Radical Methodologies
in Contested Places:
Decolonising Practices
in Central America
& the Caribbean

Regional Encounter/Workshop Managua, 21-24 February 2018

#### ORGANIZA:







#### APOYADO POR:



Antipode Foundation



### COLABORA:



# Report aim + outline



Shaping/sharing reflections from the encounter between activist researchers on "radical methodologies" in the region.

Watch the Encounter videos in our blog:

<a href="https://metodologiasradicales">https://metodologiasradicales</a>
<a href="https://metodologiasradicales">.wordpress.com</a>

#### Outline:

- The Encounter
- Participants
- Activities
- Open conference
- The Encounter/Workshop:
   Themes
- Reflections on Research
- Reflections within context
- Remaining challenges
- Reflections from practices
- Final Thoughts









"Universities never remember, communities never forget, our role as researchers is to remember".

Linda Tuhiwai Smith Managua, 21.02.18

### The Encounter: reasons



- Critique to western-centred paradigm of research
- Uses and abuses of research: research as colonising
- Decolonising Methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith) / decoanticolonialism (Cumes)/ decolonizing practices (Cusicanqui)
- "Epistemologies from the South" (de Sousa Santos)

Central America and the Caribbean as marginalised and read from South America, Mexico or US-Latino framework.

### The Encounter: reasons



- From objects of research to researchers and knowledge producers
- Activism-Research-Activism
- Sharing experiences of how collectives who are politically engaged are doing research
- Beyond the critique → How are we doing research? → How do we do research differently?

# **Participants**



- 18 activist groups/collectives doing or attempting to do research: 36 people
- 2 organisers: Aula Propia/UCA & Univ. of Bristol
- Support team: 4 facilitators + 3 social communicators + 2 students + many volunteers
- 3 guest facilitators:
  - Linda Tuhiwai Smith
  - Aura Cumes
  - Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui

# **Participants**



18 collectives from: Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, Colombia.

- Women's groups: sexuality, farmers, violence
- Indigenous (land) struggles: pacific & caribbean
- Disabilities
- Other histories/memories: underwater, postdictatorship
- State Violence: disappearance, victims, repression
- Uses of new technologies: mobilising youth
- Traditional medicine/ holistic lives

## **Participants**



"Experiencia colectivo Tierra y Libertad" Univ Antioquia (Medellin, Colombia) "Mujeres defensoras de territorios campesinos" CEPROSAF (Ceiba, Honduras) "Memorias y saberes locales" IILS-UCA (Las Segovias, Nicaragua) "Intermediarios del dolor" FUNDAR (CDMX, México) "Sexualidades y Trayectorias políticas en Iximulew" La Cuerda (C. Guatemala, Guatemala) "Derechos de las mujeres" CEM-H (Tegucigalpa, Honduras) "Luchas negra en Honduras" OFRANEH (Costa Norte, Honduras) "Memoria como territorio en disputa" H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala (C. Guatemala, Guatemala) "Audiovisual para reflexión política" Caracola Subversiva (Managua, Nicaragua)

### **Activities**

- 3 days encounter/workshop co-facilitated with guest facilitators, each day inspired by a keyword: research, radical, methodologies.
- Open conference with 3 guest speakers "Old & New Colonialisms in Social Research"
- Last day: visit and food sharing with indigenous community of Sutiaba in León: a history of resistance, dispossession, alliances and betrayals by the state.

# **Open Conference**



Participants: all those already in the encounter and interested students, activists, feminists, and intellectuals

#### **Content:**

- critical views on social research from different political and academic experiences (Bolivia, Guatemala, and New Zealand)
- reflections against/with/in academy as we know it with thoughts, sounds, images, story-telling, and anti and decolonial statements.



# The Encounter/Workshop

### **Themes**



- Critical Pedagogies
- Mediating experiences
- Day 2 Radical Aura Cumes
  - Ancestral knowledges (saberes)
  - Bodies as political
- Day 3 Methodologies Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui
  - Disrupted gaze and images
  - Public space interventions



"Sometimes it's dangerous to speak of the present, that's why it's useful to metaphorise the past, fictionalise reality".

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui Managua, 23.02.18

# Living word wall:

### a collective construction





















### Knowledge

- Understand
- Comprehend
- To know
- Reality

Day 2 -

Methodologies

#### How to do

- Steps
- Paths
- Continuing
- To arrive

Day 3 – Radical

#### Root

- Change
- Resistance
- Challenge
- Politicize







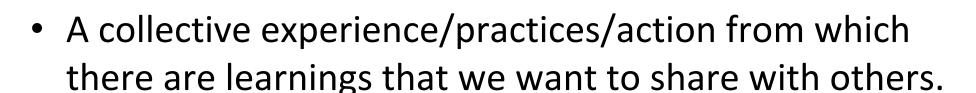




"Sometimes methodology can be a straightjacket that limits our creative capacity/ability".

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui Managua, 23.02.18

### Reflections on Research



- Translating experiences into communicable learnings: away from writing → new technologies: images, audio, video...
- Challenging your own views: internal colonialism
- How to re-value & question your own traditional / community culture
- Learning as changing: the process must have changed you









"Language is important, what's inside the tongue speaks about our relationships, identities".

Linda Tuhiwai Smith Managua, 21.02.18

### Reflections within Context



- Violence Repression Militarisation
- Imaginary of political activism no longer State-centred
- Denouncing crimes: State & Corporations
- Decolonial: Denouncing language 

  Collective learnings for action
- Constantly adapting & creative → leaving what used to work behind - engaging old & new practices
- Distance → not possible!
- What are we creating in the midst of violence?



"Let's think in what we always say about indigenous people as excluded... words like exclusion form part of that language that hides and not reveals, in this case, the continuous dispossession"

Aura Cumes Managua, 22.02.18

# What worked during the encounter?



- Beyond a collection of methods, to develop instead an adaptive how-to-do
- Reversing/Altering order of things: embracing non-linear, messy, disruptive
- Living word wall (re)constructing ideas revisiting, changing
- Storytelling multilayered attention to language
- What pisses you off? Reflexive exercise bringing together:
  - Emotions
  - Positionality
  - Transformative









"I am worried about thinking of methodologies outside of practice"

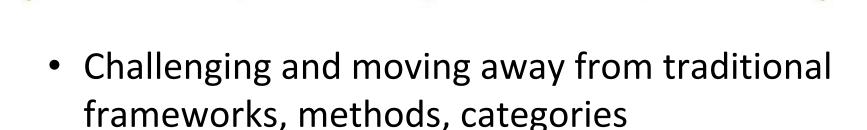
Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui Managua, 23.02.18

# Remaining challenges



- Demanding a more respectful and dignified way of "research" doesn't necessarily achieve it.
- Alliances & collaborations are complicated (power).
   Different contexts/interests make things more difficult.
- Knowledge extractivism still experienced and problematic.
- Easier to demand + propose a different listening and engagement from others with our groups than from us with others.
- Funding, writing, languages, publishing access, necessary pause, ways of sharing...

# Reflections from practice



- Using them "strategically" for legitimacy
- New Problems/Tension: how far can you go?

"Being complicit with colonization/colonizers"

"Blunting the edge of the only knife you have"









"How do we generate methodologies that construct political subjects that make political and social transformations".

Linda Tuhiwai Smith Managua, 21.02.18

# Reflections from practice



How to step outside of traditional frameworks? 7 weeks later, in April 2018, a series of violent repressive acts by the Nicaraguan government against people protesting took place in that same space where we held our Encounter. We were pushed by reality, again.

The Nicaraguan revolt is ongoing: +300 deaths, unknown number of political prisoners, disappeared, and exiled.

Student movements resistance & push to:

- resignify the slogans + consignas from the revolution
- AND break the old categories of "right"+"left" to understand their realities
- how to create something different: proposals in the midst of violence
- alliances: at national & international levels, also being sucked into same categories

Collective desires, uses of violence, ways of organising, elections, political parties...

# Final Thoughts



- How "decolonising" practices and our learnings do not become a new recipe.
- Central America & The Caribbean: violence, repression and militarisation. Implications for working within fear, targets of repression, violence, war context, impunity.
- Time + Spaces for reflection become more relevant.
- Necessity of intergenerational and multhietnic spaces where groups carrying a work that defies traditional frameworks (political, research, pedagogical) can share their questions and learnings.



"Let's ask ourselves why if we are in colonized countries, and our research processes do not contribute to decolonize us... then from what privileges are we doing research?"

Aura Cumes Managua, 22.02.18

