ANALYZING PARTICIPATORY CULTURAL PRACTICES IN A MEDIUM-SCALE SWISS TOWN:
HOW MULTIPLE BELONGINGS ARE CONSTRUCTED AND CONSOLIDATED THROUGH AN INTERACTIVE FILMMAKING PROCESS

MONIKA SALZBRUNN, BARBARA DELLWO & SYLVAIN BESENÇON

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: DR. MONIKA SALZBRUNN, UNIVERSITY OF LAUSANNE, INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES FOR RELIGIONS, OFFICE: ANTHROPOLE 5067, 1015 LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND. E-MAIL: MONIKA.SALZBRUNN@UNIL.CH

ABSTRACT

THIS PAPER DEALS WITH A PARTICIPATORY FILMMAKING PROJECT INVOLVING YOUNG RESIDENTS OF A NEIGHBORHOOD
IN A SWISS TOWN, LOCAL SOCIOCULTURAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LOCAL POLICE, AND
AN INDEPENDENT FILMMAKER. SEEKING TO QUERY WHAT PARTICIPATION MEANS IN SUCH A SETTING, WE PROPOSE AN
ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK THAT CONSIDERS THREE SCALES OF PARTICIPATION: THE PARTICIPATORY NODE, THE PARTICIPATIVE
COLLABORATION, AND PARTICIPATION AS AN ARGUMENT IN THE TOP-DOWN SETTING OF A MUNICIPAL POLICY. AS
RESEARCHERS, WE ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE ENTIRE RAW UNEDITED FILM MATERIAL THAT DOCUMENTS
THE WHOLE PRODUCTION PROCESS. FOCUSING ON THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE FILMMAKER AND THE YOUTHS, THE PAPER
EXPLORES HOW MULTIPLE BELONGINGS ARE MOBILIZED IN ORDER TO NEGOTIATE THE FRONTIER BETWEEN PARTICIPATION
AND AUTHORITY, NAMELY THROUGH JOKING RELATIONSHIPS. WE DIFFERENTIATE THIS FORM OF AUTHORITY FROM THE
SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE EXERTED BY INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATIVES IN ORDER TO HIGHLIGHT THE CONDITIONS BY WHICH ACTIVE
CITIZENSHIP IS MADE POSSIBLE.

Introduction: Observing participatory filmmaking in a context of community-engaged cultural research

In their analysis of the post-political condition, Wilson and Swyngedouw state that "contemporary forms of depoliticization are characterized by the erosion of democracy and the weakening of the public sphere" (2015: 5). In this context, "political contradictions are reduced to policy problems to be managed by experts and legitimated through participatory processes in which the scope of possible outcomes is narrowly defined in advance" (*Id.*: 6). Drawing on these somewhat pessimistic premises, we propose an analysis of a participatory filmmaking project set in a social housing district of a Swiss town and involving young residents of this neighborhood, local sociocultural and political institutions, representatives of the local police force, and an independent filmmaker. In a post-political context, citizenship becomes a consumer good and is experienced in a passive manner. Participatory processes have the potential to allow individuals to build an active relationship to citizenship, to confer agency upon them, and to allow them to overcome the post-political condition (Salzbrunn, Dellwo, Aleman, 2018).

On a methodological level, we explore here the meaning of participation in participatory cultural projects like this one, and the ways in which researchers can intervene without dominating the setting or the outcome of the research. We therefore opted to avoid the "intrusive presence" of the researcher during the filmmaking process, leaving space instead for physically present or imagined "intrusive others" (Mannay 2013: 136; 143). On an analytical level, we seek to investigate the sorts of power structures (Castells 2011) that can be observed during community-oriented cultural research, and how bottom-up and top-down emancipatory processes can be combined. In order to answer these questions, we define an emancipatory process as "one that occurs when actors are able to act outside of, or redefine the categories they are assigned to" (Salzbrunn, Dellwo, Aleman, 2018).

Hence, instead of opting for direct action research, we developed a distinct form of community-engaged research, where the (self-)reflexivity of each actor's role was central: The social housing district of "La Bourdonnette" in Lausanne is located close to the university campus. The two sites are separated by the Geneva-Lausanne highway, which adds to the already deeply perceived social and cultural distance between the two sites. A group of young residents participated in a collaborative film project called *Révélations*, endorsed by the municipality as part of a broader educational campaign about the processes of othering, under the title "Moi & les autres" (Me & the others). A local video association filmed the entire production process. We participated in the reflexive process of watching and commenting on the raw film footage with the project's head mediator, observed public screenings of the final movie, and participated in public meetings with the young filmmakers/actors and the head mediator. We also conducted classic ethnographic fieldwork in the district. A general reflection on mediation, participation, power structures, and the performance of multiple belongings has accompanied this collective work on emerging methods of participatory cultural research.

Our goal of exploring the territorial dimension of participation (the neighborhood) is motivated by the will to overcome the "ethnic lens" (Glick Schiller, Çağlar, and Guldbransen 2006), in other words, not to focus on a single ethnic (or religious) community by assuming that ethnicity (or religion) is a sufficient ground on which actors build a sense of belonging and of commonality. On the contrary, by focusing on a given territory we acknowledge the importance of locality in the shaping of actors' relationships and networks, while allowing the researcher to observe whether ethnicity or religion are indeed relevant in the actors' (self-)identification processes and sense of belonging. Thanks to this approach, we observe how "community is made within society" (Sainsaulieu, Salzbrunn, and Amiotte-Suchet 2010) without judging the process or essentializing the "politics of belonging" (Yuval-Davis, Viethen, and Kannabiran 2006).

As we will show, ethnic and religious belongings are central to our argument, both as categories of analysis and as categories of practice; as Brubaker notes, when it comes to identity, "self-identifications and other-identifications are interdependent" (2013: 2). On the one hand, the neighborhood in which this participatory filmmaking project takes place was chosen because it is perceived by local policy-makers as being problematic, due to its high level of cultural heterogeneity. On the other hand, we observed that the youths there played with various forms of their multiple belongings. In fact, the youths involved in this project recurrently refer to ethnic and religious aspects in their "politics of belonging", which Yuval-Davis defines as the boundary-work that aims to "separate the world population into 'us' and 'them'" (2006: 204). This can happen in a discursive way and/or through bodily performances targeting a specific audience in a certain context. Hence, we analyze how social and/or political

practices occur in a specific social situation (Salzbrunn 2016: 63).

From a situational perspective (Rogers and Vertovec 1995), we analyze the ways in which ethnic and religious categories are assigned, experienced, negotiated, or contested, notably through the use of humor. Our purpose in doing so is first to highlight the structure of power relationships between the young residents of the neighborhood, the local administration (social workers, police representatives, and political authorities), the filmmaker, and the researchers. Secondly, we intend to show that in this process, participation is not merely a façade: It actually allows the youths to gain agency vis-à-vis the categories to which they are assigned and helps them build an active relation to citizenship. We thus see this participatory process as holding a transformative, emancipatory potential in their struggle for recognition (Fraser 2000; Fraser and Honneth 2003). This perspective follows an "egalitarian ethic where the research participants and communities are first and foremost prioritized" (Gubrium, Harper and Otañez 2015: 19). Following Hart's ladder of participation (1992:8), we as researchers leave the highest level of autonomy to the youths, since we intervene only at the end of the participatory script-writing process. Concerning the analysis of the interaction between the institutions and the mediator involved in the creative process, we analyze to what extent the decisions are adult-initiated and shared with the youths, or if the whole process of decision-making is shared by both, which corresponds to the highest rung of Hart's ladder (ib.).

These are the research questions that emerged during the fieldwork, analysis, and critical reflection on participatory methods that we conducted during the last four years as part of the collective project "(In)visible Islam in the city"[1] in the Lake Geneva area in Switzerland.

Methodology: Accompanying a participatory project

One of our goals was to document and analyze the production of the film *Révélations*, in order to question the processes at stake and the agency of the different actors. Instead of choosing a classic action-research scheme, we opted for multi-level participation, as well as for an observation of cultural participatory practices that combined bottom-up and top-down initiatives. However, we also actively participated in the reflexive process by accompanying the actors and discussing their actions with them. The fruitful relationships between Amina, the filmmaker, and the team deserve special mention. Over the course of several weeks, we watched and commented on all of the raw, unedited film material (rushes) of the creative collaborative production process together, leading to a collaborative selection of 50 hours of recordings that we then analyzed in depth. Furthermore, we met the young filmmakers during and after public presentations and had formal as well as informal discussions with them about their work.

Recently, as we were working through this now three-year-old material, one team member observed, from his outside perspective, the collaborative reflection between researchers and the mediator on the participatory process of the young filmmakers. Using material like the 300 hours of film made by TV-Bourdonnette (and selected collectively by Amina, Barbara, Monika, and Mallory[2]), alongside the diverse observations made three years ago, is very constructive in a number of ways, as it provides us with abundant data regarding the content and atmosphere of the workshops. The first advantage is that we have a critical perspective on the primary material from two insiders (TV Bourdonnette and Amina). Another advantage is that we have an overview of the process while still maintaining close contacts with some participants, especially Amina. This way of working together allowed us to create a "site for reflexivity and social engagement among those involved in the process" (A. Gubrium and Harper 2013: 97).

The genesis of the film

The film project *Révélations* was realized in 2013 in collaboration with teenagers and young adults from the neighborhood "La Bourdonnette" and its community center, whose leaders contacted Amina, an author and filmmaker who had already completed several participatory film projects with teenagers, about contributing to the endeavor. The project also involved two representatives of the local police, a policeman and a prevention officer in the youth corps. Over the span of five months, 25 to 30 teenagers and young adults participated in weekly workshops that aimed to raise their awareness about film production, the use of images, and script writing. The filming took place over four days in May 2013. All the roles in the film were played by the youths, except those of the policemen, who were portrayed by actual policemen. The first public screening took place in July 2013 and was attended by political and official representatives. Since June 2014, the film has been available on Youtube[3], along with a "making of" compilation[4] and trailer[5].

The 40-minute fictional film focuses on two rival groups of young people living in the neighborhood of "La Bourdonnette". In the film, one of the groups plans to hold up a gas station. However, one young man is hesitant and eventually decides to inform a policeman about the plan, finally confessing his desire to become a cop himself. First seen as a betrayal, by the end of the film his behavior is deemed righteous by one of the other members of the group.

Some of the teenagers had long expressed the desire to make a short film. Indeed, an employee of TV Bourdonnette, a local TV association[6], explained that many young people frequently asked her to help "film something" and that she accompanied many of them in their first TV experience. Once, she offered a group of young people the chance to cooperate with TV Bourdonnette after seeing them try to make a short film with their mobile phones. However, the association did not have the means to produce such a film, and the project was never realized.

At the same time, tensions were rising between some young people and the employees of the neighborhood's community center. The main issue was the display of the ethnic and religious belongings of one of the employees, which some teenagers repeatedly called into question. At times, the conflict required the intervention of the police and led some of the center's leaders to resign. The situation had become dire by the time an employee of TV Bourdonnette learned of a public education campaign that was financing participatory projects with youths from Lausanne and recognized an opportunity to help these young people realize their project and reflect on recent events.

Thus, the TV Bourdonnette employee convinced the community center to respond to the call for project applications. The campaign offering financing, entitled "Me & the Others", was organized by the City of Lausanne and had two main goals: On the one hand, it sought to encourage a cross-ground participatory approach in order to reinforce cooperation between associations and public institutions; and on the other hand, it aimed to promote openness towards the other, a recognition of diversity, and the creation of social ties. The target audience was youth in the area, and the organizers aimed to instill in them an awareness of their role as citizens and residents of their neighborhood and town, in order to contribute to civic harmony. The campaign supported 51 projects between May 2012 and October 2013 with a budget of CHF 350.000. There were three successive calls for projects organized according to "three axes: 'Intergenerational', 'intercultural', and 'gender'. These three axes had been chosen "to broach the subject of alterity and to question notions such as respect of oneself and others and 'living together'" (Ville de Lausanne 2012).

The aim was to produce a short fictional film of about six minutes entirely in cooperation with teenagers and young adults from the neighborhood – from the writing of the script to the screening. The official presentation of the project required the involvement of young people with different origins (especially from Africa and Kosovo) as well as of police representatives. As indicated on the website of the campaign[7], the purpose of the film was to encourage dialogue among the participants about stereotypes and ways of coping with a lack of recognition, as well as the message participants wanted to convey. However, the project evolved into something bigger and resulted in a 40-minute film. Interestingly, the film has always been presented as a

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3   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6gxq4RxB_M

4   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzWRc1GzkX0

5   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_xRQZ3ZROY

6   www.tvbourdo.ch

7   No longer in use.

collective creation by the young people, with Amina acting as a mediator. The staff at the community center and the campaign "Me & the Others" are credited as mere facilitators of this production. As they are publicly presented as the main actors, the youths have been fully recognized for their own creative work.

The first public screening of *Révélations*, which took place in the neighborhood in which it was filmed, was a success. In addition to local residents, political representatives and the local media attended the event. Interestingly, the press release published the day after the screening by the City of Lausanne insists on two things: On the one hand, it states that the project was a resounding success, despite disagreements that arose among the various collaborators on the project and the youths discipline problems Amina had to face. On the other hand, it pointed to the difficulty the participants had in accepting the police officer who participated in the filmmaking process – a challenge which was finally overcome through animated "discussions that brought the young people to see the man inside his uniform" (Press release 11.07.2013). Moreover, Swiss Romandie Television's news program devoted two minutes to *Révélations,* where they also emphasized the disciplinary problems and the involvement of the police. The fact that these two points received so much attention in the media was not only a disappointment for the youths involved, but also signaled more broadly the negative image this neighborhood has in the eyes of the general population, as the object of many negative stereotypes related to the quality of its infrastructure, its connections with the center of the town, its security, and the quality of life it offers. A resident told us once:

> Here in the Bourdo, we have a village atmosphere. There are 2000 residents, but everybody knows everybody. The Bourdo is very well situated, we are at the gates of the town. We have the bus, the metro, green parks, playgrounds, shops, a restaurant, a nursery, a school. And in 10 minutes, we can get to the center of the town. Here, I can let my kids play outside without being afraid of cars. The road is open for cars only a few hours a day. Of course, sometimes there are problems, just as there are everywhere else! (…) For the people of Lausanne, we are commuters. They consider us as a different neighborhood, we are not from Lausanne. (Interview, 02.09.2013)[8]

She explained that this idea comes mainly from the neighborhoods' image in the media and proceeded to illustrate this with the following example: When the local news covered the riots in France in 2005, they introduced the topic with images of "La Bourdonnette". Hence, by most of the city's inhabitants the neighborhood is considered to be unsafe, violent, unhealthy, and isolated. This resident's aim was also to prompt a reevaluation of the neighborhood through the short film project.

Filmmaking and participation

The participatory realization of *Révélations* thus seems to have enjoyed a set of ideal conditions to produce an admirable and original outcome: Local demand, motivated participants from the neighborhood, as well as the support of police officers and the local government. However, we provocatively propose the inversion of this perspective and approach the project from another point of view, centered on the employees of the community center. Indeed, one year before the project began, tensions began to rise between a group of young people and employees at the community center. The main issue was the ethnic and religious identity of one of the center's employees, a female Muslim from the Balkans. Many teenagers had grown accustomed to provoking this person by constantly calling into question her means of expressing her religious and ethnic belongings. The conflict intensified to the point of occasioning police intervention and the resignation of some of the center's employees. We choose to read the project slightly differently in light of this context: As a means of reconciliation between the young people, the community center, and the police. This could explain the top-down impetus encouraging the youths to focus on responding to "a lack of recognition" or the display of ethnic belongings, as well as the involvement of police representatives. Without passing any judgement as to the nobility of intentions behind the project, this perspective allows us to raise the following questions: Who participated and what motivated the different individuals to participate? Was it for the young people to valorize their creativity and critical senses by producing a fictional film about their lives in the neighborhood, or for the community center's employees and the police as a means of projecting a better image of themselves to the youths? In both cases, it is important to keep in mind

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8   *All quotations, originally in French, were translated into English by us.*

that two members of the police forces, a policeman and a prevention officer, regularly attended the workshops and that the participants had no choice but to accept their presence.

Hence, while the initiators of the project claimed to pursue a bottom-up approach involving all the participants, it was they who decided who should participate and which topics would be addressed. At this stage, the participatory process could be located on the fourth rung of Hart's ladder of participation since the youths were only "assigned and informed" (1992:8). This observation prompts us to reconsider the participatory approach and to develop new ways of visualizing the participation and the power relationships at stake in the process. Following Dana Haraway's definition, we are of the opinion that "situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not as a screen or a resource, never finally as a slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and his authorship of 'objective' knowledge" (Haraway 1988: 592). As a matter of fact, we argue that *Révélations* is the final product of three scales of participation, whereby the young participants were increasingly considered important actors in the whole filmmaking process, ultimately aspiring to a shared decision-making level, corresponding to rung six in Hart's model (1992:8). According to Shier's alternative scale, we consider the youths' participation to reach the fourth level, i.e. being involved in the decision-making process (2001:107), even to the point of sharing in power when discussing certain points with the mediator. In a further step in our analysis in which we as researchers intervened directly in the process under investigation, the filmmaker Amina, who acted as a mediator in the participatory filmmaking process, helped us to "make sense of the data (which had been) produced" by her team, alone, without the researcher's presence (Packard 2008:75).

a)   The participatory node: This expression refers to the grass-roots level where the discussions and realization effectively took place. Very often, the participatory filmmaking process implies the presence of a researcher in the field, during the production of images or during the preparatory phase (Lomax et al. 2011: 236-238), notably in a frame of multidisciplinary intervention (Perez 2007; 232). In our case, we took the analysis of autonomous collaborative filmmaking a step further since the production was steered by the youths and Amina, the filmmaker, without any previous intervention by researchers. This independent script-writing is also what most attracted the attention of the media; the constructive relationship between Amina and the young residents was the most compelling aspect of the project. It is mainly thanks to her coaching and their engagement and motivation that the project took on its actual form. As we will see below, this relationship was very important and had a positive impact on the final product, although it was not utterly free of constraints on different levels. Indeed, the film reflects Amina's trademark style and personal taste, and we believe she greatly influenced the direction of the film by emphasizing some topics at the expense of others. However, the youths themselves strongly identify with the final product. Two years after the writing and realization of the film, Amina told us that this experience "transformed them". This aspect of participatory filmmaking was probably decisive in an emancipation process undergone by the youths and empowered them durably. We as researchers only came to intervene after the filmmaking process had concluded, during the post-production analysis of the interaction with Amina and during the public viewing and public and semi-private discussions with the youths that followed the film presentation.

b)   The participative collaboration with representatives from various institutions and sponsors: This level deals with all the actors directly involved in the process, i.e. the node of interaction between Amina and the youths, the police representatives, the community center's employees, and TV Bourdonnette, which provided the rooms and the material to document the whole process, and above all submitted the proposal to the "Me & the Others" campaign. At this level, we view the young participants not as the main actors, but rather as one type of actor among others. Everyone who took part had their own expectations and motivations, and these were sometimes contradictory or in conflict and had to be adjusted. For instance, not everyone immediately agreed to the role of the police in the project because their presence could reinforce the stereotype of "problematic youths in a bad neighborhood". For others, including the police could provide the youths with a more nuanced vision of their "enemy" (as many of them said that they did not like the police).

c) Participation as an argument in a top-down setting of a municipal policy: This third level is based on discursive elements and includes policy-making efforts to promote diversity and interculturality. The aim of the educational campaign "Me & the Others" was to raise awareness of otherness through a participatory approach. Here, the term participation has a discursive meaning and constitutes a condition of funding for a project such as *Révélations* from a top-down level. Indeed, the campaign was perceived of as a source of financial support rather than as an active partner. Furthermore, the campaign's final evaluation report deplored the fact that the funded projects were so disparate and failed to promote the campaign as a whole. This outcome calls into question the political objectives at play and the ways in which they were to a certain extent diverted by the "development brokers" (Olivier de Sardan and Bierschenk 1993) or mediators.

d) Finally, the researchers' cross-participatory approach (Figure 1) occupies yet another level, concerning the collaborative analysis of the raw footage and the discussions with the youths regarding the final result. Together with the mediator, the unedited footage of the participatory script-writing process with the youths has been analyzed along the lines of image/video elicitation methods, offering those involved the opportunity to re-live and comment on their participatory filmmaking experience. This method has often been used in primary care research (Henry and Fetters 2012). Furthermore, the video elicitation work allowed us to collect Amina's life history, as she provided numerous details of her personal "politics of belonging" when commenting on the scenes showing her joking relationship with the youths (see below). As two of the researchers who participated in the collaborative video elicitation with Amina hold non-Swiss citizenship, the interaction produced another level of joking relationship regarding them as "immigrants". Hence, we positioned ourselves as researchers who share the commonality (Salzbrunn and Sekine 2011) of being foreigners. This common belonging was more important in the creation of a complicity with Amina than our various ethnic or religious backgrounds. Class issues like the common belonging to a certain intellectual *bourgeoisie* and a certain sense of (self)irony were also important for the creation of a common ground for the participative work with her. Following Narayan's reflections about the nativity of anthropologists (1993), we assume that our common foreignness lead to a form of commonality (Salzbrunn and Sekine 2011).

Figure 1: Researchers' cross-participatory approach. Authorship: Sylvain Besençon.
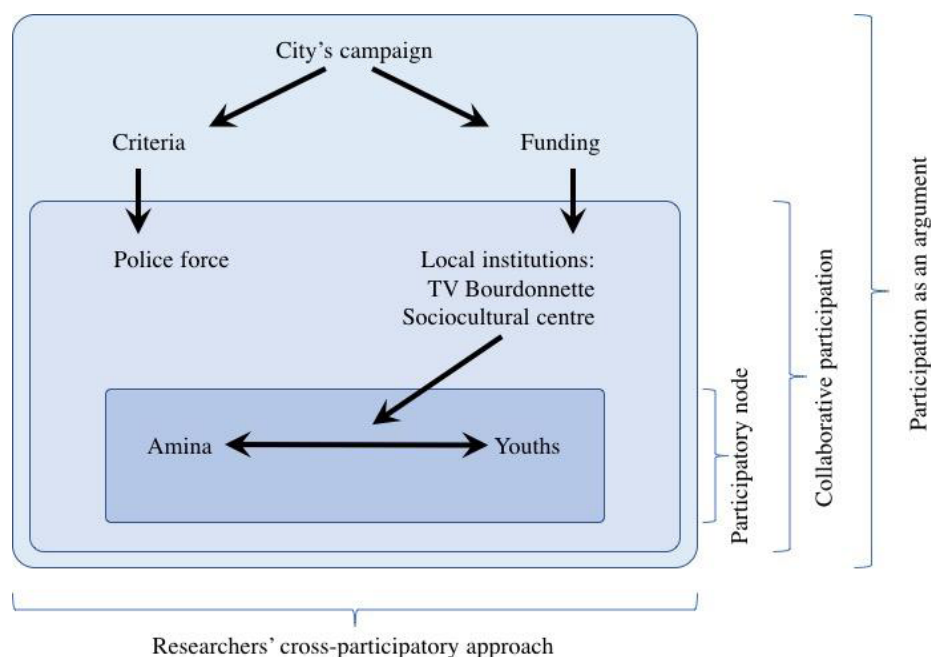
The workshops: Between participation and leadership

During the course of the project, considerable effort was made to provide the youths of the neighborhood with weekly workshops on film production, image education, and screenplay writing, and to engage them in an in-depth discussion about different kinds of violence, self-confidence, religion, individual liberty, and respect of others' choices. Amina was responsible for the workshops, while social workers from the city of Lausanne, police officers, and the staff at the community center and TV Bourdonnette also participated. The weekly workshops took place at the community center's facilities and were free of charge. It is interesting to note that, apart from Amina, the professionals involved in the workshops sat among the youths, so that there were no spatialized hierarchical distinctions among them during the workshops (Figure 2). Nevertheless, we will see later that the symbolic absence of hierarchy does not prevent a discursive or physical domination in certain situations.

Figure 2: Amina, animating one of the workshops with the youths and the representatives of the Police.
(Image filmed by Amina Djahnine and reproduced with her permission)

As mentioned above, Amina played a central role in the success of the entire filmmaking project due to her ability to create a special relationship with the youths. As responsible for the workshops, she was at all times spatially detached from the other participants, which marked her authority. One can see in the image above that she had an imposing presence, centrally positioned in front of everyone else. The presence of representatives of the police (the policeman in blue and the woman in the back) among the young participants is also visible. This illustrates very well that Amina was the motor of the workshops, catalyzing the energy of the youths.

This remarkable combination of authority and collaboration with the young people quickly made her part of the group without calling her leadership into question. There are several reasons for this: The first one is certainly her Algerian origin and above all the fact that she came to Switzerland as a political refugee, which undoubtedly had a great influence on the youths' feelings toward her. Indeed, most of the latter originated from the Balkan countries, the Middle East, North or West Africa and Turkey. They thus perceived her as being "on their side" and part of a "minority", unlike the police representatives or the woman from TV Bourdonnette, all "white" and locals. They also identified with her religious belonging, which they wrongly

assumed to be Muslim. Indeed, she declared that she was an atheist and had not received any religious education. However, having grown up in Algeria, where Islam is omnipresent, she affirmed having been influenced by a "Muslim heritage". During an interview, she told us that the young people constantly questioned her about her faith and religious convictions and did not understand why she insisted that she did not believe in a God, because for them she *was* Muslim. She explained to them that she had been immersed in a Muslim heritage, but that she simply did not believe in God, but rather in humanity. She noted that for her, the important point is for people to know how to live together with each other's differences. Interestingly, this interaction did not have the same disastrous result as the conflict one year prior, which unfolded between the youths and an employee at the community center whose expressions of ethnic and religious belongings they had also challenged.

Secondly, Amina was an outsider and thus shared no negatively connoted history with the participants. Rather, she accepted them as they were: Motivated young people willing to produce a fictional film about their daily lives. She insisted several times on the fact that she was not there to assess the participants' skills in writing or to judge them, but rather to help them retain important transversal abilities and competences that would aid them in their adult lives. From the beginning, she maintained that she was there only to accompany them throughout the whole process:

> *"When we watch a movie, we enjoy, we sit on our couch, or in a cinema, the movie unfolds, it's classy. But actually, enormous work lies behind this, and this work, I invite you to do it with me. Because everything will come from you, from the very beginning, that is, the very first little idea, till the last click to finalize the editing, you need to be creative and free. However, what is very important is to learn the tools to do it best."* (Amina, 1st workshop, 16.01.2013)

She spoke very directly, often giving her personal opinion and occasionally using colloquial words, which clearly contributed to the construction of an alternative image of her authority that was not institutional. She took the youths seriously, gave credit to their ideas, and helped them to defend themselves when the others were laughing at them or mocking them. However, she also participated in their teenage humor, laughing at their jokes even if they were inappropriate or racist, in order to avoid a moral judgement that a teacher would likely express in the same kind of situation. Her reaction can therefore be interpreted as a strategy to create a common space, which, to a certain extent, is politically incorrect in the service of her need to gain the youths' trust. During further meetings, her conspiratorial position among the youths allowed her to raise awareness of their stereotypes, namely through a joking relationship she had established with them. The same logic applies to the specific form of authority she incarnated: Rather than subjecting them to unfounded authoritarian behavior, she used her expertise (and her ethnic background and parts of her life history) to gain recognition and respect, which served as a foundation for her form of authority, and finally allowed her to motivate the youths to develop their script.

This attitude might explain, at least partially, the success of this relationship: Amina wanted the youths to participate in the creation of a movie about them, and to do so, she engaged herself in their world. She moved them to discuss complex issues, such as the meaning of psychological violence, the way to accept differences while refraining from judgement with regard to their beliefs or their sexual orientation. In this process, she motivated them to express themselves, while giving credit to their ideas or opinions and encouraging them in their reflections. This way of listening to them and taking their point of view seriously is constitutive of the relationship between Amina and the youths, and it granted her their trust and their respect (more than any institutional power position ever would). She was, or seemed to be, one of them: She listened to them, she understood them, she even laughed with them, even if their inappropriate jokes might have annoyed her; for example, when they made allusive comments about the way she chewed her pencil, or when they mocked her for not understanding the slang they were using. Her empathy and understanding explained the appreciation the youths had for Amina, and they often expressed their gratitude publicly; for instance, during interviews for TV Bourdonnette or at the public screenings of the films. This appreciation is all the more remarkable if one remembers that one year before, a community center employee had encountered considerable trouble when trying to gain acceptance from this same group of young people.

To motivate the youths to participate in the project, Amina actively engaged with their humor, playing cleverly with her ethnic and sometimes her (supposed) religious belonging to include herself in their circle. An illustrative example of this was

when some of the youths had a conversation about where they went to eat; they spoke about a restaurant that makes good sandwiches, and one of them said that it was not halal. A small debate followed, and Amina said: "Well, it's not halal, but *for us*, we don't care, it's no big deal." Here, she clearly auto-identifies as a Muslim. In this social situation, she foregrounded a specific aspect of her multiple senses of belonging (Yuval-Davis, Vieten and Kannabiran 2006) in order to underline a certain commonality (Salzbrunn and Sekine 2011). By using the plural form "us", she included herself in the implicit group of Muslims, although she usually addressed the group as an entity distinct from herself, taking the role of the mediator helping the young filmmakers develop and realize their project.

This strategy appeared to be effective, as it allowed the youths to feel at ease around her. Yet, as mentioned above, Amina was also the one leading the workshop and the filmmaking. The fact that she was trusted and appreciated by everybody does not necessary imply that she did not exercise firm control over the realization process. Despite her openness and her ability to listen to the youths, she managed to lead the movie in the direction she wanted, favoring some topics at the expense of others. The most salient example is the fact that Islam was omnipresent during discussions in the workshops but is almost invisible in the film. During an interview, Amina explained that she had been stunned by the degree to which references to Islam were present in the discussions they had, especially with regard to subjects such as the role of women in the family, authority, homosexuality, and Judaism. According to her, the youths even justified theft and robbery by means of their faith, presenting themselves as "heroes, kind of Robin Hood of the 21st century. They take from the rich to give to the poor, even if they are the poor. They base their argumentation on the Hadiths and mobilize Islam to feel less guilty about their behavior" (Amina, interviewed on 27.08.2013). Of course, not all of the participants were Muslim, but they seemed to all share a certain background where Islamic references were used and understood, one which Amina could also share.

In response to this use of Islam as a means of justification, she always provoked them with questions that brought the focus of situations back to their "victims", such as: "You, who want to play the tough guy, the big brother, if you liked a girl from the neighborhood, would you accept that her big brother comes and gives his opinion? That he tells you not to look at his sister? No? So here, it is exactly the same." And yet, this omnipresence of Islam does not appear in the film, and we can assume that Amina intervened in order to place the focus elsewhere – or that the discussions she fostered and the trust the youths had in her allowed her to overcome this topic.

Joking relationships, community-building, and symmetrical authority

When analyzing the filmed workshops and discussions, one aspect that especially caught our attention was the use of humor among the youths and the way they teased one another with jokes based on ethnic or religious stereotypes. Several researchers have highlighted the role that humor plays in social interactions, for example through joking relationships, whether in preventing conflicts and antagonisms (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940; Deschenaux and Clément 2013), in contesting power relationships (Dwyer 1991), in managing stress or uncertainty (Heiss and Carmack 2012), or in reinforcing group effectiveness and cohesion (Romero and Pescosolido 2008). These contributions allow us to think of joking relationships as performative (Butler 1988), namely holding a transformative power over social reality. As we have shown, ethnic and religious belonging are central to the youth's self-understanding, but also to the power relationships they are trapped in. Consequently, ethnicity and religion are central to their boundary work, as sites of contestation and negotiation. This explains why they constitute the principal content of their jokes.

The use of ethnicity and religion in joking relationships was particularly striking during a discussion sequence that appeared during the screenplay-writing exercises. The discussion was about Amina's partner, and the youths were trying to guess where he is from. Three young men were particularly engaged in these speculations, and they teased Amina with ethnic stereotypes. First, a young Kosovan imitated an accent from Maghreb and made stereotypical oriental moves with his hands while saying "she caught a little Swiss guy with the documents", playing with the cliché of the North African as profiteer acting in self-interest (Figure 3). When Amina said that her partner comes from the Canton of Vaud (where "La Bourdonnette" is located), another young man used a very strong and caricatured local accent while playing the part of Amina's partner on the phone, worried about where she could be. Here, the cliché was of the Swiss man unable to control his (foreign/independent) girlfriend and

afraid of what she would do. The youths then tried to guess his name, oscillating between French and foreign (Balkan or Islamic) names, while continuing to adopt different accents. They were all laughing, Amina included. She took advantage of this situation and led them along, pretending that her boyfriend was a lot of different things: First she said that he is "Vaudois", then that he is a converted Muslim, in order to see how they would react.

Figure 3: A young man imitating a Maghrebi woman, with his friend laughing at his side.
(Image filmed by Amina Djahnine and reproduced with her permission)

She then asked them if they have girlfriends, and one of the young men answered: "Not just one...!". So, Amina asked him if he practices polygamy, and when he answered "Exactly", the first young man reminded him that this scene was being recorded and that his parents would see this on TV Bourdo. He then imitated a strong Arabic accent to depict the reaction of his friend's father. Everybody laughed cheerfully, and Amina used this moment to tackle the topic of men being allowed to sleep with several girls before marriage but then expecting to marry a virgin. She confronted the participants with such contradictions. The discussion continued with jokes and laughter, and Amina then returned to the discussion about her partner, telling the youths that his name is Samuel and is a Jew. The youths' reactions were quite strong, as the third young man immediately said: "Oh shit!" While for a moment they continued to make jokes about other matters, he returned to this topic and asked Amina: "Seriously, it sticks in my brain: Your guy is a Jew?". As she answered: "Yes, what's wrong with the Jews?", he just said, "I don't like Jews". Amina then took advantage of this statement to bring him and the others to overcome simplistic rejections of the Other and articulate what they think about the Jews. Then the discussion took an interesting turn as they started talking about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the difference between "being a Jew" and politically supporting the Israeli government. She wanted to challenge them and said that her partner is a pro-Palestinian Israeli: "He's a Jew who is against the State of Israel, do you think that's possible?" The young Kosovan immediately contested: "Yeah, he was born as a Jew, it's not that he decided to... yeah, I can imagine it's quite possible". Amina's partner is neither a Jew, nor a Swiss convert to Islam, but as she told us afterwards, she invented these characters in order to elicit a reaction among the youths and open the discussion on certain topics.

This sequence is particularly interesting because it highlights a well-known function of humor, namely to defuse potential tensions. As Radcliffe-Brown noted about joking relationships, "any serious hostility is prevented by the playful antagonism of teasing" (1940: 197). As mentioned above, during the writing of the script, the theme of rival gangs was recurrent among the

youths. In the final script the gangs are relatively "diverse", but several initial proposals depicted them as "the Arabs" against "the Blacks", reflecting the actual social group formation among the youth in La Bourdonnette. For the movie, the youths had to work together regardless of their affinities in everyday life. In this context, making fun of someone's accent or joking about ethnic stereotypes created a form of group cohesion[9] among the youths through the sharing of common references and codes. Hence, through jokes, bonds were created or reinforced and linked members of the group to one another and to the group as a whole. The joking relationship is symmetrical, as no ethnic or racial group holds a position of power: Arabs, Blacks, and Balkans are all on the same level. Consequently, the social function of humor is to express potential tensions and make fun of them in order to overcome the source of conflict. The situation is slightly different with regard to Swiss (white) people, represented in this context by the woman working for TV Bourdonnette and the two members of the police. Here, joking about Swiss people and their local accent enables the youths to draw a boundary between "us" and "them" on the one hand; on the other hand, it allows them to counter, through laughter, their subordinated position in power relationships. Indeed, "in a context of high cultural heterogeneity, the non-belonging to a group can lead, by contrast, to a new group of belonging" (Descheneaux and Clément 2013: 100). In our case, the "non-Swiss group" becomes majoritarian (and Amina belongs to this group). This strategy of boundary-making can be understood as a form of stigma reversal, or, referring to Wimmer, as a strategy seeking "to change the meaning of an existing boundary by challenging the hierarchical ordering of ethnic categories" (2008: 986). Through this contestation of an established order and a renegotiation of the meaning of categories, the youths demonstrate their agency over the situation.

Another interesting dimension of the use of humor here is the role played by Amina in this joking relationship. As mentioned above, she is perceived by the youths as a part of the "minority", just like them. In this respect, the relationship with her can be seen as symmetrical. Besides, it is no coincidence that the youths establish joking relationships with her and not with the institutional representatives (social workers or police). As Dwyer states: "All actors involved in a joking relationship [...] must belong to the same social system and accept its frame of reference" (Dwyer 1991: 3). Nevertheless, because Amina is in a position of authority, the use of humor has an additional function: While joking with each other puts Amina and the youths on the same level and enforces their trust and cohesion, it also allows her to tackle complex issues and foster serious discussions. The conspiratorial relationship she has built with them contributes to her authority, obviating the need to display her superior position. Because she is able to have fun with and adopt the communicative codes of the youths, they grant her a moral authority.

Swissness, institutional authority, and symbolic violence

Unlike Amina, the police representatives were much more passive during the sessions and separate from the group. Their assigned roles were to be participants, and they always sat among the youths. However, details like their uniform, their non-Muslim belonging, their means of expressing themselves, and simply their "Swissness", mainly evidenced by their skin color, dress, accent, and way of approaching the youths, contributed to a constant restraint on their symbolic power – apart from the institutional power they obviously represented.

A striking illustration of the markers of this unbalanced power relationship comes from an exercise during one of the workshops. The purpose was to train the youths in conducting interviews, and the prevention officer was asked to question Mohammed, one of the participants. First, it is instructive to take into account the non-verbal features of the relationship that the officer set up from the beginning: The youth sat on a chair at the center of a circle of tables around which the other participants were sitting (Amina stood to the right of the screen). We can clearly see how the social worker took control of the configuration, standing above everyone except Amina, and looking down at Mohammed, who seemed quite impressed by the situation (Figure 4).

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9   Here, we combine references from social psychology about cohesiveness (Eisenberg 2007) with anthropological works about joking relationships (Radcliffe-Brown 1940).

Figure 4: A prevention officer interviews Mohammed during one of the workshops.
(Image filmed by Amina Djahnine and reproduced with her permission)

Moreover, the conversation itself is very revealing of how she imposed an alterity on Mohammed, accompanied by numerous stereotypes regarding Muslims:

Prevention officer: Hi Mohammed.

M: Good Morning

Prevention officer: Your... Your first name, where does it come from?

M: It's Arabic.

Prevention officer: It's Arabic, but from which country? Where are you from?

M: From Yemen.

Prevention officer: Okay. It's your father and your mother who come from...

M: Yeah.

Prevention officer: What does it mean, your name?

M: It's the name of the prophet.

Prevention officer: Okay. Who chose it? It's your mom? It's your dad? Do you know?

M: I don't know. But they certainly agreed.

Another youth: Because you cannot know...

Prevention officer: They reached an agreement one with another?

M: Well, they won't... I don't know... The other won't call me for example Yunef and then my mother, hum, my dad Mohammed. They agreed to call me like this.

Prevention officer: Hence, they did... They both agreed.

M: Yeah.

Prevention officer: Okay. And this, it belongs to your origin? In fact, in Yemen, the first names... Well, I don't know. You have brothers and sisters?

M: Yeah.

Prevention officer: How many?

M: I have three sisters and a little brother.

Prevention officer: Okay. They all have first names related to the religion?

M: No. There is just my little brother who is called Ahmed.

Amina: That's the second name of the prophet.

M: Yeah.

Prevention officer: It's the second name of the prophet, okay. And this, your parents actually wanted to choose a first name related to the religion?

M: Honestly, I don't know.

Prevention officer: (...) Do you like your first name?

M: Yeah.

Prevention officer: Can you explain it?

M: Well, because... it's the name of the prophet, and then... I don't know, I like it...

During this very short conversation, which lasted no more than two minutes, the social worker brought up several stereotypes on ethnicity, religion, and parental roles within the Muslim household through the mere mention of a common and popular name. Moreover, albeit probably not consciously, since she always maintained a friendly voice and "compassionate" posture, she succeeded in reinforcing her authority and the several barriers that stood in the way of their respective multiple belongings: He as a foreign, non-white, young person living on the outskirts of town, and she as an authoritarian, educated, white, and open-minded woman who works with the police. In this sense, her posture appeared to be very paternalistic. Moreover, she also seemed to have put on the habitus of the police by choosing to interrogate him (rather than having a conversation). The way she directly addressed the subject of his origin and identified as relevant his parents' origins is very insightful with regard to the way in which certain aspects of their multiple belongings were emphasized: While many of the youths affirmed very clearly that their parents came from elsewhere but that they themselves were Swiss, "with an ID card", the prevention officer immediately labelled Mohammed as a foreigner. It is significant that she did not once mention his life in Switzerland or his own perception of his belonging. Moreover, she insisted on his religion and made clear allusions to gender roles within Islamic families as she sought to shed light on male dominance. Strikingly, she was not aware of the symbolic violence she was perpetrating.

Amina's intervention is the exact opposite of this since she herself admits to having worked on the invisibilization of signs or expressions of belonging to Islam. Indeed, she did not seem very interested in claims of religious or racial belonging, but rather in the nuanced expression of belongings. It is interesting to note that for her, as well as for the youths, the construction of a "we" as opposed to "others" was very different. She often assimilated herself and was assimilated to the youths' "we", likely as a result of her origin, her Muslim culture, and her "young" behavior. As shown above, this merely translates the fact that they perceived her as being like them, a foreigner.

Conclusion: Participatory research and shifting power relations

In the research presented here, we have sought to investigate how participatory filmmaking in a context of community-engaged cultural research can lead to the emergence of active citizenship.

The risk identified by Wilson and Swyngedouw in their analysis of contemporary forms of de-politicization is that "citizens become consumers" (2015: 6), i.e. citizenship becomes a mere consumer good and participation becomes a façade. Thus, we argue that active citizenship is at the core of any emancipatory project. Referring to Rancière's theorization of dissensus

(Rancière, 2010), we believe that this process can only emerge through the acceptance of antagonisms and the willingness to confront them, in other words, by turning the participatory project into a space of re-politicization.

The transformative power of this form of cultural participation can be observed on three levels of active citizenship: 1. The young residents inscribe their cultural practices in a symbolic and territorial space reserved for adults: By becoming actors of the creation and dissemination of their self-image (as youths, as inhabitants of the social housing district of La Bourdonnette etc.), they have obtained a form of civic maturity and power of definition of their situation. 2. During the public screenings in the presence of the mayor and other officials, the youths earned public recognition as artists, but also as citizens whose voices are heard in the *polis*. 3. Each young participant has developed a mature self-reflexivity about his/her place in the polis and his/her capacity to define individual life-projects within his/her own *Lebenswelt* in the sense of Schütz (1932). Hence, we saw how these participative practices could positively influence active and symbolic citizenship and help in the struggle for recognition (Fraser and Honneth 2003). The youth were not only empowered to redefine categories of active citizenship, but also to act outside the frame of predefined notions of citizenship. Amina's open approach contributed a great deal to their emancipation and helped them be conscious of their capacities. Nevertheless, the collaborative filmmaking process needed guidance, and Amina as a professional mediator and filmmaker managed to offer the young participants a maximum of autonomy and created a fertile climate for developing common ideas without any sign of paternalism or disregard. This respectful cultural participation technique allowed a successful and satisfying result for each actor.

Furthermore, we asked what participation really means in participatory cultural projects, and what kind of power structures can be observed during community-oriented cultural research. We have shown that researchers can intervene on a level of collaborative self-reflection regarding the common creative process without dominating the setting and the outcome of the research. We did not directly influence the cultural production process, but we participated in a common reflection with several actors on the screening of the film, and we watched and commented all of the rushes that document the creative process. By observing the participatory filmmaking without intervening directly and by conducting a collaborative reflection with certain actors with regard to their ongoing or past creative process, we were able to develop and foster an emerging form of community-engaged research, reinforcing a more autonomous form of cultural participation.

By developing these multi-level participation techniques, we were able to combine bottom-up and top-down empowerment processes, leaving a maximum of free space for each actor's own reflections. Although the experience has contributed to embellishing the image of "La Bourdonnette" district and reinforced the self-identification of its residents with their place of living, the community created during this creative process (Carvalho and Duxbury 2014) is only situational in our case. However, as our follow-up research during the last four years has shown, the positive experience shared by the youths has had, and continues to have, a durable impact on a general feeling of confidence for each participant.

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