goal in higher education. To explain, the capability approach (Sen 1999, 2009; also see Nussbaum 2000) is a broad normative framework rooted in a philosophical tradition that values individual freedoms and is used for the evaluation and assessment of individual wellbeing, social arrangements and the design of policies and proposals about social change. The approach conceptualises 'good' development as extensive freedoms constituted by human capabilities, rather than only as national income or people's subjective preferences. Income does not tell us who has the money or what it is used for, while preferences may be subject to adaptations in the light of poor living, such that one comes to accommodate limited opportunities and reduced aspirations for the future. Rather, the core focus of the approach is on the effective opportunities people have to be and to do what they have reason to value. It highlights substantive freedoms ('capabilities') and outcomes or what is actually achieved ('functionings'). Importantly, with capability also comes responsibility for what we do and the obligations we owe to others (Sen 2009). The capability approach further takes into account intersecting 'conversion factors', that is, the personal, social and environmental factors that shape our ability as active agents to transform our means (resources) to achieve into capabilities and then into functionings. This includes, in our view, structures of inequality such as race, class, gender and so on. Active agents make choices, albeit under specific contextual conversion circumstances, which may enable or constrain both at the point of converting resources into capabilities and then in choosing which capabilities to operationalise as functionings.

The approach can be used as a normative framework to tell us what information we should consider—in this case, capabilities and who has them—if we are to evaluate how well a person's life is going, their wellbeing. What matters in arriving at these assessments, for Sen (2009), is the lives that people can actually live—what they are able to do and to be (such as having access to quality education and being treated fairly).

The capability approach also provides a framework for an examination and understanding of the purposes of universities and hence of research methodologies and knowledge production, because it encourages us to consider individual opportunities for wellbeing achievement and agency

in and through higher education. Through a capabilities lens, higher education is not solely a means for individuals to achieve economic gains through acquiring knowledge and skills for employment or for academics to research ignorant of the wider society. Instead, the approach asks us how higher education is contributing to human development (Ul Haq 2003), by expanding the capabilities and functionings that people have reason to value. Thus various higher education studies have explored the approach's theoretical richness in conceptualising and articulating the changes that need to take place in universities if they are to contribute to human development and social justice (see, e.g. Boni and Walker 2016).

We understand the capability approach as enabling an analysis that takes into account both persons and the structures that can get in the way of capabilities expansion, although the approach has less to say about structural change and how it works out in practice. Still, this takes us beyond a notion of individual empowerment (important though that is) because participants are located in social structures and power relations that shape what they can do and that create obstacles or opportunities for their full participation. Another way of thinking about the nexus of the person and general conversion factors is captured by Nussbaum's (2000) notion of 'combined capabilities', that is, 'internal capabilities' (such as having the aspiration to go to university), together with the external (social) uptake conditions that effectively enable that person to exercise the capability as an achieved aspiration. However, even here, there needs to be a clear focus on the importance of the realisable functionings for evaluating justice in practice. Put another way Frediani et al. (2019, p. 107) describe the capability approach as having the potential 'to engage with internal dynamics of deliberation processes as well as external relations shaping outcomes'. The strength of the capability approach is thus that it combines both internal capabilities, one's skills, attitudes, knowledge and information, with the options one has to act on them within a social context with its particular enablements and constraints.

In her later work, Fricker (2015) considers how to address epistemic injustices by drawing on the language of capability, with specific reference to Nussbaum's (2000) list. She argues that being able to contribute epistemic materials to the shared common resource (e.g. in a research process) is fundamental to human wellbeing. All citizens should be able

to make epistemic contributions and to have their contributions taken up fairly in social and educational contexts, rather than having some contributions rejected or undervalued by other contributors. Fricker (2015) proposes that one of our most basic human needs is being able to think about and make meaningful sense of our shared lives. To this end, she proposes the concept of 'epistemic contribution capability' (specifically using the notion of capability), which requires a comprehensive notion of the person as both a receiver and a giver in epistemically hospitable situations of mutual esteem and friendly trust. In the case of higher education, all participants ought to be able to contribute to the common cognitive resources in this everyday way, giving and receiving informational and interpretive materials. To be fully involved in the university's knowledge project, students would need opportunities to develop their epistemic contribution capability of being able both to receive information and make interpretive contributions to the pool of knowledge, understanding and practical deliberation. Moreover, we do not learn to do this on our own. The epistemic contributor functioning is fundamentally relational and requires—in our experience—community and caring connections (Boni and Velasco 2020; Walker et al. 2019). We propose that this functioning can be advanced through participatory research and that it should be a core capability and functioning. Fricker does not herself discuss the corresponding function, that of actually being an epistemic contributor, which we take to be as significant as the capability in education contexts. It is not enough to have the capability if the freedoms to exercise it are not also in place, in our case in a research project and participatory processes.

Relevant both to participatory research and to capabilities formation, Medina (2017) stresses that hermeneutical injustice is interactive and performative, it is made in communicative spaces. A plurality of voices offers possibility for epistemic dissidence by means of a diversity of interpretative resources and practices and the inclusion and consideration of as many positional objectivities as possible. What is also clear, given the fundamentally social nature of learning, is that relationships enable (and equally can thwart) the development of the epistemic capability in education and may even be intrinsically good beyond being instrumental for the capability, valued for their own sake and worth pursuing for their

own sake (Hoffmann and Metz 2017). It is to emphasise that we do not develop alone but in relationships with others. In the education case, developing the capability—understood in a relational way—only in some students or some researchers at the expense of others would mean that for all of us the capability would be reduced and not fully developed. Thus, my own epistemic wellbeing ought to be understood as interwoven with the epistemic capability of others if we are to advance a rich non-ideal epistemic justice. Curren and Metzger (2017, p. 80) put it this way, that institutions (in this case, universities) 'exist to enable all of its members to live well and should provide opportunities sufficient to enable all to do so and thereby provide each other such opportunities'.

The Potential of Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Having outlined the challenge of epistemic injustice and how higher education ought to foster the relevant capabilities and functionings, noting the relevance for participatory research, we now elaborate our interest in the potential of participatory processes and research. Following Reason and Bradbury (2008), we understand participatory research processes as developing knowledge (experiential, practical, propositional) through iterative actions and conceptual-empirical reflections in the pursuit of human wellbeing. Such projects start from a vision of social transformation and aspirations for greater social justice; they are not value neutral. Collaboration, community, trust, solidarity and reciprocity are central to the process. PAR seeks deliberately 'to include the investigated in the process of investigation itself' (Korala-Azad and Fuentes 2009–2010, p. 1) and to strive for methods that are ethical, open, respectful and alert to power dynamics. Thus, we understand participatory approaches to aim at doing research with and alongside people, rather than on them, and to have a shared concern with bringing about personal and social change. Participants (who would normally be considered objects of the research) act as co-investigators gathering evidence, analysing data and disseminating the knowledge acquired in different ways. They become

questioners, critics, theorists, knowers and communicators. A key political goal for PAR has to do with the fact that it is typically marginalised people who 'speak' so that the aspiration is for more democratic and inclusive forms of making knowledge and an epistemological inclusiveness. Put another way, it is a contribution (of course not the only one) to an ecology of knowledges. Conceived in this way, this capacity can challenge academic complicity in both the North and the South that prioritises only forms of scientific knowledge that insist on the continued exclusion of knowledges that take different forms from the 'sacred' scientific paradigm.

Nonetheless, putting PAR into practice in a university environment represents a challenge. Some academics question the validity of action research as scientific inquiry. Yet, as Lincoln et al. (2011) explain, PAR elements are different from positivistic, constructivist and critical approaches to inquiry but equally valid nonetheless. To illustrate the particular rationale of PAR, we list key features: (1) the way of understanding reality (the *ontology* issue) as a participative reality, a subjective and objective reality, co-created by participants; (2) *epistemology* (the way of understanding knowledge) includes experiential, propositional (knowledge of facts) and practical knowing and co-created findings; (3) *methodology* is understood as participation in collaborative action inquiry; (4) validity criteria include *congruence* between the different ways of knowing, shared agreements and reasoning among actors and knowledge that catalyses action, among others.

First in Boni and Walker (2016) and then in an expanded version in Boni and Frediani (2020), we outline further key dimensions of PAR. Firstly, PAR involves *action*. PAR aims to alter the initial situation of the group, organisation or community in the direction of a more self-managing, liberated and sustainable state (Greenwood and Levin 2007). What is defined as a liberated state varies from one practitioner to another. For example, Reason and Bradbury (2008, p. 4) propose the pursuit of 'practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities' as a goal of PAR. For others, PAR could be aligned with radical praxis. Secondly, PAR involves *research* (building knowledge, theories, models, methods, analysis). What this research tradition provides is a shared

commitment to disrupt conventional hierarchies of knowledge production: who decides on the questions to ask, how to ask them and how to theorise the world. Thirdly, PAR means *participation*, placing a strong value on democracy and control over one's own life situation. PAR often involves trained researchers who serve as facilitators and teachers of members of local communities or organisations. Because these people work together to establish the PAR agenda, generate the knowledge necessary to transform the situation and put the results to work, PAR is a participatory process in which everyone involved takes some responsibility (Greenwood and Levin 2007). Thus, the fourth dimension of PAR is this *cyclical component* (iterative cycles of analysis-reflection-action) which can generate powerful learning for participants. Gaventa and Cornwall (2008) name this learning component *awareness building*, which is fostered among the participants through self-critical investigation and analysis of their own reality. They argue that the combination of the co-production of different areas of knowledge through cycles of reflection and action, with processes of critical reflection and learning, can make PAR an empowering methodology (Fig. 1.1), also taking into account the features of the ontology, epistemology, methodology and validity criteria noted above.

Nonetheless, we acknowledge that participation (dialogue, action, learning) has a range of meanings which may be more or less fully inclusive. Sen (2009) shares similar concerns with what he understands as public reasoning. As he explains, 'the requirements for a theory of justice include bringing reason to play in the diagnosis of justice and injustice'
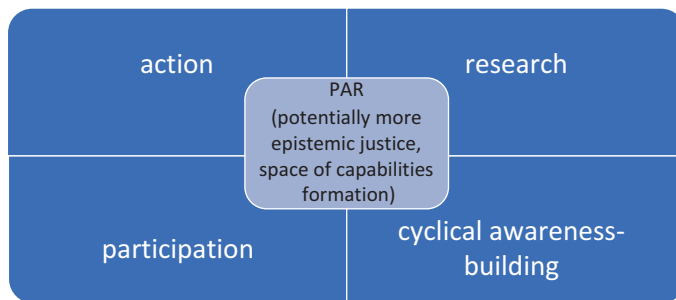
Fig. 1.1 PAR intersecting dimensions

(2009, p. 5). To compare and sort more justice against less justice requires public reasoning, which in turn requires human agents able to think and reason critically and pedagogies which form justice-facing values. Ethical (research) principles also require the use of reason, that is, they should emerge from informed scrutiny of different perspectives so that we can transcend our own 'positionally limited visions' (2009, p. 162) because people are 'able to reason and scrutinise their own decisions and those of others' (2009, p. 178). Good public reasoning requires that we develop learning and knowledge by participating in dialogue and public discussion and 'interactively forming reasoned values' (Sen 2009, p. 336). Sen puts great emphasis on the importance of knowledge from multiple perspectives (including that of the 'stranger') in the process of reasoning and choosing what we value being and doing, in being able to act as agents and in valuing freedoms.

Frediani (2015) proposes conceptualising participation in Freirean terms, focusing on how research and knowledge-making enable people to 'rupture their existing attitudes of silence, accommodation and passivity, and gain confidence and abilities to alter unjust conditions and structures' and eradicate a 'passive awaiting of fate' (p. 6). Participation in this approach would be thick not thin, enabling the voices of invisible actors in the university, challenging status inequalities and fostering the epistemic contributions associated with knowledge-making. As Hookway (2010) notes, actual participation in a wide variety of epistemic practices is necessary for developing one's agency capacities as an epistemic contributor. For example, to exclude students because of prejudice—that students can only be receivers of knowledge or because of the status inequalities noted earlier—would be to limit their epistemic development; it would constitute epistemic failure. By contrast, to include students in a participatory way would potentially enable them to be epistemic contributors.

Based on our experience of participatory projects, we think there are at least two interwoven spaces for epistemic justice arising from interventions that take account of wider inequalities. Firstly, what Anderson (2012, p. 172) calls 'epistemic democracy', in its most fully realised form this would entail 'universal participation on terms of equality for all inquirers'—in a participatory research project. This would be the ideal,

but in a real world of messy contexts and sometimes intractable social issues, we are more likely to need Sen's (2009) comparative assessments of justice so that we rather ask: did this research project advance more or less epistemic democracy, develop capabilities and offer enabling conditions for functionings, and enhance justice?

For thick inclusion in knowledge-making, for example, we might foster practices that challenge the 'scientific' view that only some forms of knowledge-making are credible and legitimate in the academy, thereby neglecting epistemic resources that may be available when students are put in a position to craft accounts of their own worlds through participatory approaches. The change means including diverse voices in the knowledge dialogue and broadening the informational basis on which we make judgements about students' lives based on capabilities and functionings. Sen calls this 'the territory of justice' and explains that '[t]he informational basis of judgment identifies the information on which the judgment is directly dependent…[it] determines the factual territory over which considerations of justice would directly apply' (1990, p. 111). The point is to attend to relations of power and 'prepare people to take part appropriately, fairly and justly in knowledge exchange' (Kotzee 2017, p. 329).

Towards a Decolonial-Inflected Ethical Research Praxis

With regard to decoloniality (Mignolo 2007), we do not think it too much of a stretch to locate participatory research projects as a constituent element of an aspirational decolonial praxis. This is more than an academic exercise but one of human concern (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). Being understood, to express oneself, and being able to contribute to meaning-making are basic human capacities and constitutive of a dignified life (Fricker 2007). Indeed, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that the challenge of the twenty-first century is that of the 'epistemic line' which denies the full humanity and voices of some—this demands, he argues, a restorative epistemic agenda and the advance of epistemic freedoms (what

Sen would call capabilities and functionings)—the right to think, theorise and interpret the world unencumbered by Eurocentrism, liberating reason from coloniality, pushing back against 'the signature of epistemic hegemony [which] is the idea of "knowledge" rather than "knowledges"' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, p. 8).

It further means fostering practices that challenge the 'scientific' view that only some forms of knowledge-making are credible and legitimate in the academy—Santos' (2014) notion of 'abyssal thinking' that reduces the humanity of some—thereby neglecting valuable epistemic resources. Thus epistemic freedom involves democratising knowledge and legitimating various forms of knowledge and knowing beyond the 'scientific' or 'philosophical' in an 'ecology of knowledges' (De Sousa Santos 2014). This constitutes a robust challenge to university researchers in the global North and global South who do not think experiential and participatory knowledge is properly scientific. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's rejoinder puts it well when she writes that as researchers we ought to be committed to producing knowledge 'that recovers subjugated knowledges, that helps create spaces for the voices of the silenced to be expressed and "listened to", and that challenge racism, colonialism and oppression' (2012, p. 41). Such a standpoint should not privilege the interests and power of the (academic) researcher but rather re-position those who have been objects of research into knowledge-makers. It is this understanding of knowledge that highlights what it means, in our setting of the university, to address hermeneutical and testimonial injustices. It also means that our research practices, as well as the substantive focus of our research, need to be grounded in advancing 'authentic humanity' (Smith 2012, p. 24) consistent with a decolonial praxis.

In this project and across the chapters in this book, authors draw on a range of resources from the global South and the global North as intellectual allies. In this we are guided by Mbembe (2016) and Wa Thiong'o (1986) who argue that the issue constitutes the re-centring of Africa rather than a wholesale rejection of Western ideas. Thus, a decolonial praxis is not about closing the door to European or other traditions, but it does require challenging a Western way of knowledge production and a canon that disregards other epistemic traditions, and it requires critically reflexive alliances within and across projects and geographies. We

need to foreground the 'important and irreplaceable role for ethics as the analysis of the difference between good and bad' because 'the moral obligation to look for good solutions belongs to all human beings engaged in deliberation' (Camacho 2019, p. 304).

Lori Keleher (2019) proposes that in addition to a meta-development ethics (what is the good?), a normative ethics (principles of moral action) and applied ethics (e.g. medical ethics), there ought to be a fourth domain of 'personal or integral ethics' (p. 42). This is of especial concern to us. Keleher understands a personal ethics as recognising 'that each of us [as university-based researchers] must deliberately consider our particular actions and how we integrate our choices made in various spheres into the personal context of our individual lives' (2019, p. 43) to focus 'on the ethical practice of whole persons' (p. 43) and to make some attempt at bringing theory and practices together. In short, the ethical must be foregrounded in participatory development practices and values and our claim to decolonial praxis.

Concluding and Introducing

The chapter has shown that epistemic justice matters for its effects not only on the epistemic but for the wider impact exclusions can have on individual lives and structures. At its worst epistemic injustice can prop up unequal societies in which dominant prejudices flourish. Unequal epistemic participation of both the hermeneutical and testimonial forms may be systemic and wide-ranging across all research and university activities or incidental and localised one-off moments of powerlessness (Fricker 2007)—in all cases there will be accountable agents. In both cases, universities and the people in them wrong others in their capacity as knowers—intentionally or otherwise the effects seem the same—they deflate generative epistemic conditions in the university. We all need to accept responsibility for which epistemic practices enable and which constrain. Like Medina (2017), we disagree with Fricker's claim that hermeneutical injustices are epistemic wrongs that simply happen without perpetrators and are simply the outcome of gaps in the 'collective hermeneutical resource' of a (higher education) ethos and culture. This is to overlook

that agents produce and reproduce cultures. The assertion of responsibility for (epistemic) justice does not allow any group, which complies with or assists in constructing structures of domination or fails to work with others to ameliorate conditions, to get a 'free pass'. Thus, Young (2011, p. 96) advances a 'social connection' model of responsibility, which 'finds that all those who contribute by their actions to structural processes with some unjust outcomes share responsibility for the injustice', and we ought to be held responsible and are obligated to work towards removing this if we continue to be part of our society.

In this chapter we have introduced our theme of epistemic justice, the work that narrative-based participatory methods can do and the expansions of people's capabilities as a matter of producing greater justice in educational settings. The chapters that follow take up these themes in different ways across global South and global North settings on the assumption that we need these kinds of conversations rather than retreating to our own epistemic 'laagers'.

Diana Velasco and Alejandra Boni consider an innovative case study of a private university in Columbia which set out to make human development the basis of policy change in the university. They detail the inclusive process by which this was undertaken and argue the relevance of the case study across diverse higher education settings. We see a considerable potential for exciting conversations based on this case study. We stay in Columbia to consider a collaboration to develop business management courses in ways which engaged local communities in social innovation processes. Sergio Belda-Miquel and Leonor Avella Bernal outline six pilot courses and make suggestions as to what we might learn. We then move to Spain and a master's programme in development cooperation in which students are required to complete an action learning project with local communities. The chapter originally introduces Freirean ideas to expand and strengthen the political thrust of epistemic justice. Lori Keleher and Alexandre Frediani provide another example of an international partnership between a UK and Brazilian institution through an action learning programme that took place in Brazil. They outline the importance of context that can produce epistemic oppression with regard to violence and how a participatory programme can be a space of epistemic resistance. From Brazil to South Africa, Carmen Martinez-Vargas discusses

her original conceptualisation of 'democratic capabilities research' emerging from a one-year participatory action research study with a group of students at one university. Importantly, she introduces and argues for the significance of taking coloniality into account when we analyse conversion factors. Melis Cin and Rahime Suleymanoglu-Kurum then recount their attempts in a Turkish university to develop young women's feminist consciousness through participatory video making. Importantly, they argue for the epistemic in epistemic justice, that is, the importance of what knowledge is developed while also making a case for specifically feminist knowledge to challenge and counter dominant social discourses. Moving back to South Africa, Melanie Walker and Mikateko Mathebula describe a photovoice project with low-income youth from four South African universities. The project worked in particular to develop voice and narrative capabilities as foundational to greater epistemic justice and, aligned with Martinez-Vargas, integral to developing a decolonial ethics in practice. Tendayi Marovah and Faith Mkwananzi, in a Zimbabwean setting, recount their project which used street art, working with excluded youth, artists and civil society partners to encourage epistemic justice. The project produced a platform for self-expression by marginalised rural youth and new opportunities for them to act as creators of knowledge in this university-community project.

In different ways, all these chapters show that the university can enable epistemic justice and the multiplicity of social practices and experiences of the world in hospitable and generous epistemic engagements, genuinely inclusive but also radically incomplete (De Sousa Santos 2014). Of course, we exercise our epistemic agency under non-ideal conditions, and recognising this, we need also to be sufficiently optimistic that educational interventions are possible in epistemic gaps so that we can produce epistemically valuable and inclusive research practices in our universities. Nor, finally, should we overlook that changing epistemic relations in universities has the potential also to advance change in broader society and to contribute in this way directly and indirectly to realising the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

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2

Expanding Epistemic Capability in Participatory Decision-Making Processes: The Universidad de Ibagué Capabilities List

Diana Velasco and Alejandra Boni

Challenges of the University in Colombia

Colombia faces significant social and environmental challenges. With high economic inequality and disparities between regions, 25% of households with unsatisfied basic needs, and threats to biodiversity by the expansion of agricultural and illegal activities like coca planting and illegal mining, major transformations are urgently needed (ACCEFYN 2018). Additionally, the country continues to undergo a contentious implementation of the peace agreements signed between the national government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia on

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November 24th, 2016. Many opportunities come with the cessation of this civil armed conflict, such as progress in structural conditions for the improvement of the quality of life for Colombians and a deep and true reconciliation process for the whole population. Within this context, how can Colombian universities contribute? Universities should primarily contribute to more humane and sustainable development, along with the more traditional contribution to the economic development of the country. They are called upon to strengthen civic education and reform their teaching, research, and community outreach, with special emphasis on communities that have historically suffered the scourge of violence and injustice.

This chapter examines these issues in the policies of the Universidad de Ibagué (UI), a private, medium-sized university located in Tolima, one of the Colombian regions most affected by illegally armed groups. Throughout the year 2019, university leadership conducted an inclusive and participatory process involving 127 people in a first phase for constructing a capabilities list and 62 people in a second phase aimed at validating the list. The intention was to promote a university policy based on the declared capabilities list, as a working document. The participants represented different university community groups: faculty, students, alumni, technical staff, management teams, and business and social organisations that have projects with the university. The chapter describes how this policy-making process expanded the capabilities of the participants, especially the epistemic capability. The process itself contributed to greater cognitive justice, one of the necessary ingredients for a more just and democratic society (Sen 2009; De Sousa Santos 2014).

The chapter is structured as follows: in the second section, we describe the role of education in the capability approach and its contribution to democracy, as well as the relevance of an epistemic capability for higher education. In the third section, we reflect on the development of capabilities lists in the field of higher education by offering examples of lists of capabilities that have been significant in our process. In the fourth section, we illustrate the context and characteristics of UI. In the fifth section, we describe the methodology for the preparation of the list. In the sixth and seventh sections, we analyse the expansion of the epistemic capability and other related capabilities with the conversion factors that made this participatory exercise possible. Finally, we conclude with some

reflections on the implications of experiences such as the one in UI to human and sustainable development from the higher education.

Education and Epistemic Capability

As Sen states, capabilities are the real possibilities and opportunities of leading a life that a person has reasons to value. They refer to different combinations of achievable functions, where functions are "the different things that a person can value doing or being" (Sen 1999, p. 3). These, together, constitute what makes a person's life valuable. The distinction between achieved functionings and capabilities is that the former refers to what is effectively possible and can be put into action, and the latter are the freedoms or valuable options from which one can choose (Robeyns 2005). In this vein, the main constrictions on freedom should be reduced or eliminated so that society can thrive as a whole.

McCowan and Unterhalter (2013) suggest different ways in which capabilities have a bearing on education and on ethical development. First is the distributional aspect of education. Thinking in terms of capabilities raises a wider range of issues than simply looking at the number of resources or commodities people have: "Because of interpersonal diversity, people need a different amount of resources in order to transform these into the functioning of being educated" (Unterhalter 2009, p. 166). In capability language, we refer to conversion factors, which are personal, social, and environmental characteristics that intersect through different dimensions. Learners could differ along (a) personal conditions (e.g. gender, age, class), (b) intersecting external environmental conditions (e.g. wealth, climate), and (c) interindividual or social conditions (Walker 2006). Furthermore, people with the same outcome may have had very different opportunities, so they should not be judged in the same manner. Apart from this distributional aspect, in our chapter the reference to conversion factors is crucial to understand the context in which the UI capabilities list was designed (the process aspect) as well as its content. As Robeyns (2017) suggests, we do not only ask about who has more or less capability and their corresponding functioning, but we also assess processes and the conditions of possibility under which functionings are enabled or limited by different conversion factors.

Second, education can be a capability multiplier. Education can develop skills that open up a wider set of opportunities in employment, leisure, family and social life, among others. Some of the opportunities enabled by education are derived from the certification provided by formal education, and some from learning itself, which can be gained from a wide variety of educational experiences (McCowan and Unterhalter 2013, p. 146). We illustrate in this chapter that the expansion of capabilities in higher education does not only happen in formal settings but also in other pedagogical encounters (Walker 2019).

Third, education is highly related and based on values. While education should not necessarily promote particular political and moral values, it is always inescapably charged with values (McCowan and Unterhalter 2013). Further, values are formed through the education process (Vaughan and Walker 2012). From a human development perspective, four fundamental values should be at the core of any development process: (1) empowerment, understood as the expansion of the capabilities of people (real opportunities to achieve valuable ends), the expansion of valuable functioning (valuable purposes achieved), and participation; (2) the equitable distribution of basic skills; (3) sustainability; and (4) the freedom of people to enjoy their opportunities and achievements (Boni and Gasper 2012). As McCowan (2015) points out, this approach to development has particular applications for education. First, educational systems should distribute their benefits in an egalitarian manner; second, educational processes should be multipliers of capabilities that empower the individual to understand, exercise, and defend their rights; third, educational practices should foster individual autonomy—the ability to choose between different life courses and to enhance agency. If we add a sustainable dimension, the distributional aspect should take into account that resources are not limitless. Moreover, rights to be defended could include future generation rights or even earth rights.

Connected with the importance of promoting autonomy and agency, the capability approach is linked with other participatory approaches to development in considering a deeply democratic way of making decisions, paying special attention to the most marginalised groups who have fewer opportunities to participate in the decision-making process (Boni and Wilson-Strydom 2018).

Related to the democratic and participatory aspects of the capability approach is the epistemic discussion. Sen (2009) states that democratic practice requires the inclusion of epistemic grounds because the demand of justice can be assessed only with the help of public reasoning. In similar terms, De Sousa Santos (2014) stresses the importance of cognitive justice to reach a global social democracy in which there is recognition of the multiplicity of social practices and experiences of the world. But there can be no global social democracy if there is no democracy between forms of knowledge. So, the epistemic capability, understood as the real possibility of producing knowledge in an inclusive way, is paramount for this understanding of democracy.

Miranda Fricker (2015, pp. 73–90) points out the importance of epistemic contributions from all citizens as contributors to the production and sharing of information (also see Chap. 1). However, she notes that this capability has not been sufficiently addressed in the capability approach literature. Hence, Fricker stresses that one of our most basic needs is to use our reasoning to discern the everyday facts and social meanings that condition, constrain, and make sense of our shared lives (2015, p. 76). This has implications for other capabilities; most notably, practical reasoning is dependent upon it, given that deliberation implies knowledge and understanding (Boni and Velasco 2019). Fricker's (2015) epistemic contribution capability can be operationalised by distributing informational and interpretive materials. The first comprises not only information itself but also anything bearing upon the question at stake, such as evidence, critical doubt, hypothesis, and argumentation. The second includes distributing interpretive materials required to make sense of a more or less shared social world (including not only interpretations themselves but also anything bearing on their justification and reasonability, such as the concepts used, alternative interpretations, or other relevant critical materials) (Fricker 2015). This is fundamentally a relational capability: it implies giving information with uptake or with a reasonable likelihood of uptake. Sen's approach would also emphasise the relational aspect of this capability in that public reasoning requires relationships of reciprocity and non-domination with others (Walker 2019, p. 224).

However, this epistemic capability can be frustrated by hermeneutical injustices. David Coady (2017, p. 64) points out that hermeneutical injustice occurs prior to communicative activity. The concept of hermeneutic marginalisation, in turn, is explained as a matter of belonging "to a group which does not have access to equal participation in the generation of social meanings" (Fricker 2013, p. 1319). Coady argues that Fricker's account of hermeneutical injustice in terms of hermeneutic marginalisation is (at least implicitly) a principle of distributive justice:

> The egalitarian principle according to which it is a requirement of justice that everyone should have equal access to participation in the generation of social meanings, that is, everyone should have equal hermeneutic power. To be marginalized with respect to a certain good is just to have less than an equal share of it. (Coady 2017, p. 65)

Hermeneutical injustice is also addressed by José Medina (2017, p. 42) who stresses that this kind of injustice occurs when subjects are not simply mistreated as intelligible communicators but also prevented from developing and exercising a distinctive "voice," that is, prevented from participating in meaning-making and meaning-sharing practices. In this sense, Medina adds an active component to the epistemic capability (although he does not use this term), illustrating that is not only an issue of giving interpretive materials but also of having the possibility of participation in epistemic practices (Boni and Velasco 2019). Both the characteristics of epistemic capability and these different interpretations of hermeneutical injustice are useful in analysing our case study.

Capabilities Lists in Higher Education Settings

In the capability approach, there is a debate about whether to list capabilities (see Robeyns 2017). A central aspect of this debate is focused on the importance of aligning the construction of the list with the central assumptions of the capability approach: the centrality of agency, choice, and freedom, underpinned by a commitment to participation and public dialogue (Robeyns 2017). Sen argues that it is preferable to avoid

predetermined lists of capabilities and allow those affected by a list to identify their own capabilities based on participatory and deliberative processes (1999, 2006, 2009). On the other hand, Nussbaum (2000) argues that a list of capabilities is essential to avoid problems of omission. This could happen when groups overlook a capability that might be important to them (not least under conditions of hermeneutic marginalisation) and, therefore, having a list from which to start may be useful. To this end, in this section, we present two capabilities lists that have been influential in the capabilities list construction for UI.

Following Nussbaum's perspective, Walker (2006) developed an ideal-theoretical list of eight central capabilities for higher education contexts: (1) practical reason; (2) educational resilience; (3) knowledge and imagination; (4) learning disposition; (5) social relations and social networks; (6) respect, dignity, and recognition; (7) emotional integrity; and (8) bodily integrity. The list was produced after reviewing six existing education-related capabilities lists, as well as her empirical work and her experience working in higher education contexts. She provides three overarching reasons to justify the utility of her list. First, a targeted list is needed to focus the capability approach on the specificities of higher education. Second, this level of specificity provides the basis for arguing for educational practices that explicitly seek to foster capabilities and equality. Lastly, the formulation of a list could be useful to test the usefulness and possible applications of the capability approach in a higher education context (Table 2.1).

Another ideal-theoretical list of six capabilities that is especially relevant for our case because it is formulated by a Latin-American author is the one proposed by Maria del Consuelo Chapela (2004). Her list was based on her own understanding of how a universal and utopian university might be. Chapela argues that a universal and, therefore, inclusive university has two dimensions: an objective one, that is, material, practical, and technical, and a subjective one, that is, social, symbolic, and historical. The blend between these two dimensions gives the base for the list of six capabilities: (1) erotic capability, (2) sapiens capability, (3) ludens capability, (4) economic capability, (5) political capability, and (6) faber capability (Table 2.2).

Table 2.1 Key elements of Walker's list (2006)

Key elements of Walker's list (2006)
Practical reason: Making well-reasoned, informed, critical, independent, intellectually acute, socially responsible, and reflective choices; constructing a personal life project in an uncertain world, good judgment
Educational resilience: Navigating study, work, and life; negotiating risk; persevering academically; responding to educational opportunities and adaptive constraints; becoming self-reliant; having aspirations and hopes for a good future
Knowledge and imagination: Disciplinary and public knowledge, critical thinking and imagination to comprehend the perspectives of multiple others and to form impartial judgments and debate complex issues. Awareness of ethical debates and moral issues
Learning disposition: Having curiosity and a desire for learning. Having confidence in one's ability to learn. Being an active inquirer
Social relations and social networks: Being able to participate in a group for learning, working with others to solve problems or tasks, collaborative and participatory learning. Being able to form good networks of friendships and belonging for learning support and leisure. Mutual trust
Respect, dignity, and recognition: Respect for oneself and for others, as well as receiving respect from others; being treated with dignity; not being diminished or devalued; showing empathy, compassion, and listening to and considering others' points of view in dialogue and debate. Being able to act inclusively and respond to human need. Having competence in intercultural communication. Having a voice to participate effectively in learning; a voice to speak out, to debate, to persuade; to be able to listen
Emotional integrity: Not being subject to anxiety or fear that diminishes learning. Being able to develop emotions for imaginations, understanding empathy, awareness, and discernment
Bodily integrity: Safety and freedom from all forms of physical and verbal harassment in the higher education environment

Table 2.2 The capabilities of Chapela's (2004) list

Key elements of Chapela's list (2004)
Erotic capability: of passion, of anger, of tasting, of dreaming, of annoyance, and of pleasure
Ludens capability: to create, to dream, to imagine, to do the infinite, the impossible, the scripts, scenarios, and rules
Economic capability: to identify the limits and possibilities in finite material, technical, and practical contexts
Political capability: to evaluate, to build alternatives, to develop projects, to choose, and to decide
Faber capability: to act with intention, to conduct projects to modify the objective and subjective worlds through objective practice in the material world, to inscribe subjectivity in the objective world

Walker and Chapela's lists were highly relevant to guide the first draft of the UI capabilities list, giving the researcher's group a general perspective and a university perspective of the things that make life valuable to live.

The Universidad de Ibagué

UI is a medium-sized private university, according to Colombian standards, with around 5600 students and 330 teachers, founded in 1980 by a group of businessmen and civic leaders from the Department of Tolima.[1] UI's mission defines its aim as providing comprehensive training for leaders and entrepreneurs—solid scientific and professional training, deeprooted ethical and moral principles, and being committed to social, cultural, and economic regional development. The characteristics of the region where it is located are especially relevant to understanding the mission of the university.

Tolima department has suffered from levels of high violence produced by the armed conflict between the state, civilians, and illegally armed groups. Conflict has negatively impacted the development of the territory, putting Tolima in the 14th place among 33 departments in competitiveness and in the 18th place in the tertiary education category, which includes coverage, quality, and rate of employment after graduation (CPC&UR 2019). Moreover, Colombia has had different stages of civil war during the second half of the twentieth century. First, civil war occurred through the 1960s as a dispute between the two traditional political parties. After a period of truce, in the 1980s, guerrillas emerged to fight for social rights, becoming economic organisations pursuing illegal businesses. During the 1990s there was a period of organised criminal business based on drug trafficking that permeated the state structure. In 2016, a peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces was signed, leading to a disarmament process in 2017. The signing of this peace agreement has given rise to a crucial moment in the country's development. In this new

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[1] Colombia is politically divided into departments.

post-agreement scenario, words such as truth, justice, reparation, non-repetition, forgiveness, and reconciliation signal the possibility of political and moral pathways to conflict resolution.

In this particular context, UI has, since its foundation in 1980, assumed a commitment to regional development based on the enhancement of social wellbeing. UI has taken an active role to build sustainable peace processes by bringing together students with communities to enhance human development capabilities:

> The Institution was created by a group of businessmen and civic leaders of Tolima with the support of the Corporation for Human Development of Tolima and the Association for the Development of Tolima, in order to contribute to human, cultural, economic, political and social development of the region, and to offer alternatives for higher education programs different from those offered until then in the region. (Universidad de Ibagué 2018, p. i)

The University was founded within an institutional framework aimed at bringing progress, making the region prosperous with a focus on social welfare, and creating a place for students to thrive within their personal and professional projection—a place worth staying. From its foundation, the notion and meaning of the region was considered a long-term collective project of a situated community. In this sense, the region is perceived as something unfinished, as something that is continuously being built. This university ethos strengthens and gives coherence to development based on the wellbeing of people in the territory. The highest government authority is the Founders' Board, followed by the Superior Board.[2] Both boards have preserved the founders' legacy and have supported a strong path dependency towards regional human development.

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[2] The Founders' Board is the highest authority of the university. The members are elected by the current members by simple majority. The Founders' Board elects the members of the Superior Board and the University President.

Building a Capabilities List for UI

Aligned with the university ethos and the aim of giving coherence and directionality to the next decades of UI trajectory, there is a project to build an institutional policy in a bottom-up approach based on the capability approach. For this purpose, a contextual capabilities list can give stronger direction to university policies, practices, and projects. Moreover, a list directed towards the expansion of real opportunities valued by the university community is highly relevant for the Tolima region and is aligned with UI vision. It was essential to assure a high degree of ownership of the list, so the list was built following a participatory process that involved representatives of faculty members, students, administrative staff, service staff, directors, alumni, enterprises, and social organisations that work with UI. The proposal for the capabilities list construction came from the University Provost, who thought about and designed the process jointly with an international professor with expertise on the capability approach (the authors of this chapter). The support from a university authority was crucial to carry out the whole process.

The methodology to build the capabilities list followed the principles described in Robeyns (2003). As we will present later, the explicit list has been discussed and defended. Its methodology has been clarified and debated through phases 1 and 2. Its content is very contextual since it comes from the considerations of the entire university community. The list went through different phases in its preparation, always respecting its contextual nature and its alignment with the key values of UI. Finally, the list includes all the elements that the university community has reason to value. Each element is different, although there are relationships between them.

The other key inspiration in building the list has been the Institute of Development Studies who have developed policy-building dimensions (IDS 2006). These include the consideration of (1) the knowledge and discourse of participants and stakeholders, their narratives, and framings of reality and expectations; (2) the identification of actors and networks involved in the action context; and (3) the underlying power dynamics that configure the veiled and unveiled politics and interests of the policy
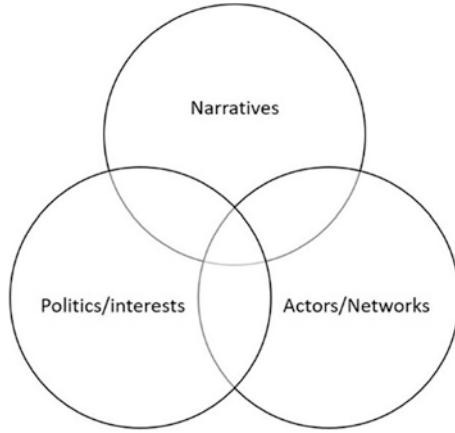
Fig. 2.1 Policy dimensions based on IDS (2006)

process (Fig. 2.1). This process was accompanied by an intentional vision for UI inspired by human development and a thorough process of identification of skills, incentives, resources, and action plans needed to produce real changes (Fig. 2.2) at UI (Knoster et al. 2000).

A three-stage process was planned, as shown in Fig. 2.2.

The capabilities list process was led by the UI Provost, with the support of a group of five researchers from the University Institute Pensad, which focuses on systemic thinking and complexity. Through the whole process, the support and advice from the international professor was fundamental. The designer group (the five UI researchers) was the most instrumental group in the process, constructing the capabilities list and expanding their epistemic capability. They designed the methodology, facilitated the workshops, and were part of the data analysis. Table 2.3 describes the core actors to carry out the methodology.

First Phase (May–October 2019)

The horizon phase objective was to build an initial consensual capabilities list by gathering the narratives and views of what is or should be valued by UI, taking into account the university identity. Nine workshops,
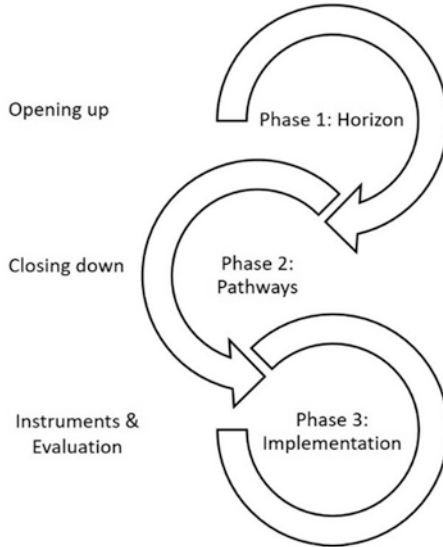
Fig. 2.2   Capabilities list-building methodology

Table 2.3   Lead actors of the participatory process

Pensad UI Institute—designer group	Five researchers trained in systemic thinking, complexity, and the capability approach. Their role was focused on the workshops' design, implementation, data gathering, and data analysis
Provost	Project leader and sponsor. Participation in the workshop design, some workshop implementation, and data analysis
International researcher	Professor, expert on the human development capability approach. Participation in data analysis and conducting interviews
Sociologist	Support in data analysis and capabilities final draft
Research assistant	Support at every research stage

designed and facilitated by the Institute Pensad, were carried out with internal university members differentiated by groups (faculty, students, administrative and service staff, executive leadership, students' welfare) and external partners that work with the university (enterprise and social organisation representatives). There were 127 participants—64 women and 63 men. Additionally, 13 interviews were conducted with regional

organisations and the University Rector. The workshops were designed by the Pensad Institute to be interactive and to trigger deep reflections about what is valuable individually and collectively.

The workshops had four central stations and three main sessions to identify the participants' lived experiences with UI. The first session was focused on bringing out valuable personal experiences with UI through a practical exercise of visualisation and breathing using mindfulness techniques. Subsequently, the participants individually, anonymously, and confidentially briefly identified those memories. The second session focused on a journey through four stations aimed at exploring meaningful and valuable elements that constitute UI identity at the personal and collective levels. The stations are described in Table 2.4.

The third session was the workshop closure, in which participants reflected collectively on the experience. It was also the moment when the whole capabilities list process was described to the participants. It was announced that a second workshop with a mixture of participants from different areas would follow this stage, and its purpose would be to share with them a UI capabilities list produced as a result of the workshops and also a list of enabling and disabling factors to expand UI capabilities.

In addition to the workshops, interviews were conducted with 13 representatives from social organisations that work with UI and also the University Rector. The questions focused on what is valuable in terms of the contribution of UI to the region and to their organisations as well as the obstacles in the relationship.

The data analysis was carried out by defining information categories gathered during the workshops and interviews from the participants' narratives. Results were analysed in terms of capabilities identification and enablers and disablers to expand the capabilities. By finding similarities in the results, the group defined four capabilities categories: training, territory, university community, and enterprise.

The result of the first stage was a list of eight capabilities: two in training, two in territory, two in university community, and one for enterprise. Enablers and disablers for these capabilities were also identified.

Table 2.4 Stations of the first stage

Station	Description	Picture
Collage	Large collage with pictures from different places in Tolima showing landscapes, cultural settings, population in context, and so on. Participants were asked to look at the collage and then in groups write how the university can contribute to regional development and vice versa	
Butterfly	Large butterfly image to reflect on what it means to be an integral trainer. Participants had to think of an example of what they consider an integral trainer by setting up a list of characteristics	
Press Headline	Press headline saying "Higher education crisis in Colombia." The content says: it is 2029 and there are only five universities still in service, one of them UI. Through a role play, in which the group is the Superior Board, participants have to determine what aspects they would maintain and also which ones they would change in order for UI to survive	

Table 2.4 (continued)

Station	Description	Picture
Silhouette	In a silhouette, participants with different colour post-its identified values, knowledge, practices, and emotions of an autonomous and humanist leader of UI	

Second Phase (November–December 2019)

The objective of this stage was the validation of the capabilities list, identification of enablers and disablers for specific pathways to expand the capabilities, and the possible interconnectedness between the capabilities, thinking of them as a system. The base group was maintained, so the Pensad Institute led the design and facilitation of the workshops. For this stage, six workshops with mixed participants (admin staff, students, faculty members, directors, and enterprise and social leaders) were developed. There were 62 participants, 35 women and 27 men. The workshops were developed as four sessions.

The first session recalled the participatory process of the first capabilities list stage and the objective and meaning of the project. It also announced for the third stage, an open call to fund projects aiming to expand at least one of the capabilities defined by UI community. The second session had the format of a "Capabilities Gallery." By reproducing an art gallery, the eight capabilities were exposed in an enlarged size relating them to an image that illustrated the purpose of each capability. Participants observed and experienced each capability and selected two affinities with which they felt most connected. Then, they recorded answers regarding the way they live and feel about the capabilities selected and the way these capabilities can empower and can be enhanced in the university community (Fig. 2.3).

Fig. 2.3   Pictures 1 and 2 (images of the capabilities gallery)

During the third moment, participants, divided by groups, proposed interrelationships between the capabilities in a systemic view, defined the system's purpose, and identified enabling and disabling factors affecting the whole system. For this section, the facilitators used cards that reproduced, in a smaller size, the art gallery images and capabilities definition as well as "joker" cards in case the group would like to suggest a new capability. Groups could also reject one or more capabilities for the system. Groups also had a wool hank, scissors, duct tape, and paper to represent the system (pictures 7, 8, and 9) (Fig. 2.4).

Once the system was designed, the facilitators gave the participants cards with enabling and disabling factors and joker cards to propose further factors. Then participants placed the factors in the system to complete the whole set (Fig. 2.5).

The third session was closed by providing a feedback forum so participants could raise their doubts, criticisms, and questions about the project and provide suggestions about the methodology and the objective of the capabilities list. The whole process was designed to empower and give voice to different groups from the university, so the community itself felt that the policy-making process and the future are in their own hands.

The fourth session consisted of the groups' systems presentations. They explained the system's purpose, demonstrated connections between capabilities, and presented new capabilities (if applicable) as well as the effect of the enabling and disabling factors in the system (with new factors if applicable). After the presentations, facilitators addressed the group
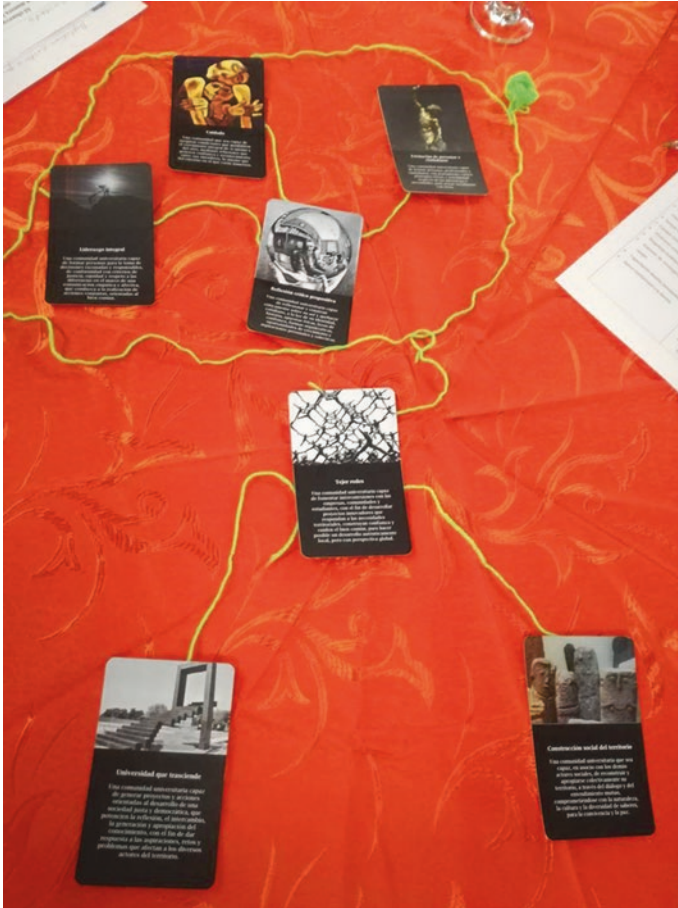
Fig. 2.4 Pictures 3, 4, and 5 (capabilities systems representation made by three different groups)

with two questions: Which of these human capabilities would your area or unit promote and enhance? How can the designed system help define the action routes that are realised through projects?

The second stage finished with a validated list of capabilities (presented in Table 2.5) and a list of enablers and disablers for expanding these capabilities.
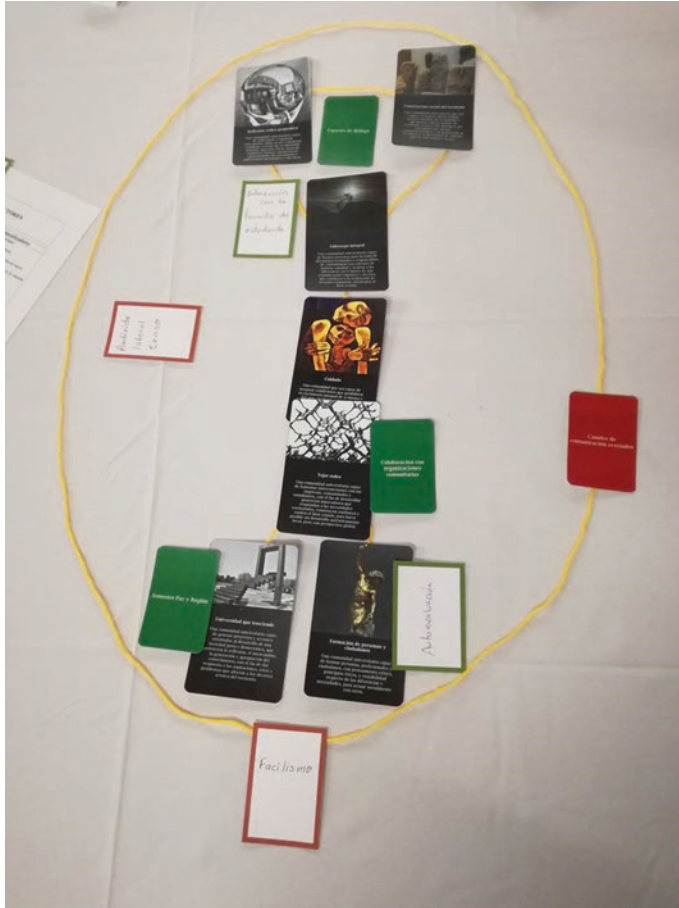
Fig. 2.5 Pictures 6, 7, and 8 (capabilities systems with enabling and disabling factors made by three different groups)

The final list of enabling and disabling factors identified by UI community and external partners is shown in Table 2.6.

These enabling and disabling factors were identified in order to enhance the capabilities list and the systems configured by the participants. Therefore, they do not reflect a lack or presence of all of the factors at UI but rather an overall view of the suggested presence of capabilities.

Fig. 2.5 (continued)

Third Phase (January 2020–Ongoing Process)

The aim of this phase is to enhance the capabilities list in each academic and administrative organisation unit. It is a long-term, challenging process. It will start with an official statement on the aim of a university policy based on the capabilities list that represents what is valuable for the UI community. As a first step, in order to get participatory and concrete

Table 2.5 Capabilities list

Category	Capability	Definition
Training	Training of persons and citizens	A university community capable of training people, professionals, and citizens with critical thinking, ethical principles, and sensitivity regarding social differences and needs
	Integral leadership	A university community capable of training people for reasoned and responsible decisions, in accordance with criteria of justice, fairness, and respect for differences (within the framework of empathic and affective communication) that leads to the realisation of joint actions oriented to the common good
Territory	Social construction of territory	A university community that is capable, in association with the other social actors, of rebuilding and appropriating its territory collectively, through dialogue and mutual understanding, committing itself to nature, culture, and diversity of knowledge for connivance and peace
	University that transcends	A university community capable of generating projects and actions aimed at the development of a fair and democratic society that enhances reflection, exchange, and generation and appropriation of knowledge to respond to aspirations, challenges, and problems that affect the various actors in the territory
University community	Purposeful critical reflection	A university community capable of reflecting and building critically on their being and daily work in the light of their identity, history, ethical stakes, bonds of trust, organisational forms, growth opportunities, and personal and collective aspirations
	Care	A community that is capable of ensuring conditions that allow the integral growth of the self and the other, through relationships that build trust and recognition among its members as well as of the environment in which they are immersed

Table 2.5 (continued)

Category	Capability	Definition
	Constructive interaction	A university community capable of stimulating, allowing, and promoting a dialogue that is well informed, clear, transparent, and respectful of freedom and differences of opinion. It is oriented, on the one hand, to strengthen the social interaction between the members of the community, so that they develop the personal power to choose and act in the social and political environment. On the other hand, it favours participation, a good working environment, and individual and collective integral human development
Enterprise	Weave nets	A university community capable of fostering interconnections with companies, communities, and students to develop innovative projects that respond to territorial needs, build trust, and take care of the common good, to make possible a truly local development with a global perspective

initiatives and projects to expand these capabilities in different contexts, the whole university community will be invited to participate in an open call to support their proposals. The challenge for UI is to promote concrete actions that make the list dynamic and useful for the shared aspirational university.

Epistemic Capabilities and Epistemic (In)justice

The participatory process for the construction of the capabilities list allowed different pedagogical encounters (Walker 2019), expanding the epistemic capability of the participants in the different moments of the process.

For the representatives in the two phases of the list construction, the epistemic capability was expanded individually and in groups. Individually, in phase 1, when the participants evoked their experiences,

Table 2.6 List of conversion factors

Enabling factors	Disabling factors
– Effective planning	– Academic programmes that do not respond to society's needs
– General wellbeing	– Lack of regional advocacy
– Supporting programmes for the university community	– Lack of evaluation processes
– Students' retainment unit	– Power relationships
– Efficiency and quality culture	– Lack of recognition of the university capabilities by the founders and Board of Directors
– Autonomy and resilience	– Ambivalent notion of leadership
– Teamwork	– Noneffective communication processes and channels
– Link between the founders and boards with the university community	– Mediocrity
– Collaborators, facilitators, citizens beyond leaders	– Financial resources
– Good communication channels	– Weak linkage with the political and business sectors
– National and international networks	– Lack of trust from the business sector to the academic sector
– Self-evaluation processes	
– Relationship with the context	
– Curriculum updating processes	
– Trust	

moments, situations, and people that have been pleasant, valuable, and/or significant on their path at UI, they reflected on valuable achievements and the freedom to enjoy them. Collectively, in the four-station journey, they argued about how the university could contribute to the region and/or vice versa; the characteristics of a person they consider as a comprehensive trainer; the aspects of the university they would either retain or remove; and the values, knowledge, practices, and emotions that describe a humanist and autonomous leader. In the second phase, the epistemic capability was also enhanced when participants experienced the Capabilities Gallery. When each person observed, experienced, and reflected on the capabilities presented, he or she assessed the validity and representation of what is valuable for UI, both at the personal level and as a group during the creation of a capability system, with the

identification of the enabling and disabling factors for the expansion of the capabilities.

In both, the first and second phases, the epistemic capability was expanded through informational and interpretive materials. It is difficult to differentiate whether a material has been more informative or more interpretative. We believe that there is a direct relationship between the two since, by discussing information about the ideal leader, integral trainer, or contribution by UI, participants, both individually and collectively, generated an interpretation of what is and should be valued by UI.

The experience of the 13 people interviewed was different. They provided their vision on central issues for the development of the list of capabilities. In this sense, we can say that they expanded their epistemic capability when they critically presented their observations, arguments, and interpretations about UI. However, there was not a group interaction to collectively elaborate on an interpretation of the purpose of UI. In this sense, we can say that both techniques proved adequate for collecting details about the list. However, for expanding epistemic capability, participatory methodologies are better not only for generating informative materials but also interpretive materials (Boni and Frediani 2020).

The designer group, as mentioned before, had a main role in the data analysis of each one of the phases. The group collectively generated informational and interpretive materials—informational by organising and generating information categories and interpretive by analysing and presenting a capabilities list that captured what the members and external allies of UI value. This constitutes the most relevant functioning of the epistemic capability. In addition, as it was dependent on the participants in the workshops, the epistemic capability that has given rise to the interpretive materials was developed in groups, which discussed and agreed on the capabilities and their definition.

Regarding epistemic injustices, we can say that the participatory method chosen allowed groups traditionally excluded from decision-making power in the University to have a voice in this process. Students, support staff, social organisations, and entrepreneurs are rarely called to

participate in processes to define an institution's aspirational vision. In this sense, in tune with Coady (2017), the participatory process allowed a greater distribution of epistemic capability by recognising the voices of the traditionally excluded (Medina 2017).

Some might object to the power of the designer group to manage the process and create the list. While the group was powerful, there were three nuances. First, there was a concerted effort to not leave any important idea out (the principle of exhaustion and non-reduction). Likewise, the list was presented and discussed among all the participants in the second-phase workshops. In that way, the information was discussed and triangulated exhaustively. The second consideration is the heterogeneity of the designer group. Its members, with the exception of the provost and one of the most senior professors at the university, were not representative of the most powerful university groups. In particular, the presence of two external advisors to the university allowed the incorporation of a wide variety of visions from diverse participants. The third consideration refers to the fact that the epistemic capability is not only reflected in the content of the list but also in the production of informational and interpretive materials. In this sense, all the participants could exercise epistemic capability even if their influence on the content of the list was lower. Nevertheless, no matter how a project is designed, all participatory processes are always permeated by power relationships that influence the degree of participation (Frediani et al. 2019).

The following table summarises the involvement of participants according to the type of epistemic functioning (kind of materials produced) and the hermeneutical power that the different groups involved had throughout the process. We have characterised the type of power by the degree of expansion of the epistemic capability and influence on the content of the final list. In this sense, we have differentiated between the people who participated in the two workshops, those who were only in the first workshop, the people interviewed, and the designer group. These characterisations are our subjective interpretations as participants in the designer group (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Epistemic capability and hermeneutical power of the UI process

Participants	Informational materials	Interpretive materials	Individual	Collective	Degree of hermeneutical power
Workshop 1–2	X	X	X	X	XX
Workshop 1	X	X	X	X	XX
Interviewees	X		X		X
Designer group	X	X	X	X	XXXX

Other Expanded Capabilities and Conversion Factors

At the beginning of this chapter, we suggested that education can be a capability multiplier. In this case, we have verified that pedagogical encounters produced by the list creation process can expand epistemic capability. Moreover, as epistemic capability was expanded, so were other qualities. Following Walker's (2006) proposal presented in the third section, we can say that the groups involved in the process also expanded (1) practical reason, knowledge, and imagination; (2) social relationships and social networks; and (3) respect, dignity, and recognition capabilities. However, not all capabilities expanded in the same way for each group. Those interviewed expanded their practical reason, knowledge, and imagination since they provided their knowledge, which was informed by a reflective choice. For them, the capabilities of a relational nature (social relationships and respect) were not expanded. Participants that were only in the first workshop expanded the other capabilities but to a lesser extent than the participants of the two workshops. The heterogeneous composition of the second workshop allowed a greater expansion of the capabilities of respect, dignity, and recognition. Finally, the designer group had the greatest capability expansion, due to their interactions and participation in all the different portions of the process. Again, as we proposed in the previous section, the greater the participation in the different pedagogical encounters, the greater the expansion of capabilities.

Finally, we analysed the conversion factors that allowed the expansion of the epistemic and other capabilities. Regarding personal conversion factors such as gender and age, we did not observe any barriers. That was not the case for the different university groups. The participation of active students and representatives of social organisations that have a relationship with UI was lower. In both cases, there was not any intentional exclusion; for the students, it is related to academic obligations and a lack of motivation to participate in institutional projects, as we confirmed afterwards. To encourage wider participation from students, the designer group conducted interviews and extra workshops to guarantee their voices were represented. In the case of representatives of social

organisations, the fact that many of the social organisations are not located in the city of Ibagué but throughout the region was a limitation for their participation in the workshops. For this reason, we decided to conduct in-person interviews with them.

The social conversion factors were very important in this process. As described in the fourth section, the ethos of this University, characterised by a commitment to the region and an understanding of higher education from a humanistic viewpoint, made it possible to propose and execute such a process. Another key issue was the strong support of the university executive leadership that led the process from the outset and gave it legitimacy.

One potentially hindering social conversion factor, not only for the list of capabilities but of the influence that this list may have on future university policy, is the conception of the higher authorities on how to manage the university. There is no doubt that this participatory process is novel in a university context for both the South and the global North. Innovation has its risks, especially in conservative regional contexts such as the Tolima department (Velasco and Boni 2019). Although this does not invalidate the process itself, since it has already expanded different capabilities, it could certainly be a limitation for a greater impact of the list's dimensions.

Conclusion

Higher education should expand capabilities and promote values related to sustainable development (Boni and Gasper 2012; Boni and Walker 2016). The UI capabilities list shows the potential of higher education institutions to facilitate social justice and community outreach. It is an example of an expansion of epistemic capabilities among different participants, most of whom rarely have the opportunity to be part of epistemic practices like these in higher education. This is an example of how to challenge hermeneutical injustice and give the opportunity to practice real cognitive justice. It is also a good example of the multiplier effect of an educational environment; the participatory process expanded other capabilities such as practical reason, knowledge, social networks,

and respect and recognition. Perhaps most significantly, it is an example of a way to produce contextual and situational knowledge that takes into account the huge challenges that a particular Colombian region is facing. The content of the list itself shows a human-centred institution based on human development values that positively transforms society with the training of highly qualified and ethical citizens and that co-produces solutions to social problems. This is part of the obligation of every university, by virtue of its very existence, to the social contract.

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3

Expanding Capabilities for Epistemic Justice Through Social Innovation: The Case of Business and Management Courses in UNIMINUTO, Colombia

Sergio Belda-Miquel and Leonor Avella-Bernal

Introduction

The term social innovation has gained increasing importance in academia, policy-making, third-sector organisations, and business (Marques et al. 2018), and the number of academic papers and importance of the topic in public debates have been on the rise in recent years. These articles point to the fact that thousands of 'social innovations' are growing in different domains and territories, addressing social challenges from innovative perspectives (Howaldt et al. 2019). Social innovation is seen as a strategy to find new solutions to societal problems from a different

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standpoint, more connected to local needs, processes, capacities, and perspectives. Nevertheless, despite this great interest in the concept, its definition remains very elusive. There are, however, some elements that are common to different definitions (Marques et al. 2018): social innovation is about addressing social needs that have not been met by other means; it is about the application of new ideas, irrespective of them being new products, processes, organisational models, ways of communicating, or others; it actively promotes participation, civic engagement, and inclusive relationships among individuals, especially those that are (or have been) neglected by previous economic, political, cultural, or social processes; it values the process of implementing new ideas as much as it does the outcomes (Moulaert et al. 2013); and these innovations are not just good for society but also create the capacity for society to act in order to improve (Hubert 2011).

It is not surprising that social innovation has also been considered a new 'must' in academic environments (Palavicini and Cepeda Mayorga 2019). Interest was initially found in business schools, but now the demand and the will to engage with social innovation as a tool for social change can be found in very different academic domains and disciplines (Mirabella and Eikenberry 2017). An increasingly large number of initiatives in very different institutions and contexts are working on introducing social innovation into their curricula and in their teaching practices. Nevertheless, there is still no clear idea on the ends and means for addressing the formation of 'social innovators' in universities (Palavicini and Cepeda Mayorga 2019).

On the one hand, there is no clear idea about the *ends* of teaching social innovation, that is, what are the specific competencies to be generated in students. A minimum common ground between different perspectives is that social innovators should be able to engage communities and to generate solutions to social problems. In this sense, the ends of teaching would be to generate competencies for creating more just and sustainable societies through innovation (Smith et al. 2015). The competencies framework has proven to be a relevant way to frame and identify the specific ends of teaching and thus for planning educative processes (see, e.g. Palavicini and Cepeda Mayorga 2019). However, it does not provide a comprehensive approach for understanding how competencies

are developed, that is, how to teach—and learn—in order to develop social innovation competencies in higher education institutions.

On the other hand, there are no shared specific ideas on the means for teaching social innovators, that is, on the specific methodologies and approaches to be adopted. A broad common understanding indicates that developing competencies for social innovation should imply engaging with local communities and their problems, co-creating solutions, and promoting broad participatory processes (Palavicini and Cepeda Mayorga 2019). This involves all stages of innovation processes, from the definition of problems to scaling solutions—stages which should be put into real practice in educative processes. Nevertheless, there is a need to examine how these methodologies and approaches should be deployed in practice.

There is still a need to build a theoretical framework for a better understanding of both the ends and the means for introducing the teaching of social innovation. Beyond that, it is also necessary to undertake empirical research on the myriad of cases of institutions and teachers interested in producing social innovators in universities. This is the overall aim of this paper: to propose a framework to understand the processes of teaching social innovation and to use it to explore a relevant case.

We build our theoretical proposal by considering a key issue both in social innovation outcomes and processes: the role of knowledge. In processes of teaching and learning social innovation, the creation of knowledge and the politics of knowledge play a key role, as social innovation implies shedding light on unsolved problems and engaging in a process of mobilisation and of the co-production of new knowledge to solve these problems collectively (Moulaert 2013). From this point of departure, we try to propose a theoretical framework drawing on two approaches.

First, we draw on Amartya Sen's capability approach for a comprehensive understanding of teaching and learning processes regarding social innovation in higher education. This has proven to be a relevant framework for understanding teaching processes that pursue social justice and the expansion of wellbeing (see, e.g. Boni and Walker 2013). The capability approach has been celebrated for proposing a clear evaluative space regarding the contribution of a given process to justice, that of

capabilities (Robeyns 2005). Moreover, it proposes a comprehensive framework that allows an in-depth exploration of the relation between the ends, the means, and the contextual factors that model teaching and learning processes. In addition, the capability approach has been seen as relevant for capturing the multidimensionality of wellbeing and the processes involved in wellbeing expansion (Robeyns 2016). In the debates on higher education, it has been studied how the capability approach can complement the approach based on competencies. For some scholars (Lozano et al. 2012), the capability approach can help us, when assessing higher education learning processes, to go beyond competencies framework and put freedom at the centre of the analysis. Moreover, the capability approach can help us in understanding 'pedagogy as a Socratic processes of discussion, debate and participatory dialogue in which knowledge—including values—is intersubjectively constructed' (Lozano et al. 2012, p. 144).

For our aims, we consider that Sen's approach provides elements for assessing processes leading to more just situations. Nevertheless, it has to be taken into account that some scholars (Deneulin 2011; Robeyns 2009) believe that Sen's ideas do not provide a full theory of justice and that they should be connected with elements from other theories and approaches in order to build a compelling theory to assess the contribution to justice made by a specific project, process, or policy.

Secondly, we draw on Fricker's (2013) ideas on epistemic injustice, in order to address the specific contribution of social innovation in university teaching to improve justice regarding knowledge and also to capture how the politics of knowledge play a role in processes of teaching, learning, and practising social innovation. We consider two aspects of epistemic justice: first, its distributive dimension, that is, how this process positively affects the distribution of epistemic goods, such as education or information, and, second, aspects regarding discrimination, that is, how the process of fostering social innovation in universities challenges the existing deficit of credibility of some people and collectives due to prejudices in the hearer's judgement and how they challenge disadvantages when it comes to making sense of significant areas of their social experience (Fricker 2013). As we will explore, this approach helps us to provide

a comprehensive perspective of the role of knowledge in the introduction of social innovation in higher education.

The combination of concepts from both the capability approach and epistemic injustice literature provides us with the elements for building a more robust exploration of the processes involved in social innovation in higher education. This allows us to create more specific questions, such as those addressed in this chapter:

- Which epistemic capabilities can be enhanced in students when engaging with local communities in fostering social innovation processes, and how?
- How this case study has contributed to challenging epistemic injustice inside universities and in the communities that are involved in teaching-learning processes?

We use this framework to address a specific initiative in the context of a project for higher education capacity building, *Students4Change*, financed by the European Union's Erasmus + Programme. The project is based in the implementation of pilot courses incorporating social innovation, using the competencies framework. For his aim, our analysis, based on the capabilities and epistemic justice approaches, tries to provide a different perspective, which is more directly connected with issues of autonomy, freedom, participation, and justice.

The case study concerns six pilot courses in the *Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios* (UNIMINUTO) in Colombia. These are undergraduate courses based on various disciplines related to management, which have been carried out in four different cities in Colombia, in very different contexts. These pilot courses have introduced various changes in their objectives, planning, and methodology in order to foster students' competencies regarding social innovation. Mostly, they have promoted students' engagement with local communities or small local businesses in order to understand their problems and propose solutions. For these aims, very different techniques, methods, and strategies have been deployed. The exploration of the case study has been made through a combination of multiple methodologies (interviews, participant

observation, workshops, research of secondary information, etc.) and followed a qualitative strategy.

The chapter proceeds as follows: the next section elaborates the theoretical framework for addressing the introduction of social innovation in higher education by engaging communities; Section 3 presents the methodology used; Section 4 provides a discussion of evidence regarding our guiding questions; and the concluding remarks present reflections on the framework and the case, both for practice and future research.

Framework

The Capability Approach

The core characteristic of the capability approach is its focus on what people are effectively able to do and be, that is, their capabilities (Robeyns 2005). This contrasts with welfarist, resourcist, and other approaches which focus essentially on specific assets people have. Sen (2001), who pioneered the approach, argues that our evaluations should focus on what people can do and be and on removing obstacles so that they can live the life that, upon reflection, they have reasons to value. These reasons are multifaceted and plural and cannot be reduced to utility. The capability approach thus evaluates processes according to their impact on people's capabilities (Robeyns 2005). Beings and doings, which Sen calls *functionings*, constitute what makes a life valuable. Functionings may include working, resting, imagining, being part of a community, and so on. The difference between achieved functionings and capabilities lies between the realised and the effectively possible. Functionings can be achieved because people have the capabilities and occur depending on personal choices, which, at the same time, are shaped by personal (e.g. physical conditions), social (e.g. public policies, institutions, social norms, power relations), or environmental (e.g. climate, geographical location) conversion factors (Robeyns 2005).

Unlike other approaches, goods and services are not an end in themselves under the capability approach, but they are a means. They should

not be thought of as exchangeable for income or money; the important thing is the effect they have on a person in their ability to realise a capability (in a classic example, a bicycle may be beneficial in different ways for different people because it may expand their capability to move, or to be healthy, or to interact with nature). Moreover, the relationship between goods and the valued capability is influenced by the different conversion factors mentioned (personal, social, or environmental). Thus, material and non-material circumstances shape people's opportunity set and also influence the choices that people make from their capabilities in order to achieve functionings.

The capability approach, thus, normatively defines a space of evaluation and introduces elements to understand the process of the expansion of these capabilities (Robeyns 2005). However, even though few scholars believe that Sen provides a full comparative theory of justice (Ballet et al. 2013), most agree that his approach, though incomplete, nevertheless provides a good basis (Robeyns 2009; Nussbaum 2003; Deneulin 2011; Claassen 2017). For them, the capability approach essentially defines a clear space of evaluation to assess a process, policy, practice, institution, or organisational change (Robeyns 2005). This is why, in order to be a full theory of justice, it requires other components and ideas, as there are no clear normative elements in Sen's capability approach to assess the importance beyond individual preferences and for the common good of a given process of capability expansion. In terms of the analysis of justice of a given process, this opens the way for connecting the capability approach with other contributions, such as those coming from debates on epistemic justice.

Epistemic Justice

Although experiences of injustice regarding knowledge had been previously addressed, the idea of 'epistemic in/justice' brought new debates in order to explore this kind of injustice. In this sense, the work developed by Fricker (2007) has been crucial. The idea refers to unfairness in relation to aspects of the production, communication, or understanding of knowledge. For Fricker, a key concern in the debates on justice has to be

fairness considering humans as knowers and as producers and communicators of knowledge.

The concept has evolved rapidly and has been adapted in order to address very different social processes and contexts. As Fricker herself states, 'the category of epistemic justice should be considered an umbrella concept, open to new ideas about which phenomena should, and should not, come under its protection' (Fricker 2013, p. 1318). There are no precise boundaries, and its use has evolved (Fricker 2017).

As Fricker (2013) indicates, epistemic injustice can take either *distributive* or *discriminatory* form. On the one hand, *distributive epistemic injustice* refers to the unfair distribution of epistemic goods, such as education or information (Fricker 2013). This idea connects with liberal conceptions of justice and particularly with those related with resource-based approaches, even though Fricker refers to a very specific resource—epistemic goods—that are not considered in this tradition.

On the other hand, *discriminatory epistemic justice* differs more from liberal approaches on justice. This kind of injustice has two main dimensions. First is *testimonial injustice*, which takes places 'when a speaker receives deficit of credibility owing to the operation of prejudice in the hearer's judgement' (Fricker 2013, p. 1319), that is, when someone's knowledge is ignored or not fully believed because that person is a member of a particular social group, for example, regarding class, gender, race, and geographical origin. Second is *hermeneutical injustice*, which is prior to communicative activity. For Fricker (2013, p. 1319), a subject is hermeneutically marginalised when she/he belongs to a group which does not have access to equal participation in the generation of social meanings. For this reason, she/he is put at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of a significant area of their social experience. In other terms, hermeneutical injustice occurs when someone's experience is not understood (by them or by others) because there are no concepts available that can adequately identify or explain that experience. Fricker uses the example of sexual harassment, a concept that makes sense of a social experience of a group suffering injustice and which had not existed until recently. This maintained a situation of disadvantage for some people (generally, female workers) regarding the communication of experiences and the creation of social meanings.

Some other key considerations regarding these forms of injustice can be made for the aims of our study. First, there are structural forms of injustice, embedded in practices, networks, and relations of relations (Fricker 2017). These forms of injustice, as Pohlhaus (2017, p. 13) states, 'create their harm within, and sometimes through the use of our epistemic practices in institutions'. These include educational curricula and the structure of academic disciplines, as several authors indicate (Mohanty 2004; Ourlaw 2007). Epistemic injustice thus sometimes occurs within the activities and institutions that knowers engage with in order to know (Pohlhaus 2017, p. 13); as such, the case of the university is paradigmatic. Nevertheless, the university may also be a relevant arena to transform these structural forms of injustice. Second, they are not deliberate forms of injustice (Fricker 2017), precisely because the causes of these injustices are structural. For these reasons, fighting this kind of epistemic injustice requires something more than just actions that empower individuals. However, this does not discount that individual agency plays a fundamental role in maintaining or challenging epistemic injustice. For these reasons, when addressing epistemic injustice, the focus should not only be on individual practices but also on how these practices are modelled by structures and how structures are challenged and transformed by practices.

Connecting the Capability Approach and Epistemic Justice to Assess Community Engagement and Social Innovation Practices in Higher Education

As mentioned, the capability approach may provide elements for a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of processes of change, expanding wellbeing related to practices of introducing social innovation in higher education. For its part, concepts from epistemic injustice can provide elements to put the issue of creation and communication of knowledge at the centre and also to propose, together with the capability approach, ideas for a theory of justice that can be useful to assess specific processes of change.

Connecting elements from these theories, we consider that in a given process epistemic capabilities are enhanced, that is, capabilities to cocreate and communicate knowledge. In this way, the idea of epistemic

resources in Fricker is reframed and can be considered as the knowledge capabilities that a person has reason to value. These capabilities are created thanks to the combination of goods or capability inputs in the teaching and learning processes (e.g. planning, methods, evaluation, material resources, interactions). Both social factors (e.g. university regulations) and personal factors concerning students (e.g. personal motivations or belonging to specific social groups) model how these resources may become capabilities through learning processes. The process of the combination of inputs creates different processes, contents, practices, and spaces of interaction and communication. Within them, testimonial and hermeneutical injustice may take place or may be challenged.

This framework may help us to address, on the one hand, how redistributive epistemic justice takes place through the creation of epistemic capabilities in the engagement of students in communities and, on the other hand, how these practices and processes of interaction and communication challenge or reinforce discriminatory epistemic injustices.

These ideas are represented in Fig. 3.1, which reinterprets the diagram by Robeyns (2005), considering elements of epistemic justice.
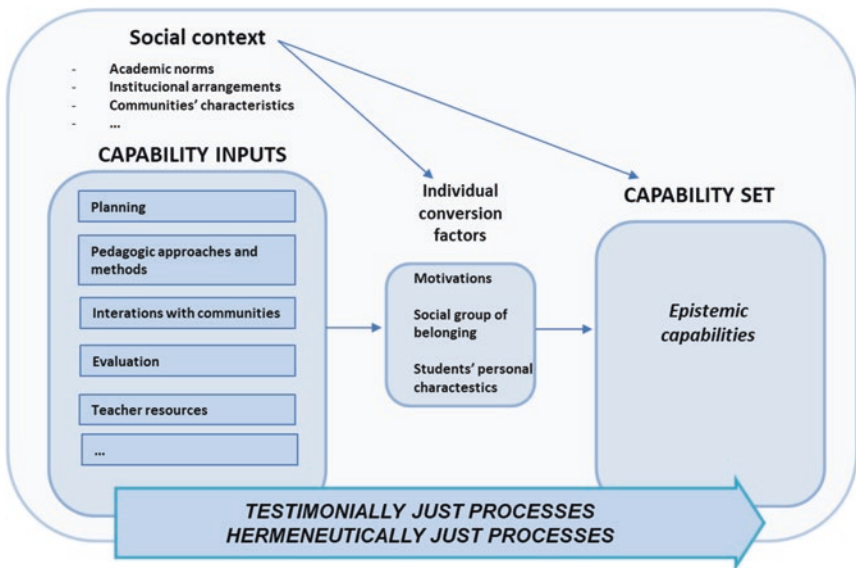

Fig. 3.1 Capability expansion and epistemic justice. (Prepared by the authors, based on Robeyns 2005)

Methodology

The information for the case was gathered during the process of assessing the experience of UNIMINUTO in the framework of the *Students4Change* project. This process took place between October and December 2018 and aimed to address the different dimensions of the experience from a systemic and comprehensive perspective. The assessment addressed the general context of the six pilot courses, key inputs modelling learning and teaching processes, key drivers of these processes, and expected and unexpected learning outcomes in students.

For gathering primary information, the following methods were used: interviews with the six teachers developing the pilot courses; three participatory workshops with students of three of the pilot courses (90 participants in total) to identify key moments, processes, and outcomes of learning; one participatory workshop with students of the other three pilot courses (20 participants); three interviews with community stakeholders; and three meetings with key policy-makers from the three UNIMINUTO campuses. For secondary information, various documents were consulted, such as syllabus and planning documents of pilot courses, strategic documents from UNIMINUTO, and the teaching diaries of the six teachers.

The information was processed by means of a qualitative content analysis, drawing on categories and subcategories derived from the framework presented in the previous section.

The analysis used both deductive and inductive strategies. We deductively used the key categories of our framework: inputs or means for the capability expansion; key aspects of social context; key individual conversion factors; and epistemic capabilities expanded. These were used in order to structure the initial analysis of our sources of information: the content of interviews, workshops, diaries, and documents and the notes taken during meetings, visits, and workshops.

For some categories (inputs, aspects of social context, individual conversion factors), we also deductively departed from some subcategories (which were also used in order to build the interviews and which are mentioned in Fig. 3.1). For example, on inputs and means, we used the categories of 'pedagogic approaches', 'interactions with communities', 'planning', 'evaluation', 'resources', and 'teachers' previous experience' in order to analyse data. From an inductive approach, these subcategories were complemented or reframed during the analysis. For example, the category on 'interactions with communities' was separated in 'relations with community during the project' and 'feedback to community'. New subcategories also emerged, as 'managing expectations'. For the category of capabilities, we used a purely inductive approach in order to obtain the different subcategories.

The subcategories used structured the exposition of findings. These findings were connected and discussed from the ideas of testimonial and hermeneutical epistemic injustice.

Our epistemological and ontological assumptions take elements from both interpretivist and critical paradigms (Lincoln et al. 2011). We consider knowledge to be mediated not only by people's perspectives and interactions but also by the positions of people in social systems and reality to be modelled by power relations and struggles within these systems (Lincoln et al. 2011). As stated, the aims of our study were essentially exploratory, as we are proposing and empirically testing new theoretical propositions and new avenues.

Case Study

UNIMINUTO and the Pilot Courses

UNIMINUTO is a private Colombian university with a great sense of social commitment, which has positioned the institution internationally as a model of inclusive education, not only because the tuition costs are affordable for low-income groups but also because the university extends to places in the country that other universities do not due to geographical

limitations or situations of violence. It is the university with the widest coverage in the country, having more than 124,000 students distributed over 36 municipalities in 18 departments (out of the country's 32), receiving professional training in engineering, business, education, and humanities programmes in both face-to-face (around 29% of students) and distance (around 71%) modalities. UNIMINUTO's student body is characterised as being young (58%), with low incomes, either coming from remote areas of the city or having to commute from their home municipalities to attend classes. In many cases, students have to combine studies and work (either with a formal job or in informal activities). UNIMINUTO's stated educational model is based on responding to the needs and priorities of the country's regions and placing the student at the centre in order to 'build a country that is fair, reunited, fraternal, and peaceful' (UNIMINUTO 2014). This involves training comprehensive professionals capable of leading social change. Consequently, the classroom must integrate learning with reflective practice, thereby making knowledge not solely the product of formal learning but also of the know-how of the communities being interacted with.

The six pilot courses analysed were chosen as a result of an internal call from the *Parque Científico de Innovación Social*—PCIS (Science Park for Social Innovation), a specialist unit of UNIMINUTO to connect communities with science, technology, and innovation, based on the principles of social innovation. The set of courses fulfilled several criteria: they were proposed by the teachers; pertained to different UNIMINUTO campuses; fell under different modalities of education (face to face and distance); and included a variety of subjects. All the same, these were subjects that had been operating for years. The pilot courses rather aimed to reformulate and introduce changes in the approach and methodology compared to previous years, in order to work on (or focus more intensely on) social innovation skills within the framework of the *Students4Change* project. The project provided training, tools, and exchange spaces for teachers to carry out the pilot courses.

The pilot courses were conducted in the following locations: Pasto campus (Nariño department, in the south-western part of the country), small in size, where four programmes are taught. Most of the students come from municipalities around Pasto and have to commute for over an

hour to get to classes. The pilot course was undertaken within the subject of innovation and creativity for the generation of business ideas with sixth-semester students from programmes on business administration, financial administration, and occupational health administration. A total of 119 students participated in the pilot. Ibagué campus (which is located in the Tolima department, in the middle of the country), larger, where eight technical and seven university programmes are taught. The pilot course was carried out within the distance business administration programme. Thirty sixth-semester students participated. Llanos campus (in the city of Villavicencio, in the east of the country in the department of Meta), having two technical programmes and 11 university programmes (six face to face and five distance). The pilot course was conducted within the business administration programme as part of the subject on organisational analysis and diagnosis, with 30 fourth-semester students. Bogota campus, in the city of Bogota, is the oldest UNIMINUTO campus with the largest number of both undergraduate and graduate programmes. Two subjects within the business administration programme carried out the pilot: the entrepreneurship course, in which 62 fifth-semester students participated, and the strategic management course in which 40 ninth-semester students participated. Finally, Bogotá Virtual and Distance campus (UVD), like Bogota's face-to-face campus, is the largest in its modality. The pilot course was carried out within the public accounting programme in the business school. Fifteen sixth-semester students studying the subject of professional practice participated.

It is important to point out that the teachers in charge of the subjects that were part of the pilot courses fulfilled specific characteristics that could have assisted the process of social transfer and appropriation of knowledge by the communities with whom they worked: (1) all are teachers who, at different times, have received training through workshops, courses, and boot camps, in topics related to entrepreneurship and social innovation; (2) at least four of the six have a career trajectory both inside and outside the university involving topics and/or projects related to these territories; and (3) they are especially sensitive to social issues.

Course Approach

The pilot courses were conducted with a clear orientation towards the local needs and perspectives of the territories and places in which they were developed. The approach of the courses was based on the social appropriation of knowledge, addressing both the need to address social innovation skills through praxis and to manage knowledge on a participatory basis with communities to enable transformations within their contexts. In the courses, scenarios for the co-creation of knowledge were proposed, in which students, using their classroom knowledge, would guide the communities with contributions related to their professions. In turn, communities using their needs and experiences would provide practical and contextual knowledge to generate opportunities for social innovation.

From the outset, the working logic was of re-signifying the classroom as a scenario for the social construction of knowledge which accommodated both the collective knowledge of the territories and their actors and the formal and structured knowledge of the academy in order to transform paradigms of exclusion and marginalisation of knowledge. To this end, each teacher—depending on the subject, the local context of the campus, and their own experience—proposed the pilot course, taking into consideration that the exercise would allow the students to get closer to real contexts. The pilot courses not only had to correspond to the curriculum of the programme they were part of but also to include work on social innovation competencies that, in the judgement of each teacher, could empower both the students and other actors involved in the process.

The six pilot courses that were carried out featured certain common characteristics:

Firstly, for UNIMINUTO's pedagogical praxeological approach, the learning process went through four periods:

1. Seeing: this involves exercising observation and imagination to problematise and distinguish ideas around the object of knowledge.
2. Judging: this entails abstracting and interpreting lived practices in the light of knowledge, connecting tacit knowledge with scientific

knowledge to obtain new conceptions, inferences, and explanations of reality to produce data and ideas to address specific challenges.

3. Acting: to consolidate new representations of reality, establishing connections that produce transformations in the ways of being-thinking with regard to the object of knowledge.

4. Creative feedback: the pedagogical experience was ordered and represented in order to evince reflections on the lived pedagogical practices and the innovations and transformations they generated (Avella Bernal 2017).

Secondly, in order to develop social innovation processes, the PCIS proposed applying 'the social innovation route', which has been developed and tested in multiple territories and projects. In the case of the pilot courses, the route was used for the teachers to identify (during the planning for each course) in which of the phase or phases the students will work in the particular processes they will be engaged during the course.

The idea is to work different competencies in different phases (e.g. competencies regarding creativity are more developed in the 'create' or 'prototypes' phase; students work more on competencies regarding critical thinking in the 'understanding' and 'analysing' phases). Using the perspective of the social innovation route, students had to develop and apply the competencies defined by the teacher in particular phases of the route. Nevertheless, all the cases involved: periods of working in the classroom on concepts and tools for interacting with the communities; periods of addressing the challenges faced by the communities, which involved both reviewing general concepts and understanding the particular conditions of each community; periods of analysing and creating solutions directly with the communities; and, in some cases, periods of the implementation phase by the communities themselves. For each case, the teacher established an issue, a strategy, and a methodology for working with the community, taking into account the context, the subject, and the competencies to be strengthened.

The Villavicencio campus carried out its pilot project with producers of rice bread in the municipality of Restrepo. The teacher established initial contact with the producers' association; subsequently, the students,

through work groups, approached the producers to arrange and carry out an organisational diagnosis for each business based on the techniques and tools discussed in the classroom. In the case of Ibagué, the teacher carried out preparatory work with a women's association from the village of Coello Cocora in the Ibagué municipality. Later, together with the students, they analysed the case and prepared and carried out a field visit in which they applied an 'empathy map' and a business canvas with the women of the association in order to define business models. In the case of Pasto, the teacher used the strategy of strengthening the existing relationships the students had with the community, either due to their work or their origin. In this case, working in teams, the students established contact with the communities and defined the challenges to be resolved, while the teacher accompanied each team and assisted them in identifying and applying the most appropriate tools for each challenge. The Bogotá teachers, both face to face and UVD, used the classroom training model. They provided their students with tools and competencies so that, subsequently, they could apply these competencies in the ensuing contexts which arose; in this way, some students applied them in their work and others in their family environments. The Bogota teacher of strategic management conducted classroom training that concluded with a field visit to the municipality of Cucunuba, Cundinamarca, to carry out a participatory observation process with local groups.

Analysis: Expanding Epistemic Justice?

Creating Distributive Epistemic Justice by Expanding Epistemic Capabilities

We first address the pilot courses from the perspective of distributive epistemic justice, exploring which epistemic capabilities have been expanded, and how, and the way this connects with epistemic justice. Regarding the capabilities that students feel they had developed during the course, the results suggest the expansion of epistemic capabilities on

various levels. These levels are variously connected with justice and the engagement with others.

In the first place, students refer to capabilities regarding knowledge that are purely individual and that have less direct connection with justice, even though, considering that these students come from lower classes, this expansion can be considered as promoting distributive epistemic justice. For example, they refer to the capability to critically analyse situations and problems in complex contexts, the capability to develop new knowledge from practice and from interactions, the capability to identify sources of knowledge in people and situations, the capability to be open to change, or the capability to identify one's own limits regarding knowledge. Secondly, students refer to another group of epistemic capabilities that are still individually expanded but that are more connected with justice and with the common good. For example, some consider they have developed the capability to emphatically observe and listen, to empathise with others and to engage with them, to give recognition to and value different worldviews, or the capability to critically analyse and reframe one's own past and personal history in the light of other's experiences. Thirdly, some students refer to another group of capabilities which are directly related to distributive epistemic justice and to the promotion of the epistemic goods of others, particularly of the most excluded. For example, they refer to the capability to understand their own responsibility towards others; the capability to create and facilitate creative processes of co-production of analysis and of new ideas for change; or the capability to identify, create, and share ideas to change unjust realities. Fourthly, a few refer to capabilities which are also very directly connected with epistemic justice but that can be considered as collectively developed through engagement with communities. They are similar to those identified for individuals but refer to the collective. For example, this is the case of the capability, as a collective, to understand, analyse, or create solutions for change.

From this analysis and clustering of epistemic capabilities, two further general considerations can be made. On the one hand, these capabilities refer to very different aspects of knowledge such as the connection between power and knowledge, to the creation of consciousness, to self-esteem, or to recognition. The idea of epistemic justice that appears in

our case is an 'umbrella' (Fricker 2007) covering multidimensional and complex phenomena. On the other hand, the capabilities identified are related, and students refer to connections and synergies between them such as those related to developing empathy with those connected with the development of co-creation processes.

Means for Capabilities Expansion

Evidence points to several key aspects regarding the means for the expansion of these epistemic capabilities.

Firstly, regarding the *teaching staff*, the key inputs that stand out are their commitment, motivation, and dedication. The teachers made an important effort in terms of time and energy to get the courses off the ground, which has been recognised and supported by fellow teachers and by those responsible for the programmes, areas, and centres. Nevertheless, their commitment has been even greater than could have been expected of them, in the light of all their other obligations, so it would seem that they have over-exerted themselves beyond their responsibilities. On the other hand, the teaching staff had ample previous experience. Despite being—in almost all cases—very young, their previous teaching experience, although not extensive, was fundamental in identifying and implementing innovations in the pilot courses. Specific experience in social innovation methodologies was not necessarily very broad in all cases. However, each teacher departed from a different point and incorporated more or less new ideas and tools according to their previous knowledge and objectives. Nevertheless, they also asserted that they were able to rely upon pedagogical resources, both material resources and knowledge of new tools, having worked on social innovation in the courses.

Secondly, regarding interactions with the environment, it has been key to build *relationships of trust* with community actors with whom the teachers worked. The teaching staff have gradually built these relationships following different strategies, as has been indicated. In some cases, the teacher had established the relationships prior to the beginning of the course and had prepared the dates of the field visits beforehand. In other cases, it was the student body that generated the relationships with the

community, with the accompaniment of the teacher. In these cases, the teacher did not carry out as much preparatory work on relationship building, but demanded greater follow-up. The different schemes and types of relationship all seem valid and interesting for generating new epistemic capabilities, depending on the teacher and the circumstances of the course.

Thirdly, concerning the *teaching-learning methodology*, in all cases this is a question of connecting with the realities of the communities in two ways. On the one hand, in relation to the objective of the subjects, in all cases it is oriented towards understanding, analysing, and solving the specific problems of small businesses, communities, or organisations. On the other hand, in relation to the techniques, in the courses new techniques are taught and tested for analysing problems, proposing solutions, and developing prototypes in a participative and creative way. This generates different spaces for dialogue and exchange between students and communities.

Fourthly, the thorough and detailed—but also flexible—*planning* of the whole educational process, especially for the moments of relating with the community, has been a key input. In some cases, a more intensive timeframe of contact, following a longer period of classroom work, was chosen. In these cases, there was more detailed planning on the part of the teacher. In other cases, contacts have been made on a more extended basis over time, but on the basis of short visits, and the teacher directed the accompaniment to a lesser extent.

Fifthly, another relevant input for generating epistemic capabilities concerns the *evaluation* approach adopted. The cases show the importance of appraising principally through continuous evaluation and, also, of evaluating on the basis of alternative outputs, not just the conventional ones, for example, pitches, videos, prototypes, and models. It is a question of making these outputs relevant and appropriate for the community and its requirements.

Sixthly, it seems fundamental to communicate *feedback to the community*, especially as a way of not breaking established relationships. In all cases, the question of the continuity of the processes that are set in motion appears to be problematic and unresolved. This is a complicated issue

that can generate frustrations and problems in terms of the epistemic capabilities developed.

This concerns, lastly, *managing expectations*. Expectations can be a fundamental input for capability development, but managing them can be problematic. Sometimes excessive expectations have been generated regarding the impacts that can occur in the communities and about the continuity of the commitment, which in turn have generated frustrations and problems—which were not always explicit—in the relations between teachers, students, and communities.

Conversion Factors in Play

Next, we indicate key social and personal factors that modelled the expansion of epistemic capabilities based on the above inputs. In the first place, we deal with social factors.

The question of *academic regulation* proves to be of great importance. In this sense, it does not seem that the policy and regulatory framework of the university has been a problem in the courses analysed. On the contrary, the subject syllabuses and teaching plans seem to have left room for flexible interpretation, thereby introducing changes in the approach and methodology. In fact, the incorporation of methodologies, techniques, and processes to work on social innovation, according to some teachers, causes these guides to be more meaningful and their contents to be implemented in a better way.

Regarding *institutional matters*, it has been indicated that the university and the particular campus have given formal support to teachers of pilot courses, which has enabled and facilitated the actions. However, it appears that not enough recognition has been made of the level of commitment required by teachers (e.g. by reducing the commitment to teaching or management tasks required by teachers of pilot courses). Along with institutional support, the context of informal support from other colleagues has also been very important, taking many forms such as covering teachers for some tasks, granting flexibility, or exempting them from attending meetings.

It appears that another very important question of context concerns the *profile and motivation of communities*. The pilot courses have, in several cases, encountered a sense of fatigue with 'academic extractivism' from many local businesses and community organisations. They claim that they often receive students who are rarely involved in a purposeful way, who do not give back enough, and who do not continue relationships, so that communities are treated more as instruments than as key protagonists of the learning process. In some cases, it has also been mentioned that these businesses or communities often have a strong resistance to change. They may be unreceptive to innovative proposals from students, which may make it difficult to expand skills. In any case, the pilot courses illustrate how these difficulties are not given conditions, rather, their impact can be addressed and reduced through the construction of close and trusting relationships with the actors with whom one works in the processes of social innovation.

In the second place, we indicate some aspects concerning the students' individual factors that have modelled the processes of their expansion of capabilities. In general, this is a highly motivated group of students, which has facilitated the course development and the utilisation of the inputs. Furthermore, it seems that by using methodologies for social innovation and generating practices connected with the territory, working with real cases, the students' interest and commitment are strongly increased. However, the results suggest that there are also different personal circumstances that make it difficult for many students to learn: there are people with low levels of motivation, which, furthermore, do not increase during the courses; there are also cases of students with a number of time restrictions, given their work and family obligations; and cases in which, due to their geographical location and lack of resources, it is very difficult for the student to travel to the communities for fieldwork.

Challenging Discriminatory Epistemic Injustice

Challenging Testimonial Epistemic Injustice

The evidence in the previous section enables a discussion of the contribution of the case under study regarding discriminatory epistemic injustice. In this regard, we address both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice.

Regarding testimonial epistemic injustice, the evidence suggests that this may be challenged in our case in two senses. On the one hand, we find the construction of credibility for people and communities regarding their judgements, knowledge, and perspectives of their own problems. This is taking place for some groups suffering a situation of particularly strong unrecognition, as is the case of small farmers and indigenous communities. On the other hand, in our case, we find the construction of credibility regarding the perspectives and ideas of these groups for creating and imagining solutions and alternative futures. Their voices are then recognised both for understanding and for transforming situations. Evidence suggests that this credibility is also complex and multidimensional in how it is generated and deployed: it has a rational and analytical dimension, for example, when students and the people in communities dialogue and reason. Moreover, this credibility is built through parallel and more emotional processes that entail the creation of empathy, respect, confidence, and the will to work together. The challenge of situations of testimonial epistemic injustice and the creation of credibility takes place through the use of specific methods and in different moments and processes. This may happen, for example, through the use of tools that promote listening and co-creation (e.g. the use of interviews by students or the use of workshops in communities for creating shared visions of the desired future, or for brainstorming), in the generation of formal and informal spaces of dialogue, or in the efforts of teachers for facilitating relations between students and communities.

However, some evidence suggests that the process may also reinforce aspects of testimonial epistemic injustice in less visible ways. For example, the cases may replicate a form of extractivism in different aspects, while the relationship with communities may be primarily focused on the

learning processes of students and not on the recognition and support of the community. Moreover, the creation of high expectations and the interruption of the continuity of the process after the academic course may generate new injustices and the devaluation of recognition. Further, it seems that a specific kind of language and tools (such as those of innovation or creativity), which are alien to communities, may be imposed on them. In this way, the credibility and recognition of disadvantaged communities may be taking place but within the rigid frames, limits, and impositions of academic courses, tools, and languages.

Challenging Hermeneutical Epistemic Injustice

Our evidence does not provide clarity on the contribution of the processes under study regarding hermeneutical epistemic injustice. The very nature of this aspect of epistemic injustice makes it very difficult to assess and to determine whether it is challenged in pedagogic processes which are limited in time and scope.

It is not clear whether new concepts or terms that can be relevant to identify, communicate, and challenge realities of oppression have arisen during the processes under study. Nevertheless, it can be said that the pedagogic processes may have created conditions and spaces to create new social meanings that could be relevant for communities to make sense of significant areas of their social experience. In the courses, different spaces of dialogue between students and community and within the community were created. Within them, on the one hand, students may be providing new and relevant elements for communities to share their troubles and aspirations and to communicate with broader audiences. For example, they provide a new language and terms such as 'visions', 'social innovations', or 'prototypes'. On the other hand, communities provide their ideas, such as those related to local knowledge and with terms such as 'food sovereignty'. In these processes, local ideas and terms may connect with those of academia and may be reframed and made more visible for other people to understand the social experience of communities. For example, in one of the cases, informal urban waste collectors shared their experiences and proposed how to improve their activities.

In this process and through the dialogue with students, they reframed their activities as a 'contribution to urban sustainability'. They can now also communicate their way of working as a 'prototype' to be supported and even scaled up with public support.

In addition, in these dialogues between students' and communities' new concerns, meanings, values, and ideas have emerged in students, which are relevant to understanding their own realities. For example, one student mentioned that by observing the valuable and admirable 'austerity' of some rural communities, she changed the meaning given to the word to a more positive one. This helped her to better understand and value some practices in her own poor urban community.

However, these processes of creating new meanings by connecting languages and logics of academia and community are full of risks and ambiguities, as we suggested earlier. They may be not only creating empowering social meanings but also introducing new forms of alienation, extractivism, and epistemic injustice by distorting and obscuring the communities' own terms, meanings, and aspirations.

Concluding Remarks

The chapter has sought to address the question of how and in what sense the creation of competencies for social innovation in higher education may be contributing to the creation of more just societies, with regard to knowledge. Using the terms we have employed, the issue is how expanding students' skills through working with social innovation might contribute to epistemic justice. In order to address this question, a framework was proposed based on the ideas of Sen and Fricker, which seeks to understand these processes in a comprehensive and multidimensional manner. This framework has been used to analyse the case of six pilot courses in UNIMINUTO that have incorporated the teaching of social innovation through the direct connection of teaching processes with the realities of specific communities.

The analysis of the case shows that students' commitment with communities generated various epistemic capabilities in them: from those

purely on the personal level, with a less direct connection with justice (such as the capability to analyse complex contexts), to others with a strong collective and justice dimension (such as the capability to work together to understand a problem and transform reality). There are also capability that are related to epistemology in multiple and complex ways, connecting issues such as knowledge, power, conscience, and motivation, among others.

The case suggests that a variety of key aspects model the expansion of these capabilities, for example, the creation of multiple occasions and spaces for dialogue with communities; the formation of trust and good relationships between teachers, students, and communities; the profile, commitment, and experience of teachers; thorough planning; and the reorientation of assessment and aligning it with outputs that are relevant to the communities. Nevertheless, there are also problems and tensions, such as teacher overload, problems in managing expectations, and those arising from the challenges involved in the continuity of processes, as well as the difficulties of time or resources faced by many students.

The case shows that these processes can challenge epistemic discrimination in the dual sense indicated by Fricker (2013). On the one hand, they can contribute to challenging testimonial injustice, since these processes of dialogue, co-creation, and the generation of empathy and trust result in greater credibility from the perspectives and judgements of the communities, especially in the case of groups habitually subjected to this type of epistemic injustice such as peasants and indigenous people. On the other hand, it can challenge hermeneutical injustice, insofar as the dialogue between local ideas and concepts and those brought in by students can generate new social meanings that allow communities to communicate and receive due attention and understanding. In any case, these are ambiguous processes, full of tensions, in which the extraction, absorption, distortion, or stripping of local languages and meanings may occur, along with the imposition of concepts and approaches that are alien to the territory and the community.

Finally, the work illustrates the interest of connecting particular concepts from capability approach and epistemic justice discussions in an operational framework in order to explore pedagogic processes linking the university and communities. Nevertheless, these connections and

framework may be refined and enriched with other concepts, in order to more fully capture the complexities, tensions, and contradictions of processes, as with those illustrated in the case study. In any case and in broader terms, capabilities and epistemic justice ideas seem to be relevant for exploring the role played by social innovation to build more just societies via universities.

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4

A Freirean Approach to Epistemic Justice: Contributions of Action Learning to Capabilities for Epistemic Liberation

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Introduction

Throughout modern history, reason and the Eurocentric method have prevailed in science and education, remaining detached and separate from subjectivities, life experiences, diversities, and socio-cultural contexts (Dussel 1996). This epistemological imposition dehumanises being, generating epistemic oppression. This vision of a rational, decontextualised, generalist, and universal knowledge is also present in the field of higher education—an education focused on transferring knowledge, but which often nullifies students' creativity and criticality. Considering

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epistemic justice in higher education requires, therefore, rehumanising the subjectivity of students in educational processes, including recovering the knowledge that comes from experience.

In this chapter we propose rethinking the university based on the perspective of Paulo Freire. In the 1970s, the Brazilian pedagogue highlighted the need to transform education and move towards a pedagogy of liberation (Freire 1970). His proposal, which is still relevant today, is an alternative pedagogy to that of the West, capable of promoting (even if not guaranteeing) the epistemic liberation of historically marginalised and oppressed people and communities in educational processes and knowledge production. Based on his ideas, we propose four capabilities for epistemic liberation that should be enhanced in the field of higher education. As will be shown later in the chapter, these capabilities are the ability to be, do, learn, and transform.

These capabilities will be analysed through a case study in Valencia (Spain) through an Action Learning process promoted by the Master's Degree in Development Cooperation of the Universitat Politècnica de València.[1] This experience was carried out in Na Rovella, a historically marginalised Valencia neighbourhood where various vulnerable communities and social groups converge. In this educational process, students put into practice different participatory methodologies with the aim of making the neighbourhood problems visible to society and acting on them collectively. The present analysis focuses on the capabilities for epistemic liberation that were enhanced in students throughout the participatory process.

The following section examines the theoretical framework outlined in this introduction. Next, the qualitative methodological strategy is presented. Subsequently, the contribution of the participatory process to the expansion of capabilities for the epistemic liberation of students is discussed. Finally, the main conclusions of the research are presented.

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[1] The Master's Degree in Development Cooperation is a two-year degree offered by the UPV. It is an interdisciplinary and multicultural training proposal focused on students as an active subject. Its objective is to train critical development practitioners sensitive to socio-cultural issues, connecting local and global realities for social justice and sustainable development. For more information, visit www.mastercooperacion.upv.es.

Capabilities for Epistemic Liberation

Miranda Fricker (2015) emphasises that if all people could exercise their capability for epistemic contribution, that is, their ability to share their beliefs and interpretations, the exchange and construction of knowledge would be facilitated. In addition, she highlights that the contribution to knowledge is bidirectional 'requiring not only that one may receive but also that one may give' (p. 5). Consequently, it can be assumed that all people are knowledgeable and narrators of their own lives and worldviews.

Therefore, she underlines the importance of analysing the epistemic injustices that prevent people from being able to share their knowledge. Fricker (2013) divides injustices into three types: deliberative injustice (when a person is deliberately prohibited or coerced so that she/he cannot express herself/himself), testimonial injustice (when prejudices lead the hearer to reduce the credibility of the speaker), and hermeneutical injustice (when the lack of resources makes it difficult to understand the information). According to Fricker (2015), institutions play a fundamental role not only in preventing these epistemic injustices from occurring but also in reproducing them.

Fricker's contribution has made it possible to locate epistemic justice as a central problem in the processes of knowledge production, with special emphasis on the role of public institutions. Indeed, it is a public higher education institution—the university—which we will focus on in this chapter. Specifically, Walker (2019) emphasises that the capability for epistemic contribution proposed by Fricker should be considered as a central freedom in the educational field. However, there are still very few academic papers that propose a road map to contribute to epistemic justice in the field of education. In this sense, we will use Freire's approach to take a step further: in addition to stressing the importance of institutions, we will examine the role students can play in their process of epistemic liberation. Based on Freire's postulates, we will propose that it is necessary to strengthen a series of capabilities in people (students, in our case) to bring about epistemic liberation. However, before explaining these capabilities, it is important to highlight some of the Brazilian pedagogue's key ideas.

Latin American thinker and educator, Paulo Freire, positioned himself from the perspective of people and communities that have been historically oppressed in educational and knowledge production processes. In his works *Education, the practice of freedom* (Freire 1970) and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 2007), he links education with politics, recognising people's capability for liberation in the face of epistemic and epistemological oppressions. For Freire (2007), the oppressed person is the one who is not allowed to be—is dehumanised—who is prevented from developing his humanity and capability for epistemic contribution. This epistemic oppression is historically reproduced through education, which also produces epistemological oppression. Freire uses the term the 'banking model of education' (1970) to describe and critique the traditional education system, in reference to the metaphor of students as containers into which educators must place knowledge. Therefore, he criticises education as 'the act of depositing, transferring, transmitting values and knowledge' (Freire 2007, p. 52) and that it 'nullifies the creative power of the students or minimises it, thus stimulating their naivety and not their criticality' (Freire 1970, p. 53). We believe that the transmission of knowledge promoted by this type of education still prevails today, including in higher education.

To overcome such oppressions and move towards liberation, Freire proposes liberating education. He advocates the emergence of the consciousness of the being through a horizontal relationship, based on reflection-action, collaboration, and mutual learning:

> although the teachers or the students are not the same, the person in charge of education is being formed or re-formed as he/she teaches, and the person who is being taught forms him/herself in this process… Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning. (Freire 2004, p. 12)

This is an education focused on the participation of people in their own learning, in doing and learning through reflective practice, a problematising and critical education that leads to transformative action:

Existing is more than living because it is more than being in the world. It is being in it and with it. And that capability or possibility of communicative union of the existing person with the objective world, contained in the etymology of the word itself, gives existence the sense of criticism that is not in the simple life. Transcend, discern, dialogue (communicate and participate) are exclusivities of existing. Existence is individual, but it is only realized in relation to others, and in communication with them. (Freire 2007, p. 29)

This recognition of existing beyond simply living requires recognition as a being, as an interdependent being with the capability to communicate and participate in educational processes and knowledge production. Freire (2007) proposes the rehumanisation of the being in educational processes as a being with a conscience and knowledge. This self-recognition of the being as a being who knows promotes the implementation of the capability to make an epistemic contribution. For Freire, this liberation must be achieved by the oppressed people and communities themselves:

Therein lies the great humanist and historical task of the oppressed: free themselves and free the oppressors. Those who oppress, exploit and violate because of their power, cannot have in that power the force of liberation from the oppressed or from themselves. Only the power that is reborn from the weakness of the oppressed will be strong enough to free both. (Freire 2007, p. 25)

According to Freire (1970), this liberation should be promoted in the educational field based on a liberating educational practice. This praxis is characterised by the communicative openness between students and teachers, which consists of a reflective and horizontal dialogue about and with reality. A praxis that objectifies reality: 'the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it. Without it, overcoming oppressor-oppressed is impossible' (Freire 1970, p. 32).

For Freire (1970) this communicative openness requires immersion in the historically oppressive reality followed by a critical interpolation to objectify it and to act collectively on the contemporary reality. This process of reflection and collective action on reality is what ensures transitivity towards *conscientisation*, a term he coined (Freire 2007). Through the

collective dialogue on reality, it is possible to decode the oppressor code and its subsequent recoding. This recoding is made based on shared reasoning, the consensual search for a common language and a shared meaning. This is the epistemological method proposed by Freire (Morollón 2018).

Based on Freire's ideas, we identify four capabilities for epistemic liberation that should be fostered and enhanced to achieve a liberating education:

- The **capability to be** is the opportunity to recognise yourself as a being with experiences, knowledge, and abilities to do, learn, and transform. The implementation of the capability to be enables the expansion of the self-concept and the reinforcement of self-esteem. It is the opportunity to recognise oneself as being interdependent and with historicity, to recognise oneself as part of the whole, not only of the problems but also of the solutions. This capability is enhanced by communicative openness, through the participation in spaces of critical reflection on historical reality and the processes of oppression and social and epistemic injustices existing at local and global levels. This individual and collective *conscientisation* allows the rehumanisation of the being, the recovery of the subjectivity of people (knowledge and experiences) in social and educational processes.
- The **capability to do** is the opportunity to participate in knowledge co-production processes and communicate knowledge and experiences. This capability is enhanced by communicative openness in and with contextual reality, together with different people, knowledge, and experiences. This communicative openness is characterised by horizontality, critical reflection, and inclusive participation through a care approach between those involved. The awareness of the ability to do is the recognition of the intent of the being, of his or her ability to produce knowledge from experience and participation. This capability enables awareness of the reality, its problems, and the potential for collective action. It is the recognition of the knowledge of all beings and the implementation of participatory methods and techniques in the processes of knowledge production. This capability encourages

power relations between expert knowledge and experiential knowledge to be overcome.

- The **capability to learn** is the opportunity to participate actively in the learning process; it involves the overcoming of power relations between the educator and the educated. This capability is promoted by horizontal relationships and the recovery of people's subjectivities, knowledge, and experiences in educational processes. It is the ability to learn from other people and from and with reality. This communicative openness in the classroom between students and teachers, and in real life between university and society, is the opportunity to put into practice the dialogue of knowledge to decode knowledge, learn from the community, and re-codify knowledge from shared reasoning. The capability to learn reinforces critical awareness about reality and enables recognition of the ability to transform it through collective action.

- The **capability to transform** is enhanced by the capability to learn from other people, by the capability to do through the co-production of knowledge, and by the capability to recognise oneself as a being with knowledge and experiences. That is, it is promoted by the three previous capabilities (to be, to do, and to learn) so that the four capabilities are multidimensional and intersect. It is from the transition between the awareness of the being and the implementation of his or her capabilities to do and learn that *conscientisation* is achieved, the capability to transform based on collective action. It is the opportunity to put into practice the knowledge of shared reasoning through collective action. The implementation of this capability enables the development of actions and products that reflect the diversity of voices, knowledge, and practices and which propose individual and collective solutions to make visible, confront, and overcome social and environmental problems at local and global levels.

We understand that these four capabilities for epistemic liberation enhance epistemic justice in educational processes. In dialogue with the capability for epistemic contribution proposed by Fricker (2015), we could point out that it has certain similarities with the definition proposed here of the capability to do, but goes beyond. Fricker (2015)

proposes two types of contributions for epistemic justice: providing informative materials (such as evidence, thesis, etc.) and providing interpretative materials (such as critical material, interpretations, etc.). We propose that the capability to do should include acting in the processes of knowledge co-production; that is, although it contributes to the generation of materials (informative and interpretive), the focus is placed on the co-production of knowledge in a collective way. It is recognised, therefore, that all knowledge is valid, that is, the asymmetric relationship between expert knowledge (usually academic) and experiential knowledge (of historically silenced populations) must be overcome. The other similarity is that the capability to transform enables the generation of products that can contribute to epistemic justice. However, these products arise through collective action, which generates their appropriation by the people who participate in the epistemic contribution.

In short, we propose the four capabilities for epistemic liberation as a road map in the field of higher education and in the processes of knowledge co-production. We believe that only through the epistemic liberation of students can we move towards a more just and sustainable society, capable of overcoming the epistemic oppression and injustices existing in contemporary society. We believe that only from the epistemic liberation of the students will it be possible to contribute towards a more just production of knowledge and a higher education committed to face and overcome the different epistemic oppressions and injustices of contemporary society. Epistemic liberation requires communicative openness based on dialogue, critical reflection, horizontality, inclusive participation through a care approach, as well as the critical awareness of the power relations existing between teachers and learners, seeking to overcome them. This communicative openness is only possible, therefore, through participatory methodologies.

However, these capabilities for epistemic liberation do not wish to be a closed list nor to produce a complete and universal definition of the meanings of the capabilities to be, to do, to learn, and to transform. On the contrary, this work is aligned with Sen's (2004) vision that proposes that capabilities can be reformulated, deliberated, and reconstructed from different contexts, cultures, and processes, which fits perfectly with Freire's proposal in the processes of co-production of knowledge.

In the next section, we characterise the case study of an Action Learning process in Na Rovella as a liberating educational experience based on the facilitation of participatory methodologies. The methodological strategy used to collect the learning and the changes generated in the students throughout the process of knowledge co-production is also presented. Subsequently, the results are shown based on discourse analysis and its contribution to the capabilities for epistemic liberation: to be, to do, to learn, and to transform.

Methodology

Our qualitative research combines the theory and practice of Freire's education for liberation in order to give meaning to the co-production of knowledge for social transformation. To this end, we analyse the case study of the Action Learning process 'Tejiendo voces en el barrio de Na Rovella, València (España)' (*Weaving Voices in the Na Rovella neighbourhood, Valencia, Spain*) promoted by the Master's Degree in Development Cooperation of the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV).

Action Learning (hereinafter AL) is a methodology aimed at solving problems through action and reflection on its results. It arose based on the principles and characteristics proposed by Reg Revans in the 1980s, in order to guide and adapt educational practices according to the diversity of organisations, contexts, and problems of contemporary society (e.g. Revans 2011). The author did not devise his own definition of AL; rather he proposed it is a set of ethical points that nurtures various approaches (Pedler et al. 2012). Due to this lack of definition, a wide diversity of formats and practices have arisen (Willis 2012; Marquardt and Yeo 2012). In practice, it has been widely used by companies to solve problems and to carry out organisational learning. On an academic level, we are interested in the view of Pedler et al. (2012), who define AL as learning processes where participants face complex problems and learn by exploring new opportunities and challenges in a specific reality. Especially interesting is the contribution of authors like Trehan (2012), who differentiate the processes of conventional AL

with critical processes, i.e. those that consider the promotion of critical thinking among the participants as one of the objectives of the process. The emphasis is therefore placed on reflection based on individual action (learning from experience) and collective, critical reflection on the organisational, political, and emotional dynamics enhanced and generated by collective action (learning from the organisation). It is the latter view—a critical Action Learning—which inspires the process analysed here as a case study. Furthermore, this Action Learning proposal incorporates the principles and practices of liberating education proposed by Freire, explained previously in the theoretical section.

This experience was carried out in the academic year 2018–2019 of the Master's Degree in Development Cooperation of the Universitat Politècnica de València in the Na Rovella neighbourhood, Valencia. The neighbourhood organisations that were most strongly involved were the Jordi de Sant Jordi Secondary School, the Universitat Popular Na Rovella (UP), and the Taleia Youth Centre of the ADSIS Foundation. The Jordi de Sant Jordi Secondary School is a public educational centre that offers secondary education, high school, basic professional training, and training cycles of the family of socio-cultural and community services. The UP is a cultural project of the City Council of Valencia that seeks to promote social participation and improve the quality of life of citizens, through continuing education, socio-cultural revitalisation, and social intervention. The UP ceded its spaces for the realisation of the AL process during the two weeks of immersion in the Na Rovella neighbourhood. The Taleia Youth Centre is a socio-educational intervention project with young people from the Quatre Carreres District, and its objective is the integral promotion of minors, youth, and their families.

The group of students of the Master's Degree in Development Cooperation of the Universitat Politècnica de València (hereinafter, MDC-UPV) is characterised by being a diverse group: intergenerational, intercultural, and multidisciplinary. Four groups were formed by students, teachers, and researchers. Participants in the experience included 11 female students, 7 male students, and 6 facilitators of the process. The interdisciplinary team of facilitators was made up of teachers of the

Master's degree and researchers from the Ingenio Institute (CSIC-UPV). The role of the facilitators is to accompany the students in the process, guiding the different theoretical and methodological approaches and serving as a link with the participating organisations and institutions.

To understand the process, we will first explain the participatory methodologies used by the groups together with each entity in the neighbourhood (summarised in Fig. 4.1), and, secondly, we will explain the methodology used by the research team to analyse the capabilities for epistemic liberation expanded during the process (summarised in Fig. 4.2).

Figure 4.1 illustrates the four groups, the methodologies provided by the students of the MDC-UPV, as well as the organisations and vulnerable communities that actively participated in the experience.

As we can see, the groups provided the following methodologies:

1. Photovoice to third-year students at Jordi de Sant Jordi Secondary School. Photovoice or participatory social photography is a methodology that seeks a positive social transformation in marginalised or minority communities through teaching in photography, giving voice to their demands and improving their quality of life (Photovoice 2019).
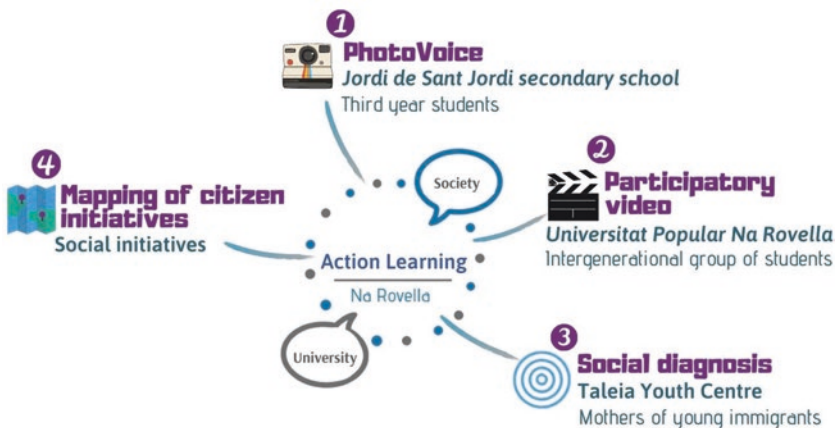
Fig. 4.1 Methodologies provided by the students

Fig. 4.2 Methodological stages to analyse students' capabilities

2. Participatory video process to the intergenerational group of students of the Universitat Popular Na Rovella. Participatory video involves a group or community creating its own film. The filmmaking process can enable participants to take action to solve their own problems, or to communicate their needs and ideas to decision-makers (White 2003).
3. Social diagnosis with five mothers of young immigrants linked to the Taleia Youth Centre. In addition to individual interviews, the group used the technique of the network target to visualise the associations, people, and spaces that most influence the current situation of women and what these relationships are like.
4. Mapping of citizen initiatives based on the CIVICS Platform. This is a way to collectively map and build a database that relates social initiatives, sharing their contributions and motivations to act in the neighbourhood. Collective mapping offers a common meeting space to articulate and relate the initiatives, making possible the construction of critical narratives through the eyes of the participants in relation to their environment. Figure 4.2 shows the stages of the AL process and the methodological strategy used in the present research to analyse the capabilities for epistemic liberation.

In the centre of Fig. 4.2, the timeline of the AL process is presented, accompanied by the methodological strategy carried out by the research team to analyse the capabilities for epistemic liberation enhanced in the students. Stage 1, prior to the immersion in the neighbourhood, consisted of the implementation of Participatory Workshop 1, provided to

the students. The objective of this workshop was to gather their motivations and expected changes in the AL process. At this stage, meetings were also held between the team of facilitators and the neighbourhood stakeholders.

Stage 2 of immersion in the neighbourhood with the participating organisations was mainly carried out through participant observation, which occurred both in groups and on an overall level. Stage 3 featured the facilitation of participatory methodologies (participatory video, photovoice, social diagnosis, and mapping of citizen initiatives), and interviews were conducted with students and people linked to the organisations. In Stage 4, within the framework of the collective evaluation of the first week, Participatory Workshop 2 was held in order to follow up on the learning, obstacles, and strengths of the process.

Stage 5 featured the co-designing of products and collective proposals. Interviews were conducted with students and people linked to the organisations that participated in the four groups. These interviews were also conducted in Stage 6 (public feedback), in order to collect the learning and results of the process. At the end of the AL, Stage 7, a second collective evaluation was facilitated through Participatory Workshop 3, with the objective of triangulating the learnings and empowered changes among the students of the MDC-UPV. Finally, in Stage 8, interviews were conducted with the participating organisations to triangulate the learnings and changes of the participants and the impact of the AL on the organisations and the neighbourhood. The students in this last stage carried out two tasks: on the one hand, each group presented a report that included the experiences, processes, and learning, and on the other hand, each student made an individual reflection based on the critical learning that had been expanded after the process. Both tasks made it possible to triangulate the results related to the participation, learning, and changes desired and achieved on a personal level and as process facilitators and development professionals.

Finally, note that for the analysis of qualitative data, NVivo 12 software was used.

Learnings and Capabilities for Epistemic Liberation

This section presents the enhanced learnings in MDC-UPV students throughout the AL process carried out in the Na Rovella neighbourhood. The results have been categorised according to their contribution to the four capabilities for epistemic liberation. These learnings and their contribution are summarised in Fig. 4.3 for each stage of the process.

Figure 4.3 shows the stages of the process and the learnings that have been enhanced in the Master's degree students. These learnings show the expansion of capabilities for epistemic liberation in students who participated in the AL process. These capabilities for epistemic liberation (capability to be, capability to do, capability to learn, and capability to transform) are not equally enhanced at all stages of the process. From Fig. 4.3 it can be seen that, for example, the capability to be develops more in the initial stages, while the capability to transform is evidenced in the final stages. This is consistent with Freire's thinking because the capabilities are interrelated, and in order for people to transform, first they have to be aware of their capabilities to be, do, and learn. In the
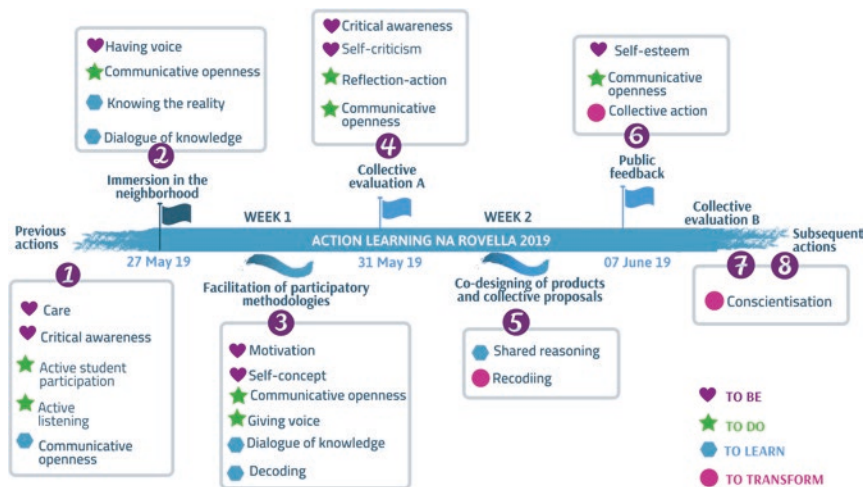
Fig. 4.3 Learning and contribution to capabilities for epistemic liberation

following subsections, we will highlight some moments where these capabilities were evidenced throughout the process.

Capability to Be

Regarding the capability to be, we consider that the actions carried out prior to the process of immersion in the reality of the Na Rovella neighbourhood enhanced the horizontality in the relations between students and teachers. This communicative openness between students and teachers enables a horizontal relationship and the rehumanisation of the being as a student who is educating. This awareness of participation allows students to recognise themselves as beings, beings who know. This capability to be is also enhanced in teamwork, by having a voice and giving voice to other people, at the intergroup and relational level:

> During this Master's degree I have learned to listen to others much more and respect their opinions. This is something that I have endeavoured to apply throughout the AL process, I think successfully, and I consider it crucial to generate a horizontal and participatory space of trust in which all people can have a voice and nobody feels excluded. (MDC-UPV student—UP Group)

This capability to be is reinforced in the spaces of individual and collective reflection generated in the formative spaces prior to immersion in the neighbourhood. The previous participation of the students in the subjects of the MDC-UPV (international aid system, globalisation, different conceptions and alternatives to development, inequalities, and social injustices—gender, climate change, poverty, participatory methodologies, and other competences) made it possible to transition towards a realisation of the being in the world. Students recognise themselves as beings and as part of the whole, establishing connections between local reality and the global context.

Participatory methodologies and teamwork based on the care approach used in the classroom have enhanced the recovery of their voices as beings with intercultural and interdisciplinary experiences and knowledge. This

recovery of the being and the motivation to do contributes to the expansion of the students' self-concept:

> I think it is essential to believe in what you are doing, to work with enthusiasm and convey the same thing that you intend to achieve. I think I could say that being an active listener and being patient, which I have applied in the process, is absolutely necessary to make the participants feel that they are being heard, because in this way they will open up more and you can really delve into the points that they want to address. (MDC-UPV Student—Mapping Group)

Through active listening and inclusive participation, students are able to be and do more as a person, student, citizen, and development professional. The communicative openness between students and facilitators in the spaces of collective evaluation allows individual and collective reflection on the theory and practice of development. This reflection on the practice encourages an awareness to arise about the learning achieved over the two weeks. This contributes to reflective self-criticism about being and doing. In this sense, the words of one student stand out:

> I still need to deconstruct myself and work on myself a lot. I still have to work, study and understand a lot to fill up my kit bag. This would also improve my self-perception when it comes to contributing to development processes, I may have more to contribute and say than I think I do. In short, I have to improve and work on all those skills that the contribution to social change requires through constant questioning, self-questioning, learning, and training. (MDC-UPV Student—Secondary School Group)

This motivation to contribute to social change emerges through the students' implementation of their knowledge and know-how. This practice, also reflective, facilitates their recognition not only as a being who knows but also as a being who does not know everything, who does not own the truth, and, therefore, who is in a continuous learning process. This process of reflective self-criticism allows students to channel forces to be the being they want to be, both as an individual and as a development professional.

Being in a complex reality and facing it through one's experience as a development professional allows one to recognise oneself as part of the whole, not only of the problems but also of the solutions:

> Other qualities that have contributed to this process have been my desire and motivation to give a voice to this group. At all times I have been able to express to them that this was an opportunity to give them the voice that society denies them, making them invisible because they are young. This is because I have always seen it as important to have the opinion of young people, because they also make up the social fabric of the neighbourhood. I believe that this yearning has transmitted to them the importance of this process and their involvement in it. (MDC-UPV Student—Secondary School Group)

Putting this opportunity into practice in the process and, specifically, in the public feedback contributes to the increase of students' self-esteem, recognising themselves as beings, beings who know, that learn with other people, with the intent for transformative action. This capability to be recognising oneself as a person with knowledge and experiences and being interdependent on the local and global level promotes active participation and the appropriation of the process to do, learn, and transform.

Capability to Do

The active participation of the UPV students in actions prior to their immersion in the neighbourhood contributes to the expansion of their capability to do, understood as the ability to make and produce knowledge with other people, in a horizontal relationship, also recognising them as beings with knowledge and intent. Process facilitation is an opportunity to co-produce knowledge through active listening and dialogue of knowledge:

> Through this experience I have realised that by listening to the cities you acquire a much more transversal vision of the idiosyncrasies of the communities. Active listening has an infinite power to identify the need for change and to find a way to carry it out. The ability to actively listen to the

work team itself and to put your ego aside, something that I have been improving a lot during this academic year, offers innumerable answers about what may be the most appropriate way to act and when to do so. (MDC-UPV Student—Mapping Group)

This immersion in the reality and in action with the practice of the organisations, alongside vulnerable communities, motivates the students to participate in the learning process as active subjects. This communicative openness is previously reinforced by the actions prior to immersion in the neighbourhood (classroom activities on previous experiences of AL, socio-cultural contextualisation, transect walks[2] through the neighbourhood).

Through the facilitation of participatory processes and methodologies, students have the opportunity to give a voice to the people linked to the organisations. This capability to do is expanded based on the dialogue of knowledge and inclusive participation through a care approach, as an intentional practice that is implemented in the participatory process with the organisations:

Action Learning has helped me to first know then delve into the methodology of accompaniment and facilitation of development processes, in this case local, applying an inductive method that tries to guide rather than impose or expose the ideological frameworks of the facilitators, through participatory and horizontal behaviour. (MDC-UPV Student—Secondary School Group)

This communicative openness enhances alternative ways of doing, of producing knowledge, through a transformative practice that recognises the other as a being and their experience as knowledge:

As for the methodology, the photovoice has been a way out of the established paths. From the beginning we made it clear that no photo was bad, and that no narrative or idea was better or worse than another. I think this was super important to bring about their commitment to the project, since

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[2] The transect consisted of an afternoon walk through the neighbourhood, visiting the organisations and observing the context of the Na Rovella neighbourhood.

they saw that in addition to having a voice and it being valid, they had both our support and that of the rest of their peers. (MDC-UPV Student—Secondary School Group)

These alternative ways of doing make it possible to give a voice to the most vulnerable groups and to make visible the diversity of experiences and knowledge, contributing to change through mutual learning and collective action:

I'm someone who's willing to listen to others, always with a receptive and respectful attitude. To that, perhaps you could also add having a close and horizontal relationship with the people I work with and accompany. This is not only because of my conviction that I am merely someone who should guide, accompany, and cooperate, but also because of the personal pleasure I get from working with people who have a lot to say, a lot to pursue and live, and with whom I can grow while, somehow, I contribute in some small way to their being heard, to improving their real opportunities to develop. (MDC-UPV Student—Secondary School Group)

This awareness of the need to do based on communicative openness, horizontality, and dialogue of knowledge enhances critical awareness about the reality, also with regard to the educational system:

I think the AL has contributed by demonstrating that it can also be learned outside the classrooms and outside the rigid system into which we are pigeonholed. (MDC-UPV Student—Secondary School Group)

I think that the group has felt it's been part of our learning and it's been possible to break down, symbolically, the distance that usually exists between the research subject and the 'object' of study. (MDC-UPV Student—Taleia Group)

By recognising that the educational system generates epistemic and epistemological oppression, students put into action the co-production of knowledge based on communicative openness, inclusive participation through a care approach, and the dialogue of knowledge. This capability to do is the opportunity to generate transformative processes and

practices that enhance learning related to ownership and commitment to social transformation. This capability enhances the capability to learn in an alternative way to the transfer of knowledge imparted by banking education.

Capability to Learn

The immersion of the students in the neighbourhood contributes to the awareness of power relations and towards establishing horizontal relationships between students and neighbourhood, promoting learning in facilitating processes together with vulnerable communities:

> I recognise that it's very important to generate peer relationships where not only the students express their visions, but also where we, as facilitators, also express our concerns. During the process we noted that the students were more receptive if we carried out the activities with them as well. (MDC-UPV Student—Secondary School Group)

This immersion in reality is the opportunity for students to learn about the neighbourhood and organisations, through their voices, practices, and knowledge:

> Without a doubt, walking through the neighbourhood to contact the different stakeholders, I think it's essential, because you learn how everyday life goes by so when they tell you things about the neighbourhood, you understand them better. (MDC-UPV Student—Mapping Group)

Living in the neighbourhood and understanding the reality of the people who inhabit it by facilitating workshop and communicative spaces (interviews, conversations, active listening, observation) enhances relationships of trust and mutual learning:

> The horizontal nature of the workshop and I believe that, above all, the care approach that we try to apply at all times favoured the creation of an environment of trust in which we could open up to others and share our most intimate stories and feelings. It's these stories and the emotional bonds that

have been created by everyone who has offered us mutual learning on a much more human level. I believe that we all take away from the process values such as honesty, resilience, active listening, or the desire to excel, without forgetting how enriching it has been to learn to see the world through the eyes of a blind person and offer them the possibility of discovering the world of video. (MDC-UPV Student—UP Group)

These values and learnings generated during the process enhance the overcoming of historical prejudices and oppressions in participation and knowledge production. This overcoming requires the implementation of decoding:

On the first day of the workshop they had assumed that we were the ones who were going to make all the decisions and do all the work and that they were going to be merely actors in a film. Through the different stages of the process they realised that the power was theirs, and began to show an increasingly active attitude. Our role as facilitators was crucial to achieve that empowerment and appropriation of the video and the process associated with it. From the first day we occupied a position of technical support and of advisers so that the UP participants felt comfortable and the masters of the project. (MDC-UPV Student—UP Group)

This decoding of the accompaniment enables a critical awareness about the reality and its complexities. By recognising the different subjectivities of the participants and their knowledge, the search for shared reasoning is enhanced:

During the Action Learning process the most representative changes which we were able to contribute to as a result of our participation and collective construction with organisations were: the connection and knowledge between stakeholders, which strengthens relationships and generates networks of collaboration; the construction of alternative perceptions and narratives of the neighbourhood based on the dialogue, awareness, and involvement of the community in the change based on their opinion; and emphasising the value of the various initiatives in the neighbourhood that had been made invisible and improving their dissemination. (MDC-UPV Student—Mapping Group)

This capability to learn with other people through the co-production of knowledge enhances the capability to transform and to seek change through collective action.

Capability to Transform

The capability to transform is enhanced throughout the AL process, but it is through the recoding and co-production of collective products and proposals that it materialises. The facilitation of the process through participatory methodologies such as photovoice, participatory video, participatory social diagnosis, and citizen initiatives mapping—CIVICS—enhances the recoding based on shared reasoning:

> In this way the class has become a self-confident agent of change, not only with the desire to continue to learn more, but also with the spirit to communicate it to whoever is necessary. (MDC-UPV Student—Secondary School Group)

The immersion in a local reality, the facilitation of participatory methodologies, and the critical reflection on practice allow students to become aware as beings and as development professionals. In this process, critical awareness emerges, recognising oneself as being in a 'glocal' context and to intentionally transform it:

> It's the desire to help and contribute to the change for a better society, from my own environment, to be a better human being and struggle for my dreams that fill me with energy and a positive attitude every day, to act in the best way and to not give up even when things do not go as expected, to make mistakes, or to see the injustices around me. The will to transform and commitment to wanting a more equitable society, where there is greater equality and social justice for all. (MDC-UPV Student—Mapping Group)

This commitment to transformation is enhanced by participation in a small group and the promotion of participatory methodologies alongside

historically oppressed groups. It is the opportunity to give a voice to these people and contexts:

> That's why I believe that the group has contributed in a very positive way in Taleia, since we have been able to produce content adapted to its needs and useful both in its present and its future. (MDC-UPV Student—Taleia Group)

Public feedback and subsequent actions (evaluation, reflective work, teacher's notebook, etc.) are an opportunity for the students to reflect on the impact of the AL process in themselves, the people, and organisations involved and in the neighbourhood:

> This increased mobilisation of the wills, capacities, and resources of the community has represented inclusion, implication, integration, and identity that can enhance the social transformation pursued and which we have contributed to in some way through our participatory process […] and the possibility of generating collaboration networks, solidarity networks of common interests as resources that enable collective action to enable community strengthening processes, and also, the personal capability to mobilise those contacts arising from relationships towards the achievement of collective goals. (MDC-UPV Student—Mapping Group)

This process of transitivity between being, doing, learning, and transforming is the conscientisation conceptualised and argued for by Paulo Freire (1970). Conscientisation is the critical awareness of being in an oppressive reality and the ability to overcome epistemic oppression through the liberation of oneself and other people, based on the diversity of knowledge and collective action.

Conclusions

The Action Learning promoted by the MDC-UPV in Na Rovella, even with its economic and time limitations, is a case study of education for liberation—a process that enhances the expansion of capabilities for

epistemic liberation among participating students. It is the opportunity to put students' knowledge into action and give a voice to the neighbourhood, a practice that is reflective and critical to local and global reality and seeks to promote social transformation processes, based on the facilitation of participatory methodologies that promote critical and reflective participation, communicative openness, and collective action.

The capabilities for epistemic liberation are enhanced throughout the entire training on the Master's degree, but they are implemented through immersion in the neighbourhood alongside vulnerable communities and social groups that take part in participatory processes facilitated by students. These capabilities are interrelated and trigger one another. The capability to be enhances the capability to do. The capabilities to be and do in the field of higher education promote and expand the capability to learn and the capability to transform.

Participatory processes that intend to be transformative should enhance the four capabilities for epistemic liberation presented and analysed here. We believe that the rehumanisation of the being and the recovery of knowledge from experience promote a critical and reflexive participation in the processes of knowledge co-production. This participation enhances the appropriation of materials and products co-produced by the university and society and is reinforced by the capability to learn from other people, knowledge, and experiences. This capability to learn from the reflective and critical process enhances the capability to transform through collective action.

This educational experience is a humanistic and liberating undertaking promoted by teachers and researchers committed to the social transformation of the university, its relations with students, and local reality. It is not a simple process to promote within the framework of a university, and it is also technically challenging, since there are many institutional barriers and obstacles that hinder the implementation of this type of experience. These barriers and obstacles are related to the curriculum, the teaching load, the lack of recognition and incentives, the traditional evaluation (exams), and the culture of knowledge transfer, among many other existing difficulties.

Despite the institutional difficulties, the motivation and the appropriation of the process and of the products and materials generated by the

students and of the people and groups that participate reinforce the commitment of the teaching staff to make this experience of liberating education possible. It is a political undertaking, based on academic activism, to move towards a public university committed to epistemic justice and social transformation—a liberating university that enhances the capabilities for epistemic liberation of students and historically oppressed communities marginalised from knowledge production processes.

In future publications we will further explore the capabilities for epistemic liberation enhanced in the people and groups of the neighbourhood who participated in the Na Rovella Action Learning process.

In conclusion, we consider that this research provides a road map for enhancing the expansion of capabilities for epistemic liberation in the field of higher education and the co-production of transformative knowledge. This case study aims to contribute to the promotion of epistemic justice, expanding the opportunities for the epistemic contribution of the next generations. Being aware that there are still many epistemic challenges and injustices to address and make visible in the field of higher education, we propose the capabilities for epistemic liberation to expand other participatory processes of co-production of knowledge between the university and society.

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5

Epistemic Capabilities in the Context of Oppression: Reflections from an Action Learning Programme in Salvador, Brazil

Lori Keleher and Alexandre Apsan Frediani

Introduction

The right to the city is an ideal and a slogan which holds that cities should be co-created spaces driven by people's needs and aspirations, not by profit. Henri Lefebvre first used the phrase *right to the city* in 1968, to call for a "radical restructuring of socio-political and economic relations, in cities and beyond" (Purcell 2002, p. 101). Since then, this concept has been used by academics, social movements, NGOs, governments, and international development agencies to articulate a myriad of demands and concerns (Belda-Miquel et al. 2016). Civil society groups have used the right to the city slogan to denounce the tendencies of capital accumulation and dispossession to result in growing social and spatial

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inequalities and human rights violations in cities (Frediani 2019). Yet, despite the critical link between violence and the right to the city, mentions of violence were remarkably scarce in the action learning programme on the right to the city in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, discussed in this chapter.

Violence related to drug trafficking is a key issue affecting the struggles towards the right to the city in Salvador. In low-income neighbourhoods, violence from police, militia groups, and drug trafficking organisations is an everyday reality. With a 2017 homicide rate of 63.5 per 100,000 inhabitants, Salvador is the fifth most violent of Brazil's 26 state capitals (Cerqueira et al. 2019). Most homicides affect the young black population from low-income territories of the city. Residents of these neighbourhoods not only suffer physical violence but also oppression generated by the omnipresent threat of violence, persistent insecurity, intimidation, restricted options for livelihoods, constrained mobility, and so on. Community and civil society organisations often operate under the surveillance of powerful criminal organisations. These conditions compromise the autonomy and democratic deliberations of civil society organisations and, in turn, their capacity to advocate for the rights of marginalised people and to expose oppressive power relationships. Therefore, violence from drug trafficking not only threatens lives but also deepens oppressive urban inequalities, hinders democratic participation, and impedes recognition of human rights, including the right to the city.

Nevertheless, Salvador has a long history of critical urban pedagogical practices. Collaborations between local universities, social movements, and government authorities have generated many innovative and emancipatory knowledge production experiences. Drawing on Freirean methodologies (1967, 1975, 1981), these collaborations have exposed many biases that influence knowledge production in and about the city. In response, many learning collaborations now highlight the importance of marginalised groups as the "protagonists" in knowledge production processes. It is in this context that the partnership between the research group Lugar Comum from the Faculty of Architecture of the Federal University of Bahia and the MSc in Social Development Practice of the Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) of University College London in the United Kingdom was established. The partners developed

a programme with the focus on collective action and the right to the city in Salvador.

In this chapter, we explore some of the epistemic dimensions of the remarkable absence of discussion on violence in the programme. For reasons explained below, we consider the absence of such a relevant theme to be an epistemic challenge for the programme and its participants. Although one focus of this paper is how facilitators can best respond to this epistemic challenge, we never considered the challenge to be a fatal flaw of the programme.[1] After all, justice, including epistemic justice, does not apply to situations completely or not at all. Instead, situations are more or less just, even when challenges remain. Thus, we believe it is not only desirable but also academically, epistemically, and morally responsible to critically examine the lessons learnt from this initiative, so that we might inform future learning programmes. To this end, we draw upon the reflections of one of the workshop facilitators[2] (a co-author of this chapter) in order to properly understand and evaluate the epistemic challenges and the virtues and limitations of the programme facilitators in meeting those challenges. In focusing on epistemic challenge, rather than the programme's many successes, we are adopting what Miranda Fricker (2017) calls a *failure first* approach. This reflexive and self-critical approach is consistent with her suggestion that it is "philosophically fruitful to focus on disfunction rather than well-functioning" (2017, p. 57). We hope the reflections of this chapter will allow greater recognition of some of the embedded epistemic challenges that exist in even well-functioning and genuinely emancipatory projects, so that we might ultimately generate projects that are even more effective and epistemically just.

In what follows we first provide some practical and conceptual background in an effort to lay the groundwork for our central position: that discussions of violence related to drug trafficking did not occur during the programme because participants lacked a robust *capability for*

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[1] The lessons learnt through the programme are presented in a short film by Carvalho and Macfarlane (2020).

[2] The reflections of the action learning programme presented here draw upon the perspective of only one of the workshop facilitators who is a co-author in this chapter and may not represent the views of other stakeholders.

epistemic contribution within the context of the programme, due to *reducible epistemic oppression* resulting from structural injustice within the larger social-political context of Salvador. We then introduce the action learning programme, its purpose, and its structure. In this context we provide testimonies from programme participants. We provide some analysis of the project's process of knowledge co-production and examine how issues around violence were navigated. We draw upon the participant testimonies as we expound upon our central position and argue that within the relevant context of the programme, the silence on drug trafficking may have been a productive *subversive silence* that ultimately mitigates structural injustice and epistemic oppression. Although it is not ideal, we submit that this strategic response to oppression is progressive and, to some degree, emancipatory. We address the educational dimension of the situation as we explain how the silence resulting from this oppression generated epistemic harms throughout and beyond the programme as materials produced and disseminated by the programme also reflected a diminished contribution to the pool of knowledge. We discuss the responsibilities of the facilitators before submitting that in not breaking the silence by introducing the topic of violence, the facilitators acted morally and epistemically responsibly. Nevertheless, we argue that when such situations occur it would be key for educators to discuss these issues in ways that could inform future efforts of knowledge co-production facing similar threats.

Practical and Conceptual Background

In our efforts to better understand why there was silence on the theme of violence and drug trafficking, we carefully reviewed the programme design and considered testimonies from and discussion with participants. We recognised that the silence both stems from and results in a lack of a robust *capability for epistemic contribution*. Capabilities are the real freedoms that we have to achieve various beings and doings (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2000). To lack a robust capability for epistemic contribution is to lack the freedom to contribute to the pool of shared knowledge in a fully accurate and authentic way. In this case, participants lack a robust

capability because they are unable to safely share their experiences and concerns about violence during the programme. Thus, the silence stems from the lack of this capability.

There are several situations that might cause such a capability deficit.[3] We believe that in this case the capability deficit is a result of oppressive social-political structures that are facilitated by the culture of drug trafficking in Salvador. Specifically, we believe that explicitly discussing violence related to drug trafficking during the programme risks harmful retribution from drug traffickers. Retribution in this context could mean physical violence, but it could also mean other, more subtle, but still very serious, forms of harm. For example, if a local community representative spoke about violence or oppression, the drug trafficking organisations might work to discredit the representative's legitimacy or to create challenges in building relationships with key urban stakeholders, thereby effectively undermining her capability to advance the right to the city. Thus, retribution for speaking about drug trafficking and violence can lead to serious harm and capability deprivations. In this sense, community representative participants lack the capability to speak safely and were silenced. Yet, we also submit that participants elected to stay silent in order to avoid retribution and as part of a larger strategy of resistance.

There may be an apparent tension between our claims that (1) participants were silenced and that (2) participants elected to stay silent. The language of capabilities may be helpful in understanding our position. We believe that the community representatives are qualified knowers with the capability to understand and articulate the issues related to drug trafficking and violence well. They have what Martha Nussbaum (2000, pp. 84–85) calls the basic capabilities (or the "innate equipment") necessary for developing more advanced capabilities as well as the internal capabilities (or the developed states of a person) required to speak about drug trafficking violence. Yet, they lack the combined capability, that is,

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[3] We initially suspected that this capability deficit was the result of a hermeneutical injustice (Fricker 2007) within the structure of the programme. We suspected that the resources required for discussing and understanding the social experiences of those faced with violence were not part of the dominant hermeneutical resources available within the programme. However, our review of the testimonies and discussions with programme participants has led us to conclude that the silence on the theme of violence is not a result of the lack of programme hermeneutical resources.

the internal capability, plus the external conditions required to make an epistemic contribution on the theme.[4] This is because the external conditions—the social-political environment of Salvador—make doing so too dangerous. In other words, participants have (a) the capability to discuss the issues related to drug trafficking and violence but lack (b) the capability to safely discuss these issues. Faced with these options, participants made the understandable choice to avoid discussing violence and drug trafficking. Again, participants were *both silenced* because they cannot speak without great risk, *and acting as agents* in choosing not to exercise (a), despite the risks.

A culture of drug trafficking, so pervasive and powerful that it silences courageous activists and capable academics, poses many serious problems worthy of examination and response. However, in this paper, we have focused on the epistemic harms related to the action learning programme. The silencing of participants is an epistemic harm, primarily because those silenced were prevented from contributing to the pool of knowledge. Such persistent epistemic exclusion is a form of epistemic injustice appropriately recognised as epistemic oppression: "a persistent and unwarranted infringement on the ability to utilise persuasively shared epistemic resources that hinder one's contribution to knowledge production" and "if required the revision of those same resources" (Dotson 2014, pp. 1–2).

In this case, the participants' lack of capability to contribute to the shared pool of knowledge on drug trafficking-related violence during the action learning programme is *reducible epistemic oppression* (Dotson 2014). This is because the epistemic oppression is not a result of the programme itself, but of the oppressive social-political power relations within society. Thus, making changes to the programme alone would do little or nothing to change the injustice; mitigating reducible epistemic oppression requires changing the unjust structures of society. The epistemic injustice experienced within the programme is reducible epistemic oppression because the explanation of such oppression can be reduced to an explanation of aspects of the greater oppression experienced in Salvador in general and in the context of the struggles for the right to the city in particular.

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[4] See Fricker (2015) for an argument on why the sort of capability for epistemic contribution is so important that it ought to be included on Nussbaum's list of Central Capabilities (Nussbaum 2000).

Although the epistemic harm does not originate with the programme, it reverberates throughout and beyond the project. Without the relevant contributions from knowers, the learning experience of those drawing from the pool of knowledge in the educational setting was diminished. Moreover, this pattern of weakened contribution to the pool and diminished withdrawal from the pool is repeated in subsequent reflections and works produced and disseminated within educational environments that make up part of the international pool of knowledge. The harm is reproduced again as policies that draw on these materials—including policies relevant to the right to the city—are less accurate and informative than they otherwise could be. Thus, the epistemic harm of silencing participants is serious and has significant and far-reaching consequences for both knowers and for the pool of knowledge. It is in this way that epistemic injustice within the programme results in a lack of a robust capability for epistemic contribution.

Despite the seriousness of the situation, faculty and staff at both learning institutions did not break the silence or initiate conversations on the themes of violence and drug trafficking. We argue that not breaking the silence was a morally and epistemically permissible choice that reflects respect for the community members as agents of knowledge, who deserve to choose the circumstances under which they share and guard their knowledge. We also believe that although making changes to the programme would not remedy the greater oppression experienced in Salvador, the existence of the programme and the respect for the contributions community representatives elected to make allowed a platform for the resistance strategy of subversive silence. This strategy, discussed in greater detail below, seeks to bring about change in the community while avoiding harmful retribution by undermining the structures of injustice that facilitate violence by expanding the capability sets of community members. By expanding capability sets, that is, by increasing the freedoms community members enjoy, participants are arguably weakening the unjust structure of society and diminishing reducible epistemic oppression within the programme. By providing this platform and not breaking the silence, the facilitators can be understood as acting in solidarity with community members.

Programme Description

From 2016 to 2019, the research group "Lugar Comum" from the Faculty of Architecture of Universidade Federal da Bahia and the team of the MSc programme in Social Development Practice of the Bartlett Development Planning Unit of University College London conducted four action learning initiatives focused on the right to the city in Salvador, Brazil. When this partnership was formed, Lugar Comum was already involved in the struggle for a more equitable and democratic process of city-making through several urban collectives from Salvador. The action learning activities of the partnership were designed to facilitate collective learning processes between students, academic staff, and representatives from grassroots collectives in ways that support on-going demands and mobilisations of the struggle. The four cycles of learning exchanges that took place in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 mobilised more than 200 students and 20 academic staff members from UFBA and UCL, as well as leaders and residents of seven different communities and neighbourhoods in Salvador.[5]

The facilitation team was composed of a mostly unchanging set of academics from UFBA and UCL and urban collective representatives. Each year, the team collaborated to develop and implement learning objectives and activities for a new cohort of student participants from UFBA and UCL. These were:

Stage 1:   Pre-learning exchange: January–March
        The facilitation team develops a strategic scope of engagement. Student participants learn about the context of the action learning initiative through readings and lectures.

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[5] The urban collectives involved in the learning exchange included neighbourhood association of the historical city centre called AMACH (residents association and friends of the historical city centre), art and cultural group called Acervo da Laje, neighbourhood association from the informal settlement of Gamboa de Baixo, housing social movement called Movimento dos Sem Teto da Bahia (Roofless movement of Bahia), cultural group from Saramandaia neighbourhood called Arte Consciente, neighbourhood association from the neighbourhood of Nordeste de Amaralina, and housing social movement called Movimento de Luta nos Bairros, Vilas e Favelas (MLB).

Stage 2:   Learning exchange: Two weeks in May
Student participants and the facilitation team engage in action learning activities. Groups of around ten members composed of UCL and UFBA students and staff and representatives from urban collectives are formed. Members of each group work together to refine the focus of their engagement and methodology, to conduct policy analysis, site visits, and research activities. They also produce collective reflections on the right to the city and a preliminary output to be shared with local partners. This stage concludes with presentations of group findings and collective discussion and reflection about particular findings and the learning exchange experience in general.

Stage 3:   Post-learning exchange: May–June
Following each exchange, individual students produce a final report with analysis of their findings. The academic staff of the facilitation team then edit these reports and produce a consolidated final report to share with the urban collectives.

Another key feature of the action learning partnership is related to the topic of engagement each year. During the first and second learning exchanges, the teams explored collective practices of resistance and documented existing mechanisms within which universities and civil society groups have been or could be collaborating. From this experience, the learning exchange identified the importance of reflecting on actual practices and methodologies of collaboration, in ways that can foster learning as well as outputs that can advance claims for the right to the city of marginalised groups. In the third cycle of the learning exchange collaboration, the action learning programme focused on analysing the potential role of claims and instruments to take place at a wider territorial scale.

The work in 2018 approached the learning exchange as an opportunity to facilitate learning across civil society groups and explored the role for building collaborative strategies to address common concerns of those involved in the right to the city struggle. Groups were divided into four cross-cutting themes, which had been prioritised by the urban collectives

in Salvador. These included collective spaces and social equipment, housing and the economy, mobility and infrastructure, and culture and memory.

In the fourth and final year of the action learning collaboration, the objective of the learning exchange was to consolidate the learning that had taken place in the last three learning exchanges, examining their role in feeding into policy and planning processes. This involved producing collectively a set of demands associated with key themes approached during previous exchanges and conducting a meeting with key public and social stakeholders to discuss them. These meetings were envisioned as "spaces of dialogue" and ended up with a symbolic moment of public and social stakeholders signing a letter with the commitments made during the meetings. In the end of the learning exchange, a newspaper was produced outlining the main agreements and shared with all participants of the process (see Fig. 5.1).

Fig. 5.1   Newspaper Common City, Dillon (2019)

Programme Testimonies

UCL and UFBA students often articulate the significance of learning with other students and community representatives as facilitating a situated and therefore deeper understanding of experiences and mobilisations towards the right to the city. The programme uses a pedagogy that draws on feminist concepts, including Donna Haraway's situated knowledge (1988) and Sandra Harding's standpoint epistemology (1986). This approach encourages students to simultaneously learn about the city from the perspective of peripheral and marginalised standpoints and critically engaging with such positions and without romanticising them. As Haraway (1988, p. 584) explains, "the standpoints of the subjugated are not 'innocent' positions. On the contrary, they are preferred because in principle they are least likely to allow denial of the critical and interpretive core of all knowledge."

Box 5.1 Reflections from UCL and UFBA Students

"I think the most important thing I have learned from the action-learning practice is that I have a stronger understanding of the difficulties and complexities popular movements will encounter in reality in claiming their rights to the city and pursuing social justice… I have a deeper understanding of the relations between actors in civil society, the public and private sectors which affect social development process and outcomes…" *UCL Student*

"It is a process that is difficult, laborious, requires a lot of patience, and a lot of tolerance of the differences we find, but at the same time, in these differences we find many potentialities for the process to be rich and not conflicting." *UFBA Student*

The urban collective members articulated the importance of participating in the action learning activities because of three main issues: (1) it built and nurtured the solidarity between communities and the university, strengthening trust and relationships; (2) it opened up an opportunity for community representatives to have a role in the formation of the next generation of urban practitioners and challenge potential stigmas and preconceptions about grassroots communities and collectives; and (3) it offered an opportunity to interact with other territories and

collectives of the city of Salvador as well as realities from other countries, getting to know about new experiences and mobilisations across the city related to the right to the city and internationally.

Box 5.2 Reflections from Urban Collectives' Representatives

"It's an exchange, we learn from them and they learn from us. Last year when they came we focused on our needs. When we went to the University we heard from students talking about people in Mexico who are also having housing problems, like us. So, I identified a lot with them, because the same problem there is in Mexico, we are having here." *MSTB Representative*

"One of the things I have learned in this process is this: that if I do not get out of Gamboa and cross borders, we will not be able to deal with many things. So this is something that I consider important for me to learn, I am realizing in the spaces that I am going, in the spaces I have visited, in the open spaces where I speak, that I need to talk about Gamboa outside of Gamboa, that I need to bring Gamboa with me." *Gamboa de Baixo Representative*

For the staff of UCL and UFBA, the learning was often articulated in relation to the pedagogical approach that was developed through this experience, challenging asymmetries of power embedded in learning processes, questioning the technocratic and instrumental formation of urban practitioners, and opening up possibilities to imagine alternative approaches towards a more socially just form of city-making.

Box 5.3 Reflections from Lecturers

"I think there is something very interesting about what this exchange generates as results, which is to put the students in this process of formation that implies not necessarily to apply the previously defined methodology, but to think what it is to build alternatives along with the movements for action in the city, I think this allows students to come out of 'the university' much better prepared to deal with the contradictions that are given in city-law disputes." *UFBA Lecturer*

"The other thing that has been explicit in this collaboration is the engagement between academics and grassroots activists and actually how we work in terms of supporting the claims and narratives of grassroots activists, rather than extracting those for our own ends or interpreting them to the extent that they lose that connection." *UCL Lecturer*

Apart from the many positive learning outcomes that are extremely important for reflection on the importance of situated and collaborative forms of knowledge production, the exchange has also faced challenges that influence the type and quality of learning. In this chapter, we focus our reflection on how the context of urban violence in Salvador has generated "silences" in the learning process. Participants' reflections about the learning exchange have highlighted how drug trafficking shapes both the lives of people living in low-income areas and their right to the city. However, representatives of urban collectives emphasised that the learning exchange should not explicitly focus on the issues of drug trafficking, as doing so would be a difficult issue to approach through an initiative with an international learning exchange format, because it puts the partnership with the universities at risk. Through conversations with academics from UFBA and urban collectives' representatives, it became clear that there was a preoccupation that the issue of violence was related to drug trafficking. But this was seen as too sensitive to be addressed during a two-week workshop engagement, involving participants from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, with limited understandings on how to navigate them during the research activities.

Because of the theme's sensitive nature, violence therefore was not explicitly introduced during any of the four editions of action learning activities. At some point in preparation of the third edition, violence was discussed by the urban collectives' representatives as an important topic to be addressed in relation to rights to the city, but they explained that they chose to prioritise other themes when defining the learning questions and themes for group work. This silence and the issues surrounding it were articulated in the discussion that took place when a government official raised the topic during the action learning programme in 2019. The discussion between a government official from the department of culture of the State of Bahia, a community representative, and a lecturer from UFBA provides many insights. It was a rare moment, when the issue of violence was explicitly broached during the action learning activities, but even here, the discussion is not about the violence itself, but instead is concerned with the meta-level or about discussions of violence. As the testimonies reveal, community representatives rebuff the government official's suggestion that cities and neighbourhoods should be talking explicitly about drug trafficking. We provide both participant testimonies from this discussion and some context in Box 5.4.

Box 5.4 Dialogue on Silences and Emphasis of the Learning Exchange

Government official: "The problem of drug trafficking needs to be talked about in this city and in neighborhoods where the drug presence is striking. Trafficking is power and drugs is also culture."

   From this government official's perspective, it is important to recognise that drug trafficking enhances the power of particular groups to affect the decisions about territories. At the same time, he argued that there is a powerful culture surrounding drug trafficking that attracts young people to be part of it. Furthermore, he reports, these issues are not being discussed, but silenced. He argued that without discussing these issues "we will not be able to stand up to militia, conservatives and extermination groups." Therefore, he argued that the drug dimension cannot be excluded from the debates around the right to the city.

   Community representative: The community representative replied to the government official's provocation by contextualising a process of stigmatisation of marginalised communities and a tendency to make local leaders responsible for issues related to drug trafficking. She responds to this tendency by arguing that there is a need to focus on the positive experiences and alternatives, what we call capability expansions, that contribute towards the right to the city. Her reply draws specially on collective practices from the community of Gamboa de Baixo, part of a network of communities located in the historical city centre of Salvador: "We want to retain our fishing culture. There is an attempt to destroy Salvador's fishing communities. We are not omitting the issue of drug trafficking. We are exactly fighting it. We want to look for alternatives. Therefore, we are in this exchange and articulated with the communities that are part of the historical city center of Salvador. We are fighting this exclusion and this attempt to erase our culture. We need to strengthen the fishing culture, the theatre, the guided tours. We need to open our communities so that they are not overwhelmed by trafficking. If the government does not help in this, our community will be taken [by drug trafficking]. And we're saying we don't agree and we don't want it. Wanting to hold [community] leaders responsible for the problems that persist in our community is absurd. These secretariats [government officials] can work with us to open our communities, understanding our limits, how far we can go, what we can talk about, and where we can talk, it's a way of contributing, it's a way of understanding. We have some rights that need to be respected. We want to be respected as a fishing community. Alternatives to change we have, just give us opportunity."

Box 5.4 (continued)

Government official: "My provocation was that we would not reproduce here the common place of the complaint. I have no doubt about the important work that communities do and their right to claim. Extermination group is not just police. It is made up of members of the communities, our neighbour next door, black and poor just like us."

In this intervention, the government official reaffirmed his position that he believed that the responsibility to deal with issues of drug trafficking was not only of the government but also of community groups and their representatives.

UFBA lecturer: "On the government official's comment about being naive: you start from the principle that we are naive, as if we disregard all that is difficult and complex, to place ourselves in the field of the elegy of communitarianism, of the popular. This is true, but this is not the result of naivety, it is the result of a long process of discussion and maturation about the reality of the poor in Brazil, especially the poor population of Salvador, who are treated with a level of prejudice and political illegitimacy by any installed political faction."

The UFBA lecturer followed this statement by arguing that this led universities to play the role of "articulators," aiming to strengthen the legitimacy of marginalised voices and perspectives and advocate for the recognition of the fundamental and substantial contribution that the poor make to the wealth of the city and the nation. She then quoted De Sousa Santos' (2015) concept of "epistemicide," that is, the destruction of the knowledge and cultures of populations, including memories, ancestral links, and the manner of relating to others and to nature, in this case to the lifestyle of fishing. She argued that contesting the hegemonic forces that are "killing the symbolic capital, killing knowledge capital, and making everything somewhat uniform" is key to advance the right to the city. She then addressed the issue of drug trafficking by explaining that "we started with the discussion about violence and from the outset found a difficulty talking about the death of young people, because the leaders themselves expressed a difficulty talking about the issue. In 2018, there was security as the proposed approach theme, but it disappeared due to lack of speech space. It has no speech space because it is deadly. Because there is a threat that is everyday, which is present and you have to have a symbolic and community level that allows you to get through it. I think this is an important question, but do you think we can handle to address this issue?"

Analysis: Epistemic Oppression and Subversive Silence

As the exchange indicates, there were insightful moments of meta-discussion about the silencing of drug trafficking-related violence during the action learning programme in Salvador. It highlights that silence permeated the process of knowledge co-production because those most vulnerable to threats of retribution from drug traffickers decided to suppress a direct engagement with this topic rather than risk retribution. This exchange makes clear that there is a collective awareness that drug trafficking plays a key role in people's right to the city. However, there was a tactical decision tacitly endorsed by community representatives and programme facilitators not to discuss it explicitly, because of the unspoken understanding that doing so would put participants at risk. This discussion illustrates the sense in which participants lacked a robust capability for epistemic contribution within the programme, due to reducible epistemic oppression rooted in the structural injustice generated by drug trafficking. It is especially noteworthy that the community representative asserted that the unjust social structures need to change through generating opportunities in order to have the capability of safely speaking about drug trafficking. This makes clear that the epistemic injustice of not being able to speak without risk within the programme is a matter of reducible epistemic oppression that cannot be resolved within the programme itself, but is best mitigated by addressing oppressive social-political structures.

However, as discussed above, choosing to avoid explicit engagement of the theme of drug trafficking violence can be understood as one part of a larger strategy to address structural injustice, including some of the driving factors of drug trafficking. As the dialogue in Box 5.4 demonstrates, from the urban collectives' perspective, discussions of opportunities and autonomous city-making practices are themselves mechanisms to address factors of drug trafficking. In this way, progress towards the right to the city is also progress towards epistemic justice. The deliberative process of discussion reframes the issue of systematic oppression resulting from drug trafficking as a deficit of capabilities that can be mitigated through

collective action. The focus on encouraging the expansion of opportunities and alternative trajectories for young people provides viable alternatives to the pathway of crime. Furthermore, through the focus on collective practices towards the right to the city, urban collectives hope to avoid reproducing stigma associated with their territories which are characterised purely or primarily as places of crime.

Education and Epistemic Responsibility Amid Epistemic Injustice

As the above testimonies suggest, there are many significant issues involved in the relationships between the rights to the city, drug trafficking, violence, and the facilitating social-political structures. Given our focus on capabilities, epistemic oppression, and education, we conclude that although drug trafficking and related violence have a significant impact on the struggles for the realisation of the right to the city, and although community participants are well-qualified knowers with both the internal and basic capabilities to speak about drug trafficking violence, such discussions were largely absent because they lacked the combined capability to so speak about on such issues. Again, community members had the capability to speak on the issues, but not the capability to do so without high risk for retribution.

It is unfortunate that participants lacked a robust capability for epistemic contribution. Participatory processes of action learning are always formed by larger structural issues that influence what is prioritised within discussions. In this particular experience, the key factor of urban violence was not explicitly addressed. Consequently, many of the interactions between state, criminal organisations, and communities that shape the right to the city were not discussed. This resulted in important blind spots related to the interactions between drug trafficking and the right to the city in the co-production of knowledge. In other words, contributions to the shared pool of knowledge were diminished. As discussed above, the impact of these limited contributions were reproduced within and beyond the programme.

Yet, in what can be understood as acts of resistance not only to epistemic oppression but also the larger social-political systems of oppression that impact the struggle towards the rights to the city, stakeholders discussed enhancing education, employment, and other empowering opportunities. In avoiding explicit conversations about drug trafficking, they strategically created and protected a space with the epistemic resources available for fruitful discussions that could result in emancipatory change. This strategy can expand capability sets and ultimately undermine the greater oppression generated by drug trafficking and related violence and, in turn, the reducible epistemic oppression experienced within and beyond the programme. By avoiding explicit discussions of drug trafficking and violence within the programme, participants were actually working to diminish the epistemic injustice that prevented them from safely discussing drug trafficking and violence within the programme. Their silence was a subversive silence. This is not to say that the act of remaining silent on the issue of violence within the programme alone is enough to paradoxically facilitate the capability for robust epistemic contribution on the theme and transform the situation into an epistemically just one. Rather, in a world where situations are more or less just, the situation resulting from the strategy of subversive silence is slightly more just.

By acting as agents of change in selectively contributing to the pool of knowledge, community stakeholders have used the shared epistemic resources of the action learning programme as tools of their empowerment as they strategically co-produce knowledge products with other participants. It is obviously tragic that social circumstances of epistemic oppression did not allow participants to fully contribute to the co-production of knowledge. But their performance of limited contribution itself can also be understood as a contribution of an epistemic resource to the student experience and the knowledge products of the workshop: the performance offers a valuable model of subversive change where a full emancipatory strategy is not viable. Thus, we submit that the community participants acted as virtuous and effective contributors to the learning exchange.

The university staff, including faculty members, have special epistemic duties within the learning exchange. As facilitators they are the primary creators and managers of the epistemological systems that make up the

programme. They must work to ensure that the system is not fundamentally unjust. For example, they ought to strive to make sure that offered testimonies are given appropriate weight and that all participants have the epistemological resources needed to effectively contribute to and draw from the relevant pools of knowledge (e.g. appropriate shared vocabulary, adequate speaking time).

The faculty of the universities have additional special duties. As educators, they must endeavour to make knowledge accessible to the students in the programme. Moreover, programme leaders must make every effort to ensure that the knowledge products generated during the learning exchange provide a robust and critical assessment of the struggles for the right to the city in Salvador. Faculty should also work to promote good scholarship within student contributions. All knowledge products that result from the programme, including newspaper articles and reports, are additional contributions to the pool of knowledge. (For more information on knowledge products from this programme, see Frediani et al. 2016; Fernandes et al. 2016, 2017, 2018; and Dillon 2019). In the present case, the absence of direct discussions of violence and drug trafficking means that the knowledge products disseminated in association with the programme were less complete and less accurate than they might have been because they do not tackle one of the key critical issues that shapes the advancement of the right to the city in Salvador. This gives rise to the question of whether or not the learning exchange facilitators, that is, the faculty and staff of both universities, met their epistemic responsibilities to the programme participants, including students.

This is a complex question. Our basic response is that the university staff from both institutions acted at least appropriately, if not morally and epistemically virtuously, in their design and implementation of the programme. We believe that facilitators were right not to break the silence by introducing the topics of violence and drug trafficking during the workshop. However, we also found room for improvement in the post-workshop, educational stage of the programme.

The university staff recognised that community members could not safely speak on the theme of drug trafficking and related violence in relation to the rights of the city. In choosing not to introduce this theme, facilitators avoided placing the community members at unnecessary risk

of violence and serious capability deprivation—as we believe moral virtue requires. In addition, the university staff also respected the choice of community participants as agents of knowledge to share what they elected to share. We submit that such respect is always an important part of insider-outsider partnerships. However, in this case, it is especially important as doing so also shows respect for participants as informed agents qualified to make decisions about what strategies to adopt in the face of such epistemic (and broader) oppression and harms they are enduring. Moreover, it is possible that the knowledge production and right to the city processes would not have been more emancipatory if the issue of violence was explicitly discussed. Indeed, such discussion may have actually threatened urban collectives, risking lives and important relationships critical for advancing the right to the city.

The persevered silence can be understood as an act of solidarity between facilitators and community members. Such solidarity allows the participants to act as allies in opening new spaces of agency and discussion and in bringing about the emancipatory strategies of community members. Once this relationship has been established, the participants of the programme ought to look for other, safer, spaces where community members can speak freely about the reality of their situation and discuss ways in which they can investigate the impacts of drug violence on the rights to the city and work to undermine them. Such work seems to require a new and differently structured epistemological space than the one best suited for the learning exchange. For example, this new space might not be public or involve students. In other words, although the topic is highly relevant to the rights of the city, complete discussions of the social and political complexities of drug trafficking, violence, oppression, and other themes may fall well beyond the appropriate scope of the learning exchange.

We believe that facilitators were right not to introduce the topics of violence and drug trafficking during the workshop. This is true even upon consideration of the special duties educators have to make critical knowledge accessible to their students. In this case, respecting the safety and the epistemic agency of the community knowers not only trumps the duty educators have to make knowledge accessible to their students but that educators also provided a valuable demonstration of how to engage

in respectful dialogue in the context of an academic-activist workshop and, in so doing, made a different type of knowledge accessible to their students, specifically, how to respond to and cooperate with the strategic performance of limited epistemic contribution offered by stakeholders.

However, there was a missed opportunity to educate students both on how drug trafficking violence impacts the struggle for the rights to the city in Salvador and on the full set of emancipatory strategies and tools at work in the programme and their epistemological significance. Specifically, educators could have explicitly discussed with students the selective contribution made by community stakeholders and the decision to respect the silence on certain themes established as a part of this strategy. Educators could have explicitly addressed these challenges during the planning and debriefing periods of the project. Students could have been enlisted to contribute to reflections about how future work outside of the exchange might broaden the set of capabilities stakeholders have and on how to better educate students about these issues so that both student understanding and the knowledge products of the learning exchange better reflect the complex reality of the situation in Salvador.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the notable lack of discussion on the theme of drug trafficking and violence within an action learning programme on the right to the city in Salvador that included students and academic staff from both the University College London in the United Kingdom and the Federal University of Bahia, in Salvador, Brazil, as well as representatives from urban collectives. We found that participants lacked a robust capability for epistemic contribution within the programme because they were silenced by a general credible threat of violence and harmful capability deprivation. Thus, although epistemic oppression impacted the programme, it is reducible epistemic oppression resulting from the broader social-political oppression suffered in Salvador.

We also found that community stakeholders made the most of their participation in the programme by employing effective strategies of subversive resistance. Specifically, they engaged in co-production of knowledge on

topics that were peripheral to drug trafficking and violence, including education and job creation, and that emphasised collective agency, for example, autonomous city-making practices. We argue that making progress on these "peripheral" issues could undermine the structural injustice that is ultimately responsible for the epistemic injustice experienced by community representative participants in the programme. University faculty and staff acted in accordance with epistemic virtue by respecting the epistemic agency of the community members by not breaking the silence on violence, but instead allying themselves with local knowers and their efforts to undermine both social-political and epistemic oppression. However, given the special duties faculty have to students, we argue that it would have been productive if educators could have taken advantage of opportunities or after the workshops in Salvador to discuss the impact of violence and drug trafficking on the right to the city and discuss explicitly the emancipatory and epistemic strategies at work within the programme, given the oppressive context. These reflections would have been particularly relevant to explore how issues of drug trafficking-related violence can be explored by other knowledge co-production initiatives, making sure that the blind spots do not end up reproducing the injustices embedded in the role that drug trafficking plays in curtailing the right to the city. In short, the chapter has explored both the possibilities and the limits for enhancing epistemic justice within this action learning programme. We conclude that the educational programme has resulted in both greater epistemic justice and greater justice within the context of the right to the city in Salvador.

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6

Democratic Capabilities Research: Exploring Contextual Challenges and Contributions of Participatory Research Towards Epistemic Justice

Carmen Martinez-Vargas

Introduction

Participatory research practices are becoming more and more relevant in academia (Rowell et al. 2017). The claims and critiques made are now more important than ever, bringing forward substantial issues for the reformulation of what higher education institutions research and how we, as researchers, fulfil our academic endeavour (Larrea 2019). This is not to discredit what researchers have been doing but rather to reconsider whether we can question and diversify our research practices towards transforming academia into a more critical and plural space (Hall and Tandon 2017). Thus, participatory practices can play a key role in this diversification, as they allow the researcher to go beyond the conventional boundaries of what traditional research is and what it is for in Western academia (Bradbury 2015; De Sousa Santos et al. 2016), albeit

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not without difficulties (Bradbury 2015; Rowell et al. 2017). This is where the debate about epistemic justice is situated.

De Sousa Santos (2015) claims that if we do not understand and challenge epistemic inequalities—which are a colonial consequence—our effort towards social justice is futile. Recognising the colonial limitations of knowledge generation in higher education institutions is central to global justice (Grosfoguel et al. 2016; Maldonado-Torres 2016; Mignolo and Walsh 2018). However, although this debate is theoretically clear, we have limited empirical research investigating how we can advance towards epistemic justice through participatory research, using the capabilities approach as our theoretical framework. Therefore, having higher education as a general context, this chapter focuses on the experiences of a group of students involved in a participatory research project as an empirical space to examine how epistemic injustices are articulated in their university context and how participatory projects, such as my own conceptualisation of democratic capabilities research (DCR), have the potential to impact their epistemic freedoms. The chapter aims to investigate the complexities of advancing epistemic justice, especially in the global South where individuals are highly influenced by their colonial past and its current neo-colonial context.

Contextualising the South African Higher Education System

The South African higher education system is an exciting as well as a challenging context. Old and new ideas still present in a contradictory space that is actively fighting to overcome past discriminatory educational policies and current neoliberal pressures (Badat 2009). Although the higher education context has overcome many divisions, especially changing student demographics and increasing access to historically excluded populations, there are many other questions that are still unresolved (Bozalek and Boughey 2012; Walker and Mathebula 2019). The 2015 student protests for decolonisation demanded justice, reminding the country that the measures that the apartheid regime implemented were not only geographical segregation but an epistemic segregation and invalidation of

understandings and ways of living that were different from the hegemonic Western system (Postma 2016; Walker 2018). Indeed, while student protests claims were articulated in different words and ideas, what brought them together was, as Amartya Sen (2011, p. vii) says citing Dickens: "there is nothing so finely perceived and finely felt, as injustice". Although protest around the country advanced many positions for and against, the epistemic question is still a priority for scholars as a way to advance towards a more just and equal South Africa, including the expansion of individual epistemic freedoms through higher education.

The institution in which this participatory project was developed is part of this complex higher education system. Moreover, it is part of a specific group of institutions that historically excluded black students, as a previously white Afrikaner institution (Van der Merwe and Van Reenen 2016). This, however, as has happened across the country, has changed and is still changing. Nowadays, the institutional demographics is more representative of the country population, although still struggling to balance staff and management positions that are still in white and mostly in male hands (Institutional Audit Report 2016). Nonetheless, as we know, the representation issue does not uniquely rely on race divisions but also on gender and other intersectional characteristics that ignore minority groups and their embodied discrimination and deprivation of freedoms (Akala and Divala 2016; Van Reenen 2016). Hence, the participatory project aimed to challenge some of these issues to bring about change and contribute to the current transformation being carried out by the institution itself.

The Capabilities Approach and Epistemic Justice

What is the contribution of the capabilities approach (Sen 1999) to these debates, ideas and higher education challenges in South Africa? The capabilities approach might assist us in evaluating how well higher education institutions are doing around the world. Thus, what matters in using this theoretical framework is the freedoms that individuals enjoy or have expanded thanks to higher education institutions (Sen 1999). In this, we

understand the development of universities as to how well they can assist individuals in this different context and with diverse aspirations in leading the life they each have reason to value (Sen 1999). Equally, going into university practices, this can be applied to research, and if so, we ask how participatory practices enhance individual freedoms. Let me elaborate on a few of the substantial elements of this theoretical framework.

Many concepts are constitutive when using the capabilities approach. First, we talk about capabilities or freedoms, that is, the actual freedoms that a person has, and then, when this freedom is achieved, we call it a functioning. The importance of this difference lies in the options and choices that people can exercise in their lives. For instance, it is not the same to be hungry because someone does not have the choice, compared to choosing to be on a hunger strike. In the second case, this person has the freedom but for political reasons is exercising her agency in not realising the functioning of nutrition despite having the choice. Capabilities are then beings and doings that are valued by an individual and that assist in leading the life she/he has reason to value.

Thus, in this use of the capabilities approach supported by Sen (1999), it is important to know what is valued by an individual and how she/he is capable of leading the life she/he has reason to value. Further, it is critical to know about the context, social arrangements and historical processes around individuals, as their freedoms are going to rely on how these conditions assist or not in the expansion of their valued capabilities. In this area, the capabilities approach talks about conversion factors. Robeyns (2017) classifies three—environmental, social and personal—conversion factors. All three allow us to understand the real freedoms individuals enjoy and how they affect—in a positive or negative way—individuals. However, due to the specificity of the country and the global South context in which this research is based, we might think that an additional category is worth adding "colonial conversion factors". By colonial conversion factors, I refer here to colonial effects on individuals' freedoms that have been formed by historical processes, which disproportionately deprive targeted groups, impacting their freedoms negatively, while giving huge privileges to other groups, affecting their freedoms in a positive way (Dussel 2007). These colonial conversion factors, although conceptually neutral, had (and have) positive effects for the groups that

persistently deprived colonised communities of fundamental freedoms, creating an abyss between groups, dominant and subordinate, with various grades of grey among them.

The significant point here is that while in the global North, we can talk about social and environmental arrangements that limit a category of groups from the enjoyment of their freedoms, they are nonetheless part of a privileged global group, even where they may face inequalities in their own countries. However, for many—not all—populations in the global South, colonial conversion factors have significant effects on their freedoms. An example of such are the epistemic conditions that constrain indigenous communities in Africa from becoming contributors to the social pool of knowledge.

Therefore, in the global South, albeit with country and context variations, we face a colonial heritage that divides populations as human and "not/less human" (Zibechi 2015). South Africa faces its own legacy of what has been called "colonialism of a special type", that is, a kind of external colonialism becoming internally driven after formal independence from Britain in 1910, exerted by one group (whites) against another majority group (blacks) (see Nkwinti 2016). Overall, constrained humanity and the denial of basic dignity are what the term colonialism aims to highlight; colonial conversion factors have a negative effect for them. Further, these colonial conversion factors will be explored in the empirical section of this chapter, focusing on their relation to epistemic freedoms and epistemic justice.

Epistemic justice was not a focus of attention in the capabilities approach within its initial conceptualisation, despite finding similarities with other substantial capabilities (e.g. Nussbaum 2011). However, in the last years, the literature in this area has grown (Walker 2019; Fricker 2015). Epistemic freedom, as Fricker (2015) argues, is crucial for the wellbeing of individuals and a freedom that is worth preserving and protecting for all. Fricker's (2015) contribution is significant for the capabilities literature because she not only highlights and analyses epistemic injustices as hermeneutical and testimonial, but equally talks about the importance of reciprocity, relationality and the contribution of epistemic materials by all. Thus, how central is the capability of becoming epistemic contributors and the importance of protecting epistemic freedoms,

which then follows. Fricker (2015) does not use decolonial language to express her ideas, but her thinking is inextricably linked with all these. For decolonial scholars, epistemic justice is central for the removal of colonial, imperial and neoliberal societies (Dussel 2007; De Sousa Santos et al. 2016). Therefore, they argue for the removal of these injustices through systems that are epistemically plural and inclusive of those epistemic materials and systems that have been excluded and ignored, promoting an ecology of knowledges (De Sousa Santos 2015). Equally, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, p. 3) defines epistemic freedom as "fundamentally about the right to think, theorise, interpret the world, develop own methodologies and write from where one is located and unencumbered by Eurocentrism". Hence, the centrality of epistemic freedoms for all individuals to contribute with their epistemic materials to the social pool of shared knowledge, as givers and receivers of knowledge (Fricker 2015).

Furthermore, the capabilities approach is an evaluative framework in its open-ended version as defended by Sen (1999, 2011). It presents an incomplete understanding of justice (Sen 2011). The idea is not aiming to know how a perfect society looks, but how we can remove injustices and shift towards a more just, rather than a perfect society. This is of decisive importance, as it guides us towards more epistemically plural and open societies and not necessarily to the perfectly just epistemic society.

The point to be made is that in order to promote epistemic justice, we need to pay attention to historical injustices that continue to be reproduced in the higher education context, including research practices, due to what I call here colonial conversion factors in higher education institutions. This is especially central in contexts in the global South, due to the deprivation of the peoples and knowledges in the South, jeopardising fundamental freedoms such as becoming epistemic contributors (De Sousa Santos 2015; Fricker 2015). Further, there is not only an urgency to understand the consequences, but to unfold how these unfair mechanisms work and how we can reverse some long-standing injustice in higher education contexts, through different research practices to which end I now draw on a participatory project in South Africa.

The Democratic Capabilities Research (DCR) Project

DCR was designed as a participatory research project based on the capabilities approach as a way to overcome the limitations that participatory research practices experience in academia (Martinez-Vargas 2018). Many participatory practices aim to challenge oppressive structures and seek to promote social change and social justice (Rowell et al. 2017) in different ways and at different levels. However, the critical point is whether we are able to overcome Eurocentric ways of participatory research and a consequent epistemic narrowness. As many scholars have claimed, the diversity of participatory approaches is part of its transformational aim (Reason and Bradbury 2008). However, this is not possible if we claim that we are a diverse field and yet apply participation under a Eurocentric lens. Thus, arising from these challenges, DCR was designed to highlight that we also need practices that go beyond Eurocentric ways of viewing the world and making sense of it, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) affirms (and see Martinez-Vargas 2018).

Hence, DCR was conceptualised through an open-ended frame which aligns with decolonial ideas and the capabilities approach, in order to accommodate a diversity of epistemic systems and practices. However, DCR is not an instruction manual to implement a participatory research project, but a compendium of principles to remind practitioners of the critical points when using participatory research processes with communities or groups, especially in the global South. These principles are:

1. *Injustice as an initial issue.* Injustice(s) should be the foundational issue(s), which means that "injustice" is not framed by the "facilitator" but embraces a multiplicity of understandings of injustices according to the members involved.
2. *Internal and/or external epistemic diversity (ecology of knowledges).* Promotion of different knowledges throughout the research process.
3. *The voiceless as knowledge creators.* The participants involved represent collectives excluded from validated knowledge production processes,

which does not mean that they do not create knowledge in their own frames or use validated sources of knowledge.

4. *Uncertain horizon*. This involves flexibility; it is desirable to promote and conserve an uncertain horizon able to transform what comes next through the constant democratic dialogue and decision-making of the research group.

5. Finally, *DCR as a platform to expand participants' capabilities*.

These principles were articulated in the DCR project that started in February 2017, with an advertising campaign in which I was looking for undergraduate volunteers to be part of the research team. The research had social justice as an umbrella theme, but that was not yet defined. Twelve students volunteered to take part, all of them undergraduates (first, second or third year), from different disciplines (medicine, chemistry, psychology, education, economics or sociology), different ethnic and cultural background (Sotho, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Zulu, Tsonga and Tswana) and different genders (seven females and five males). We organised a full-day workshop together (9 am to 5 pm), usually once or twice a month. Although our first meeting was guided by myself as the facilitator, the idea was to design the project together and transfer ownership to the co-researchers. During our first meeting, we had time to get to know each other as well by understanding what social justice meant for the group. Nonetheless, agreeing on social justice was a challenge; we had different values and moral scales that shaped assessments of justice in different ways, so we came to understand what type of social injustices mattered to us in order to design our project. As Sen (1999) states, the point is not to agree on all the moral points, as our moral lives are complicated, but to reach a point in which we can deliberate and find common ground (Hoffmann and Metz 2017).

The workshops developed as a dialogic space in which each person would have a responsibility, for instance, coordinating the meeting, taking care of a specific task or having to take care of the food arrangements that day. After our first initial meeting, we designed the agenda for the coming day and decided how to go about the next step. As different themes interested the group, we divided into three research groups. The first group focused on researching racism, the second group on

researching gender inequalities and the third on researching social inequalities in general. The campus was the centre of analysis for all. Despite these research themes being connected, the idea was that each research group would have the autonomy to investigate these issues as they wished. Additionally, the search for information and knowledge was not only in academic terms. The different groups investigated an ecology of knowledge process (De Sousa Santos 2015) in order to allow different epistemic systems[1] to be represented in our project. Therefore, in order to promote this ecology of knowledges, we brought knowledge from their communities, personal experiences from their lives, key informants' experiential knowledge, cultural knowledge, intuitive knowledge and, of course, scientific knowledge disseminated by scholars and universities around the world. All this developed through many activities together: attending art exhibitions, inviting guests to our meetings for debates (academics as well as other collectives and individuals of interest), visiting key members in their communities, attending special lectures related to our themes, having general discussions among the group or going to a mass university meeting to report on issues on campus. The research became an iterative learning process in which other knowledge systems were valued and recognised but also confronted and assessed, generating locally relevant knowledge regarding the three research themes (racism, gender inequalities and social inequalities on campus).

The project finished at the end of 2017, with the production of two participatory videos and a collaborative book, bringing their open-ended conclusions about racism, gender inequalities and social inequalities on campus into debate with a broader audience, the university and their communities. Further, all the resources created by the project are available on the project website (for more information, see Martinez-Vargas 2018).

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[1] I refer in this chapter to epistemic system, as a socially created system that determines the nature of knowledge and the process in which knowledge is produced, hence their epistemic standards and methodologies. This is important to consider, as under the notion of an ecology of knowledges every epistemic system is inherently incomplete, due to its own internal and external limitations. The incompleteness of all knowledge systems—including the traditional scientific Western knowledge—necessitates an epistemological dialogue with other knowledge systems, in order to stimulate an ecology of knowledges.

The empirical sections of this chapter draw on qualitative data from the case study of the project. Thus, data from 36 interviews at different points of the project, together with participant observation and other sources as journals and audio-visual material, have been used for the analysis and reflections on the students' experiences focusing on their epistemic freedoms.

Exploring Epistemic Challenges: Colonial Conversion Factors on Campus

Now, two years after the project has finished, there are many aspects worth exploring from an epistemic perspective. Therefore, this section starts by focusing on participants' experiences on campus, highlighting the conditions that shaped their lives in this higher education institution before being part of the project, and continues with their reflections about the participatory project and how the project did or did not enhance epistemic freedoms towards epistemic justice.

Two main points arose out of the analysis in the students' experiences on campus from an epistemic perspective. First, oppression through the lack of valuable freedoms is a big part of their lived experiences as students. This was visible through intersecting contextual colonial conversion factors as systems of meaning (cosmovisions), racialised relations and colonial language, among others that affected them in negative ways, constraining their freedoms but mainly their epistemic freedoms. Secondly, due to these unfreedoms, there were many negotiations and adaptations in their campus lives and future projects in order to fit and survive in this new system. Therefore, when referring to the university space, many colonial conversion factors jeopardised their epistemic freedoms and functionings mainly related to one central aspect, the new epistemic system shared among individuals in the university space that generated meanings and structures of power, conceptualising the students as mere receivers of epistemic material.

As Yábar-Dextre (1978, p. 406) highlights, "Every language reflects the mentality and cosmovision of the people who speak that language. It

develops in the direction of the necessities, goals and problems of the community in a given time and geographical area". In this way, it is not only about English or any other colonial language but also sub-communities that use the language in their own ways and create different meanings. Students reflected about experiences of discrimination and deprivation of freedoms through the use of language. Even though South Africa has 11 official languages, only 3 were presented in the formal curriculum of their university, with 2 dominant languages—English and Afrikaans—and Sotho, the main local language only used occasionally and not available in most degrees. Language is a space of resistance for many post-colonial scholars and substantial for epistemic freedoms (Mbembe 2001). Although we understand the challenges of a linguistically plural higher education system, as one of the students asked, why do some students have the freedom to study in their mother tongue (English or Afrikaans) and not others? Iminathi, a second-year chemistry student explored this issue in a sophisticated way, highlighting how this colonial conversion factor affects many students in this institution:

> There are so many students…who come from literally not knowing English, they do not know even a single word but then they come to varsity and they are forced to learn literally their entire degree in English[…] They said that, obviously it makes…that Afrikaans groups tend to perform 10–20% better than the English groups because now imagine that you are with somebody from the same…cultural background than you, and it is much easier for you to relate to the lecturer, and it is much easier for the lecturer to relate to you and say eh guys this is so important for the exam also. So…you understand…if the lecturer is Afrikaans and starts speaking English, it is not fluent English […] It should not have this thing of two languages because these people [Afrikaans] have not done English so far. Yeah we have also done Afrikaans in high school, in primary or whatever but we are learning English, so why you cannot learn English?

In this quote, Iminathi reflects how the negotiation space is shaped for them as students. Their freedom to articulate their world in their own language is constrained because they must study their degrees in English when many have received their primary and secondary education

(unofficially) in their indigenous languages. However, this is different for Afrikaans or English-speaking students who have the freedom to participate and study in their own mother tongue,[2] having a positive impact of this colonial conversion factor in their academic performance. Similarly, another student provided a more detailed account on this issue:

> She was like, 'Nah [Afrikaans student in her class] 'if you guys cannot talk, cannot learn Afrikaans why should I learn your language' Why should he learn to speak in English because he went to an Afrikaans school and he does not know this language and he is not very good at it'. He is actually one of the persons when in class, it is very odd, that in class there is still a certain way whereby there are two facilitators. One for Afrikaans and one for English. […] We do not have a facilitator speaking Sotho and being like 'everyone who does not understand this very big word', which I also have a problem with very big words, can now say, 'okay I am going to tell you in Sotho, your language Lesedi so you can understand'.

Lesedi is unable to understand why, if this person has a facilitator in his mother tongue, she is not permitted to have it in Sotho. It is not about all having English but about how protected this particular group seems with their freedom to learn in their mother tongue. Again, language is not only a means of expression but a creator of meaning and social understanding that is important for all as part of different cultures and cosmovisions. Further, languages are part of how epistemic systems are socially articulated and disseminated and therefore a central part of epistemic freedoms, which links with the second aspect (Mignolo and Walsh 2018).

Secondly, Lesedi highlights a substantial point regarding epistemic systems—this "big word". Epistemic systems such as the academic one are systems of meaning and understanding that are not necessarily equal across cultures (De Sousa Santos 2015). When Lesedi is saying "I also have a problem with very big words", she is highlighting the challenges to access this new academic epistemic system, and which may be a challenge

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[2] See language policy for more information https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/default-source/all-documents/language%2D%2D-policy-335-eng.pdf?sfvrsn=d62ae421_0 [09.03.2020 12.56] and https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2019/february/worldmothertongueday-celebrating-your-native-langue-mother-tongue?NewsItemID=6694 [09.03.2020 13.01].

for all or many other students but in her case must also be accessed through a language (English) with which she is not very confident. Thus, the point is that for many of the students, they are not only learning and studying their degrees in a second language, but they are being introduced into a new epistemic system as a whole, the Western science system that may not be easily intelligible. However, the challenge does not lie only in the issue of accessing this new epistemic system but in the freedoms or not that they have to participate in this system with their own epistemic materials and how the access is articulated for them. Kungawo observed:

> It is very competitive, it is unjust, it is like […] the class, it is the … most unequal spot. The most oppressive space the most unequal space, because now the knowledge comes from a certain place which we do not, you know… relate. For instance… today I was writing history… and a lot of the stuff, I learnt about was about what is going on in Belgium. I was learning about what is going on in Belgium, Portugal and etc. And that is like to me, why can I not learn like African history, South African history. Yeah so the class is, the class is like… Sometimes you have to make it through a degree…and not question things and not try to overanalyse or be too smart with things.

Two points are important here. First, aspects of their curriculum do not relate to them. Still, the point is not to ignore global history but to acknowledge the unfreedoms of these students to know and contribute to their own history. Furthermore, it is important to note how Kungawo highlighted the impact of colonial conversion factors through a new epistemic system that creates unequal relations among individuals on campus ("Sometimes you have to make it through a degree… and not question things and not try to overanalyse or be too smart"). Kungawo highlighted the unfreedoms experienced at not being able to express her opinions (and knowledge), a combination of hermeneutical and testimonial injustice through an epistemic relational inequality (Fricker 2015), grounded in hierarchical teaching and learning conditions as a product of the pedagogic history of a formerly Afrikaans university. This new environment told him how to behave and relate to other individuals in this space. As

Fricker highlights (2015, pp. 78–79), "through iterated dialogue, we form beliefs about how the world is, and we navigate our way around our social world by exercising the capacity for social understanding and interpretations, however, this might not be the case for those that are at the margins, not being epistemic contributors but just mere receivers". Thus, for these students, epistemic freedoms are conceptualised as "restricted access" to this specific epistemic system.

Here is another example with other intersecting features that were experienced on campus by these students. Francois, one of the white students in the project, gave a broad example of how this operated for black individuals:

> If you as a white person went to, you are dating a black person, you went to their home. Like people would come to the gates and party…and a celebration, but then now the other way around obviously from my own two parents, I know it is a complete opposite. It is closing the gates; it is shunning everyone away.

Lesedi, a black student, added to Francois' statement:

> You know when you are young and you see a white person, you would be like this, you would respect them extra. You would actually feel like, 'I wish so much that I could be them'. So, you feel like white people are…I do not know…angels… Although some black people when they see a white person they will be like, 'ahhh these people took our land.' They are like this. But, for us, the kids I grew up with we will be like, 'oh my God, a white person. It is amazing.' And even for the girls, if you get married to a white man it is a very big thing. It is very important. You got married to a white man!

This is a general example of how relations and valuations among white and black individuals are expressed in this context and for these two students. It gives a clear overview of how racialised relations are replicated on campus as many other studies have explored (Cornell and Kessi 2017; Walker 2005). However, racism, as a colonial conversion factor, does not act in isolation. Tethabile gave a good example of how colonial conversion factors operate in an intersectional way on campus when she said

that "It is kind of difficult in the university to raise your opinion. Because first, they want to know, who are you?" Here Tethabile refers to her attempt to start a project with the assistance of the university. She mentioned how the university would ask first, in a highly defensive way, who she was, in order to determine her identity and social position.

Nevertheless, this example might not be sufficient to explore the complexity in which distinctively colonial conversion factors operate in this context. As many scholars claim (Dussel 2007; Segato 2003), race does not operate in isolation but is interlinked with newly formed discriminations and neoliberal logics in post-colonial contexts. For instance, it is relevant to know also your gender within historically imposed norms, sexual norms in your context, the predominant religion, hierarchies among communities, mother tongue, cultural background and so on. Further, all these intersections can situate individuals in a privileged position or in a deprived situation that affects their active participation in their societies (Mathebula 2019), such as Tethabile being unable to implement her ideas and projects on campus or how difficult it can be to give your opinion on campus.

Once again, as Fricker highlights (2015, p. 77), "unequal epistemic participation is one of the key modes in which unequal relationships and statuses of other kinds tend to express themselves". This is captured by these students' experiences. Minenhle said:

> I have never in my three years of being here. I have never raised my hand in class to give a view about something or to ask a question […] I guess, I would say, I still do not have that confidence to say something in class but also the environment of the class, it does not allow you to say something.

What Minenhle is expressing is how testimonial and hermeneutical injustices work (Fricker 2015). In this example, Minenhle came from a fees-free public school and that made her feel lesser and less smart than others who attended fee-paying (and generally much better) schools. The university stereotypes told her that only smart individuals are those who went to fee-paying semi-private and private schools and enjoy a comfortable economic life—mostly white—are worthy to be there. However, this is not only reproduced by her own perception but by unequal

pedagogical practices and relations among other individuals that reinforce these beliefs, preventing her from being an active participator, to the extreme of never having raised her hand in class (Cornell and Kessi 2017). This negatively affected her epistemic contribution capability and her epistemic freedoms which were diminished by the negative effects of this colonial conversion factor, which are not comparable with oppression experienced in the global North.

Similarly, Kungawo described a similar situation in his classroom:

> Classes is just you hearing that person speak, the person who has the… fancy degree or Master's Degree or Doctorate or whatever. They speak to you, and then you listen for the entire hour […] Like the class is, it is sort of like a cage where you just have to sit there and take everything instead of saying what you think.

Kungawo emphasised the embodied colonial qualities that influence relationships. Thus, he mentioned the individuals that have the "fancy degree" embody the privilege to be listened to without questioning as the only legitimate epistemic contributor. We, the embodied "others", only have the right to listen, to be receivers of their epistemic materials, and not to question the unequal relationship and participation.

Therefore, we can see how many students that participated in this project were deprived of their valued epistemic freedoms. Epistemic freedoms, hence, are mediated by the real capabilities that we have, not to only be receivers of epistemic material but as givers of epistemic materials.

These students were given restricted access to epistemic materials on campus; however, although this is necessary for the realisation of their epistemic freedoms, it is not sufficient. As the arrow in Fig. 6.1 shows, access is articulated in a unidirectional way, being mere receivers due to colonial conversion factors interfering with their real epistemic freedoms, as many students highlighted, not being able to participate in formal and informal spaces on campus. Going back to Fricker's (2015) ideas, being receivers is not enough to realise epistemic freedoms. The university, therefore, needs to pay attention to colonial conversion factors in order to transform a unidirectional to a bidirectional relationship, with
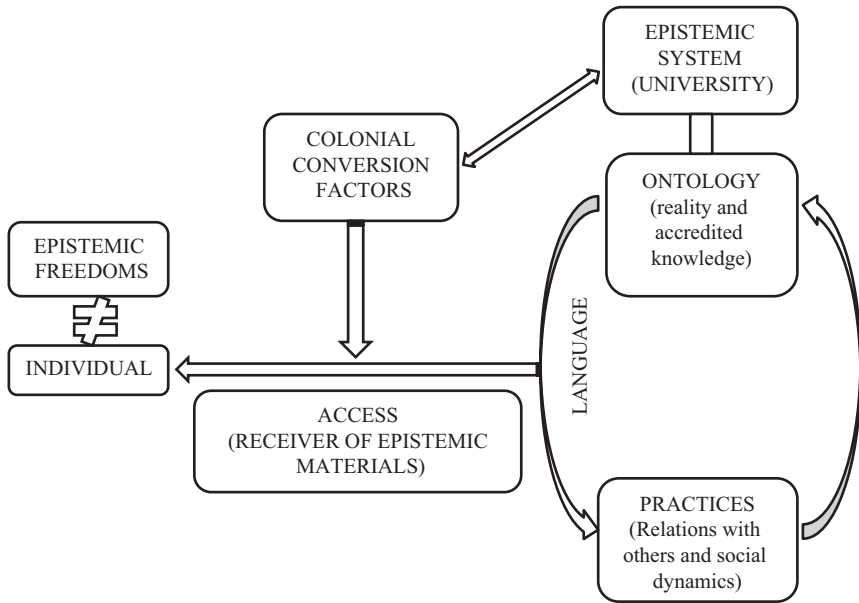
Fig. 6.1 Students' epistemic freedoms

students becoming full epistemic contributors, hence enhancing their epistemic contribution capabilities.

Opportunities Towards Epistemic Justice: Researching and Becoming Epistemic Contributors

The previous section explored how this university operates to reproduce colonial conversion factors and in shaping individuals' epistemic freedoms. Similarly, research practices replicate this worldview through practices and relations. As Smith (1999, p. 60) recognises, "the instruments and technologies of research are also instruments of knowledge and instruments of legitimising various colonial practices". However, when knowledge is created in different ways and creates meaning at different levels, changes can be appreciated, if not on a large scale, at least in

research participants when analysed under a capabilities approach. Hence, the next section explores students' experiences of being part of the DCR participatory project. I will start by exploring the meaning of "restricted" epistemic access, as a consequence of not including students in formal research practices, and continue with their reflections about being part of this participatory project.

First, students from the project reflected about the participatory research project as not being what they expected and mentioned how the university does not introduce them to what research is in its more traditional definition. Iminathi, a student from natural sciences, mentioned "I am doing Bachelor in Natural Sciences. They do not introduce me to this kind of research. Like we never do research […] I feel that because they did not teach us how to do research, probably we end up not being able to take up the right information". Most of the students, as claimed by Iminathi, mentioned that they were told what to know, without questioning how this knowledge came to this classroom or how it had been produced in the university space. In this way, the university was constraining their epistemic access, as access is only understood as being given epistemic materials without any understanding of how this epistemic system works as a whole, thus having "restricted" access.

Yet, full and not partial epistemic access to the Western epistemic system is fundamental and necessary to exercise other epistemic freedoms. However, it is not sufficient. The process of accessing the epistemic system does not only relate to accessing direct knowledge but understanding and taking part in the processes of knowledge generation. Therefore, epistemic freedoms not only depend on opening up to a Western epistemic system (i.e. still necessary) but to also overcome colonial conversion factors jeopardising their capability as epistemic contributors. A good example is how Siyabonga reflected on what he had expected from the participatory project: "I guess I look at it more as if I was going be more like helping you with your research project. But as the meetings went on, I realised, I was also learning new ways of thinking for myself". Siyabonga had a clear idea how the system had positioned him as "helping with the research". However, after the project had started, he realised that that was not the case, he was a contributor of epistemic materials. Besides that, Lesedi mentioned:

Oh, okay, a research project had to be like very formal and everything. So, I expected all the formalities, but then when I got here it was like, formalities aside. Because when we said…when, when we wanted to like raise our hands when we wanted to speak you were like, 'no man just speak, do not raise your hand. It is not a class.' We were like hallelujah! (Laughs) so it kind of you, you came, you brought this…umm… friendly environment out for us. And then, there are these wonderful personalities our side. They are much better than you think. Everybody is just different but in a very nice friendly way and nobody is aggressive, nobody…is too high. We are all at an equal level. We are all equal, it was just a friendly environment that I did not expect at all, really.

Many points are worth noting here. For instance, when Lesedi notes that "nobody is aggressive", this marks the embodied aggression of colonial conversion factors, that is, how students are prevented from sharing their epistemic materials on campus. Secondly, the project provided a friendly space, but we were definitely not equal within the group. There were many power inequalities among members that needed critical discussion, but the point is, for Lesedi, that this was a more equal space than that outside this participatory project. Hence, it is clear how the project generated an adequate platform for them to share their epistemic materials.

In this same way, other students reflected on their personal changes throughout the project and how the dynamics within the project enabled them to exercise their epistemic freedoms, becoming epistemic contributors within and outside the project. Tethabile reflected:

Because at first, I was very shy. I could just sit down and attend the meeting and leave. But now! There are certain things that I can see that…oh this has taught me to stand up for myself and be able to voice out my own opinion or what I wanna ask. So it has really brought a lot of change in me and if I did not come to this research project I would still be the same person who is still being ignorant.

Tethabile was not ignorant at all before the project, but the way she used that word is to showcase how she was quiet and lacked epistemic freedoms, not seeing herself as an epistemic contributor. During the

project, she became an active participant and an active epistemic contributor within and beyond the project, as she reiterated.

Equally, Lesedi reflected on her experience of enhancing her epistemic freedom as "being free":

> What I like about the workshops is that you are free to talk about such issues and address them nobody says 'no but then this is like this and this'. We all agree on one thing if we are going to stick on English, we are going to speak English and we also get different views from the Afrikaans background, from Lethabo you also get views from the Zulu, everybody. Everybody is just free and it all comes together we are like a rainbow. But for them, in class, yoh, it kind of gets very difficult when we deal with sensitive issues like race, privilege and power.

Here, Lesedi reflected on how difficult it is to talk about sensitive issues in class; she refers to "no but then this is like this" as appreciating that more powerful individuals might dampen her opinion, not being able to become a trustworthy testifier. However, the project provided a platform in which not only her opinion and knowledge about the world was valued and listened to by others, but also other knowledges and opinions were respected and discussed.

Similarly, Minenhle talked about how the project had assisted in reversing the negative impact of colonial conversion factors for her in this space: "It has helped with my confidence, just being able to speak in front of people and tell them your perspective confidently, it really helped me". For Minenhle, this change happened even outside the project. She added: "Yes, it actually does. Yeah, it does. It builds that thing of if I can tell this to these people about this and that, then I am able to do so outside of the session which, it really helps". Thus, Minenhle acknowledged how being part of the project influenced her epistemic freedoms, even beyond the project.

On the other hand, another critical aspect mentioned by the participants was the complementarity among members, and how they were able to learn one from another as exchangers of epistemic materials, but also in an ecology of knowledges. Lesedi explained further that "Some people are good at this, and some are good at that. So when we come together,

we just make a whole perfect team so I feel great to be part of the whole process, yeah". Or Minenhle who said that "I have learned a lot, especially from the other participants". This learning would not have been possible without listening and respecting others, including those that were not part of the research team, bringing different knowledge systems into a common conversation and disrupting colonial conversion factors.

In brief, although the participatory project had many limitations, for instance, the international relevance of the knowledge generated by the team, internal power dynamics or the language used during the project, there is much evidence, as this section has explored, on the positive impact that participation had on the participants' epistemic contribution capability and achieving various essential epistemic functionings. Visibly, we cannot consider this type of participatory research as the best way of enhancing epistemic freedoms for all. However, what we can undoubtedly affirm is the relevance of the project in the enhancement of participants' epistemic contributor capabilities and associated functionings, despite the limiting circumstances surrounding them.

Possibilities Towards Epistemic Justice: Disrupting Colonial Conversion Factors and Promoting Epistemic Freedoms

When Smith (1999, p. 1) says that "The way in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonised peoples", we should not ignore this. Research is a highly contested word for those fighting against old and new forms of colonialism and coloniality. However, what is perhaps erroneous is to think that all types of research are precisely the same and that we, the scholars working in academia, use the same constrained notion of research. Rather, Appadurai (2006, p. 167) reminds us that research is:

> a generalised capacity, the capacity to make disciplined inquiries into those things we need to know but do not know yet. All human beings are, in this

sense, researchers, since all human beings make the decisions that require them to make systematic forays beyond their current knowledge horizons.

When we see research as a general capacity and understand epistemic freedoms as substantial for human flourishing but also understand the importance of an ecology of knowledges, many options appear which can challenge epistemic injustices within higher education institutions, as this case study has investigated.

As I have argued, participatory research projects, such as DCR, could open up spaces to enhance epistemic freedoms. This is especially important in global South institutions where pervasive colonial conversion factors are in place, limiting students' epistemic contribution capabilities and their associated functionings. Further, the reason why I brought colonial conversion factors to the centre of this argument lies in the disproportionate way they affect certain populations in the South. We are talking about a colonial heritage that, even today, restricts the humanity of many (including indigenous groups and Africans) from being recognised as dignified human beings, depriving them of the functioning to be considered a trustworthy testifier.

Still, the point to be made is that perfect epistemic justice can only be realised in perfect, epistemically just higher education institutions, and these do not exist anywhere. However, there are practices and meaning-making processes that could be introduced in higher education institutions such as participatory research projects, like DCR, reducing and even neutralising in small spaces the impact of these unfreedoms on individuals. This is not unimportant—we learn how to be, differently.

This is not to consider DCR or similar participatory research practices as the only or unique way to enhance epistemic freedoms in the higher education context, but rather an option among others to expand these substantial freedoms in groups that have been historically oppressed through colonialism but also in places where epistemologies of ignorance are in place (Steyn 2012). Epistemic systems are not neutral, and what is beneficial for a group through this system might not be for others, as I have explored in this chapter. The point is not to discredit the epistemic system as a whole, as has happened with radical rejections of Western science, but to identify the discriminatory colonial conversion factors that

negatively impact individuals' freedoms within the system. To do so is also to recognise the value of other knowledge systems and to understand the power dynamics among them in order to balance knowledge inequalities.

In brief, this case study has confirmed that higher education institutions—especially those situated in the global South—could and can promote more inclusive research processes in which participants are not just respondents to researchers' interests, but active agents throughout the whole process—creating their own grounded theories, bringing their own interests to research and implementing the process in the ways they consider best and which may be different from Eurocentric methodologies. This, as the case of DCR has explored, can unlock, in some way, long-standing colonial conversion factors and expand participants' epistemic freedoms towards more rather than less epistemically just higher education institutions.

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Participatory Video as a Tool for Cultivating Political and Feminist Capabilities of Women in Turkey

F. Melis Cin and Rahime Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm

This chapter considers the dialogic and participatory aspect of participatory action research (PAR) in a gender project in one Turkish university, working with undergraduate students from low-income households and conservative backgrounds. The study employs a feminist participatory video-production method and aims to (1) explore how such methods can create a safe, democratic, and deliberative environment to discuss gender issues; (2) develop the political capabilities of students; (3) voice the gender equality issues they want to discuss and bring them to the attention of other people through a public display of their videography; and (4) help them gain the skills, values, and knowledge to create change or initiatives for a gender-just society. Thus, the research is primarily concerned with the expansion of capabilities and functionings and epistemic

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injustice caused by structural inequalities. Our aim is not only to understand how participatory video contributes to participation, deliberation, and improving the capabilities of the youth but also to explore the role of PAR in epistemic functioning.

We conducted the study as a part of a Jean Monnet project[1] entitled 'Women's Development and Europeanisation of Gender Policies (WDEGP)' funded by the European Commission (EU). The module sought to understand the extent to which the EU can generate sustainable changes in the gender policies of its member and non-member states. The module was offered both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and aimed to critically scrutinise gender policies in Turkey from a feminist perspective. We purposefully worked with 'conservative'[2] students from highly patriarchal families to analyse the discourse of Islamic conservatism, which is historically associated with the subordination of women in Turkey. Therefore, the research aimed to challenge the negative identity prejudices assigned to these conservative female students, not least because, in Turkey, feminism and gender equality debates have long been the realm of urban, educated, secular, and mostly middle-class women (Arat 2000). Over time, different feminist groups, including Islamist feminist groups, began to emerge from the 1990s (Arat 1994). Islamist feminists pinpointed Western ideas exerted on Muslim societies and sought to bring the Muslim identity of society into the public domain by highlighting how women wearing a veil are systematically ignored and discriminated against (Diner and Toktas 2010, p. 50). Islamist feminists mostly worked for the empowerment of women, alleviating their poverty and drawing attention to the fact that women in Turkey are heterogenous and the voices of Muslim women should also be heard. However, Islamic feminism is prevalent mostly among well-educated, pious, intellectual women who see the defining of their Muslim identity as a priority and has failed to include less-educated Muslim women from low-income households. Nonetheless, recently, there have been some small-scale more

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[1] A Jean Monnet Module is a teaching programme (or course) in the field of European Union studies at a higher education institution.

[2] Here, we use the word conservative women to define those have chosen to lead religious/pious lives and embrace traditional values or behaviours. So, the conservatism in this chapter refers to cultural conservatism rather than a political one.

inclusive grassroots movements, such as 'Women in Mosque', which challenge male domination in mosques by refusing to use separate areas allocated for women, as well as calls for more female-friendly mosques.

To be sure, in the current *Turkish conservative political* conjuncture, gender equality has become less of a priority agenda. Triggered by increasing Islamic conservatism, as of 2019, the Turkish Council of Higher Education cancelled the gender equality programme[3] in universities and removed the notion of gender equality from documents, arguing that gender equality is not compatible with cultural values. Faced with such a social and political challenge, gender equality debates have become less of a concern. Moreover, they started to be conceived as an undesirable topic for public deliberation and discussions or a so-called threat to social and family life. Under this broader context of a highly conservative country and an immature democratic environment, it would not be incorrect to argue that women from conservative and low-income families have less exposure to gender equality debates. Even if they want to be part of such debates, they are seen as having low credibility to speak about gender inequality, and to be lacking in feminist consciousness or aspirations, and unlikely to contribute to feminist debates in Turkey as knowers/subjects and producers of knowledge.

Our project therefore aimed to challenge this discourse by bringing their voices and knowledge to a PAR process and space to understand the ways in which these young women experience and see gender inequality. As a part of the project, students were asked to engage in a participatory, creative, and dialogic process, producing short films about a gender (in) equality issue of interest to them and then displaying these videos publicly to open a deliberative environment for discussion. The intention with the participatory videos was to include the women as researchers, give them the space and opportunity to reflect on their experiences and values on gender equality as producers of knowledge, and create an epistemically inclusive process that could lead to the expansion of their capabilities and functionings (Sen 2009). In doing so, we employed Miranda Fricker's account of epistemic justice (Fricker 2007) and conceptualised

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[3] The gender equality programme included courses to be provided in universities to promote equality between women and men and raise awareness on gender issues.

it as a political capability (Cin 2017) drawing on Bohman's (1996) argument about political poverty.

The chapter first sets out the context for feminist PAR and our understanding of capabilities enriched by Fricker (2007) and Bohman (1996). We then outline the research process and identify three key concepts—voice and space, feminist capabilities, and epistemic contribution—that have emerged as key issues in the research. We conclude by noting some limitations that remain.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Feminism

PAR is a political action research committed to hearing the voices of the ignored, exploring their knowledge and experiences, and encouraging genuine collaboration (Reason 1994). The methods employed in PAR can be diverse and range from arts-based methods such as participatory video and photovoice to more experimental research designs, as long as dialogue with and among people remains central (Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991; Gatenby and Humphries 2000). This dialogue includes the interaction and knowledge production during the research process in which participants identify the issues that matter the most, the process of reflection, and the dissemination process in which the participants share their experiences to develop the community and seek change (Reason 1994). Unlike other approaches, PAR challenges the historical and political value system and aims to politicise the research. Therefore, it aligns itself closely with feminist research, as both expose similar concerns with including women or marginalised populations as independent actors (Lykes and Coquillon 2007).

PAR, underpinned by feminist discourse and values, can be critical of social power structures, can create democratic spaces that account for women's voices and explore hidden gender inequalities (Naples 2003), and can contribute to unearthing a feminist epistemology (Fine 2007). Feminist PAR has the potential to, empower women, demystify the research itself (Reinharz 1992), and create advocacy for and critical

consciousness about one's self and the wider social and political context participants are situated in. Most importantly, it provides an alternative tool for women who have not received formal education or who have been excluded from public discourse to express themselves and communicate their ideas, in contrast to mainstream political debate, which rests on malestream rational procedures of knowledge-making (Krumer-Nevo 2009). In this way communities may be mobilised (Gatenby and Humphries 2000). Iris Marion Young calls (2002) this alternative way of expression 'communicative democracy' that attends to the differences in society and gives an opportunity for its less powerful members to voice their personal experiences and challenge the hegemonic notions that undervalue them. Overall, feminist PAR incorporates 'all stages of knowledge production, including identifying the research problem, collecting and analyzing the data and translating the knowledge' (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014, p. 344), with the aim of developing capacity, securing space for advocacy to change policies and practice, and creating collectivity (Chakma 2016).

Driven by feminist principles and PAR, we used participatory video as a tool for conducting feminist research to engage a number of conservative women who claimed to be particularly excluded from feminist debates and discourse in Turkey. The idea of participatory videos was deemed to be a conducive method for two reasons: firstly, it gathers and articulates the stories and experiences of these groups of women traditionally lacking a voice and also offers a platform for creative resistance on how they are seen and represented (Mayer 2000). Secondly, it is a dialectal and dialogic process that has the potential for raising critical consciousness regarding the social issues inherent in the participants' lives, which could, in turn, create social action and improve social wellbeing (White 2003). Our desire to use participatory videos was thus related to exploring and introducing the experiences of women whose standpoint on gender equality is seldom acknowledged, contributes to a counter-narrative, and confronts a one-dimensional depiction of what gender equality is and what feminism should look like. As Young (2002) argues, we believe that participatory video offers alternative ways of thinking, analysing, and representing knowledge and also facilitates empathetic responses and creates horizontal challenges of learning from one another,

whilst emphasising the political reality that comes with it (Moodley 2008). Furthermore, our intention to develop and employ an innovative PAR project aimed to create an alternative methodological and public space to address the epistemic injustices faced by these women, which also aligns well with the normative role of higher education institutions to promote social justice.

However, this role of universities becomes less clear in politically and socially divided countries like Turkey. On the contrary, from a Gramscian perspective, universities in such contexts can be reproducers of dominant ideology—like the education system itself—with no spaces for deliberative democracy. As the value of using PAR as a feminist practice is an important tool for revisioning the roles of universities in such contexts, conducting it at a higher education institution provided an opportunity to those with less power to speak by means of the research. We understand that PAR may not always lead to greater change at a social, political, or institutional level. Even so, the use of PAR can develop aspirations for more democratic and inclusive venues for knowledge-making (Walker et al. 2019). Therefore, the women's participation in this research aimed to disrupt their silence and passivity and foster their epistemic contribution, thereby developing their agency as epistemic contributors. Thus, PAR further aligns with the epistemic justice advocated by Fricker and the political poverty of Bohman (1996), which we categorise under political capability and discuss below.

Conceptualising Epistemic Justice as a Political Capability

Capabilities are the real opportunities each person has to lead a life that one has reason to value, whereas functionings are one's actual achievements (Sen 1999). In a higher education setting, social interactions, safe and collegial spaces, economic resources, or supportive conditions (e.g. peer support) can play an important role in enabling students to realise what they value, including being co-researchers or becoming epistemic contributors. We used participatory video production as a significant

resource to provide an enabling environment in which young women could develop new opportunities and epistemic freedoms to be change-makers in their own lives and those of others. The capabilities literature emphasises the importance of being educated, developing narrative imag-ination, and affiliation (showing concern for others, protecting the free-dom of political speech). Nevertheless, recognition of the epistemic capability has most recently been introduced as a way to understand the 'comprehensive notion of the person as both a receiver and a giver in epistemically hospitable situations of mutual esteem and friendly trust' (Walker et al. 2019, p. 4) and to discuss the corresponding functioning of being an epistemic contributor, drawing on Fricker's account of epis-temic (in)justice. Fricker (2007) identifies two forms of injustice: testi-monial and hermeneutical. Testimonial injustice is a transactional issue, as a social group may suffer from credibility and lack trustworthiness due to their social identity and may face discrimination in access to goods and services. Testimonial exclusion becomes structural when institutions are set up to exclude people (Anderson 2012). Hermeneutical injustice is a structural issue and occurs when a society fails to interpret or understand the speaker's experiences because one belongs to a social group that has been prejudicially marginalised (Fricker 2007). For instance, women suf-fering from sexual harassment can be argued to have experienced herme-neutical injustice because they were not taken seriously as narrators of their experiences due to prejudicial epistemic marginalisation.

In this research, we frame epistemic justice as a significant political capability. We have elsewhere conceptualised a political capability in the Turkish context as 'one's freedom to express political ideas and to engage in politics; to protest and to be free from state repression' (Cin 2017, p. 44) and explained how this political capability can be gendered. For instance, women activists are being suppressed brutally because they are seen as not only challenging the dominant political ideology but also the broader gender norms that restrict women's role in the private sphere (ibid). However, it is difficult to exercise the political functioning of being listened to, getting one's voice, demands, values, and ideas heard and taken into consideration and converting them into a capability when the freedoms to exercise it are not in place and one is constantly deprived of being an epistemic contributor to a society. Therefore, Fricker's (2007)

account of epistemic injustice is a significant aspect of the political capabilities of an individual. Not being able to develop this functioning or having an enabling environment to exercise it can be regarded as a 'political poverty'.

We conceptualise both types of Fricker's injustices as a 'political poverty' of citizens to effectively participate in social and political life to make a contribution to their society/community in a way to influence or be part of the public discussions and deliberation. The term political poverty draws on James Bohman's (1996) conceptualisation of 'asymmetry of public capabilities and functioning', in which he argues for three 'deliberative inequalities': *power asymmetries* (which affect access to the public sphere), *communicative inequalities* (which affect the ability to participate and to make effective use of available opportunities to deliberate in the public sphere), and *political poverty* (which makes it less likely that politically impoverished citizens can participate in the public sphere at all). Here, *political poverty* means a failure to participate in public deliberation or joint social activity that could lead to deliberation or to raise their concerns or to receive public attention from others (Bohman 1996). Politically impoverished groups lack political and economic capabilities and adequate general functioning for full participation in social life and therefore cannot take place in public deliberation. As Sen (1999) points out, lack of inclusive public reasoning as the space for discussion and the exclusive social arrangements will prevent people from being fully included in the public arena or prevent them from becoming who they are. So, being an epistemic contributor would require these conversion conditions because they are key to fostering political efficacy for those who are politically marginal and have little political capacity to initiate public deliberation as Bohman (1996) outlines it. Thus, we propose that the conditions which do not allow for a deep discussion of knowledge are often shaped by deliberative and structural inequalities that restrict access to the public sphere. This aligns with what Bohman (1996, p. 323) refers to as 'political freedom' and highlights developing 'capacities that give people … sufficient respect and recognition so as to be able to influence decisions that affect them.' Epistemic justice (both types) can be regarded as a political capability as it requires political equality of access, skills,

resources, and space to advance capacities for public functioning and knowledge production.

Working with a conservative, working-class group of women who suffered from political poverty, we argue that despite accessing higher education, such women form a disadvantaged group as they are entrapped within a limited space, having restricted access to public space and, thus, political space in terms of expressing their opinions or speaking their minds. This entrapment is mainly driven by the low value and credibility attached to them for being woman, wearing headscarves, having conservative life styles and few economic opportunities, and coming from patriarchal families that define the familial sphere as the natural locus of women. This raises the question of which of these women can participate in political life and social life and to what extent. Although civil society in Turkey aspires to expand by widening the political space it occupies, a certain group of women remain invisible, passive agents and onlookers. Also, coercion and the feeling of fear (marginalisation, being ignored) were prevalent among the PAR participants, and many of them told us that they did not feel comfortable and confident in expressing their ideas because they were afraid of being bullied. Developing this particular form of capability (of being included in an epistemic community and being recognised as legitimate knowers) requires addressing the aforementioned three interrelated concepts of Bohman to challenge unequal power in order to ensure intelligibility and voice, envisaging alternative and new possibilities to help participants confidently express their voices in public reasoning, and enabling full and meaningful democratic participation in society. Therefore, through feminist participatory video research, our chapter focuses on these challenges that stood in the way of these women and investigated the structural injustices and difficulties that limited their potential and political capabilities. To sum up, epistemic injustice as a significant political poverty signifies a lack of political functioning and capabilities: citizens must be capable of adequate political functioning to be able to influence the outcomes of public deliberation or see their voices and ideas represented and recognised. Epistemic injustice stands for a lack of political capabilities, and developing this capability is important for one to be able to enjoy public dialogue.

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) Process

The research was conducted with 24 female students studying at a university in Istanbul as part of an award-bearing elective course in a programme on sociology and psychology. The students were all from conservative, working-class families where patriarchal and conservative values were dominant, which is hardly surprising in a patriarchal society like Turkey. Women were recruited among those who have voluntarily signed up for the course. We had decided on participatory video-production as a visual method to create room for creativity and dialogue among the group members and to involve them as producers of knowledge. To this end, students were asked to engage in a participatory, creative, and dialogic process and produce short films about a gender (in)equality issue of their interest and then display these videos publicly to open a deliberative environment for discussion. In total, they produced eight short films on LGBT rights, women's lack of representation and participation in political life, gender inequalities in the labour market, and violence and discrimination against women.

   The process included several workshops over the 16-week course (see Table 7.1). The first four weeks (weeks 1–4) consisted of readings of gender literature in Turkey in order to map the field and have a discussion on the most pressing gender inequalities encountered in Turkey. These weeks were quite important to raise the critical awareness of the students on gender inequalities, to understand the ways in which they witness or experience them, and to determine how their experiences resonate or are reflected in the literature. To stimulate students' critical thinking, the readings were accompanied by several controversial case studies, videos, films, and concept maps. The following week (weeks 5–7) consisted of discussion about the aims, research questions, and structure of the project, consensus on the issues to be covered in the videos, and formation of the groups. We asked students to work in groups of three. Once the groups had been formed, they decided on their respective themes. We assigned content-specific readings for them to enrich their knowledge and exposure to the topic. This process was followed by two weeks (weeks

Table 7.1 Compiled by authors drawing on Walker and Loots (2018)

Steps	Timeline	Goals
Knowledge/ deliberation	Weeks 1–4	Identification of the most pressing gender equalities in Turkey and identifying the reflection of their experiences in the literature
Participation/ deliberation	Weeks 5–7	Formation of groups and themes, setting objectives, and determining research questions
Participation/ deliberation	Weeks 8–9	Deciding on the principles of co-production and brainstorming the story line of the videos
Knowledge	Weeks 10–11	Video production: technical training on how to shoot and edit short films
Participation/ knowledge	Weeks 12–14	Co-production of the videos
Knowledge/public deliberation	Week 15	Week-long workshop: displaying videos followed by feedback and discussion around the themes covered
Public deliberation	Week 16	Public display at the university

8–9) to decide upon the principles of co-production and to brainstorm the story line of the videos. Later on students had a two-week workshop (weeks 10–11) on producing videos, involving technical training on how to shoot and edit short films. The last step was the co-production of the videos, which lasted for three weeks (weeks 12–14). Once the videos were ready, a week-long workshop took place in which students showed the videos to the other groups, received feedback, and held a discussion on the themes they had covered (week 15). This constituted a crucial aspect of the research, as students not only reflected on different gender inequalities or issues they faced but also developed an understanding of how these inequalities can be translated into the policy goals at an institutional/local/national level or interventions. Finally, the groups held a public display at the university. This event attracted people from upper management and the administrative staff and worked as a gender-awareness day. However, not every group opted for public display. Some groups' videos were on LGBT rights, and they felt quite reluctant to share them. Finally, we conducted individual interviews with students to

understand the knowledge-making process in the PAR and to what extent the process created a change in their perception, value, and knowledge of gender issues.

The analysis of the videos was a longitudinal and shared method that took place throughout the PAR process. Mostly, the discussions after watching the videos were useful in exploring the themes, the impact of the research process on women, and being critically engaged with the structures of the wider community, family, society, and politics and understanding how these shape gender inequalities and obstruct the development of political agency and capabilities. The production of the videos was accompanied by reflection reports and exit interviews that sought to understand students' journeys throughout the project.

The in-depth analysis of the PAR process and interviews highlighted two important issues: the expansion of capabilities and the epistemic contribution of the women. Our initial concern had been to redress the political poverty of these women, which corresponds to the lack of the following functionings: not being able to express themselves, not being heard, and not being able to be part of public deliberation and make a contribution to public opinion. Furthermore, when we talk about epistemic injustice, the idea of giving voice to the participants—especially to the marginalised or less advantaged who cannot make their voices heard—dominates the debate, with less attention being paid to the content of those voices and understanding what their epistemic contribution is, rather than simply providing and enabling an opportunity for women to speak. Therefore, in this chapter, our major concern was to go beyond the act of giving voice to actually understand what these conservative women valued and what was unique in their understanding of gender issues that the gender literature (which is mostly shaped by secular or less-conservative women, including the authors) in Turkey mostly failed to recognise. Drawing on multiple data sources (videos, workshop discussions, exit interviews, reports), we first focus on the opportunities and enabling conversion factors provided by the PAR process (voice, communicative democracy, and space), then elaborate on the functionings developed through these enabling factors, which we have categorised as feminist capabilities, and then flesh out the episteme (knowledge) produced by the women.

Voice, Communicative Democracy, and Space

Participation in this research was a significant and eye-opening opportunity for many women. As conservative, working-class women, the participants often felt alienated from feminist movements and discussions around them. Although the majority of the participants had strong feelings about the everyday gender inequalities they faced, they had never felt the urge to speak up about these inequalities due to the lack of a safe space and platform that would genuinely value their ideas and participation. The PAR in this research contributed to the public debate by showing that there are different forms of gender inequalities and displaying what these women valued in terms of feminism. In this regard, we wanted to engage with both the epistemological and methodological principles of feminist research, one of which was voice. Our aim was not only to enable voices but to create a democratic and friendly space so that women could express their values, experiences, and knowledge through a methodological and more egalitarian PAR tool and bring these to the public space for discussion and scrutiny. In doing so, it is important not to decontextualise or depoliticise voice and to investigate the influence of social processes that shape their experiences as depoliticisation of voice has the risk of delegitimising their knowledge (Krumer-Nevo 2009). Therefore, the discussions and interviews with these women showed that there were several structures and conversion factors that excluded them from speaking up against the gender issues, being part of feminist discussions, or developing gender awareness and contributing to debates as knowers/subjects and producers of knowledge.

Firstly, the social and cultural capital of the women had a great influence on their upbringing and the development of certain aspirations. Participants mostly came from conservative and patriarchal families in which they were expected to comply with gendered roles. Therefore, they had been brought up within traditional gender codes and did not have an opportunity to question any of the inequalities that restricted them. Nor did they have a social environment where gender issues were discussed or in which people had an awareness and critical consciousness of such matters. Being working-class conservative women also restricted their

mobility and opportunities of what they could do, achieve, and aspire to. As one participant noted, 'In my family, we never discussed gender equality. I came from a very traditional family where I was expected to comply with gender roles. I was not brought up with such critical thinking or gender awareness, it was not part of my family culture'.

Secondly, many women felt excluded from the feminist movements in Turkey as the feminist debates and movement have long been the realm of secular, non-conservative, upper-middle income, highly educated women, and have long overlooked the needs and ignored the voices of the less advantaged, rural, or conservative women. Although this started to change in the early 2000s with Turkey's EU accession process and the rise of political Islam, which has made a symbolic attempt to improve women's rights, the feminist movement driven by Muslim women in Turkey has not always been successful in reaching out to all women. Lastly, young women expressed their concern with the recent crackdown on civil society in Turkey, which drove many youths to become apolitical, passive actors. It led to the closure of feminist NGOs and closed up the space for such movements and activism to be publicly accessible, as illustrated by the following words of another participant: 'I don't feel comfortable expressing my ideas in public due to the hostile and unfriendly environment—we were brought up to be apolitical and keep our thoughts to ourselves'.

These conversion factors were the reasons why these women had never participated in a gender-related project and movement, even if they had wanted to. The PAR offered an alternative, democratic, and safe space to enable deliberation and equal participation. A significant role of higher education is to provide spaces for the generation of critical knowledge and contribute to working towards addressing social problems (Walker 2018). Nevertheless, universities do not always provide venues for creative and life-enhancing knowledge if their practices are captured by neoliberal or ideological forces. Therefore, participatory studies like this one speak to the ethos and democratic mission of the university.

Also, participatory methods enabled communicative democracy by offering the participants an innovative and creative methodological tool to express themselves and initiate a dialogue between different actors in civil society. As Fraser (1989) and Young (2002) note, public deliberation

may not always include those (or women) who have been side-lined, and their voices may not be heard. This is because a rationalist, male, hegemonic polity ignores the differences in articulation of voice and ideas of the public. Therefore, Young (2002) argues for a model of communicative democracy to highlight the importance of using different forms of communications or methodologies for disadvantaged groups to express themselves, rather than formal political debate, which is based on assumptions about rational procedures. Students remarked that the participatory videos encouraged them to express themselves as they were the ones who decided on the topic, what to record, what to convey as a message, so they had an opportunity to think creatively, interact with other people, and think critically, which includes them in knowledge exchange (Kotzee 2017). One woman remarked: 'Creating our own videos and the process of co-production was a critical engagement with our reflection, experiences, and the literature. If I was asked to write an essay or stand in front of a crowd to deliver a speech on this topic, I don't think I would feel comfortable and confident, or express my ideas clearly. It is not only the videos, the research process itself was very intriguing and empowering.'

Arguably, the PAR process offered a transformative space and communicative democracy to these women to engage in knowledge-making and be part of the feminist discussions. All these were important conversion factors contributing to epistemic justice and the corresponding political capability.

Formation of Feminist Capabilities

Our data was drawn from the videos, recorded discussions, reflection report, and exit interviews. We identified several functionings that students had acquired during this five-month research process and that contributed to epistemic justice. These functionings (and the capabilities we extrapolated) played a significant role in redressing testimonial justice by recognising the voices of these women and inserting their voices into gender equality claims and hermeneutical injustice, as they were able to talk about their experiences and make their stories and values known.

The research process itself and the public display have not only led to the expansion of political capabilities but also helped a number of further functionings to flourish, which we refer to as 'feminist capabilities'. There are two reasons why we use the term feminist capabilities. Firstly, these women were engaged in a feminist PAR through which they talked about different gender issues. This process increased their critical consciousness about gender inequalities and also provided an enriching, friendly, and democratic environment for them to develop three important functionings for gender inequality awareness: developing confidence and voice, being able to discuss and develop good reasoning, and building collective resilience. Secondly, they were able to exercise these three functionings in a democratic space within the university, which led to their contribution to feminist knowledge. These functionings, and the conducive environment to exercise them, enabled the women to make a significant contribution to gender equality debates; develop critical consciousness, social, and collective action resilience; and support mechanisms to improve gender equality in society at large—all of which are key to feminist research and movements.

The participants developed the confidence and voice functioning through participation, presenting their videos, and by being included in public deliberation of discussion and having their experiences and views listened to. This was a unique opportunity that disrupted testimonial injustice by making their voices and experiences visible. One explained: 'I have been able to speak up freely in an open public environment for the first time without feeling any resentment. I gained self-confidence to express myself and felt very excited to see that there were so many people in the room listening to my thoughts and views. This friendly discussion was what I needed'. For some participants, this functioning of voice was important to deconstruct the image of conservative women and to challenge the discourse that 'pathologises' their experiences as women and the identity prejudice which silences them: 'I think this participatory video was a very valuable opportunity to develop my confidence and speak against the prevalent idea that we, as conservative and veiled women, do not have an understanding of gender equality or we are submissive and obedient. This is not the case at all. I am probably exposed to gender inequality more than any other women—because both men and 'other'

women are oppressive to me … I had an opportunity to share these experiences through this project'.

The functioning of developing good/critical reasoning and being able to participate in discussion is significant for people to act and speak as political agents. One may only develop critical reasoning and debate once one has developed confidence and one is positioned in a safe deliberative environment to be able to speak up. PAR can go further by providing an alternative, common, and plural space where women could be politically involved, but the research process itself can be of great value as women engage with each other and with stakeholders, in dialogue, as equals. For some women, the co-production process provided a space to debate what they collectively value: 'As I had a chance to work with the colleagues in my group, we realised that we valued the same issues, such as being recognised. In the planning phase of our video, our in-group discussions revealed that we all felt that our opinions and perspectives were not valued'. The co-production phase, the intellectual inputs and discussions, fertile relationships, and working together (not only with each other but with us, as co-researchers) were a catalyst for enabling intersecting capabilities and functionings of reasoning and discussion.

The functioning of building up collective resilience involved developing solidarity with other women and being motivated to take collective action to increase gender equality awareness among women like themselves and encouraging them to be part of the feminist debates in Turkey. This shows that the interaction and participation interacted with the women's confidence, knowledge, and values of what they ought to be and do (Lopez-Fogues and Cin 2018) and helped the women develop motivations that led them to act beyond their self-interest by speaking up about the challenges they faced in a wider public setting (the screening of short movies at the university).

The development of these three functionings is core, we think, to any feminist research and movement agenda in two ways. Firstly, feminist research aims to empower women through making their experiences visible and providing an avenue for 'subaltern' voices to speak up about their experiences and claim their space. Secondly, it aims to build up collective strength and political capabilities for social change in the long run.

From Voice to Knowledge: Unravelling the Epistemic Contribution of the Women

The importance of voice in PAR is that it is a pathway to the production of knowledge. The research has shown that these women were producers of knowledge and gained credibility as knowers, made their experiences visible and intelligible to others, and developed collective agency and action to promote gender equality at the wider university level. So far, the research on feminist PAR (Krumer-Nevo 2009) and epistemic justice (Walker et al. 2019) underlines the importance of how lived experience transforms into knowledge, how voice manifests itself in creating knowledge, what capabilities participatory research fosters, and how they create an opportunity for epistemic justice. These studies successfully document the importance of such methods in redressing epistemic injustice through challenging the structural inequalities. However, our research further asks the question of 'what is their [participants'] epistemic (knowledge) contribution?' Whilst we acknowledge the unique opportunity given by participatory methods to remedy structural inequalities, and enable conversion factors such as democratic space and creative communicative tools that lead to the expansion of capabilities, we are also interested in unearthing the episteme produced by these women.

When we co-analysed the videos with the women and looked at their reflections, the public display discussion and exit interviews, two important epistemic contributions were highlighted: the ethics of care and everyday resilience. The women's videos undoubtedly provided an entry into how these groups of students experienced and understood gender inequality in multiple and different ways. Some videos were created to reflect their everyday experience and resilience to gender inequalities. The everyday resilience in the videos and public discussions focused on navigating tension and prejudices and how they learnt from and adapted positively to life's unpleasant events. In this particular context, everyday resilience came up as a process of withstanding daily gender-related struggles.

In addition, these students' videos also challenged long-standing discourses about women. The women often stressed how their everyday

mechanisms of surviving gender inequalities were often ignored, and they highlighted that as 'conservative and veiled women', they are not only exposed to structural violence by men but also from other women. They underscored that these issues are rarely spoken of in debates on gender equality. What is more, this gender discrimination does not always stem from hegemonic structures that devalue women but is also caused by the relationships with other women who tend to exploit their labour and undervalue their position and capabilities. Some of the issues they highlighted were being undervalued by male professors; not being able to secure intern opportunities for not being 'presentable' due to their headscarves; not being seen as 'expert or professional' enough by others because of their particular Islamic dress code; and being young women, which gives them little credibility in terms of being viewed as professionals. In the literature there is qualitative evidence that there is sometimes discrimination against women in the labour market directed specifically against women wearing headscarves (Cindoğlu 2011). In response to this, the young women have developed unique everyday resilience and mechanisms to avoid such structural violence, such as 'thinking of giving up their headscarves permanently' or 'making job applications only to workplaces which attract consumers or customers from conservative segments of the society'. Some even consider not entering the job market at all: 'I am a final-year psychology student and have been looking for intern opportunities or part time jobs as a teacher in private schools or as a social worker since last year. However, I am being turned down for not being "presentable". At first, I did not understand what that meant—I thought they were expecting me to wear suits, blazers, and so on. Later on, I found out that they were referring to my headscarf. One of the private school chains told me that even though their students come from conservative families, parents were not in favour of seeing teachers with headscarves. I need to think carefully about my future and wellbeing, and there are times when I want to give up my headscarf'. Similarly, another student explained: 'I have had great difficulty in getting recognition at the university. My professors do not respect me; they see me as a young and oppressed woman who cannot be good at psychology counselling. This is quite detrimental to my educational wellbeing. I started to ignore such attitudes and even worked harder to prove myself! I did it! I will graduate

with distinction and have secured an internship at a very good public hospital'.

The second epistemic contribution that emerged from these interviews concerns ethics of care. Feminist philosophers working on care theory have raised the question of whether care is a feminine task assigned to the private sphere or gender-neutral, dislocated from women (Gilligan 1982; Hollway 2006; Raghuram 2019). In response to this question, Laugier (2015) argues that ethics of care debates are not necessarily positioned within the justice literature, which is seen as universal and malestream, and care is seen as a concept that resonates with self-sacrifice and femininity. In this research, it became clear that these women strongly valued care as a human strength which should be taught to and expected of men as well as women and challenged some dominating feminist discourses that care reinforces traditional stereotypes of what it is to be a good woman:

'There is one thing I don't like about the feminist argument; they blame women for doing care work and therefore causing a huge gender gap in employment or having low participation in the labour market. However, they don't understand that caring for someone and choosing to do such care work is a fundamental need of not only those who are being cared for, but also for us, who want to show care. It is something I value and I am ready to have a career break at some point in my life. This does not mean that I am oppressed or conforming to gender roles because I don't see care as a feminine issue, but as a human need, which men should also be taught'. Like this quote, several women have opposed positioning care in gendered bodies and challenge the argument that because they undertake such responsibilities, come from conservative families or wear a headscarf, this does not mean that they are being 'oppressed' in order to align themselves with feminine roles but see care as an inherent human value, acknowledging that the current structural and economic system exploits and creates injustices that favour men.

Overall, the PAR process revealed that these women made two important epistemic contributions to feminist literature in Turkey that have so far not been stressed in debates and discussions. It is our understanding and ethical responsibility as feminist researchers to ensure that these epistemes are legitimate knowledge that could inform the gender equality

debates as we discuss different feminisms and the needs of women who are diverse and heterogenous.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter explained how participatory video research contributed to enhancing political capabilities and reducing political poverty of conservative women and helped them to contribute to epistemic justice by making their diverse and multiple experiences of gender inequality heard and discussed in a friendly and democratic environment of co-production and screening. Findings from the analysis illustrate that providing an epistemic, friendly, and democratic space allows the expansion of political and feminist capabilities of women. On the other hand, we would also like to draw attention to a couple of limitations related to the context and space so as not to romanticise the participatory methods. Although we have argued that participatory research proved to be critical in the formation of an alternative counter public space as a response to anti-egalitarian spaces that favour dominant voices, two groups were sceptical about displaying their LGBT video publicly as they were hesitant of the reactions they would receive in a patriarchal society. Their display was only limited to the other groups in a closed environment, and they refused to go public. Despite this limitation, the discussions and interviews reflect that the co-production of the videos was important in equalising structural power and having the freedom to say what they think. The second issue was related to controlled and monitored public and political spaces. Students noted that they felt slightly more comfortable in displaying these videos to other groups in a closed environment. Due to the recent shrinkage of space in civil society in Turkey, many women self-censored some of the issues that they had wanted to raise in public discussion forums, although they found the discussion very fruitful and enjoyed the experience of speaking up for the first time in front of the public. This situation is directly related to the current political climate in Turkey and limits imposed on freedom of expression.

To sum up, we can argue that higher education institutions have a public good role to provide equal and participatory spaces. However, we

see that this is not always possible and arts-based participatory methods like video-production can be one way to enable epistemological inclusiveness, democratic space, and advancing people's political capabilities. We achieved some of this in this project. The participants expanded their political capabilities by challenging the notion of political poverty through engaging in a research process that accounted for their voices, provided a safe space to engage in deliberations to influence the agenda, and some of the debates strengthened their agency and feminist consciousness. We argue that women have gained significant functionings that are crucial for their enactment of the political capabilities of expression, thereby contributing to epistemic democracy/justice, despite the limitations outlined above.

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8

A Participatory Photovoice Project: Towards Capability Expansion of 'Invisible' Students in South Africa

Melanie Walker and Mikateko Mathebula

Introduction

Amartya Sen (2019) reminds us of the significant synergies of interpretation and action. Yet Jean Dreze (2002, p. 817) writes that in practice, '[t]he worlds of research and action are far apart and the gulf shows no sign of narrowing'. In Dreze's view it is not just that research can help action but that action can also enhance the quality of research so that research and action can belong to a common cause. Through discussing our participatory action research photovoice project undertaken in 2018–2019 with low-income student-researchers from four universities in South Africa, we try to show how this might work practically through <u>both</u> advancing knowledge (interpretation) about university experiences <u>and</u> action. Our aim was to explore the possibilities for fostering 'narrative capabilities' (Watts 2008) as foundational to greater epistemic justice

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(Fricker 2007), focusing on how students experienced and reflected on their knowledge of exclusions and inclusions. Our intention was to involve students as researchers, adopting a methodology that recognised them as legitimate producers of higher education knowledge. Our project combined photography stories, with critical and shared reflections by participants, aimed at the expansion of 'epistemic capability' (Fricker 2015) through narrative and storytelling. Moreover, we wanted to challenge the partial narrative of low-income students as being all the same. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009, p. 1) reminds us of 'the danger of a single story', in this case about low-income students. She explains that '[o]ur lives, our cultures, are composed of many overlapping stories. If we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding'. Of course, a narrative is never merely a personal and idiosyncratic story. Stories are played out on a structural field, embedded in political, social, and historical conditions, and participatory research must be attentive to this. We return to this point later in the chapter.

We also saw the possibility in participatory photovoice to contribute to an aspirational decolonial ethics which might enable previously invisible voices and stories in a global South context to be heard. We regard this as aspirational because we recognise that knowledge and university conditions are not yet propitious, but, following Sen (2009), we shoot for the imperfect rather than not acting at all. This ethical stance in our research processes is more than an academic exercise but one of human concern (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). Being understood, expressing oneself, and being able to contribute to social meaning-making are basic human capacities and constitutive of a dignified life (Fricker 2007)—the right to think, theorise, and interpret the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017). A decolonial ethics requires, as Fanon (1967 [1961]) argues, a logic of personhood which requires being human in ways which enable dignity and which are generous, ethical, and compassionate. Moreover, if 'the signature of epistemic hegemony is the idea of "knowledge" rather than "knowledges"' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, p. 8), then cognitive justice is demanded for a decolonial ethics, that is, the recognition of the diverse ways of knowing on which we can draw to make meaning of our lives. Thus it means fostering practices that challenge the 'scientific' view that only some forms of knowledge-making are credible and legitimate in the

academy—De Sousa Santos' (2014) notion of 'abyssal thinking' that reduces the humanity of some—thereby neglecting epistemic resources that may be available when students are put in a position to craft accounts of their own worlds. Thus, advancing epistemic freedoms (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018) involves democratising knowledge and legitimating forms of knowledge and knowing beyond the 'scientific' or 'philosophical' in an 'ecology of knowledges' (De Sousa Santos 2014). Our research practices as well as the substantive focus of our research need to be grounded in advancing 'authentic humanity' (Smith 1999, p. 24). This aligns with our vision of the potential of university practices and research to be just, equitable, collective, and agency-enhancing.

Narrative Capability to Advance an Epistemic Justice Capability

In our view, advancing an ecology of knowledges requires not only the inclusion of many voices but, as importantly, inclusive, agential, and empowering research methodologies and processes to enable narrative capability (Godwin Phelps 2006; Watts 2008). We understand 'capabilities' (Sen 2009) to mean the freedoms each individual enjoys and that these freedoms are the means and ends of human development and wellbeing. Thus the core focus of the approach is on the effective opportunities people have to be and to do what they have reason to value. It highlights the difference between what is effectively possible or substantive freedoms (known as 'capabilities') and outcomes or what is actually achieved (known as 'functionings'). What matters in arriving at these assessments, for Sen (2009), is the lives that people can actually live. This means broadening the informational basis on which we make evaluative judgments about undergraduate students' lives to include capabilities and functionings. Sen (1990, p. 111) calls this 'the territory of justice' and explains that '[t]he informational basis of judgment identifies the information on which the judgment is directly dependent … [it] determines the factual territory over which considerations of justice would directly

apply'. Thus in our project we asked: what freedoms were enhanced for participants, and whether or not they have reason to value them?

Turning specifically to narrative capability, Godwin Phelps (2006) writes about Truth Commissions, but we think her case for narrative has potential relevance for participatory research. Following Ricoeur (2006, p. 18) who suggests that 'the first basic capability is the capacity to speak' and through storytelling to construct our personal identities, Godwin Phelps argues that storytelling, being able to speak about one's own life, generates a capability of self-recognition. Storytelling is then an essential part of a rich notion of what it means to be human, it is 'an essential human act; it is what we humans do; it is an act by which we assert our humanity' (Godwin Phelps 2006, p. 106). We need opportunities to participate in an attentive community that can hear, acknowledge, and value our stories through interaction and discussion to enhance our capabilities in a way which is epistemically just. This constitutes a form of 'social' or 'dialogical' truth (Sachs 2000). Moreover, stories involve us emotionally and not only intellectually, 'they draw us in, challenge our autonomy, and make us cognizant of our inevitable interconnectedness' (Godwin Phelps 2006, p. 115). Narratives also show that individuals and the particular matter, and this aligns well with capabilities. Humans are *homo narrans*, says Godwin Phelps (2006, p. 107), because we understand our lives in terms of narrative and through narrative find or assert our place in families, communities, and, in our project, a university. In short, to limit opportunities in a university (our research setting) for narrative is then to limit what it means to be fully human.

Michael Watts (2008, p. 100) focuses on the use of stories for research purposes, offering a definition of narrative capability as 'the real opportunities that individuals have to tell their stories' and 'the substantive freedom to deploy one's narrative capital in order to be heard and acknowledged'. This raises questions about the conditions of possibility of research and the effect on the freedoms of participants to tell their stories and to tell them in ways that they have reason to value. Narrative functioning in particular reflects the real opportunities students actually have to tell the stories they value and have reason to value and the freedoms to do so. As Watts (2008, p. 102) explains, if 'the individual's voice is not heard, she cannot contribute to the debate and, moreover, she may

find herself acquiescing in the unchallenged value attributed to unjust hierarchies,' so that 'some students may become resigned to not being heard'. However, enabling the voices of research participants means more than simply letting them speak as might be the case in qualitative interviews. Rather, it needs a supportive development process so that students, such as the ones we worked with, can 'articulate and understand their own lives, acknowledging their own values and perspectives to avoid the hegemonic imposition of our [academic researcher] interpretations of their lives' (Watts 2008, p. 106).

We further locate narrative capability as constitutive of specifically epistemic forms of justice. Here we draw on Miranda Fricker (2007, p. 20) who explains that the reverse—epistemic injustice—is 'a wrong done to someone specifically in her capacity as a knower'. Epistemic injustice thus refers to unfair treatment in knowledge practices, understanding, and participation in communicative practices (research development, learning, and so on). Epistemic exclusion can sometimes be so damaging 'that it cramps the very development of self' (Fricker 2007, p. 163). For example, in a university context, students who lack the required middle-class expressive modes may be disadvantaged as credible participants and contributors to knowledge. Or students may not be seen as credible knowledge producers in their own right compared to academic researchers. Quite simply, if you are in a disadvantaged position to influence discourse, you are subject to epistemic injustice and suffer reduced epistemic agency (Elgin 2013). To exclude or misrecognise students because of prejudice—that students can only be receivers of knowledge or because of status inequalities—would be to limit their epistemic development; this can cut deep into confidence and agency.

Two forms of epistemic injustice are explained by Fricker (2007). Testimonial injustice occurs when a hearer gives a reduced level of credibility to what someone says due to prejudice against the speaker as being competent to contribute knowledge resources (because of epistemically irrelevant reasons such as race, gender, social class, rural background, and so on). Testimonial injustice takes an individual form but can become systematic and embedded in the social structure, in addition to being personal and transactional. As Fricker (2015) explains, people are prevented from becoming fully who they are when they are not recognised

as knowers and tellers in an epistemic community. The second form is hermeneutical injustice, evident in failed attempts to make an experience intelligible to oneself or to someone else. Hermeneutical injustice is shaped by dominant understandings and corresponding structures of power that take some understandings (and some research forms) to be legitimate and others not. Unequal participation in generating social meanings creates hermeneutic marginalisation of a person or group and exposes how dominant discursive resources fail (or refuse) to comprehend the experiences of the oppressed. If anyone is excluded for epistemically irrelevant reasons, then the frustration of their capability reveals the wider structures of inequality—who gets access to what knowledge under what conditions and with what outcomes.

In her later work (2015), Fricker considers how to address epistemic injustices by drawing on the language of capability. She argues that being able to contribute epistemic materials to the shared common resource (e.g., in a research process) is fundamental to human wellbeing and an egalitarian value. All citizens should be able to make epistemic contributions and to have their contributions taken up fairly in social and educational contexts, rather than having some contributions rejected or undervalued by more powerful others. Epistemic contributions are, therefore, crucial for promoting epistemic justice, and Fricker proposes that one of our most basic human needs 'is to use our reason in order to discern the everyday facts and social meanings that condition, constrain, and make sense of our shared lives' (2015, p. 75). To this end, she proposes the concept of 'epistemic contribution capability', which requires a comprehensive notion of the person as both a receiver and a giver in epistemically hospitable situations which nurture 'epistemic courage'. Fricker does not discuss the corresponding functioning, that of actually being an epistemic contributor, which we take to be as significant as the capability in education contexts. It is not enough to have the capability if the freedoms to exercise it are not also in place. Thus, we have in mind both the capability and the functioning—both matter in combination—to operationalise epistemic justice practically. Moreover, as Hookway (2010) notes, actual participation in a wide variety of epistemic practices is necessary for developing one's agency capacities as an epistemic contributor.

Participatory Photovoice

We think participatory research can be a space to enable narrative capability and the epistemic contributor capability and functioning. A key political goal for participatory research has to do with the fact that it is typically those with less power who speak through the research process—people whose voices, agendas, and research do not (yet) count as valid knowledge contributions. Instead, the participants (who would normally be considered objects of the research) act as co-investigators so that they might come 'to a critical form of thinking about their world' (Freire 1972, p. 104). We understand participatory research to seek deliberately 'to include the investigated in the process of investigation itself' (Korala-Azad and Fuentes 2009–2010, p. 1) and to strive for methods that are ethical, open, respectful, and alert to power dynamics. Participatory research involves active participation by all and reflection through democratic relationships (Reason and Bradbury 2008) so that participants' voices, values, and insights are central. Therefore, participatory approaches aim at doing research with and alongside, rather than on and about. Even though projects may not always or even typically succeed in intervening in larger political processes, the aspiration is for more democratic and inclusive forms of knowledge-making.

However, there are diverse interpretations of 'participation' so that Thiollent and Colette (2017) question the limited value given to participation by some scholars working with participatory approaches and their contradictory paradigmatic positionality, which is used to cover and mask interests with only a limited critical perspective on participatory practices. As they explain, participation can be confused with other terms such as 'collaboration' or 'cooperation'. 'Participant' or 'participatory' is also sometimes attached to research as if it were easy to characterise and to do. In our case, our aim was 'thick' participation, enabling the voices of invisible actors in the university, challenging status inequalities, and fostering the epistemic contributions associated with knowledge-making.

In particular, our project used photovoice (Wang and Burris 1997) as a process of visual and oral storytelling so that participants might

document aspects of their lives on their own terms. For the process, participants are given digital cameras and asked to document various aspects of their lived experiences through photographs. Images are then used to elicit analytic discussions during focus groups or interviews as participants narrate the personal significance of the images. Projects typically conclude with an exhibition, where findings can reach a wider public. The anticipated value lies in asking participants to imagine and to create their own visual stories which, in our experience, can add to spoken responses to interview questions determined largely by the university interviewer. This creates a layer of richness within the data not possible through interviews alone; photographs and student-chosen words can generate empathic and emotional responses which can be important for connecting both within and outside the project community (Wang and Burris 1997). It further means recognising the development process and the expansion of capabilities and functionings as outcomes of the research, as much as any substantive contributions to knowledge.

We also chose photovoice[1] because we felt it would be technically accessible to students from low-income backgrounds with whom we were working (see Table 8.1) and who we knew were not that familiar with technology or the internet from their youth or school days. We had already experimented with the method in an earlier project (see Walker et al. 2019) where we had found that photovoice can enable students to be involved at all stages, unlike participatory videos where very few have the editing skills in our context to produce the final product (and the interpretation). It was also reasonably cost-effective to use digital cameras and could be done in a suitable amount of time. Three facilitators, the two authors of this chapter, as well as Carmen Martinez-Vargas, at that time a doctoral student at UFS, planned the process together and supported its implementation with 19 student co-researchers.

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[1] The photovoice project is part of the longitudinal *Miratho* research project (see www.ufs.ac.za/miratho) (2016–2020), a mixed-methods project on achieved higher education learning outcomes for low-income youth in five diverse universities. Data includes longitudinal life histories from 65 low-income rural and some urban youth, a survey, and secondary data sets. We focus on students from low-income backgrounds as a justice question, because we think this throws into sharp relief who has wealth and power in our society and who has wealth and power in our higher education system.

Table 8.1 Photovoice participants

	Name	G	University	Course	Home language	First in family at university
1	Dumisani	M	City	B.A. Language Practice	IsiZulu	No, a cousin has been to varsity
2	Khethiwe	M	City	B.A. Politics	IsiXhosa	No, both parents have been to varsity
3	Mthunzi	M	City	B.A. Tourism Development	IsiZulu	No, three cousins have been to varsity
4	Sonto	F	City	B.A. Politics	IsiZulu	Yes
5	Makungu	M	City	Diploma in Accountancy	Xitsonga	No, aunts, cousins, and uncle have been to varsity
6	Maduvha	F	Country	B.Ed. Foundation phase	Tshivenda	Yes
7	Vutomi	M	Country	B.Sc. Soil Science	Xitsonga	Yes
8	Tintswalo	M	Country	B.Ed. Agriculture and Biology	Tshivenda	Yes
9	Rimisa	M	Country	B.A. in Indigenous Knowledge Systems	Tshivenda	Yes
10	Ntondeni	F	Metro	B.Sc. Construction Studies	Tshivenda	No, father has been to university
11	Tiyani	M	Metro	B.Sc. Construction Studies	Xitsonga	No, brother has been to university
12	Asanda	M	Provincial	B.Ed. Senior Phase, Accounting, and Business Studies	IsiXhosa	Yes
13	Ntando	M	Provincial	B.Com. Accounting	IsiXhosa	No, sister has been to university
14	Busisiwe	F	Provincial	B.Ed. Business, Maths, and Sign Language	IsiXhosa	Yes

(continued)

Table 8.1 (continued)

	Name	G	University	Course	Home language	First in family at university
15	Anathi	F	Provincial	B.Ed. English and Technology	IsiXhosa	Yes
16	Bongeka	F	Provincial	B.Soc.Sc. Sociology and Communications	IsiXhosa	Yes
17	Aphiwe	F	Provincial	B.Ed. English and Geography	IsiXhosa	Yes
18	Zanele	M	Provincial	B.Sc. IT	IsiXhosa	Yes
19	Langutani	F	Provincial	B.Sc. Genetics and Microbiology	Xitsonga	No, two aunts, eight cousins, and one brother have been to university

Preceding the photovoice project, the life history students[2] had already attended workshops to develop their own river of life—a drawing of a river that is symbolic of one's life—including boulders or crocodiles to represent obstacles or bridges and stepping stones to represent opportunities (see Fig. 8.1). The river of life approach allows participants to reflect on and be involved in telling their own stories, in their own way, and in hearing about the lives of others. In this way they had begun to think about their university trajectories.

We then developed an outline of a four-day photovoice process[3] and chose the theme of students' stories on exclusion and inclusion at university (with effects for learning outcomes). We invited volunteers from among the 65 life history participants, and 19 student-researchers chose to produce individual photo-stories at one of three 4-day workshops in the provinces of the Free State, Limpopo, and Gauteng. Student-researchers received basic photography training, discussed the theme of exclusion and inclusion (to encourage critical or discursive knowledge alongside narrative capability), and then produced storyboards on which

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[2] All students' names are pseudonyms, as are the names of the universities. Provincial is in Free State province, City and Metropolitan in Gauteng, and Country in Limpopo province.

[3] The detailed plan is available from the chapter authors.
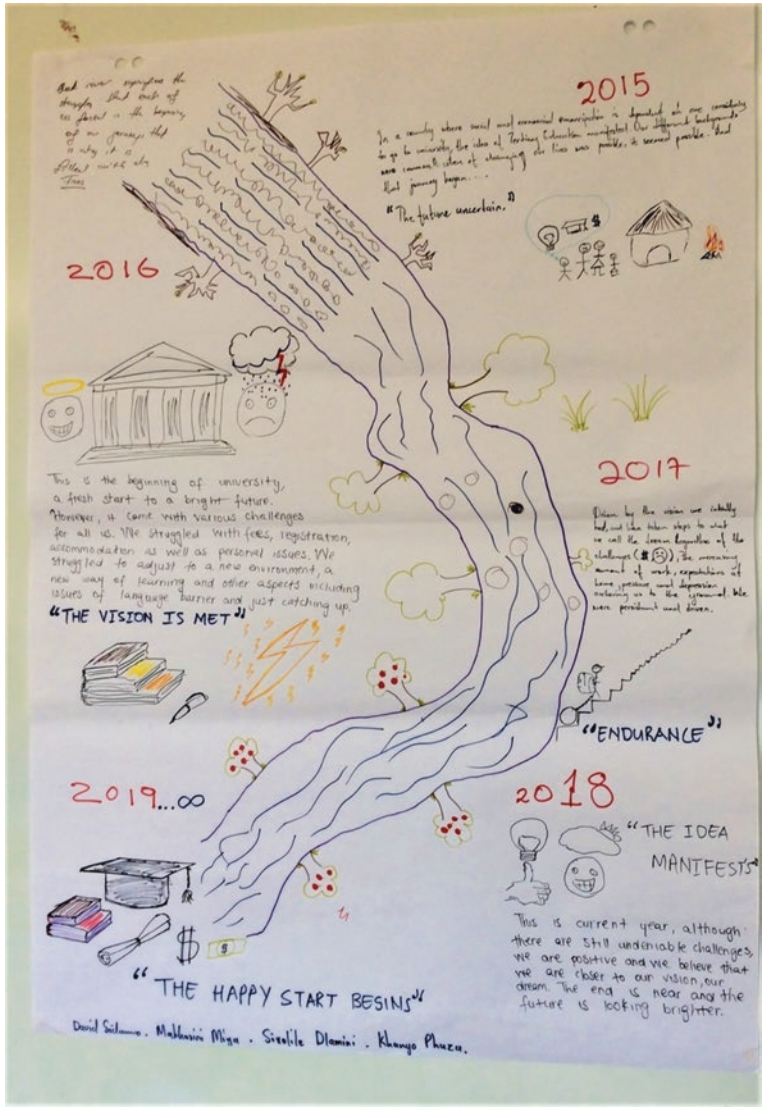
Fig. 8.1   River of life drawing

they could base their photographs and narratives. They took their own photographs and presented these for discussion and feedback, followed by further photograph taking. On the final day of the workshop, they curated and captioned their stories, including an overall title. This last day involved them in collective analysis and an exhibition for each other of their visual stories. If they wished they could also record a short video about their experiences.

In their individual visual narratives, student-researchers documented in photographs and text their often painful experiences of exclusion at their university but also highlighted their determination and hard work as they struggled to be included. Story titles included 'My long journey towards the power of knowledge', 'Against all odds', 'You don't have to go through it alone', 'You can do it!', 'The path: not for the faint hearted', 'Realising my potential', 'The dream is still alive', 'A life I can't wait for you to know', 'The untold tales of varsity', and 'The difference between "here" and "there" is courage'. Some of the stories were more abstract and symbolic than others, some were aesthetically more accomplished than others, but all of them had commonalities, highlighting issues related to lack of finance, accommodation, insufficient resources, friendships, and resilience. Very few took photographs about their experiences of teaching and learning, which surprised us.

In March 2019 we brought the student-researchers together from across the country for a residential two-day colloquium at the University of the Free State where we ourselves are based. During the two days, students critically discussed inclusion and exclusion and worked together on a common photo-story. They took time to look at all the photo-stories which had been printed on high-quality paper and displayed for the public exhibition, discussed them together to identify common themes and challenges, and then selected 12 pictures to be used for the common photobook. They worked together on a book title—*The Bitter Truth of Success*—and an ordering of the photographs, adding a title for each photograph and short captions. In addition to English, they decided to translate the common book into IsiXhosa, Sesotho, IsiZulu, Xitsonga, and Tshivenda. They also drafted a charter for an inclusive university to be included in the common book, working first in small groups to produce key points, which could be presented to leaders at their universities. Three

of the research team then worked on the proposals and categorised them into common themes. These were then further discussed with the student-researchers to see if they agreed. The result is a Charter for Inclusion (included in the common book), which the students view as a reasonable set of demands for universities to implement. It has five overlapping dimensions, which are elaborated in the common book: (1) outreach and access, (2) student welfare, (3) inclusive teaching, (4) access to ICT, and (5) teaching spaces.

The colloquium culminated in a student-researcher-led public discussion and public exhibition which powerfully highlighted the importance of enabling the narrative capability of student-researchers, allowing them to find their voices, developing their confidence, and taking account of their experiences. As part of the exhibition, the students presented and discussed their individual photo-stories with the audience. We also produced two short videos based on student reflections on how they felt about and what they learnt from the photovoice process.

Narrative Functioning: Being Able to Tell Your Story in Your Own Way

The narrative functioning and its importance is evident in the group interviews after the provincial workshops, written reflections by students at the colloquium, colloquium discussions, the photobooks, and the delight evident in the body language and voices captured in our short videos which we simply do not find in most of the life history interviews. We draw on all these data sources and have chosen to include as many voices as possible rather than always summarising or paraphrasing for the storytellers, which, in our view, constitutes both a disservice to the storytellers (speaking for) and a loss of the richness of the project. Stories and reflections captured both the particularity of each story and the generality of low-income student trajectories, animated by the text and photographs students themselves produced. Three integrated dimensions of narrative in particular became clear.

'One Should Own Your Truth and Not Let It Weigh You Down': Self-Recognition

Particularity was important. As Sonto (Gauteng) said, 'this project made me realise that each and every single experience is meaningful'. Maduvha (Limpopo) added at the colloquium discussions that 'we are fortunate because we are here today. We had a chance to express ourselves, to tell our stories to the people. Now our stories are going everywhere, to the world'. Mthunzi (Gauteng) told us that 'I feel from now on, I can tackle anything in life, because I can see from the photovoice, my story from before I went to varsity and after, and even now. So, I'm just happy and grateful for everything and for the opportunity. [I have] No words. No words'. Increased confidence underpinned being able to tell their stories. Ntondeni (Gauteng) commented she had learnt 'to be more confident in myself and this experience has really boosted my self-esteem. I have also gained confidence to socialise with other people from different backgrounds', while Tintswalo (Limpopo) said, 'I learned self-confidence because I used to doubt myself that I can't speak in front of others'.

Stories were reflexive, brave, painful, and emotional for the teller and the audience. Thus Maduvha (Limpopo) wrote that 'I felt emotional when I viewed other pictures … [it] Reminds me of pain I experienced'. Busisiwe (Free State) explained that at first she had had doubts of sharing in the project 'because I'm the kind of person who likes to keep things to herself. Whatever happens, happens. So, I actually got a chance to see the importance of expressing yourself; how you feel … it affects you emotionally if you keep things to yourself, but if you let them all out, then in that way you'll find some solutions in how to deal with whatever problems you have'. Anathi (Free State) commented that 'I also learned that it is very, very important to speak out. Talking about it, it really helps you, it frees you'. Bongeka (Free State) eloquently spoke at the public colloquium, and we tell her story at some length (see Fig. 8.2 for her photo-story):

> The title of my story is, 'My Journey of Thorns and Roses'. In the first picture of my story, is the picture of roses with thorns. Which means that when you get the letter, when you get confirmation that you are going to

Fig. 8.2 Photo-story 'My journey of thorns and roses'

go to varsity, it's as beautiful as a rose in the morning. The smell is the most beautiful smell ever. Because there's hope. Being the first person from your family, from my family to go to varsity, that was very beautiful. However, I focused more on the rose than the thorns. I was never told that there are struggles. I was never told that being a varsity student means that you will face obstacles. There will be things that will keep on weighing you down. It's so funny how many students, even though others don't say, are depressed, because we are told that the key to success is education. But we are never told that it comes with obstacles. We're never told that it comes with barriers. We're never told that it comes with a lot of nos. Where you think that because I am a varsity student, because I come from this background, definitely I will get a yes, only to get a no. And you have to dust yourself, you have to stand up. You have to fight, because you know that I'm the light in my family. I'm that hope. My story ends with my last picture of someone on a staircase. Meaning that even though there are challenges, even though there are those blockades, even though there are those thorns, even though there are those mornings when you just feel like giving up, where you feel like, is it even worth it? Where you feel like there are a lot of people who are successful out there who do not have degrees. Moments where you feel like, should I be here? Do I belong here, or should I be elsewhere? Moments you feel like, should I come up with something else to make money and be better off without this degree? Is it even worth

it? Is it even worth the stress? Is it even worth not sleeping and studying? It is, especially if you are that first person to go to varsity. It is, especially if you know your background. It is, if you know that your parents cannot actually pay for your fees. It is, so that your kids, or your cousins, or your siblings don't go through what you went through. It is, because you can be someone else's mentor. You can actually help someone else. Imagine if you give up now!

Like Bongeka, Dumisani (Gauteng) highlighted Adichie's (2009) warning of the dangers of a single story, explaining that '[Photovice] showed me that I was exposed to the danger of a single story. I was excited about the idea of going to university. That was my single story of a university. Fast forward years where I needed to be a university student. I found myself in the same situation with the excitement of not knowing. I was excited but I didn't know. The only knowledge that I had, was that one single story about university depicted by the movies. I found myself in a totally different story'.

Threaded through all their accounts was a language of challenges and obstacles, of determination and astonishing resilience, of moving towards a desired future, honestly voicing hopes and fears. For example, Rimisa (Limpopo) said: 'this project is always a reminder for me to find myself. Because always in this project you are thinking about the story of your life. So once I am talking about the story of my life it helps me to find myself, where I am. That's why I will be always motivated. You don't lose focus. You came from this background and you need to go somewhere'. Tintswalo (Limpopo) said: 'I was shy to tell you my story, because I thought I'm the only one who comes from a poor background', while Rimisa (Limpopo) commented: 'The challenges that I experienced previously were also caused by other family members. So by participating … it helped me to forgive myself and forgive them. It helped me to see myself in the future, to see what I can do and what kind of person or family I want to have in the future'. The project helped students to keep going: 'This has taught me not to give up in life… It has given me a boost not to give up. Because at some point I felt like I was giving up on my academics… And it actually gave me more strength to keep on challenging things that are challenging me and just fight back. And I'm closer, I'm

getting there, so I shouldn't give up and … I shouldn't give up because I was giving up. I was losing hope. The past few weeks, I was losing hope' (Mthunzi, Gauteng). Finally, Makungu (Gauteng) found the project helped in looking to the future: 'to be ahead like of what I want to be in life. So through the capturing of everything for me it was important, it made me realise and bring the most of what I want for the next day, and the next and next'.

Storytelling opportunities, under supportive conditions of speaking, listening, of being heard, community, and mutual recognition operationalised narrative capability but also epistemic justice at the intersections of the photovoice process.

'I Was Not Alone': Valuing of Others' Stories in a Photovoice Community

The notion of feeling 'safe', of being able to tell a story without fear, of not being alone, of relationships surfaced in many of the comments; the process for student-researchers was mutually reciprocal and recognitional. They valued both hearing the stories of others as well as the opportunity to tell their own story. Thus Mthunzi (Gauteng) told us that 'I felt overwhelmed, I felt connection between and around the team, teamwork. I felt intrigued by other students' thinking capacity and how they went with the project'. Knowing that you are not alone in your struggles was significant for students. For example, Ntondeni (Gauteng) said that 'I felt as if I am really not alone in these struggles of being a university student. This has really taught me to be more appreciative of what I have and I am really proud of all the achievements I have made and all obstacles I have overcome'.

Students were able to reflect together on their own strengths and to feel hopeful about their futures so that Asanda (Free State) similarly said, 'I learned how strong a person who is after his/her dreams can be. People who should've given up long time are still pushing until they get their degrees. When I participated in the photovoice I felt that nothing is impossible if you are determined. That if you meet with the right people and knock on the right doors until they open you will make your dreams

come true. I felt that the situations we firstly encounter are not permanent'. Dumisani (Gauteng) explained that 'I knew my own story alone rather than knowing other people's stories. And them telling their own story, made me realise that challenges can be similar … understanding, getting a different view or a different story from somebody else and what they've been through and what they've undergone through as an individual through their academic life, gave me an understanding that you're not alone and giving up right now would be giving up while it's too early'. Thus, students from different universities discovered that it was not only those from their own university that faced obstacles and challenges, and they drew emotional strength from hearing these stories. We were, however, surprised (and concerned) that universities seem not to provide spaces for students to make connections like the ones enabled by photovoice so that they feel alone and lonely in their struggles.

The sharing of stories was oriented as much to contributing to the lives of others beyond the project. Thus Dumisani (Gauteng) summed up: 'I felt part of something big and life changing. Being able to share my life story with someone to help them have it better than I did. To be able to share my events in order to change how the education structure should work is extremely profound than I could ever express. Everyone has a purpose in their lives and many others. I fulfilled one of them in this project. I hope it changes how our education system is'. Students showed concern about motivating and helping others through their own stories: 'I have learned to be able to tell other students who will face the problem that they must still hold on and know that the problem is not the end of the world, they must know where they are going' (Vutomi, Limpopo).

Intertwined with valuing the stories of others was making connections and building relationships, both emerging from and enabling storytelling and reflexivity. Ntando (Free State) explained, 'When I participated in the photovoice I learned how to build relationships with people from different places. I also learned irrespective of where we are based, we face similar problems when we come to the university space. I learned that people have different experiences, beliefs and perspectives. It is important to respect each other's differences'. As important was learning to turn to others for help so that Busisiwe (Free State) told us that 'The best way of succeeding through all the obstacles is by reaching out for help, trying to

associate yourself with others'. As Rimisa (Limpopo) put it, 'if we make a team, we conquer the challenges and move on'.

'Pictures Can Actually Tell a Tale, When Given a Voice': New Skills, Critical Knowledge

Making visual stories using photographs, a new skill for all the students practically fostered storytelling, as well as the opportunities to present and speak in discussions and to analyse data. The process was imaginative, creative, critical, and collective. Students became immersed in the process of learning photography skills, learning how to make a storyboard, and then learning how to produce a visual narrative and discuss it with others. The 'prop' provided by this process seemed to produce a 'narrating space'. For example, Mthunzi (Gauteng) explained at the colloquium discussion that 'I learned that a photo can tell many stories depending on how you want to interpret it. I believe photos play a role in our lives, as they tell our life stories or tales'. Through this process, he had learnt about people's stories, 'which are very close to their hearts', and 'it just showed me the power that a simple photo can be able to do, the change that it can be able to interact and be able to affect someone's life. That's the thing that I learnt here and I am grateful for it'. Bongeka (Free State) added, 'Because we see pictures each and every day but we never get time to actually explain every detail of the picture. So, I've learned that a picture is not just what you see, it could be more… you can take a picture of a rose, but it can mean a deeper thing. You just see a rose with thorns and you can actually be like, oh, some people think thorns are protectors of roses, and others are like, thorns actually enhance the beauty of the rose. So, it helped me to be able to interpret pictures'. Makungu (Gauteng) told the group that 'the photovoice project helped me to learn how to present my story visually … it's so nice because I've managed to take some pictures… I can present people with something that is not explained directly to them … visually it explains itself'. Sonto (Gauteng) felt that you can use photographs 'in a symbolic way to describe what type of situation you come from, and your situation will symbolise something, maybe to be able to correlate with a particular individual. And you

use this photo to be able to impact someone's life'. The process was creative because 'you don't have one way of understanding things. If you want to describe what the photo is by just taking a photo, that's an abstract meaning. That's being creative, that's telling a story in a different way … the pictures help you to be creative and understand that there isn't one way to do things. Pictures can tell a story' (Dumisani, Gauteng).

Some began to understand photovoice as a research process so that Khethiwe (Gauteng) said, 'last semester we did something about qualitative and quantitative research approaches. It was just a theoretical approach, like how to interview people, be able to work with people, you know, manoeuvre your way around research. And being able to apply what's on your mind set and being able to approach people, your limitations on how you should treat people when doing a research approach. So now I feel like, when you did it in the practical session and I was a part of it, I was like, oh, okay now, oh, this is how it's done'. From a slightly different direction, Tiyani (Gauteng) remarked that 'this experience showed me the good part of research. At school [university] we see it as being difficult because we are not used to it … So we don't usually go out and do interviews. So this experience made me see the good part of research as well'.

Towards Educational Change, with Some Qualifications

Working together, the three functionings (see Fig. 8.3) constitute the expansion of narrative capability and the corresponding epistemic contributor functioning of being able to give and receive epistemic resources,

Intersecting narrative capability-functionings		
Self-recognition	Mutual recognition & relationships	Creative and critical skills and knowledge of inclusion and exclusion
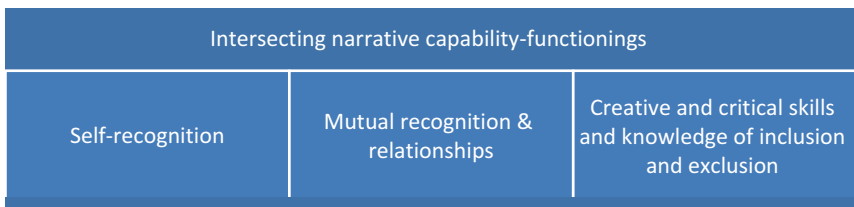
Fig. 8.3   Narrative capability formation through photovoice

which, it is clear, all the students had reason to value. The narrative capability and functioning both strengthen the epistemic, and the epistemic in turn reinforces narrative. In this way, we can foster greater epistemic justice in practice.

We suggest that this is a contribution to greater epistemic justice and to advancing epistemic courage (Fricker 2007) fostered through speaking out, having a point of view, and being confident about expressing oneself. Moreover, students were critically aware of the educational challenges even though they are told that education is the way to a better life, so that Dumisani (Gauteng) remarked that 'we are told a single story, that education is the key. What happens when the key is cut? What happens when you find yourself in situations where your key is not fitting the door-knob?' For him and for others in the group, the photobooks are an opportunity to make a new key because he said, 'A book can travel far. At one point I read that a book is a present that you can open a million times'. The group told their stories, they produced photobooks which they can share with others, they wrote an inclusive university charter, and they held a public exhibition. These are significant achievements, even though more needs to be done.

As we have seen, photovoice can foster personhood oriented to the wellbeing both of self and of others, as well as more aware minds by advancing narrative functioning to become and be an epistemic contributor in a sustainable way. While we do not see the individual as the only site of change, nonetheless it matters that individual epistemic functionings were fostered. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 41) puts it well when she writes that as researchers we ought to be committed to producing knowledge 'that helps create spaces for the voices of the silenced to be expressed and "listened to", and that challenge racism, colonialism and oppression'. Research need not privilege the interests and power of the (academic) researcher but rather re-position those who have been objects of research into 'questioners, critics, theorists, knowers, and communicators' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017, p. 1). We can see that testimonial injustice was shifted some way and hermeneutical justice advanced in the listening to and acknowledging the contributions made by the students about unheard oppressions in the university and exclusions that they face in their lives and in foregrounding their own voices. Power relations were

transformed albeit it only in a temporary photovoice community from the vertical to the horizontal. By mobilising community and connections (quite clearly from what students said, 'hidden' in university structures), a community was built.

Ricoeur (2006) argues that capabilities lead to self-recognition, comprising the capacity to speak, to act (speaking is itself a form of action), and to tell a story where reciprocal relations embodied in this process connect capabilities and rights. We could say that beyond capabilities expansion, the right to research was secured for the students. Indeed, it is Appadurai (2006, p. 167) who argues for research as a right. While research 'is normally seen as a high-end, technical activity, available by training and class background to specialists in education, the sciences and related professional fields', as we have argued in this chapter in making a case for participatory research, research is seldom understood as 'a capacity with democratic potential, much less as belonging to the family of rights'. Appadurai (2006) argues for research as a right of a special kind, 'the capacity to make disciplined inquiries into those things we need to know, but do not know yet… To make decisions that require them to make systematic forays beyond their current knowledge horizons'. In this sense, the photovoice project advanced a specific right, as well as capabilities, for the students as we can see from their reflections on the project. This constitutes a democratic as well as an epistemic advance.

On the other hand, hermeneutical injustices are structural and complex, difficult to eradicate, and require more than individual change. The critique by Nygreen (2009–2010) and others of participatory research raises the dilemma of scale such that local interventions (such as ours) do not impact on structural inequalities and are mostly too limited for social change beyond the participating group. We absolutely do not claim that a participatory method on its own can resolve dilemmas of power, participation, and scale. We were struck too by how student-researchers seemed to accept the university structures and individualised their struggles—it was up to them to make things work and not up to the university to work to help and support them. Elizabeth Anderson (2012) rightly emphasises the importance of addressing structures of power that, she argues, Fricker overlooks in her emphasis only on cultivating individual virtues as the remedy to epistemic injustice: 'The larger systems by which

we organise the training of inquirers and the circulation, uptake and incorporation of individuals' epistemic contributions to the construction of knowledge may need to be reformed to ensure that justice is done to each knower, and groups of inquirers' (Anderson 2012, p. 165). We acknowledge that our project was less successful at shifting university structures and power.

In the end, we know that the logic of the university as it is is not directed towards epistemological inclusiveness. As Dreze (2002) reminds us, the university is well integrated with structures of power—it is not a neutral space so that engaging students in participatory research is entangled with the reality of our context. Nonetheless, we can confront challenges without taking hope away so that any move in the direction of more freedom and greater justice seems better than no move at all. We are still of the view that the photovoice project was a more epistemically just approach than doing nothing at all when educational perfection is out of reach and that the expansion of the narrative capability and functioning is foundational to greater justice.

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9

Graffiti as a Participatory Method Fostering Epistemic Justice and Collective Capabilities Among Rural Youth: A Case Study in Zimbabwe

Tendayi Marovah and Faith Mkwananzi

Introduction

Participatory methods in qualitative research have the potential to address power dynamics that are often experienced in community contexts in which researchers enjoy an advantage over participants. However, Schneider (2012, p. 153) stresses the aim should be "to have ordinary community members generate new knowledge about issues or problems they care about and through collaboration promote personal and social change." It is from this aim and value of participation in creating new knowledge and bringing about social change that our project was designed. The chapter highlights the contribution of participants as co-researchers in a project dealing with epistemic injustices among marginalised and excluded groups, in our case, rural youth living in Binga district, Zimbabwe. We argue that the exclusive use of traditional

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methods of research in qualitative research (e.g. interviews, question-naires, focus group discussions, observations) often does not offer the space necessary for participants to confidently and meaningfully engage in and contribute to debates and processes that advance what they reasonably value to be and to do. More traditional qualitative methods may then restrict communicating ideas about self and deriving meaning and interpretation of what is of value in the immediate and desired world.

Although Schneider's (2012) use of participatory research methods focuses on the disability rights movement, the element of co-creation of knowledge is relevant to our work. We applied the innovative and creative technique of graffiti on board to enhance inclusion and to enable marginalised Tonga youth in northern Zimbabwe to participate in a way that they had not done before, from sub-theme identification in the project to results dissemination. This research approach enabled a space for them to appreciate themselves as equal citizens and contributors to society, rather than seeing themselves as passive consumers of narratives that often exclude them. We were cognisant of the fact that, regardless of the context of disadvantage in which we were operating, given the opportunity, youth will take action in "mobilising the assets and skills they have" (Cin and Dogan 2020, p. 4) to create a new narrative. Often, the mobilisation of their capabilities is for the benefit of the broader community.

Drawing on Walker (2019, p. 218), our approach made a case for "a non-negotiable and foundational epistemic capability" for Tonga youth who are often overshadowed by multiple inequalities. While we acknowledge the opportunities that state and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) create for the development of Binga district, there has not been much focus on youth in the area. More so, not much use has been made of participatory methods to address the challenges experienced by the ethnic Tonga community. Thus, through graffiti as our arts-based method, with Tonga youth as co-researchers in the project, the foundational epistemic capability suggested by Walker (2019) was advanced both ethically and as an objective. Our view is that participatory collaborations offer a unique opportunity for excluded groups to be creators of knowledge, while expanding collective capabilities fosters social cohesion. Based on this standpoint, the overall objective of our project was to co-produce knowledge about youth and make it accessible to the broader community.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. The next section provides a brief historical understanding of the context where graffiti on board was used as a tool for addressing epistemic injustice as experienced by Tonga youth. This is followed by a conceptualisation of terms where concepts such as epistemic justice, collective capabilities, and social cohesion are explained. We then discuss the methods, the process, and the key contribution of using participatory methods in the project, after which we present the findings that resulted from the process. The discussion section follows, focusing on the relationship between the concepts of collective capabilities and epistemic justice, after which we conclude the chapter by highlighting the possible contribution of participatory methods in working with marginalised youth.

Contextual Orientation

Focusing on youth between 18 and 25 years of age, the project was conducted in rural Binga, a significantly underdeveloped rural district in Zimbabwe lying on the fringes of the Zambezi River along the Kariba dam on the western border with Zambia. The area is largely inhabited by the Tonga people, who have been subject to marginalisation, social violence, and exclusion, producing disadvantage (Gwindingwe et al. 2019) among this hard-to-reach minority ethnic group. Indeed, Zimbabwe's cultural and ethnic complexity stretches back to historical socio-political clashes and conflicts that have never been fully resolved (Muchemwa 2015). Despite being the third-largest ethnic group, other ethnic groups have subjected the Tonga to various forms of structural violence over the years, such as persistent raids in the pre-colonial era, the displacement from the Zambezi valley in 1957 to make way for the Kariba dam, and a lack of development of the district in the post-colonial period. In 2012, approximately 70% of its population was classified as poor or extremely poor (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency [ZIMSTAT] 2012). The villagers, including youth, form part of secluded, hard-to-reach rural communities in Zimbabwe whose voices are often silenced and who have fewer opportunities for education and employment even though studies have highlighted the potential contribution of education in contexts of

disadvantage (see Walker and Mkwananzi 2015; Ciftci and Cin 2018; Mathebula 2019). Because of their geographic isolation, the Tonga community remains "invisible" in most political, economic, and social development discourses (Conyers 2003).

The multiple social challenges are evident even in the education infrastructure that has remained unchanged over the years. Although the district can boast of an increase in rural primary schools, the poor infrastructure and limited number of secondary schools have contributed to children who graduate from primary schools and then discontinue their schooling. As a result, most children are exposed to exploitative labour practices and gender inequality, despite strong advocacy against child exploitation by non-governmental organisations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) and local organisations such as the Basilwizi Trust. Although Binga district is often characterised by political oppression and isolation, Tonga culture has survived the influence of its surrounding dominant ethnic groups (Muderedzi et al. 2017). Tonga is known for fishing in the Zambezi River and for their craftwork, particularly weaving and basketry.

Knowledge Creation as a Capability for the Youth

Our project made use of graffiti with youth in the area, aiming to create a democratic space for engagement and opportunities for them to tell stories about their experiences and the lives they desire. This also turned out to be a starting point for collective engagement. Conceptually, therefore, we were interested in using a participatory and creative method to understand and deal with the social, political, and economic experiences of Tonga rural youth from Binga district and how these shaped epistemic injustice within this group. We understand epistemic injustice for these youth to be a culmination of years of disregard by other ethnic groups who do not see them as potential contributors to the societal, economic, cultural, and political knowledge that influences the social fabric of the country. As Fricker (2007) suggests, such disregard equates to an

injustice, which infringes on the opportunities individuals and groups have to realise their wellbeing (Sen 1999). The opportunity to "speak up" through graffiti, therefore, becomes a fundamental freedom, integral to the wellbeing of the youth and new opportunities for knowledge creation and sharing. McCowan and Unterhalter (2013) highlight the significance of the participation of citizens in the affairs of their polity, and our project considers effective involvement of local people in community-based research in creating and expanding freedoms. Graffiti has the potential to promote recognition and build collective capabilities among excluded groups and to foster democratic practices through participatory methodologies in dealing with structural epistemic injustices.

Despite a growing body of literature acknowledging the position of disadvantage occupied by youth throughout the world and particularly so in Africa, youth experiences continue to be limited by social, political, and economic challenges (Corrigan 2009; Ngang 2018). While other forms of challenges have received relatively wide attention, there has been limited focus on marginalised youth from hard-to-reach areas such as Binga in Zimbabwe and how they are affected by limited opportunities for being knowledge creators. Fricker (2007) explains two broad forms of epistemic injustices: testimonial injustice and hermeneutic injustice. The two are distinct but simultaneously complementary to one another. While with testimonial injustice, "speakers are, variously, thwarted in their claims to acknowledgement as subjects of knowledge, and thereby harmed in their self-development," in hermeneutical injustice, "speakers' knowledge claims fall into a blank gap in the available conceptual resources" (Fricker 2007, p. 2). With testimonial injustice, the harm of epistemic confidence followed by the harm to self-development affects Tonga youth. Hermeneutical injustice blocks their capacity to understand and hence to interpret their experiences.

The centrality of epistemic justice when dealing with marginalised groups is stressed by Walker (2018, p. 1) when she highlights the significance of foregrounding the "epistemic practices of knowledge, (knowing and being a knower) to understand conditions of possibility for epistemic justice." As will be shown later in the chapter in the case of Tonga youth, various factors limit them as both knowers and in the potential to know, and herein they experience both forms of injustice. Also, structurally, the

Tonga youth experience marginalisation at two levels, firstly as a minority, hard-to-reach ethnic group, and secondly as a vulnerable age group whose practices of knowledge, knowing, and being a knower are often undermined by elders. Based on this observation, it is evident that epistemic justice is closely linked with social relations and the extent to which one holds power and legitimacy in society. Thus, Fricker's (2007, p. 14) argument about "social power and how it is socially situated" is applicable in this context. Additionally, the group is disadvantaged through the capacity to control others' actions which is often exercised by particular social agents or may operate purely through structural inequalities.

Ndofirepi and Gwaravanda (2019) reiterate that epistemic forms of injustice are significant where knowledge generation is prized, and they show the implications of marginalising knowledge systems (and knowers). For example, in traditional research methodologies, participants are harmed in their self-development if they are undermined in their claims to acknowledgement as subjects of knowledge. This results in what Ndofirepi and Gwaravanda (2019) term the harm of epistemic confidence, which is subsequently followed by the harm to self-development. This can be exemplified when one's identity is destroyed through blindly following the identities of other people with limited or no appreciation of the epistemological justifications inherent in debates on identities (Ndofirepi and Gwaravanda 2019). The far-reaching impact of extractive research methodologies that fail to place participants on an equal footing with researchers results in hermeneutical injustice, even though they are not the only causes. In this case, participants are prevented from fully becoming who they are. This understanding helps us address epistemic injustices caused by displacement or marginalisation of participants in research. This means that their position and identities as knowers with unique practices of knowledge and knowing are destroyed, since audiences, including researchers, may fail to acknowledge the epistemological identities and capabilities embedded in the researched communities.

In contrast to the limitations of traditional methodologies explained above, the use of graffiti as a participatory arts technique offered an opportunity for all participants to creatively and freely illustrate their experiences on boards, which they then explained in their own language despite different levels of education, age, and gender. Unlike in

interviews, focus group discussion, or observation, where the researchers are left to analyse, interpret, and present research findings, graffiti art provided an open opportunity for every participant to generate their paintings and then analyse, interpret, and present them.

Collective Capabilities and Epistemic Justice

Beyond this individual development, collective capabilities and epistemic justice are also important. Although the focus of the capability approach is on the individual (Zimmermann 2006; Pelenc et al. 2015), we show the contribution to and within groups by highlighting the notion of collective capabilities in advancing epistemic justice. In approaching collective capabilities, we understand these as the real opportunities available for the Tonga youth to achieve a set of functionings *they view as collectively valuable*. To convert collective capabilities into achieved functioning, it is further necessary to have or to enable collective agency. We have found it challenging to separate collective capabilities (opportunity freedoms) from collective agency (process freedoms). Figure 9.1 highlights the different levels at which collectivity happens and how it emerged in our project.

Level 1 comprises the resources that each individual brings to the groups, such as skills and knowledge. These are the innate capabilities highlighted by Nussbaum (2000) as necessary to develop advanced capabilities such as language, which may influence platforms for expression. Drawing on their individual "innate" capabilities, community members
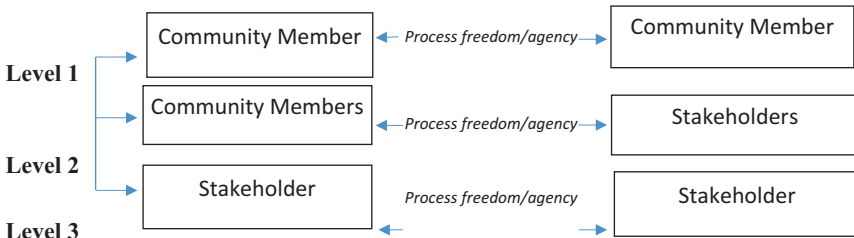
Fig. 9.1 Collective capability process

engage with each other to identify ways to address their concerns, generating combined common-good capabilities in the process, such as creativity, aspiration, and knowledge. These are both individually held but also, through the necessary community process, collectively held. This in turn produces collective actions (agency) to bring an issue to the relevant stakeholders, at which stage the community members (as a collective) identify strategies and methods to get their issues heard at the stakeholder level (Level 2). At Level 3 (stakeholder level), stakeholders engage with each other to address the concerns presented to them by the community.

While in our project the collective process started at Level 1, the process could start at Level 3, that is, in an environment where decision-makers are pro-active with people-centred development. While in our project, community members initiated engagement with stakeholders at Level 2, the process could be interchangeable, with stakeholders initiating engagement processes rather than the processes being initiated by communities. During the processes of interaction at the different levels, collaboration is advanced.

A Collaborative Participatory Method

Participatory research comprises a range of methodological approaches and techniques, all with the objective of power-with and power-alongside experienced researchers and research participants, who are often marginalised community members such as the youth (Martin et al. 2019). These methodologies and techniques include participatory inquiry, action research, oral testimonies, photo-digital stories, photovoice, and participatory video. Debates on participatory research and its value to the generation and understanding of knowledge centre on five areas of interest. The first of these involves our understanding of knowledge and how it is created; secondly, what we do with the knowledge we create; thirdly, how we do what we do as researchers, that is, the processes and practice of undertaking research; fourthly, the degree of involvement of participants in the process of generating knowledge; and fifthly, how this knowledge is communicated.

Ideally, in participatory research, participants should have control over the research agenda, the process, and the actions, but this is not always feasible, as will be demonstrated in our case study. Most importantly, unlike in traditional social science research where experiences of participants have largely been interpreted through the researchers' perspective, voice, and analysis (Groundwater-Smith and Downes 1999), in participatory, arts-based methods, the participants themselves are the ones who analyse and reflect on the data or evidence to obtain the findings and conclusions of the research process. While the method involves inquiry, it also involves action since the research aims to influence decision-making processes and impact peoples' lives locally and nationally. A growing body of scholarship acknowledges the challenge of marginalised groups who are largely absent in public fora (including research fora), which both excludes them and amplifies the voices of more powerful groups (including academic researchers). Nonetheless, while participatory research practices may address elements of epistemic injustices, it does not imply that the method does not have challenges. As noted by Coyne and Carter (2018), most communities are complex and internally stratified resulting in difficulties in ethically including powerless people. In our project, the complexity was countered by focusing on youth of the same ethnic background facing similar challenges, although the youth had diverse views. This was important for curating their art works.

The use of collaborative and participatory methods is one of the ways in which epistemic injustices can be dealt with both in and outside of academia. Despite the challenges as to how the method can be effectively operationalised, civil society and non-governmental organisations have for a while been using the methods for needs assessment in various communities to inform development and aid programmes (Coyne and Carter 2018). The various techniques used in participatory work are essential for addressing the exclusion of people in knowledge acquisition and creation, as well as the "injustices that result from negative identity prejudices that silence certain groups of people unfairly" (Bacharach 2018, p. 31).

Why Graffiti?

To encourage youth participation, our study innovatively and strategically selected participatory graffiti art on boards as a method. A survey of literature on studies in Binga surprisingly indicates that there have been limited attempts to use this powerful tool. According to Muwati (2015, p. 23), the Tonga people have for a long time been "victims of cantankerous and pejorative designations often authored by their neighbours (Shonas and Ndebeles) and the colonizer." In trying to address concerns raised by Muwati (2015) and other scholars, graffiti on board was adopted as a method, based on its value in five key spheres. Firstly, it has the potential to generate collective expression of self to communities. Secondly, it has value as an engaging and participatory method. The third dimension is the fun embedded in the processes of painting experiences on boards, which best suited the age of the participants. The fourth component concerns its propensity to contribute to skills building among unemployed youth in a disadvantaged community, and, lastly, the innovative nature of the method allows for creativity, and it has the potential for being used as a creative participatory adventure that encourages dialogic interactions of artists and communities working towards social change (European Academy of Participation 2016). We acknowledge that the method used in the project does not come without criticism, particularly on the ethics and aesthetics of the practice. However, its connection with epistemic justice is what makes it significant in working in the Binga context.

The Process

The initial aim of the project was to use street art for the project. However, because of the rurality of the context, this was constrained, and the project resorted to graffiti on board because of the compatibility of the method to the context (see https://changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/category/p2-zimbabwe/). The project collaborated with the Batonga Community Museum and the Basilwizi Trust, youth-focused NGOs based in the Binga community. Both NGOs were actively involved in

identifying the youth, as well as in the design, production, and delivery of artefacts. The two NGOs collaborated in communicating with stakeholders and organising the workshops. With the help of the researchers and two hired professional artists, the NGOs were useful in facilitating exhibitions and in the dissemination of artefacts.

We started with a five-day workshop involving rural youth (12 young people with equal gender representation), representatives from the Basilwizi Trust (a local NGO), and representatives from the Batonga Museum to discuss challenges experienced by Binga youth (Table 9.1).

Returning to Fig. 9.1, as researchers, we were facilitators of the process at Level 1 and youth had the opportunity to engage with each other. At Level 2, the youth engaged directly with various stakeholders, such as the public interested in the graffiti and other artists who attended the exhibitions and were interested in the art works. To do this, the project was divided into two phases. The first strand focused on the creative process of making the graffiti artefact that was a build-up from a series of activities, and the second strand was a multi-city exhibition of the artefacts.

Table 9.1 Demographics of participants

Name	G	Current Occupation	Level of Education
Mpilo	F	Studying at a Technical College	Form 6
Luba	F	At home hoping to go to university	Form 6
Makha	F	At home hoping to go to university	Form 6
Nyasha	F	Supplementing Form 4	Incomplete secondary education
Vimbai	F	Temporary primary school teacher	Form 4
Rudo	F	Supplementing Form 4 Mathematics	Form 4
Dumi	M	Looking for employment	Form 4
Taku	M	Looking for employment	Incomplete secondary education
Sipho	M	Looking for employment	Incomplete secondary education
Tino	M	Looking for employment	Form 6
Tapiwa	M	Looking for employment	University education
Farai	M	Looking for employment	Incomplete secondary education

The first one and a half days of the workshop were used to discuss the challenges and opportunities experienced by Tonga youth as a minority tribe in Zimbabwe. Ice-breaking games and activities such as the river of life were used during the workshop.

Collectively, participants identified themes for art training and discussed how to portray these themes through paintings. Various themes such as child abuse, early marriage, poverty, and gender inequality were identified by Tonga youth during the workshop through a discussion process on the challenges they experienced. The youth later used the identified themes to paint their graffiti. On the second day, the two professional artists started with the graffiti training, and this was followed by the creation of individual graffiti boards. On the final day of the workshop, there was an in-house discussion and photoshoot of the graffiti. We also conducted exit interviews with the youth after completion of the graffiti, as well as interviews with representatives from the NGO and the Batonga Museum. The purpose of the exit interviews was to gather the experiences of the project (from diverse perspectives). The professional artists were also interviewed to ascertain their views on the purpose and potential of art methods in creating spaces for engagement among different groups of society.

In the second phase, all 12 Tonga youth participated in exhibitions held at the Bulawayo National Art Gallery, at the Midlands State University, and at the Zimbabwe Museum of Human Sciences in Harare. Firstly, there was an indoor exhibition at the National Gallery of Bulawayo, with the artefacts displayed for two days. This was followed by a one-day public exhibition at the Bulawayo City Hall car park. The open-air public display allowed the youth to display and discuss their artefacts with members of the public who had no access to the Art Gallery. After this, there was a two-day exhibition at Midlands State University. The aim of exhibiting at the University was to also expose the rural youth to a university environment and, pragmatically, one of us is based there. Finally, the artefacts were displayed at the Zimbabwe Museum of Human Sciences in the capital city of Harare. The indoor exhibition allowed engagement with museum officials, as well as guests that visited the museum. The museum guests included primary and secondary school learners who had an opportunity to learn about Tonga culture.

These exhibitions brought together academics, municipality representatives, fellow artists, and art gallery representatives so that rural youth were able to share their stories as represented in the graffiti. As the youth spoke about their experiences, most of them acknowledged that they had never had the opportunity for such reflections. In each case, the audience had the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the aspirations of the youth. This degree of participation of the youth created a platform for discussions on how current decisions and opportunities impact on future generations (Marovah 2016). During the engagement with various stakeholders, the youth expressed a desire to be recognised as part of the Zimbabwean community rather than being isolated based on cultural and social stereotypes.

While the youth collectively decided on the themes they wanted to focus on throughout the project, we are aware of the criticism of participatory approaches highlighted by authors such as Kindon, Pain, and Kesby (2009) and Alkire (2006), particularly concerning the selection of participants, terms of engagement with facilitators during the process, and power imbalances. We acknowledge that with us (the authors) being researchers from universities, there were power imbalances. Yet, at the same time, it is almost impossible to do away completely with these existing power dynamics. What we have instead emphasised in our project is that we were unfamiliar with the challenges experienced in Binga and that we would appreciate learning from them as experts from within the community. Our role was to facilitate the process, based on project goals. As a funded project, it was and remains important that we are honest about the purpose of the project and our role as representatives of academic institutions and the UK-based funders. However, in the process, we allowed the participants as much freedom as was possible in order to work within those parameters. This is the ethical compromise that we, as researchers, had to broker by representing all project stakeholders honestly and truthfully. It is a compromise because, while the desire is always to give complete freedom to participants, there are limitations based on the project's scope and its contextual realities. For example, in our project the funds were limited to the activities that were carried out and which we had identified in advance. Yet, the participating youth would have liked to have many exhibitions sharing their stories with various

communities. Using graffiti and not another form of art is in itself a free-dom limitation and an example of power—we had decided on this method. It is then that the limitations come into play—there is no com-plete freedom, particularly in funded projects, and the parameters of these freedoms are characteristic of the power present in research projects. We do however acknowledge that, in the process of using graffiti as a form of expression, the youth had the freedom to express various con-cerns without restrictions, and they were able to identify the stakeholders and the collective message they wanted to share about Binga. In this way, there was a power balance between researchers (as representatives of other stakeholders) and youth (as representatives of their community and their stories). Moreover, power is not always negative or coercive, what is nec-essary is to reach a comparatively just, not perfectly just (Sen 2009) power balance among the various actors involved in the process.

What We Learnt

The purpose of the project was to use participatory art methods to high-light social concerns among Tonga youth and, in the process, provide a collective space that allowed for epistemic engagements and contribu-tions. In this section, we share some of the findings and demonstrate how graffiti helped to achieve this, as well as influencing collective capabilities at the process level and the output level. We found that graffiti as an art method and as a research tool provided space to grant voice to those who had been silenced. The creativity involved in art, we found, can give par-ticipants different ways of expressing themselves. Empirically, four themes emerged as important for the collective and what they desired to share with the public: the need for recognition, preservation of cultural heri-tage, the impact of collective capabilities, and the role of art as a creative method of expression.

Capability for Recognition

The use of art created an opportunity for youth to express their feelings, experiences, and aspirations for them as individuals, as well as a community. Most importantly, it emerged that the youth wanted to be recognised and be seen as part of broader society, with capabilities and aspirations. They said things like:

> I feel so happy exhibiting my graffiti to people because I know that they will see that there are people in Binga who can do this kind of thing, so they won't look down upon us. (Dumi)

> I am so happy … you made a good thing in Binga because as Binga, we are isolated people, but as of now, we are feeling that we are the same and we are loved by other tribes, so we are so happy. (Mpilo)

From the above extracts, we note a former lack of recognition and effective participation by Tonga youth in everyday affairs. As a result, the youth suffer from multiple disadvantages, particularly being in an underprivileged position to influence public discourse due to unfair treatment concerning knowledge and participation in communicative practices or representation (Fricker 2015). Apart from the need for recognition, there was also a desire by the youth to have knowledge and skills transferred from the older generation to help the youth preserve the culture, tradition, and artistry skills of sculpture work and carpentry.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Skills such as building houses and fishery were viewed as artistic talents of the people of Binga. The youth highlighted that as their stories are shared, people would not only recognise their individual capabilities but recognise them as a collective and the cultural practices and values they uphold. Some of the cultural practices included fishing, building, and basketry which the Tonga people, over generations, have used as a source of livelihoods as noted below:

Fig. 9.2 Binga, "Source of life," Youth Artist: Farai

> What is being displayed here (Fig. 9.2) has something to do with the source of life, the way we generate income as a source of food and where we get money for our school fees, get what we need and everything else that we depend on. The challenges that we face in the district of Binga, especially in the fishing industry is a lack of resources and it includes not having the financial support to buy modern equipment to use in the fishing industry. Also because of these financial constraints, I think the fishing industry is being underutilized. (Farai)

The traditional canoe in the painting also introduces the social and cultural elements of fishing practice in Binga. Although capturing what is valued culturally, the graffiti also highlights the potential skills for livelihoods among youth in the area. Mentorship and cultural knowledge transfer were desired by most of the young people to maintain their identity into future generations and to utilise their culturally informed skills, such as fishing and sculpting. Some of the youth believed that through a disregard of their identity and cultural practices, various injustices are perpetuated against them as a community. The value in preserving indigenous knowledge as asserted by the youth concurs with Cliggett, Bond, and Siamwiza (2013) who conclude that the Tonga often rely more on

their cultural beliefs than outside influences to respond to their socio-economic and political challenges. In pursuing epistemic justice, it becomes essential to recognise the meaning and value of indigenous knowledge exhibited and conserved through cultural practices. Thus, bringing together individual capabilities for action towards a common community goal (cultural practices and continuities) is necessary to address the concerns in this marginalised community.

The creative and collective process among the youth was evident not only in the creation and sharing of knowledge but also in the creation of a collective narrative that captures the realities of the Binga people. Thus, although each of the 12 youth eventually worked on an individual theme, there had been a prior consensus among them about the key issues facing young people in that area, which we discuss in the following section.

Collective Engagement Among Marginalised Youth

There was a notable significance to collective engagement, particularly in the process leading up to the individual graffiti works. The process created an opportunity for the youth to work together for a common struggle at the grassroots level. As noted earlier, during the first strand of the project, the youth highlighted several thematic issues that they thought needed to be addressed in Binga, as shown in Fig. 9.3. Some of these issues were informed by personal experiences, while others were general observations about what was happening in the society.

The youth had a common goal for the message they wanted to put across to the public:

Fig. 9.3 Challenges identified by Binga youth

The message that I want to put to the public is that we must respect the rights of our children and give them time to accomplish their goals and appreciate the things they do, and not pull them down and look down upon them. (Tapiwa on child abuse)

Many children are suffering in their families, so they think if they get married that would be the solution to their problems My graffiti is about encouraging students to learn and not think marriage is the solution to our problems. (Nyasha on early marriage)

As Tonga youth, we are youth who have grown up in a tide of poverty so I want them to know that we do something that will make us have a better life or that will make us achieve something good. (Taku on poverty)

We think that by bringing together collective resources and skills, groups become less easy to overlook, even though the required interventions may take a while, the message is nonetheless more likely to be heard. Therefore, we suggest that collective capabilities are important in creating such bottom-up demands, even though this may not always be possible, particularly in hierarchal institutional cultures. Thus a cooperative ethos underpinned by the values of solidarity and equality may be useful in dealing with such a complex context.

Art as a Creative Method of Expression

Through the project we have identified three ways in which graffiti and other art methods may be used to express social concerns: (1) knowledge creation and sharing, (2) information dissemination, and (3) as an advocacy tool. Methods such as graffiti have an element of activism, which makes it possible to confront social inequalities directly by giving participants the freedom to work in public without worrying about what other (dominant) groups may think (Bacharach 2018). The creativity involved in art can offer participants different ways of expressing themselves, providing a voice to those who have been silenced as well as being used for knowledge creation, information, and advocacy purposes. Vimbai's comment is an example of the multidimensional elements of art methods

encompassing creativity, advocacy, knowledge, and information sharing (Fig. 9.4):

> The idea behind this graffiti is that I wanted to let the responsible know about the challenges which learners are facing at school. In Binga, we have disabled people who are not going to school because of a lack of support from responsible people, unlike in towns where such people are being supported which can make them acquire education. Also, girls in our community are not treated equally to boys because of the stereotypes from long ago, whereby only boys were shown doing better jobs while girls were shown doing home chores. So, my aim is to encourage the responsible people to come to our community, educate parents and students about the importance of education and about their rights so that they all know that they have a right to education. (Vimbai)

The words in Vimbai's graffiti provide an interesting analysis. "School" provides the context in which these injustices are happening. "We" highlights the desire for togetherness, oneness, and inclusion. "Are" is an expression of the desired state of being. "All" speaks to inclusion regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, background, and other categories used to differentiate people. Finally, "equal" captures the injustices experienced

Fig. 9.4 "School: we are all equal," Youth Artist: Vimbai

by a certain group, in a school setting. From the above graffiti, we comprehend injustices that need to be addressed. In Farai's case, it is the injustice to the person through social, economic, and cultural exclusion. Similarly, in the case of Vimbai, the injustices are individually experienced but draw on broader social, economic, traditional, and cultural elements. From what they both say, we understand that epistemic injustices are formed and perpetuated in and through broader social injustices, whereby individuals and groups are pushed to the margins of society based on culture, traditional practices, economic standing, age, ethnicity, and gender. This undermines who creates knowledge and who deserves to receive and partake in existing and created knowledge. The above examples also demonstrate the creative nature of collaborative, creative arts methods in highlighting injustices.

Discussion

We return to our earlier conceptualisation of collective capabilities and highlight how the collective process unfolded in our project. While Rauschmayer, Bauler, and Schapke (2013) note the importance of understanding the relationship between individual and collective levels, we wish to highlight the importance of collective capabilities at the three levels. The relationship and nature of how collective capabilities interact are important for promoting a more just society. Aruqaj (2016) thus highlights the intrinsic and instrumental values of collective action for the expansion of human capabilities. The collective capabilities discussed and pursued within these spaces involve intentionality and obligation towards others, paving the way to "enriching" the individual's intrinsic values (Mkwananzi and Cin, in press). In this light, whatever one achieves or desires to achieve is not always individual, but may be collective and for the collective (Mkwananzi and Cin, in press).

It is collective agency that aids in expanding the possibilities of the community to advance both individual and collective capabilities. The willingness of the youth as a community who work together as a group to address past and current injustices within the Tonga community contributes to a wide variety of functionings (outcomes) that may be beneficial

for the whole community, beyond the individual, and beyond the youth as a group. These benefits may include long-term community social benefits such as the economic and educational. Economic benefits may include identifying programmes that advance the economic skills of the youth such as fishing, building, and farming. As Farai noted, the latest technology and resources for fishing may make fishing more than a small-scale and local economic activity.

In terms of collective capabilities, during the process of engagement as well as during exhibitions, the youth were able to make use of collective opportunities that were available to express themselves. This freedom advanced their epistemic capability of sharing with a wider community the experiences and aspirations of the Tonga youth. The consequent outcome (functionings) was the advancement of the youth's opportunities to be heard, respected, and recognised as a part of the broader youth community of Zimbabwe. It matters that they were collectively heard and held this capability as a collective. Ultimately, the outcome of the project is that it contributed to the steps essential for building the social cohesion that is necessary for the wellbeing of the Tonga people as a community.

Collective capabilities and collective agency may yield long-term social benefits rather than short-term benefits, and we cannot know this from a time-bound, small-scale project. We acknowledge that in a country like Zimbabwe that remains economically unstable, some of the interventions may not be expedient at a national level.

Strengthening Epistemic Spaces of Inclusion

Gwindingwe, Alfandika, and Chateuka (2019, p. 91) assert that despite the rich cultural heritage possessed by the Tonga people, they still "lack a suitable local public platform to express themselves." Our aim was therefore to provide such a platform for self-expression, and through the creative nature of the method used, we were able to mobilise the youth for this effort. This desire for recognition reveals a desire by the youth to be treated as equals, with dignity and respect. From a capability approach standpoint, this may be achieved by giving equal opportunities to resources and platforms necessary for individuals and groups to express

themselves. These opportunities may include an environment that allows for the non-negotiable, foundational epistemic capability (Walker 2019) by treating the Tonga youth as knowers and contributors to knowledge. It is the recognition of this potential contribution that allows space for the flourishing of other capabilities such as confidence in one's identity, values, culture, and belief system. In the case of the Tonga youth, it frees them of external scrutiny by other more powerful dominant groups (Jones and Krzyzanowski 2008).

Strengthening Social Cohesion

We believe our project was necessary as a foundation to begin conversations and take steps towards promoting transformative social cohesion among marginalised youth. Following Walker (2020), we understand transformative social cohesion to mean a quality of collective togetherness, a cohesive society characterised by close social relations, emotional connectedness to the social entity, and a strong orientation to the common good. Social cohesion, in this view and in our own experience, can raise issues of power, namely, who can speak and who is heard. The youth had noted the absence of opportunities to work collectively towards a common goal. The absence of such spaces was attributed to a lack of resources and experiences of segregation and stereotyping which often led to the youth overlooking their potential as a group. In Fig. 9.5 we demonstrate that after the collaborative process, collective action became both a collective capability and a collective functioning operating in an iterative process.

Although some of the youth were generally shy, most of them became confident once they started reflecting on their lives and speaking about their experiences and desires openly. The collaborative environment allowed for individual reflection and identification of issues of concern in the community. Their collective efforts (intellectual, skills, and togetherness) formed the collective capability set that gave youth the confidence to voice their concerns, creating and operating within the just epistemic space that the project had made possible. During engagements with various stakeholders, dialogue was initiated, creating an environment
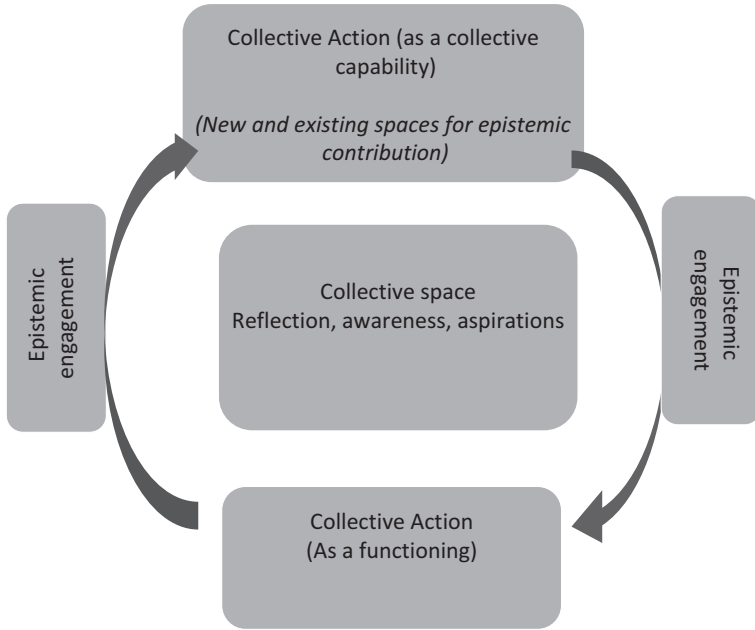
Fig. 9.5 Connecting collective action to epistemic justice

conducive for deliberation and ongoing future conversations among those that were present on issues of inclusion and exclusion of marginalised groups. Most of the capabilities that the youth exhibited towards the end of the project were either acquired or cultivated during the process of graffiti making, highlighting the hidden potential—made visible in the project—of an epistemic contribution in those that are not previously given the space and opportunity for self-expression.

From a capability standpoint, the intrinsic value of collective action is embedded in the individual's capabilities to function being shaped largely by social structures and social context. What a person can be and do is often dependent on this social environment. Instrumentally, the value of collective effort lies in the fact that some capabilities are only possible within the collective and cannot be "harnessed" by the individual alone, since some capabilities are group dependent (Stewart 2005). We conclude by noting that by providing space to build collective capabilities,

youth exhibit both individual and collective agencies in acting towards what is individually and collectively valued. They wanted to take action in representing their community as a whole, rather than only focusing on the challenges experienced by the youth.

Conclusion

In the context of our study on Tonga youth, participatory graffiti art fitted well as a method as it was informed by the ideas of co-production, collaboration, community practice, and public engagement. It also enabled community empowerment and transformation through developing insights that challenged perspectives and assumptions about the status quo. It brought together diverse knowledge through critical enquiry and mutual exchange. We therefore suggest that the collective action and expression of marginalised rural youth's lives and values creates opportunities to work together for a common struggle that encourages the formation of grassroots participation. This collectivism enables both individuals and communities to create new synergies with other members of the community and expand their social capital. The use of arts can be a significant tool for mobilising a cooperative ethos which enables a marginalised population to reconcile their values and identities as they build constructive relations with others. Finally, our experience working with the youth, the museum, and the local NGO highlighted the potential contributions of collaborations among academic researchers and such organisations to yield advocacy and developmental processes and outcomes. We thus need to start thinking practically about how to further build and strengthen collaborations between academics, NGOs, civil organisations, and communities to further reduce inequalities, advance the capabilities of those on the edges of society, and strengthen local and national partnerships for bottom-up initiatives.

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10

Potential of Participatory Action Research Processes to Overcome Epistemic Injustice in Non-ideal University Settings

Alejandra Boni and Melanie Walker

Introduction

As we stated in the introductory chapter, the main concern of the book is with epistemic (in)justice (Fricker 2007; Kidd et al. 2017) as foundational to a reflexive, inclusive, and decolonial approach to knowledge and for its importance to democratic life, deliberation, and participation in higher education (Walker 2019).

We make the case, through participatory action research (PAR), for an ecology of knowledge which is contrary to the epistemological exclusions

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that seek to conceal (even destroy) other ways of knowing and which looks to a solidarity reorientation of the relationship between university and society. This is because a key political goal of PAR has to do with the fact that it is typically marginalised people who 'speak'—as we see in all the book chapters—so that the aspiration is for more democratic and inclusive forms of making knowledge and an epistemological inclusiveness. Moreover, the chapters show the many different ways in which people can be marginalised by institutions and by structural and historical factors, from agency opportunities and from valuable capabilities expansion possibilities. We also see what is possible when spaces are opened for genuine participation and a plurality of voices.

But, as we know, PAR in higher education is happening in non-ideal settings of epistemic justice. Therefore, taking into account these non-ideal settings, where epistemic injustices occurs, this book wants to show *how* and to *what extent* epistemic capabilities and epistemic functionings can be enhanced, as well as where and what the challenges are. This reminds us of the importance of social, historical, and personal conversion factors and how they can constrain or boost the expansion of capabilities and functionings. Also, we are particularly interested in exploring *whose* capabilities and functionings are being augmented. This is critical for talking about epistemic injustice from a decolonial approach. Finally, we are interested to see how the different experiences highlighted in this book could contribute to refining the main theories that underline this book in three directions: (1) epistemic capabilities and functionings and their relations with epistemic injustice, (2) key dimensions of participatory action research, and (3) the decolonial approach.

Reasoning on what is outlined above, the structure of this chapter is as follows: the first section will draw on how the different examples show us which capabilities and functionings are expanded through the use of different participatory methods and how these capabilities and functionings faced different kinds of epistemic injustices (mainly testimonial and hermeneutical according to Fricker (2007)). The second section will take account of social and historical conversion factors that can enable or constrain capability enlargement. The third section will propose a different contribution to theory in an attempt to bring theory and practice together. We are aware that none of the chapters speaks to all these

elements, but their compilation can provide an original and context-situated overview of the possibilities of practising epistemic justice in global South and global North higher education settings.

PAR Methods That Expand Epistemic Capabilities and Functionings

The eight chapters of the book offer a variety of examples of how PAR can expand epistemic capabilities in three different ambits of university performance: policy making, teaching, and research. We consider the eight examples as part of the broad PAR family, although not all of them are strictly research processes as far as these are commonly understood. More importantly, the projects discussed all use an inclusive understanding of participation, involving non-traditional knowledge producers, and have an action purpose related to increased human development and capability expansion, through the production of relevant epistemic materials. In this way we consider all the examples as PAR initiatives.

Policy Making

The chapter by Diana Velasco and Alejandra Boni shows how building a capabilities list for the Colombian University of Ibagué to inspire university policy allowed different pedagogical encounters (Walker 2019). The development of the list involved 124 people in a first phase for constructing a capabilities list and 117 people in a second phase aimed at validating the list. This example shows, as well, an array of different creative participatory methods (such as the gallery of capabilities) that intended to foster the aspiration capability of all people involved.

Unusually for current higher education and the neoliberal trend, this process has expanded the epistemic capability of the participants in different moments, challenging testimonial epistemic injustice in particular. Students, support staff, social organisations, and entrepreneurs are rarely called upon to participate in processes to define an institution's aspirational vision. Moreover, epistemic capabilities are also related with other

capabilities such as practical reason, knowledge, and imagination; social relationships and social networks; as well as respect, dignity, and recognition capabilities. Working together, these expand the episteme (knowledge) and encourage comprehensive participation. It constitutes a remarkable example of what is possible in making higher education more just.

Teaching

Sergio Belda-Miquel and Leonor Avella present an analysis of a social innovation curriculum in another Colombian University named UNIMINUTO. The analysis of the case shows that students' commitment to and in the communities generated various epistemic capabilities[1] in them. These included those purely on the personal level, with a less direct connection with justice (such as the capability to analyse complex contexts), to others with a strong collective and justice dimension (such as the capability to work together to understand a problem and transform reality). This case study suggests that a variety of key aspects model the expansion of capabilities, for example, the creation of multiple occasions and spaces for dialogue with communities; the formation of trust and good relationships between teachers, students, and communities; the profile, commitment, and experience of teachers; thorough planning; and the reorientation of assessment, aligning it with outputs that are relevant to the communities. Such key aspects might constitute a guidance 'grid' for others wishing to expand capabilities in their own teaching practice towards greater epistemic justice. The authors conclude that these processes have the potential to challenge testimonial injustice, giving greater credibility to perspectives and judgements of communities. The processes further challenge hermeneutic injustice, since the dialogue between local ideas and concepts and those brought in by students can generate new social meanings that allow communities to communicate and receive due attention and understanding. As with the previous chapter, this demonstrates what is possible in higher education and what can be done to bring about changes at the teaching level.

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[1] The authors use the term capacities, but in our understanding, they refer to capabilities.

Remaining in the teaching domain, Lori Keleher and Alexandre Frediani present an action learning experience between a Western university (University College of London, United Kingdom) and a Southern institution (the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil), as well as representatives from urban collectives. They argue that the action learning programme allowed for producing knowledge, which was relevant for the participants. However, the context of violence in Bahia did not permit the programme to introduce violence in the discussion, giving that doing so might put community members at high risk. Nevertheless, they argue that action learning can also be understood as contributing an important epistemic resource to the student experience and the knowledge products of the workshop. The performance offers a valuable model of subtle and subversive change, even where a full emancipatory strategy is not viable. Thus, they submit that the community participants acted as virtuous and effective contributors to the learning exchange. A further interesting point in this chapter is the reference to epistemic duties: university staff, including faculty members, have special epistemic duties within the learning exchange. As facilitators they are the primary creators and managers of the epistemological systems that make up the programme. Moreover, programme leaders must make every effort to ensure that the knowledge products generated during the learning exchange provide a robust and critical assessment of community struggles.

The last chapter that addresses a teaching experience is that by Monique Leivas, Álvaro Fernández-Baldor, Marta Maicas-Pérez, and Carola Calabuig-Tormo. They present another case of action learning, located this time in Valencia (Spain). One of the most interesting contributions of this chapter is the idea of capabilities for epistemic liberation based on Paulo Freire's ideas. The authors propose four key dimensions drawing on Freire: (1) the capability to be is the opportunity to recognise yourself as a being with experiences, knowledge, and abilities to do, learn, and transform; (2) the capability to do is the opportunity to participate in knowledge co-production processes and communicate knowledge and experiences; (3) the capability to learn is the opportunity to participate actively in the learning process—it involves the overcoming of power relations between the educator and the educated; and (4) the capability to transform is enhanced by the capability to learn from other people,

both by the capability to do through the co-production of knowledge and by the capability to recognise oneself as a being with knowledge and experiences. The implementation of the capability to transform enables the development of actions and products that reflect the diversity of voices, knowledge, and practices and which propose individual and collective solutions to make visible, confront, and overcome social and environmental problems at local and global levels. The four capabilities for epistemic liberation are enhanced throughout the entire action learning training presented in this chapter, where immersion in the neighbourhood alongside vulnerable communities and social groups that take part in participatory processes facilitated by students plays a key role.

Taken together, these chapters focused on teaching demonstrate the possibilities that emerge when teaching is oriented to forms of justice and that pedagogical change is significant and important in advancing justice in higher education through capabilities-based pedagogical arrangements.

Researching

The chapter by Melis Cin and Rahime Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm explains how participatory video research conducted at one university in Turkey contributed to enhancing political capabilities and reducing the 'political poverty' of conservative women. Analytically, they employ Miranda Fricker's account of epistemic justice and conceptualise it as a political capability (Cin 2017), drawing also on Bohman's (1996) argument about political poverty. The project enabled the women participants to contribute to epistemic justice by making their diverse and multiple experiences of gender inequality heard and discussed in a friendly and democratic environment of co-production and screenings of the videos. Findings from the analysis illustrate that providing an epistemic, friendly, and democratic space allows the expansion of the political and feminist capabilities of marginalised women. They identify several functionings that students acquired during this five-month research process and that contributed to epistemic justice. These functionings (and the capabilities they extrapolated) played a significant role in redressing testimonial justice by recognising the voices of these women and inserting their voices

into gender equality claims and hermeneutical injustice, as they were able to talk about their experiences and make their stories and values known.

The chapter by Melanie Walker and Mikateko Mathebula explores the possibilities for fostering narrative capabilities (Watts 2008) as foundational to greater epistemic justice, focusing on how students experienced and reflected on their knowledge of exclusions and inclusions. Their project, based in South Africa, combined photo-stories with critical and shared reflections by participants, aimed at the expansion of epistemic capability through narrative and storytelling capabilities. Components of this narrative capability formation can be found in four capabilities and their corresponding functionings: (1) an intersecting narrative capability, (2) self-recognition, (3) mutual recognition and relationships, and (4) creative and critical skills and knowledge of inclusion and exclusion. Photovoice enabled greater testimonial justice by going beyond prejudice and silencing of black, largely rural low-income students and hermeneutic justice—to some extent—in challenging structures which 'invisibilise' these students in the university. As with the accounts of teaching, they argue that micro-level change through being heard and telling one's own story matters greatly, even if there are real limits to change at the meso and macro levels.

Remaining in South Africa, Carmen Martínez-Vargas discusses the importance of overcoming what she conceptualises as 'colonial conversion factors' in PAR (see next section). She presents a set of five principles, which she names Democratic Capability Research (DRC), to remind practitioners of the critical points when using participatory research processes with communities or groups, especially in the global South. These principles are:

1. Injustice as an initial issue. Injustice(s) should be the foundational issue(s), which means that 'injustice' is not framed by the 'facilitator' but embraces a multiplicity of understandings of injustices according to the members involved.
2. Internal and/or external epistemic diversity (ecology of knowledges)—promotion of different knowledges throughout the research process.
3. The voiceless as knowledge creators. The participants involved represent collectives excluded from validated knowledge production pro-

cesses, which does not mean that they do not create knowledge in their own frames or use validated sources of knowledge.

4. Uncertain horizon. This involves flexibility; it is desirable to promote and conserve an uncertain horizon able to transform what comes next through the constant democratic dialogue and decision-making of the research group.

5. Lastly, DCR as a platform to expand participants' capabilities. These principles were articulated in a DCR project at the University of the Free State involving 12 students of different backgrounds.

Finally, the chapter by Tendayi Marovah and Faith Mkwananzi presents an innovative and creative technique of graffiti on board to enhance inclusion and enable marginalised Tonga youth in northern Zimbabwe to participate in a PAR project. The use of art created an opportunity for youth to express their feelings, experiences, and aspirations for them as individuals, as well as their aspirations as part of a community. Most importantly, it emerged that the youth wanted to be recognised and be seen as part of broader society, with capabilities and aspirations. The authors remark how PAR enhances collective capabilities in the preservation of cultural heritage and collective engagement. Moreover, they argue that, through the project, three ways in which graffiti and other art methods may be used to express social concerns were identified: (1) knowledge creation and sharing, (2) information dissemination, and (3) that it can act as an advocacy tool.

Table 10.1 consolidates the rich insights from the contributions of the eight chapters.

Structural and Historical Conversion Factors That Affect the Expansion of Epistemic Capabilities

However, these cases also show the limitations of participatory initiatives to overcome structural and historical imbalances that are intertwined in societies.

Table 10.1 Key insights

Means	Epistemic capabilities
Capability list (Colombia)	Epistemic capabilities and practical reason, knowledge, and imagination; social relationships and social networks; and respect, dignity, and recognition capabilities
Social innovation curriculum (Colombia)	Epistemic capabilities on the personal level and with a collective and justice dimension
Action learning (UK-Brazil)	Epistemic capability (with limitations) and epistemic duties
Action learning (Spain)	Four epistemic capabilities for liberation: capability to be, to do, to learn, and to transform
Participatory video (Turkey)	Epistemic capabilities as a way to expand political capabilities and contribute to the episteme
Photovoice (South Africa)	Intersecting narrative capability functioning: self-recognition, mutual recognition and relationships, and creative and critical skills and knowledge of inclusion and exclusion
DRC (South Africa)	Seven principles to expand epistemic capabilities
Graffiti (Zimbabwe)	Collective epistemic capabilities: preservation of cultural heritage and collective engagement

Firstly, Melis Cin and Rahime Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm (Turkish case study) argue that although PAR proved to be critical in the formation of an alternative counter public space as a response to anti-egalitarian spaces that favour dominant voices, two groups were sceptical about displaying their LGBT video publicly. They were hesitant about the reactions they would receive in a patriarchal society. Their display was limited to the other groups in a closed environment, and they refused to go public. The second issue is related to controlled and monitored public and political spaces. Students noted that they felt slightly more comfortable in showing their videos to other groups in a closed environment. Due to the recent shrinkage of public space in civil society in Turkey, many women self-censored some of the issues that they had wanted to raise in public discussion forums, although they found the discussion very fruitful and enjoyed the experience of speaking up for the first time in front of the public. This situation is directly related to the current political climate in Turkey and severe limits imposed on freedom of expression.

In line with the previous argument, Lori Keleher and Alexander Frediani (case study in Brazil) conclude that although community participants are well-qualified knowers with both the internal and basic capabilities to speak on the theme of drug trafficking violence, such discussions were largely absent because community members chose not to discuss the issues. Doing so would put them at high risk for retribution. However, the authors also present the case more positively. They underline how, through discussing enhancing education, employment, and other empowering opportunities and avoiding explicit conversations about drug trafficking, participants have strategically created, or at least protected, a space with the epistemic resources available for fruitful discussions that can result in (some) emancipatory change. This strategy can expand capability sets and ultimately undermines the greater oppression generated by drug trafficking and related violence and, in turn, the reducible epistemic oppression experienced within and beyond the programme.

The chapter that unpacked extensively the issue of social conversion factors is that by Carmen Martínez-Vargas. She argues that there are pervasive colonial conversion factors that have been formed by historical processes. These factors disproportionately deprive targeted groups and impact their freedoms negatively while giving huge privileges to other groups and affecting their freedoms in a positive way (Dussel 2007). The significant point here is that while in the global North, we can talk about social and environmental arrangements that limit a category of groups from the enjoyment of their freedoms, they are nonetheless part of a privileged global group, even where they may face inequalities in their own countries. However, for many—not all—populations in the global South, colonial conversion factors have significant effects on their freedoms. An example of these are the epistemic conditions that constrain indigenous communities in Africa from becoming contributors to the social pool of knowledge. Two main points arose out of her analysis of the students' campus experiences from an epistemic perspective. First, oppression through the lack of valuable freedoms is a major part of their lived experiences as students. This was visible through intersecting contextual colonial conversion factors in systems of meaning (cosmovisions), racialised relations, and colonial language, among others, that affected them in negative ways, constraining their freedoms but mainly their

epistemic freedoms. Secondly, due to these unfreedoms, there were many negotiations and adaptations in their campus lives and future projects in order to fit in and survive in this new system. Therefore, when referring to the university space, many colonial conversion factors jeopardised their epistemic freedoms and functionings mainly related to one central aspect, the new (academic) epistemic system shared among individuals in the university space that generated meanings and structures of power, conceptualising the students as mere receivers of epistemic material.

However, as the chapter by Melanie Walker and Mikateko Mathebula suggests, these colonial conversion factors can be challenged—to some extent at least—by using PAR processes. They saw the possibility in participatory photovoice to contribute to an aspirational decolonial ethics which might enable previously invisible voices and stories in a global South context to be heard and valued. They regard this as aspirational because they recognise that, while knowledge and university conditions are not yet propitious, following Sen (2009), they try for imperfect justice rather than not acting at all. In their view, advancing an ecology of knowledges requires not only the inclusion of many voices but, as importantly, inclusive, agential, and empowering research methodologies and processes to enable narrative capability. In the same line of argument, Melis Cin and Rahime Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm also highlight that the value of using PAR as a feminist practice provided an opportunity to those with less power to speak by means of the research. PAR may not always lead to greater change at a social, political, or institutional level, but, even so, the use of PAR can develop aspirations for more democratic and inclusive avenues for knowledge-making (Walker et al. 2019).

And, finally, moving to another case in the global South, the experience of the Universidad de Ibagué in Colombia illustrates the importance of social conversion factors to enable the development of a participatory process throughout an entire university. The ethos of this university, characterised by a commitment to the region and an understanding of higher education from a humanistic view, made it possible to propose and execute such a process. Another key issue was the strong support of the university executive leadership that led the process from the outset and gave it legitimacy.

Revisiting Theory from Practice

As we have shown in the previous two sections, the eight chapters provide theoretical insights arising from empirical research. One important contribution of the book can be seen in enlarging the conceptualisation of the epistemic justice capability proposed by Fricker (2007). Through the book, the understanding of this capability has been enlarged with the inspirational writings of Paulo Freire (1970) bringing a new conceptualisation of capabilities for epistemic liberation (the chapter of Leivas et al.). Moreover, the chapter by Walker and Mathebula has been precise in identifying the *narrative capability* as the core capability of the epistemic capability. Cin and Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm have conceptualised the epistemic capability as a political capability, while Keleher and Frediani have proposed the idea of epistemic duties.

Additionally, Belda-Miquel and Avella Bernal have shown a promising area of application of epistemic justice in the field of social innovation. They argue that the enlargement of the epistemic capability among students and communities has provided a new language and terms such as 'visions', 'social innovations', or 'prototypes'. Communities provide their ideas, such as those related to local knowledge and with terms such as 'food sovereignty'. In these processes, local ideas and terms may connect with those of academia and may be reframed and made more visible for other people to understand the social experience of communities.

Another relevant contribution is for decolonial studies. As Martínez-Vargas points out, although this debate is theoretically clear, we have limited empirical research investigating how we can advance towards epistemic justice through participatory research. She discusses the importance of colonial conversion factors that can limit epistemic justice in the global South, while other authors (see previous section) present their cases as examples of overcoming these specific conversion factors through higher education initiatives. In that sense, these cases showed how a critical and emancipatory understanding of PAR is aligned with a decolonial approach that considers action as a key component (Boni and Frediani 2020).

This critical and emancipatory vision of PAR is in line with the tradition of Latin American thinkers like Fals Borda and Freire. The examples in the book illustrate how PAR facilitates the investigation of 'generative themes' for the participants. As Freire states, 'to investigate the generative theme is to investigate people's thinking about reality and people's action upon reality, which is their praxis' (1970, p. 106). The collective aspirations of Zimbabwean youth, or women in Turkey, or marginalised students in South Africa, are powerful examples of issues that really matter for people and which have to be changed.

Moreover, all chapters make the case for the relevance of experiential and presentational knowledge (Heron and Reason 2006). The first one is gained through direct encounters, face to face, with persons, places, or things; the former orders experiential knowledge into spatial-temporal patterns of imagery, which then symbolise our sense of their meaning in movement, sound, colour, shape, line, and poetry. The development of presentational knowledge is an important and often neglected bridge between experiential knowledge and propositional knowledge (knowledge of facts) (Heron and Reason 2006).

Finally, all the chapters make a relevant contribution to the capabilities that can be enlarged in PAR processes. In the introductory chapters, we presented the idea of participatory capabilities (Frediani 2015) that can be fostered using participatory methods. This book provides a detailed account of one of the key capabilities for emancipatory action research, which is the epistemic capability.

Concluding Thoughts on Change

What all chapters have in common is presenting the university as a (nonperfect) site of possibilities to expand the epistemic capabilities of students, teachers, community members, and so on. From the collective involvement of a considerable part of a university community (the case of the Universidad de Ibagué) to small-scale experiences of PAR in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Turkey, through action learning experiences that involve students, teachers, and social organisations (Colombia, Brazil, Spain), all show the potential of higher education institutions to

challenge, generally, the wide and geographical spread of injustices that our societies are facing. In particular, they show how epistemic injustice can be addressed and reformed—in some way—for another university than the neoliberal version that still dominates in current times.

Through the PAR projects recounted in this book, we can reflect on change and how it happens. A 'virtuous' account would be able to bring about change in the context, the institutions, and the agents, all working together mobilising through key events and moments (like PAR) which might be triggers for change (Green 2008). But change processes are not uniform given the complexity of contexts and human interactions so that context, institutions, agents, and events will combine dynamically to produce diverse change pathways, as we see in these chapters. As Green (2008) notes, pathways might be cumulative and sequential, and close-up change may appear slow and even inconsequential in the moment but over the longer term may have significant effects (e.g. a different kind of university). We locate most PAR projects somewhere along this pathway.

Assuming the different patterns that change can adopt, we can also argue that PAR projects which enlarge epistemic capabilities can be triggers for emergent change: an adaptive and uneven process of unconscious and conscious learning from experience and the change that results from that. It consists in adjusting to shifting realities, of trying to improve and enhance what we know and do, of building on what is there, step-by-step, uncertainly, but still learning and adapting, however well or badly (Reeler 2007, p. 9). Imperfect examples of PAR can also be sources of an adaptive and emergent change so relevant for what our societies are facing nowadays.

Moreover, human relationships—so central in PAR—are a potential locus of change, so that developing mutual and reciprocal understanding and expanding people's individual capabilities can contribute to change at many levels. In working to expand capabilities, we also confront and must understand social conversion factors, how they might present as obstacles, and how this in turn informs our development of projects and relationships in specific contexts of higher education.

Inspirational leadership and ideas can also be a driver for change (Green 2008)—we see both of these at work, too, across all the PAR projects in this book. As Green (2008) notes, there can be 'demonstration

effects', whereby people's behaviour is influenced by their points of reference so that change, even at a very local level (a new way of doing research, empowering individuals, and so on), can be a source of inspiration. Such thinking and actions for and about development and human development is certainly reformist rather than revolutionary in so far as we are obliged to work within existing institutions and higher education systems rather than overturning them completely. On the other hand, we do not envisage PAR as subscribing to a limited reformist agenda of change with no change. Rather, we see PAR as sitting between reform and revolution in its transformational actions and aspirations, imperfectly realised but realised nonetheless.

We also know that neoliberal approaches in higher education are not taking us towards human development for all and, indeed, appear to be exacerbating existing inequalities. On the other hand, in this book we find human development ideas at work in inclusive and aspirational university practices, research processes, and policies. We need to try out new actions towards decent university and social cultures, even though they may be imperfect. Without trying we cannot know what can be done. Without neglecting macro systems, we align with Lori Keleher (2019, p. 42) who explicates a domain of 'personal or integral ethics'. Keleher understands a personal ethics as recognising 'that each of us [as university-based researchers] must deliberately consider our own particular actions and how we integrate our choices made in various spheres into the personal context of our individual lives' (2019, p. 43), as focusing on 'the ethical practice of whole persons' (p. 43) and as attempting to bring theory and practices together. Finally, then, Martha Nussbaum (2008, p. 1) reminds us that working for justice and human development demands of us a 'patient and persistent effort of imagination, analysis, and, ultimately, action'. We extend this demand to our research efforts inside universities, arguing for the legitimacy and credibility of PAR to contribute to knowledge and action towards change and, on the same continuum, action learning for evidence-based development.

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