

Research Article

From compass to radar: An innovative methodological strategy for researching cultural innovation

De la brújula al radar: Una estrategia metodológica innovadora para investigar la innovación cultural

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Abstract: In response to the absence of a deep reflection on methodological innovation, this article sets out to approach the most appropriate strategy for investigating cultural innovation. In this regard, underlying this article there is a conceptual revision of two key terms: culture and innovation. The former is expanded towards more open and creative visions, and the latter is redefined from a linear and accumulative conceptualisation to an open and creative process. In order to build a new methodological approach based on this revision, we focus on presenting an onto-epistemological turn that implies a move from a research process in a linear progression, to an innovative cultural research process understood as an event that is processual, relational, and performative. By way of conclusion, the article proposes a creative and innovative research device that is open to the multiple configurations in which individuals and groups inhabit, build and experience culture in innovative ways.

Keywords: cultural innovation; methodological innovation; onto-epistemological turn; linear research process; processual research process.

Resumen: Ante la falta de una reflexión profunda sobre innovación metodológica, este artículo se propone abordar la estrategia más adecuada para investigar la innovación cultural. En este sentido, subyace en este artículo una revisión conceptual de dos términos clave: cultura e innovación. El primero se expande hacia visiones más abiertas y creativas, y el segundo, se redefine desde una conceptualización lineal y acumulativa hacia un proceso abierto y creativo. Para construir un nuevo enfoque metodológico a partir de esta revisión, presentamos un giro onto-epistemológico que implica pasar de un proceso de investigación en progresión lineal, a un proceso de investigación cultural innovador entendido como un evento procesual, relacional y performativo. A modo de conclusión, el artículo propone un dispositivo de investigación creativo e innovador, abierto a las múltiples configuraciones en las que individuos y grupos habitan, construyen y experimentan la cultura de forma innovadora.

Palabras clave: innovación cultural; innovación metodológica; giro onto-epistemológico; proceso de investigación lineal; proceso de investigación procesual.

1. A journey through the hidden details of methodological innovation

In this article we share the unease felt by many researchers confronting the absence of a deep reflection on methodological innovation in the social sciences. Amparo Lasén and Elena Casado (2014, p. 156) assert that this reflection is an urgent issue that cannot be postponed given what the authors interpret as a lack of adjustment between the commonly used method and research techniques (both quantitative and qualitative) and the emergent social practices in the present socio-historical context. More concretely, we could say that the current state of the debate is at the very least insufficient since when it does take place, it largely focusses on the purely technical adaptation¹ of the techniques in use, or on their adoption² and transfer from one field of application to another.

Without denying the contribution of the two modalities, true methodological innovation would be that which recovers epistemology as the starting point and the horizon of realisation since otherwise “epistemology is diluted when methodology becomes technique, minimising the situated and socio-historical character of all social practice, including research” (Lasén & Casado, 2014, p. 158). There are two implicit arguments in this assertion: on one side, an in-depth consideration of the meaning of innovation; and on the other, recognition of the performative, when not political, character of methodology. It is worth dwelling briefly on these arguments.

In all ages, there are fetish/password terms that serve to legitimise those who use them as legitimate participants in a “socialised linguistic network” (Pacho, 2009, p. 33). Julián Pacho (2009) reminds us that “in the first half of the XIX century the terms ‘development’ and ‘evolution’ were in fashion and served as a password; in the second half of the same century, they were replaced by ‘progress’ and ‘sciences’ in the plural”. For this author, the term innovation has emerged as the fetish word of the XXI century, due to its inflationary use in all fields and in all instances of public and private institutional power, economic management and also knowledge management³. Inflationary use is not incompatible with radical ambiguity in the term’s definition, or with the absence of such a definition or some type of reflection on it. Stated differently, the term’s fetishization does not always prove enlightening since this is quite often not accompanied by any conceptual and semantic delimitation of a term that is in itself already slippery and ambiguous.

With the aim of remedying this course of action, in what follows we present a basic and possibly shared definition of the term. Hence, by innovation we understand the introduction in theory or in practice of a new object, whether this be a concept, a process, a techno-object or a form of application or development of each one of the foregoing (Pacho, 2009, p. 33). The mention of theory and practice refers to the articulation between invention (innovation in relation to new ideas, designs and approaches) and application (innovation with regard to the exploitation and diffusion of these ideas, concepts and designs...). Also implicit is the positive axiology that is attributed to innovation by making it the equivalent of “benefit”, “improvement” and even

¹ “Claims for innovation which are adaptations are when an author claims an established method has been adapted or changed” (Wiles et al., 2010, p. 14).

² “Claims for innovation relating to adoption are when an author claims they are taking a method into a new discipline or sphere [...] or a novel combination of method is used, for instance use of quantitative, textual and visual analyses in combination” (Wiles et al., 2010, p. 14).

³ The inflationary use of the term can be confirmed by the results of introducing the term in any search engine. If we refine the search using the terms innovation+methods or methodology, the number of results obtained increases substantially. That being said, the recurring presence of the term should not be understood solely as a reflection of intellectual aspiration. It can also be seen as a response induced by the logic of knowledge and research production in so-called academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Such production extols the figure of the academic entrepreneur and innovator subjected to the permanent trial of her/his contribution to the chain of value, to productivity in the framework of a rapid science oriented to obtaining and distributing outputs directly aimed at resolving concrete problems (efficiency); a science/research that uses controllable quantitative criteria (although external to the requirements of the discipline itself) to evaluate the quality of the research (calculability): indicators of impact, number of publications associated to the research project, etc.; and finally, a science/research based on anticipating the future (predictability) based on present-day knowledge (Abad & Davila, 2020).

“progress” since ultimately innovation always has a favourable outcome of some kind (Taylor & Coffey, 2008, p. 8). The positive axiology cited contributes to obviating the fact that progress and improvement, when present, are the result of a long chain of trial-and-error processes that discard “those innovations that are not compatible (and, therefore, virtually synergetic) with the rest” (Pacho, 2009, p. 38). Innovation, and methodology as well, is thus presented with a markedly unidirectional, teleological, technical and procedural bias, since a final result retrospectively determines and directs everything that precedes it. Lineal interpretation constituted by a prior decision that is concretised in a succession of successful phases, developed by means of techniques of refinement, adaptation and adoption; a process that advances in lineal progression obviating the routes, advances and retrocessions that are discarded as non-conclusive and focusing on the static abstractions of this process, which is thus converted into a mere concatenation of isolated events (Woolgar, 1991).

The second argument mentioned above, referring to the performative character of the methodology, involves accepting that the method (as a constitutive part of the latter) is something more than a set of valid procedures for approaching a given reality, for obtaining a specific type of data. It is not exclusively technical, much less innocent. The method is performative, it helps to produce realities as Karen Barad (2007, p. 91) reminds us when she notes that “making knowledge is not simply about making facts but about making worlds, or rather, it is about making specific worldly configurations” (cited in Krehl, Thomas & Bellingham, 2020, p. 1). John Law uses the term method assemblage to underscore this idea: “method assemblage is a continuing process of crafting and enacting necessary boundaries between presence, manifest absence and Otherness” (Law, 2004, p. 144). A game of absence/presence for understanding the most significant dimension of methodological innovation, called inception (Willes et al., 2010): a new and revised conceptual, epistemological schema that, when put into practice, introduces some modification into the form of seeing/researching a phenomenon.

Consideration of the three forms of methodological innovation outlined above enables us to detect a certain hierarchical relation between them; or better put, a relationship of displacement from innovation as mere transference (adoption) or simple improved extension (adaptation), to innovation as a constitutive aspect of an “other” methodological approach (inception). In this, the process of innovation goes beyond a simple change of position that seeks to achieve a better and more systematically exhaustive extraction of data and information; that is to say, beyond an activity that is purely extractive of meanings (Barnett, 2014, p. 284)⁴. Methodological innovation understood in this widened sense supposes “an involvement and openness to experience” (Barnett, 2014, p. 284); an openness to experience in which such meanings emerge and are constructed.

2. Detailing method assemblage: from arboreal knowledge to rhizomatic knowledge

From the perspective of method as something more than a neutral procedure that not only describes but also produces the reality that it tries to investigate by detecting patterns, underlining and enlarging some while silencing others, it is interesting to know the specific forms in which method assemblage is conjugated in order to understand the onto-epistemological displacement that is entailed in all innovation understood as inception.

The conception of reality that has been associated for centuries with the method of the social sciences is based on the supposition of a reality understood “as a set of fairly specific, determinate,

⁴ With respect to the cultural field that concerns us here, this shift also implies a re-conceptualisation of the articulation between culture and innovation that would adopt three forms that correspond in a certain way to the methodological innovation we have set out: innovative culture (in allusion to the use of the term innovation in its version as refinement or improvement that makes cultural products expand, arousing market interest); culture of innovation (in reference to the creation and transfer of practices, discourses and programs aimed at generating a climate of social and cultural innovation); cultural innovation (identification of the cultural sphere as a space of knowledge production based on an exercise of onto-epistemological creativity) (Piazuelo Lamote de Grignon & YProductions, 2008).

and more or less identifiable processes" (Law, 2004, p. 5); "that there are definite processes out there that are waiting to be discovered" (Law, 2004, p. 6)⁵. For its part, the method, its procedures, and rules are perceived as the certain and reliable instrument for approaching that reality that waits to be discovered/uncovered. In this sense, "method hopes to act as a set of short-circuits that link us in the best possible way with reality and allow us to return more or less quickly from that reality to our place of study with findings that are reasonable secure, at least for the time being" (Law, 2004, p. 10). The method acts here as a compass that orientates the research process, making the person who initiates it responsible for both the point that s/he takes as a reference on the horizon and the path followed to approach it, while reality is a structure, a territory that we can interpret, represent and cut out by selecting what proves meaningful (what we want to make visible, make known).

The selection is made according to an initial stimulus, a purpose that acts as a compass, a device that always points to the goal, the attainment of the established objectives, the achievement of results that, acting as evidence, make it possible to coherently answer the initial stimulus. This is linked to a form of knowledge that Deleuze and Guattari termed arboreal in relation to a process described as "as linear, static, and 'tree-like' in its installation of a hierarchy of genealogical structures that continue to subdivide phenomena through formal principles of identity" (1987, p. 7). It produces answers where there should be questions and tries to create order and structure, breaks and discontinuities in the form of metric (e.g., tables and charts) and linguistic representations (e.g., taxonomies) where continuity is the norm (Abad & Davila, 2020).

In terms of research, we are facing a lineal and chronological process that identifies the problem, analyses data, evaluates and provides solutions with a predictive value; a process in which it is the research procedure itself that is of value inasmuch as it connects cause and effect (Torrance, 2019, pp. 736-737), providing "findings of research to be immediately 'useful' in the context of (so-called) evidence-based policy making, the 'what work' movement, and 'scientifically based research'".

It is not surprising that the only innovation conceivable in this framework is that pointing to improvements of adaptation and refinement in the development of the procedure itself, without going into deeper questions, or into its epistemological foundations. To address these foundations would involve recalling that this model sets out from a conception of reality as "independent of our actions and especially of our perceptions [...] a reality that is out there beyond ourselves" (Law, 2004, p. 24; emphasis in the original); a static, permanent reality that is predictable in its patterns of relation and configuration that waits inertly and passively to be discovered, uncovered (Woolgar, 1991, p. 84) and represented⁶ in a research process that is reduced, in essence, to tracing the outlines, levels and slopes that shape it⁷ (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013).

The arboreal form of knowledge shows its limitations when it comes to understanding (or simply describing) the more complex and diffuse aspects of reality, those that appear and

⁵ This conception is understood on the basis of a binary logic of thought in which the subject and the object appear clearly differentiated.

⁶ Representation is only possible, on one side, from the radical separation between a knowing subject and a knowable object and, on the other, from its conception as a carbon copy or reproduction of what is previously given (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013), which corresponds to the view of "the truth" dominant in Western philosophical thought; a conception that holds that the truth represents a relation of correspondence between a (discursive) proposition and an extra-discursive reality so that "in this view, thought is about a realm completely independent of human action and expresses things as they are in themselves, that is, free of human interpretation" (Alcoff, 1991, p. 14). It is worth keeping in mind that this is no more than a fiction aimed at hiding the inscription made on the object by the interpretation of the person investigating it. It cannot, therefore, be understood as an act of discovery in the strict sense as the representation is mediated by the gaze of the person making it.

⁷ The method deployed in the research process delimits, names and gives visibility to what can be objectified. In a certain way it shapes "what is" (the limits of its presence). But by proceeding in this way, we also define the contours of what is absent, what is incidental, what is intermittent and, by means of all this, we define the otherness of what cannot be objectified so easily by means of the traditional assemblage method.

disappear following a logic that is hard to predict. Because reality presents itself to us shaped by aspects that escape from order, clarity and predictive certainty. And when they do become predictable, this is as a result of our effort to adjust their confusing and discontinuous nature, their rules of appearance/ disappearance, to the rules of order and clarity of our methods (Law, 2004).

In fact, the data, their conceptualisation, are prior to their construction, emergence and appearance: we know what to do with them, how to analyse them, how to present them and how to increase their validity even before any encounter with the data themselves (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016, p. 45). We treat data the same way as Procrustes⁸ treated the travellers who arrived at his guesthouse: we break them, stretch them, shorten them... until they are made to fit onto the bed/map of our research.

Breaking with this logic of the order/pattern/map involves innovating beyond adaptation and even adoption, understood as procrustean practices: it means innovating to go beyond the standardisation implicit in these practices, not as a mere form of providing an outlet for a mere intellectual desire, but instead as “the attempt to respond to certain problematizations that are emerging within the social field” (Shumack & Tuckwell, 2010, p. 6). In fact, as John Law reminds us, “if we want to think about the messes of reality at all then we’re going to have to teach ourselves to think, to practice, to relate, and to know in new ways. We will need to teach ourselves to know some of the realities of the world using methods unusual to or unknown in social science” (Law, 2004, p. 12).

This new way of thinking points towards the rhizomatic knowledge developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). As the physical and biomedical sciences have explained to us very well, the reality/world/universe is not a discreet set of units that remain in a fixed and static order so that the research must focus on describing and representing the identity (essence) that defines them based on their position in precise space/time coordinates. On the contrary, the reality/world/universe is defined by flow, movement, change and displacement characterised “not as a pre-given reference or fixed category, but as a life form in movement characterized exactly by its being-in movement” (Wentzen & Mattingly, 2018, p. 150; cited in Salazar, 2022 p. 14). This movement does not assume the course of an arrow and as a result it cannot be understood as evolution but as involution, a concept that “captures well the entangled pushing and pulling of ‘organisms constantly inventing new ways to live with and alongside one another’” (Hustak & Myers, 2012, p. 87; cited in Salazar, 2022, p. 15).

Reality in movement, fluid reality, that which emerges through a process of relational becoming, acquires the form of a rhizome: an assemblage or mangle in which “human interactions, thoughts, language, discourse, matter (materiality) and nature are all occupants of the world [...] and all have equal status in this world’s flat topology” (Greene, 2013, p. 751). The rhizome concept enables us to visualise a flat typology, a structure of horizontally interconnected nodes in constant growth: “There are no points or positions in the rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8) and “these lines are organized as ephemeral horizontal relations that are always proliferating. Multiplicity celebrates plurality, proliferative modes of thinking, acting, and being rather than unitary, static, binary, and totalizing modes” (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013, p. 670). The research process that attempts to converge with the characteristics of the rhizome must be “forward moving, backward thinking, rhizomatic, iterative, and emergent endeavour, itself constantly on the move” (Childers, 2012, p. 752).

⁸ In Greek mythology Procrustes was a bandit and innkeeper in Attica who offered shelter to travellers. While the traveller slept, Procrustes tied him to the four corners of the bed. If the victim was tall and his body exceeded the limits of the bed, he sawed off the parts that protruded: the feet, the hands, the head... In the opposite case, he dislocated them with hammer blows and stretched them to make them fit. This is the origin of the concept of the “Procrustean bed” used to refer to a forced standardisation, or to an act of self-deception in the attempt to make everything match perfectly and appear before the spectator’s eye according to our wishes.

If the compass served us as a metaphor of navigation to understand the arboreal research process and mode of knowledge, we can now refer to the radar with similar aims: the radar emits enough information (although not predictable beforehand) to advance without colliding with the elements (also in movement) that are encountered along the way, with the result that it “can help a researcher map possible directions but also to inquire about the unexpected” (Agee, 2009, p. 432). The radar refers to a movement whose components branch out in different directions, shaping “an ontology of becoming(s) rather than being. Reality is viewed as a continual process of flux or differentiation even though this fact is usually masked by powerful and pervasive illusory discourses of fixity, stability, and identity that have characterized most of western philosophy and theory since at least the Enlightenment. This ontology of becoming(s) enables (even urges) us to see things differently – in terms of what they might become rather than as they currently are” (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013, p. 670). Therefore, there is no map (territory) prior to journeying, or it is not the only form of representing reality⁹.

This opens the door to methodological innovation where the data are seen as emergent: “They question us, they hail us, they unsettle us so as to oblige us to revise the idea of finding, discovery and serendipity from a view of the datum as a process that becomes visible (as on the radar) through the acts of seeing, listening, performative interaction (a capacity now assigned to the data themselves): “We conceptualize data as a wave, as flow, as liquid; ever-changing, inconstant, unreliable, non-interpretable; as a dark forest. Data is already there and here, only partially accessible. Data may not need to be collected but may be lived, sensed, and done. [...] Rather than conceptualize data as a potential source of information, we are interested in data for what it produces, how it moves and for how it can be lived and sensed by researchers, and how data makes us as people and researchers” (Benozzo, Bell & Koro-Ljungberg, 2013, p. 309).

In short, the metaphor of navigation using a radar (as well as the rhizomatic form of knowledge that it tries to make visible) refers us to a research process understood as an event that is processual (as it involves becoming), relational (involving the different human and non-human forces that intervene in its objectification) and performative (involving practices that contribute to the production of the event, its data and its moments). A research process that is creative, innovative and open to the specific configuration of the relations amongst representations, practices and discourses.

3. Exploring new routes: traditional practices under erasure

Adjusting to the rhizomatic form of knowledge leads us to think that “traditional methodological practices ought to be ‘twisted and bent’ (Spivak, 1993, p. xiv), contorted and placed under erasure even as they guide us” (Childers, 2012, p. 753). Winding, twisting, folding, even turning, are all actions that refer to a disruptive view of the regulating practices and concepts that operate in language according to a binary either/or type of logic, rather than as “a more cloudy distribution of circulating and ending possibilities” (Childers, 2012, p. 753). The disruptive reading that opens the door for us to certain possibilities goes hand-in-hand with the acceptance of two related principles: 1) vital monism that points to the continuum between nature/culture; and human/non-human; 2) post-humanist nomadism that decentres the figure of the human as the sole and original agent in the creation of meaning in order to understand it as part of a process of becoming in relation with the world (Braidotti, 2015; Barad, 2007).

Both principles are postulated facing the hierarchical dualism articulated by Cartesian objectivism that “for a long time explained questions related to knowledge in terms of an individual mind separated from the body and carnality confronting the external world” (Carrasco Segovia & Castro Varela, 2020, p. 67), so that the emphasis was placed on reason over other experiences that were considered to be “non-rational” or “pre-rational”, and the notion of agency was limited to its humanist consideration. It is worth recalling that according to the traditional

⁹ In any case, it is the action that shapes both the territory and the map insofar as it is the dynamic product of that action.

humanist conception, which we can here equate with the arboreal form of knowledge, agency is understood to be an innate characteristic of a subject whose characteristics of freedom, will, intentionality, autonomy and reason enable her or him to act in and on the world (Mazzei, 2013, p. 733) based more on volition (desire and reasoned will) than on any conditioning that might be imposed on will itself. In this way, the attribution of agency presupposes the existence of human subjects (bearers and generators of information/knowledge) “who speak for themselves; subjects capable of knowing others; and subjects in charge of their desires and identifications” (Lather, 2009, p. 17). Human subjects are the site of agency, knowledge and the praxis of research.

The materiality of reality is always the object of knowledge, lacking agency insofar as it is only the product of human agency, the sole voice legitimised to represent those without voice, or stated differently, what is withheld from the discursive and non-discursive patterns that surround it and constitute it (Haraway, 1999)¹⁰. The methodological implication of this binary and representational essentialism involves assuming that people (authentic subjects of the research) “who speak (from a conscious center) give us (the researchers, also authentic) rational, coherent truths that serve as foundation (data) for data analysis and interpretation” (Youngblood Jackson, 2013, p. 742). Analysis and interpretation that, as essentialising practices, seek order and regularity, patterns of similarity and familiarity amongst the different aspects of reality under scrutiny so that these aspects can be defined in their common, shared, stable essence, and thus be named under a single code/category, “categories that supposedly possess coherent essences and consistent traits for theme-building and subsequent meaning-making [...]. Thus, the practice of coding data that essentializes people and their experiences—and that leads to representations of the real and true knowledge—is an epistemological project flavored with humanism” (Youngblood Jackson, 2013, p. 742).

Based on this epistemological proposal, a methodological strategy (from the technical design of the research to the analytical procedure) is constructed that pivots on the centrality of the subject and her/his voice. The centrality of the subject and her/his voice is produced from the moment at which the voice (and presence) of the participants is taken as a datum/evidence/representation of a meaning (truth) that is there to be subjectively (re)constructed, (re)presented and transmitted by a rational, autonomous subject who is the source of will, thought and action. A subject that projects in her/his voice (speech, whatever the form it adopts, or whatever the form in which it is related/narrated) the authentic nature of her/his being¹¹; to be sure, this is mysteriously captured by the listener/researcher thus strengthening the fiction of a meaning understood as a property/quality that is portable from one subject to another by the sole mediation of speaking (or in its case, narration).

It seems obvious to think that problematizing binary and representational logic entails a basic exercise of problematization of the language that has been acquired, learnt, taken for granted – “our mother tongue” or “our language with history” (Spivak, 1993, p. 69 cited in St Pierre, 1997, p. 175) – to produce a different knowledge and produce it in a different form: “a different strategy of sense-making, one that might elude humanism’s attempts to order what can never be contained”. And in this new way of proceeding, we start by decentring the subject and the voice starting from a different (or widened) concept of agency, now understood as “an entanglement of research-data-participants-theory-analysis, as opposed to an innate attribute of an individual human being. In other words, agency to change the world and be changed by the world emerges within the intra-actions of multiple people and things and does not pre-exist those encounters” (Mazzei, 2013, p. 734). From here on, research designs are focused on the research event: an entanglement of living beings, objects, spaces, times and materials¹² that are

¹⁰ For a broader view of the ethical and political (not to say epistemological) implications that underlie the binary and representational logic of this schema of distancing, see: The problems of speaking for others (Linda Alcoff, 1991, *Cultural Critique*, 20, pp. 5-32).

¹¹ It is worth asking why what is said is more highly valued, as evidence, than what is written, drawn or done.

¹² Karen Barad reminds us that things and subjects are not the only materials, but also discourses, what is thought, what is imagined, what is possible and what is impossible.

reconfigured, interwoven, related and rearticulated on the basis of their interactions¹³. Therefore, we are facing research designs in which the search for symbolic meaning that a subject attributes to reality and to her/his experience is combined with an understanding of the event in which the intra-action takes place¹⁴; that is, the assemblage between agencies that gives rise to meaning based on contingent articulation, situated spatiotemporally, of the connections between what is rational, symbolic and what is precognitive, irrational or lacking apparent meaning. All of this with the aim of capturing the continuous flow of everyday life and experience: shared experiences, daily routines, fleeting encounters, bodily movements, precognitive triggerings, practical skills, affective intensities, lasting impulses, unexceptional interactions... aspects/moments in which there are other forms of meaning, or no cognitively attributed symbolic meaning (Vannini, 2015, p. 4). In this way research designs are created that open the door to the recovery of moments of waiting or in-between moments¹⁵; moments that, in spite of their centrality for the emergence of serendipity, discovery, the emergence of meaning... are traditionally considered non-events and are therefore rejected, denied and combatted as they lack symbolic meaning and develop in a marginal time unfolded on the dead margins of the field work (Abad & Davila, 2020). In sum, events are examined because considered in their totality, and not only as a situation for extracting information based on the profiles of individuals, they inevitably emphasise not the instrumental levels, the drafts of actions and scripts and a priori conditions, but instead the possibility of alternative futures, the failures of representations, the contingencies of interventions and the effervescence with which things really happen (Vannini, 2015, p. 7). As a result, the idea of a datum is transformed from what is "given" to what is "emergent", relationally constituted in the research activity itself.

In light of what has been expounded, research designs should reject any separation between materiality and sociability, assuming a basic principle of relational materialism: each thought, each action, each encounter, each word emerges from a substratum of materiality that enables such phenomena to occur, and consequently our understanding of the material (nature) and the meaning (culture) must be inextricably connected (Vannini, 2015). The first consequence of all of this is the urgency of considering, in each research project, that all the practices, whether scientific, technological, creative, social, clinical or analytical, are natural cultural practices through which the material and the meaning are interwoven so that the methodological and technological design will have to be formulated from the outset from this position. At the same time, the specific qualities of each research practice constitute the specific form in which nature and culture come to interact so that the research designs will be creative, imaginative, open to the agency of otherness and to the connection between nature (materiality) and culture (meaning) (ibid, 2015).

Hence creativity, from the perspective of methodological innovation, includes an amalgam of resources and devices that range from inception to adaption and adoption: from the generation of prototypes that stimulate interactions (Michael, 2012) to the performative adaption of classical ethnography (Alexander, 2013; Denzin, 2003) and story completion (Lupton, 2021).

There is a common shared substratum in all these proposals of innovation that have been mentioned: the centrality of performativity. John David Dewsbury (2000, pp. 481, 490) reminds us that while representational theories study the mind and its operations (thoughts, ideas, motivations, urges, values, beliefs, attitudes, etc.) as prior conditions for taking action, non-representational models exclusively examine thought in action, concentrating on unpremeditated actions and interactions that are impulsive, semi-impulsive, non-introspective, pre-objective and

¹³ Here, we understand research events as systems/networks of action and, in this sense, full of transitivity: subject-subject; subject-object; object-object. It is this transitivity that enables us to understand agency as dispersed or distributed.

¹⁴ Following Karen Barad (2003, 2007) we can understand the intra-actions in terms of relations and intersections, where the elements of meaning that emerge prove to be the consequence of the interwoven state of the different capacities of agency, in this way making it possible to theorise the social and the natural as a whole.

¹⁵ To broaden the idea of field work shaped on the basis of the moments of waiting and/or in between moments, see the concept of waiting field of Dawn Mannay and Melanie Morgan (2015, pp. 174-175).

habitual (thought/discourse under construction). Because people, perspectives and things come into being in and because of events, that is, by being performed, which serves to underline the difficulty entailed in setting out from previously defined individual and structural profiles. This is because the subject is not something previously defined and constructed that patiently waits to be appropriated. It is the product of its invention, the consequence of its adaptation to a situation/event. The performativity of the experience, of the thought in action, is inevitably an experience embodied in a corporality that is not solely a container of knowledge, nor a mere object to be represented. Bodies are part of the assemblage of the event, subjects of knowledge that deploy their affective and sensorial potential in performativity (Dewsbury, 2000, pp. 482-485). There are two consequences that we can extract from this affirmation: on one side, research designs should cease to “read” the body, and its infinite representations, as if it were a text marked by the inscriptions of the person who sees, reads or interprets it; on the other, these designs should consider the body as an inscriber based on its capacity to move and affect other people and things. From the body as an inscribed text to the body as an inscribing agent, the performative experience, the research event, becomes multi-sensorial or, at least, revisits the hierarchy of the senses: from the primacy of the eye/sight, which gives rise to a body-screen unfolded in a dual space since the observing I is situated in a different space, normally opposite to that of the object of observation, to the deployment of other senses that give volume and texture to the body and its affects (Raquejo, 2020, p. 164).

4. Conclusion

In spite of their thematic differences the texts that make up this monograph share an interest in revisiting two terms that appear to be of key importance at the present socio-historical moment: culture and innovation. Regarding the first, there continues to be a conceptual tension that explodes the concept of culture, dispersing it towards more open and creative views. Out of this tension arises the revision of the second of the proposed concepts. Thus, innovation in the cultural field ceases to be understood solely as lineal and accumulative progress, and comes to be seen as an open and creative process.

Like dominoes that fall in an orderly way due to the momentum of one pushing against another, the revision of concepts that become analytically fundamental requires, at the least, rethinking the onto-epistemological bases from which their analytical potential is understood, which inevitably leads to the necessary reconsideration of the methodological strategy most suited to the onto-epistemological revision undertaken.

This has been the final aim of this article: to capture the role of the domino effect. With this aim we have dwelt on the presentation of two forms of knowledge that involve two strategic approaches to research: arboreal knowledge that advances in a lineal progression to discover (in the sense of uncovering, drawing back the veil covering it) what is “given”; and rhizomatic knowledge that is unfolded in research events performed in the here and now, enabling us to encounter what is new, unexpected, emergent... in sum, what we didn't know we were looking for.

In both cases an appeal is made to the logic of discovery as the final and necessary aim of the research. But this is done with differentiating nuances that point to different modes of conceiving methodological innovation, or at least to specific forms of combining those modes. In the first case, discovery is valued in terms of uncovering what already existed in its unique and fixed form, although remaining hidden, to which end we faithfully follow the methodologically established route, and adjustments (adoption and adaptation), when these occur, are assumed to be improvements in the procedure that enable a faithful map of the finding to be sketched¹⁶; a valuable finding that is produced in the progressive deployment of the search procedure. In the

¹⁶ A logic of representation that is legitimised the better the map fits the territory, making the representation into a carbon copy or reproduction of reality.

second case, the discovery is read as serendipity, a concept that according to the proposal of Robert Merton (1948, p. 506) is defined as “a pattern that involves the unanticipated, anomalous and strategic datum which exerts pressure upon the investigator for a new direction of inquiry which extends theory”. Discovery is outlined here as the capacity to notice something while on the move, or to take note of something that was not sought after or was not expected, or the ability and sagacity to see everything that was not expected to be seen in such a way, or to hear what is transmitted on the margins of the voice and textuality¹⁷. To achieve this requires promotion of the conditions and opportunities for generating open, creative and innovative research designs, closer to the logic of inception/invention. This means creating research events that make it possible, through every type of technical and analytical bricolage, to map¹⁸ the form(s) in which what is unexpected emerges, always in the here and now of a research event/experience open to future potentials that are not determined a priori, materialised and embodied in gestures and micro-gestures of relationship with the human and nonhuman, multi-sensorial and, in any case, hybrid setting, since it is designed from the articulation amongst practices, discourses and representations as well as from the articulation of different disciplines, ranging from sociology to contemporary art and anthropology.

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¹⁷ At this moment the practice of rhizomatic research is drenched in new nuances as it is formulated in terms of metis. By metis the ancient Greeks understood a form of knowledge suitable for praxis in changeable, living, confusing and complex settings; a form of knowledge in which, from the cunning and artful position of the person who, in this case, carries out research; fantasy, imagination, creativity, prudence and sagacity are combined in order to develop a practical knowledge attached to the painstaking analysis of situations and settings of realisation and, of course, a willingness to revisit the initial goals should this be necessary.

¹⁸ We have moved from the noun (map=result of the research) to the verb that underscores the process and the action (mapping). To give an example, we move from analysing the apprenticeship (result), to additionally consider the process of learning.

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