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NEWS FROM SOMEWHERE: RESEARCH TRAJECTORIES REVISITED

> Comprendre, c'est comprendre d'abord le champ avec lequel et contre lequel on s'est fait. (Bourdieu, 2004: 15)
>
> [To understand, is to understand first of all the field in which and against which one has been formed. Author's trans.]

Broaching divides

A year ago, while discussing in a Zoom meeting the pitfalls of communication between the researchers from the different countries, institutions and research traditions that we are, and while considering suggestions for generating more satisfying linguistic exchange in discussion, presentations and writing, a colleague noted the difficulty of broaching the 'national-cultural' divides between what he referred to as more 'distant, impersonal' approaches to researching human life and the more 'relational' and 'empathic' approach favoured overwhelmingly in our own network, namely, the ESREA Life History and Biography Network[1].

Language – and this universally means English – by itself represents, of course, a formidable barrier to all aspects of research practice, investigation, analysis, presentation, and publication[2]. Yet beyond the statement of fact that the hegemony of English excludes probably more than it includes, there could be heard, too, in our colleague's statement, the notion of the 'other', a possibly rather stereotypical allusion to very different and perhaps even questionable ways of doing research. Stereotypical, because

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[1] See Agnieszka Bron's *In Memoriam* in this issue for details of the network's founding years. The papers by Formenti, Monteagudo and West also provide interesting glimpses of the network's development, while others refer to their own debt to ESREA.

[2] A good example of the awareness of this problem within research organisations is conveniently provided by the journal of my own research community. The journal explains on its front matter page: The European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA) is a refereed academic journal creating a forum for the publication of critical research on adult education and learning. It has a particular focus on issues at stake for adult education and learning in Europe, as these emerge in connection with wider international and transnational dynamics and trends. *Such a forum is important at a time when local and regional explorations of issues are often difficult to foreground across language barriers*. (My italics)

certain 'schools' of research are sometimes judged in a very general fashion and the 'national' or 'cultural' are not infrequently adduced as sufficient to account for their difference and, we can say, their perceived 'foreignness'[3]. In research circles infused with empathic, embodied, intimately mindful relationships between researchers and co-researchers, the simple use, for instance, of an excel spreadsheet in order to present 'results' can excite quite sharp reactions[4]. At the same time, somewhat eclectic approaches to theory, or say, to data collection or analysis can clash sharply, too, with approaches adopting a more 'traditional' research design and practice, as well as a traditional model of oral presentation. In its most extreme forms, the reaction to the 'foreignness' of the concepts and ideas used by other individual researchers or communities of researchers near and far can, we know, reach more visceral levels when ignorance or incomprehension lead to rejection or belittlement. Common targets may naturally be younger colleagues and those from (supposedly) 'peripheral' countries, institutions or communities[5]. Marginalisation of research and antipathy expressed towards research perceived as unorthodox (see for example Abu-Lughod, 2008: xiii) or threatening can easily generate the disregard and cancelling Sousa Santos (Sousa Santos, 2011: 20) refers to in relation to the epistemologies of the South, with the epistemicidal propensity to "devalue, ignore and demonise", or the gendered epistemic injustice that pervades our institutions, the learning within them and their learners (Clover, 2022: 95). The 'clash' (when it is only that) is reproposed – and sometimes resolved unmercifully – in the blind peer review process. These are behaviours, conventions even, that I have observed, commented upon, and doubtless reproduced at times myself over the years. Because the differences *are* there, and we are rarely (sufficiently, if at all) acquainted with their theoretical, social and personal/biographic origins.

Plumbing the research field

In 2015, Andreas Fejes and Erik Nylander (Fejes & Nylander, 2015) investigated the popular notion among researchers that the research field today is "heterogeneous, borrowing theories and methods from a range of disciplines". They looked at bibliographic data of "top cited articles in three main adult education journals between 2005 and 2012" and found that patterns of works cited by country of authorship were in fact relatively

[3] 'Foreignness and distance' are words chosen by Peter Alheit to describe Pierre Bourdieu's conflictual relationship with most of the leading intellectual figures in his formative years as a researcher-in-waiting (Alheit, 2022: 303).

[4] In fact, Fejes and Nylander feel compelled to ask: "Are there ways to conduct adult education research critically, while still building on statistical methods?" (Fejes & Nylander, 2015: 121).

[5] See Marcin Gołebniak's paper on this theme.

homogenous quite simply because the USA, UK, Australia and Canada were the prime countries of origin of the authors, and that, as well, "the research methods adopted" in the papers examined were highly uniform and that they observed "a tendency to adopt similar theoretical approaches" (Fejes & Nylander, 2015: 103). They found, too, that:

> There is a risk that we, as adult education scholars who publish in adult education journals as well as read them, take our own set of assumptions of the field to be true (Fejes & Nylander, 2015: 120).

Fejes and Nylander go on to argue that if we do in fact tend to ignore or oversee what else is going on in the field, the (current) dominant theories and methodological paradigms may not necessarily automatically further "the emergence of new knowledge". Is one very strong reason, they ask, for this tendency to narrow the field of view because "established networks of adult education research [are] based on proximity and familiarity with these theoretical approaches?" (Fejes & Nylander, 2015: 120).

A narrowing of the field of view, then, proximity and familiarity are brakes to seeing further. We all come from somewhere, after all. And for most researchers, the formative stages of their development may well reach very far back in their biographies, well before the first conscious encounter with academic work as such. Family, teachers, politics, religion, work, friendship and love are just some of the possible influences.

The Finnish sociologist Pertti Alasuutari examined the globalisation of qualitative research two decades ago (Alasuutari, 2004), noting the pressures on researchers in the 'periphery' – that is, in non-Anglo-Saxon countries – to conform to the expectations and interests of the Anglo 'centre', particularly in relation to the presentation and discussion of locally focused empirical research (Alasuutari, 2004: 597-598), and especially when a lot of inaccessible research literature (read: in a language not commonly understood) is used (Alasuutari, 2004: 595). Yet, Alasuutari is convinced that

> The formation of a truly global network of researchers can only take place if there is a global flow of ideas across borders and language barriers. It means that we have to have access to the work being done in different countries and regions and in different languages (Alasuutari, 2004: 595-596).

This happens to date at what he calls the 'crossroads' or meeting point called the English language, and he argues reassuringly that despite Anglophone dominance in the book markets for research literature, "there are still other networks and flows of influence in the world" (Alasuutari, 2004: 596). These networks – and we realise this in each of our conferences, perhaps imperfectly, but we try – connect up our locally important problems and the theories we work in with theories and methodological approaches being refined and employed in other institutions, other researcher collectives, on other continents.

Understand the field, understand the researcher

To understand better the researcher and the paths she treads, Bourdieu's axiom cited at the head of this text tells us that we must first understand the field in which and against which she/we have been formed (Bourdieu, 2004: 15). By way of illustration, Pertti Alasuutari's path is given in full as he describes it:

> At the time, my objects of interest within the social sciences and humanities certainly reflected the paradigm constellation within Finnish sociology. In addition to direct influence from researchers and theorists within the country, influences in the domestic field were filtered from several directions. Many older generation sociologists had studied at least for some time in the United States and become trained as survey researchers. However, in the 1970s economistic and purely theoretical, even philosophical Marxism, or the Scandinavian, especially Danish Kapitallogiker school (together with the more Soviet-influenced, explicitly political Marxism-Leninism), enjoyed a firm paradigmatic footing, especially among the younger generation. Marxism was a response to American 'behavioural science', and sought to account better for the structural determinants of society. By the late 1970s, however, researchers were beginning to look for 'softer' approaches that took account of people's everyday life. The solution was to be provided by the concept of way of life, adopted from Soviet and German Marxist sociology. […] In addition to East and West German influences, such as Jürgen Habermas, the French cultural sociologist Pierre Bourdieu became early on very popular in Finland, and in addition to him there was a constant flow of influences from French philosophy and 'poststructuralist' social theory. Names like Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser became known, read in French or in translations into Finnish or English. On top of all that, there were the old traditions of Finnish folklore and ethnology, which caught my interest when I later tried to relate my experience from fieldwork to those of others and to develop methods for analysing life stories (Alasuutari, 2004: 605).

Alasuutari's path through the reading lists and library shelves, the recommended reading and the tips picked up in the reference lists of others can be followed only too well, as it certainly reflects our own individual wanderings before finding a space to work in that seemed to fit.

How important this biographical component to our research practice is, how powerful the formative force of the near and the familiar, and how important these driving forces are for the experience of doing research, has been addressed eloquently and idiosyncratically by Pierre Bourdieu in his auto-analytical esquisse/sketch (Bourdieu, 2004). In contrast to his relationship to former teachers and exalted contemporaries with all their institutional weight, Bourdieu describes the experience of "total immersion and the joy of the rediscoveries" he made when embarking on his study of his native Béarn and the country people of Béarn, "the friends of his childhood, family, their manners, their routines, their accent" (Bourdieu, 2004: 82, author's translation). He succeeds in marrying in his account the strict discipline of scientific research with

emotional abandon, excitement, and sheer joy[6] in his reconstruction of the driving force behind this pivotal research on his place of origin.

Thus, he speaks of:

"l'atmosphère émotionelle dans laquelle s'est déroulée mon enquête" / "the emotional atmosphere in which my research unfolded" (Bourdieu, 2004: 83). The study of his native Béarn was "une enquête sur l'enquête et sur l'enquêteur" / "an investigation about the investigation and the investigator" (Bourdieu, 2004: 85). In another place he compares the research experience to a kind of intellectual *Bildungsroman* of his evolution as a researcher moving from philosophy through anthropology to sociology with a concomitant intellectual and emotional transformation (Bourdieu, 2004: 79).

Bourdieu describes the experience of carrying out the Béarn study thus:

C'est sans doute le goût de "vivre toutes les vies" dont parle Flaubert et de saisir toutes les occasions d'entrer dans l'aventure qu'est chaque fois la découverte de nouveaux milieux (ou tout simplement l'excitation de commencer une nouvelle recherche)…	It is without any doubt the taste for "living every life" as Flaubert calls it and seizing every opportunity to partake of the adventure encountered every time some new space is discovered (or simply the excitement of starting a new research project)

(Bourdieu, 2004: 86-87, author's translation).

The impetus of his "investissement total, un peu fou, dans la recherche." / "total commitment, a bit mad, to the research" was driven by

la logique même de la recherche, génératrice de questions toujours nouvelles, et aussi *dans le plaisir et les joies extraordinaires* que procure le monde enchanté et parfait de la science.	the very logic of the research itself, generating every time new questions, and also in the pleasure and the extraordinary joys given by the magic and perfect world of science

(Bourdieu, 2004: 91, author's translation and italics).

Thus, we can see evolutionary transitions in a researcher's life that may well be easy to follow and understand, but there are also radical shifts that may be less easy to recognise and possibly difficult to understand fully. Bourdieu himself, talking of the break he made in studying first the Kabyles of Algeria and then the Béarnais of south-western France employs variously the terms 'transformation', 'initiation' and even 'conversion' (Bourdieu, 2004: 78-79) to measure the extent and force of his move into new fields of study. Indeed he admits that his transformation is difficult to describe, being the sum of

[6] Or "libido sciendi", as he calls it (Bourdieu, 2004: 64).

changements qui m'ont été peu à peu imposes par les expériences de la vie ou que j'ai opérés au prix de tout un travail sur moi-même, inséparable du travail que je menais sur le monde social

changes which were imposed on me one after another by life's experiences or which I brought about through doing a lot of work on myself, which can't be separated from the work I was doing on the social world

(Bourdieu, 2004: 78, author's translation)

Origins and points of arrival

The title of this collection is, as some will immediately recognise, a wink at the utopian socialist novel *News from Nowhere* by William Morris first published in 1890 (Morris, 1993). Morris' 'Nowhere' is a description of a classical *utopia*, a non-place. Research, however, is most definitely in a *place*, even if not, or not always sufficiently, 'grounded' in that place. The research we do, we do somewhere. And we all come from that 'somewhere', which is in no way a utopian place. Quite the contrary, many will feel.

All the more reason, then for starting from that place and mapping it out with some precision. In the hope that an idea of what is happening there can be formed. News, then, from other places, to compare and contrast with our own news and a chance to exchange news with others like ourselves. Or, as Alcides Monteiro in the title of his contribution to this collection of papers suggests: "perhaps we should exchange some ideas on the subject" and stop and talk about it.

In the biographical path of any researcher, it seems, the near and the familiar are, and remain, anchors, firm points of reference, however removed they may be from others' view. And there are departures to new positions which become new points of reference. Not wishing to have recourse to the vocabularies of nationalisms and cultures – which are always unpardonably reductive because they tend to be, in Lila Abu-Lughod's words "static, homogenous and bounded" (Abu-Lughod, 2008: xiii) – I shall borrow instead from geology (and not from history or mythology) terms that seem more fitting and useful for a description of origins and points of arrival.

I prefer to see the lasting, perhaps invisible, influences of the individual formation of a researcher as similar to the *autochthon*, the "mass of rock which is in the place of its original formation relative to its basement or foundation". Wikipedia states that "It can be described as rooted to its basement rock". The points of arrival after possibly radical shifts in research practice – Bourdieu's transformation/conversion – can be likened, by contrast, to the "*allochthonous* block which has been relocated from its site of formation" (Autochthon, 2023). If this loan from geology is not wholly superfluous,

then the simile should not require any further elaboration. If we wish to bridge the space between different research practices, it can help to trace the shifts and plot the positions from which a researcher is coming.

As we all come from *somewhere*, it seemed interesting to confront a certain number of researchers with the invitation to write about their individual research and researcher trajectories. They were asked to discuss, illustrate, explain, or analyse the 'place' they write from and do their research in. They were asked to consider to what extent their researcher position is influenced by the 'national culture' and its education and research traditions, practices or assumptions that they were formed in and have worked in. At the same time, do the notions of 'national' and/or 'culture' make sense for them at all in talking about their research trajectory? Did they think these notions can convey satisfactorily the significance of those *autochthonous* experiences that they can still locate in their (researcher) biography?

The authors were also urged to address the question of whether there have been moments of friction with their own training as a researcher, with other, perhaps, bordering areas of research, as well as moments of enrichment and/or discovery as well, something of the joy and passion, that 'libido sciendi' we have seen Bourdieu referring to (Bourdieu, 2004: 64), moments of epiphany perhaps (Linden West, in this collection of papers, refers to just such experiences)?

They had no doubt drawn lines in their practice, associating and dis-associating themselves in discrete ways with and from the work of others in their own work. What conclusions have they drawn about their work, I asked, and the work of others that has shaped or still shapes today their research?

Differences in methods, presentation and discussion, also in organisation, hierarchy, and status are obvious moments of tension and moments of differentiation. All of these must have exerted some influence on their work sometime, in some way. Were they merely unavoidable, irksome and a source of frustration or were they perhaps significantly formative in some way?

What recognisable research traditions exerted significant influence on their work and where, in fact, did they see themselves as opposed to earlier phases of their trajectory? Is their allochthonous 'place' somewhere significantly different to previous areas they have worked in/on? Has there been a crucial shift in their way of doing research?

The authors were free to find the most suitable format for their text. Most opted for a discursively chronological narrative, two – Peter Alheit and Katarzyna Walentynowicz-Moryl – chose rather to take a particular formative phase of their researcher career refracted, as it were, through the lens of afterthought in order to "ground anew" the critical narrative of their progress (Berger, 2005: 31).

The papers: what news, then?

This collection of essay papers is composed therefore of eight attempts to trace the trajectory covered in the course of individual research careers to date. The authors are Spanish, Italian, English, Canadian, Portuguese, Polish, and German.

All of the authors, some warmly and openly, others more scientifically, perhaps, refer to the stages of their research trajectory and to the individuals or communities who peopled those formative spaces. Certain figures loom into sight and alter fundamentally the direction of the author's progress. In the case of **Peter Alheit** (University of Göttingen, Germany), who takes us back to the religious milieu in central Germany that played such a formative role in his early intellectual development, the figure of the theologian Bultmann ignites an autonomous intellectual learning process that will accompany him throughout his academic life. This drive for autonomy developed in him, he argues, a sceptical, sometimes negative, attitude towards intellectual mainstreams and overly rigid professional settings. Ultimately, he sees that he owes the opportunity for intellectual work, for interested and precise observation of his social world, to the early acquired skill of distancing himself intellectually. A precise skill, he adds pointedly, inherited from his grandfathers, who were small-scale craftsmen.

Sixty years on, looking back on an interesting journey through theoretical landscapes, Peter Alheit still marvels at Habermas' work; he is unable to suppress a certain annoyance at the "glass bead games" of Luhmann's system theory; is able, on the other hand, to enjoy the continuation of Bourdieu's ideas, and some of Foucault (but not all), is inspired by Eribon's analysis, admires Reckwitz' "almost journalistic elegance" without being wholly convinced; and continues to hold to the concept of a Community of politically committed researchers interested in the civil shaping of world society developed especially by Charles Sanders Peirce.

This dialogue with works and people started and maintained through the decades underlines the importance – common to all of the papers presented here – of the acquisition of the craft knowledge of the professional researcher.

This aspect of the researcher trajectory – the learning of the ropes – is made most forcefully in this collection by **Katarzyna Walentynowicz-Moryl** (University of Zielona Góra, Poland) who leads us through the travails of her research with women with infertility problems. She unfolds her dogged pursuit of reliability, validity and reproducibility in the unorthodox research field of online forums more than a decade ago. In a very obvious sense, she reflects here on experiences every researcher has passed through, experiences which are – I hazard to suggest – routinely sidestepped or ignored, or just as frequently romanticised and 'adventurised'. Katarzyna insists on a naked view of the researcher's formation under the frighteningly dead weight of the obligations

and necessities dictated by the researcher's training, the pressure of the institution and the self-destructive drive of the researcher herself. "Abandon all hope all ye who enter here", we may be led to think. In any case, many of us will recognise ourselves in her paper and will be seriously in her debt for responding to the editorial invitation in this way. We may at the end stop to ask ourselves whether we have not only been there too, but whether we possess anything like her candour, her entire lack of vanity, and her stripped-down, no-nonsense approach to the realities of getting the job done?

She lists the hurdles thrown in her way along the path of her research, including the self-created hurdles of desire and hope, and we accompany her through the agonising over topics and sources, the lack of guidance or help, the endless uncomprehending gatekeepers, the need to invent strategies and methods anew over and again, and the successes, humiliations, the rewards and the exhaustion and finally the complexities in the encounters with the people she is seeking to understand. Waiting and patience are the lessons she draws from this experience – and recognition of the debt owed to those people. As she concludes: "ultimately the person on the other side will decide whether they want to participate in our research project and how much insight she will give us into her world". No amount of simple preparation can bring that about.

Adrienne Chan (University of Fraser Valley, Canada) introduces us to the complex web of discrimination and identity in her journey through family, community and a research career. At the outset she states:

> I am a researcher. My research focuses on story, narrative, autobiography, and the use of the subjective. I acknowledge that research is not neutral: my identity, values, beliefs, experiences, and social location affect my choices in research, who my collaborators and co-researchers are, and how I interpret the stories of participants.

She recounts her family history, being Chinese in Canada, a settler, and a non--Indigenous researcher working with Indigenous peoples, and the tensions as well as learning experiences that are the results of working in research. These conflicting forces evolve into her awareness of 'triple consciousness' and the intersectionality intrinsic to her experience as a woman of colour and researcher who seeks to examine the multiple locations that have affected her research experiences and led her to become an activist-researcher. While she, too, traces her path through the stages of an apprenticeship to research, the influence that looms largest in her account is no specific individual or school of note, but the Indigenous community with which she learns to unravel her own emerging researcher identity. In this, Adrienne holds a particular place among the authors bringing their news from somewhere.

José González Monteagudo (University of Seville, Spain) visits the numerous stops in his research journey. He sets out to present his itinerary as a researcher and

educator in the biographical-narrative field over the last two decades. In so doing, his paper addresses,

> from a personal and subjective point of view, the recent changes in the biographical universe referred to globalisation, teamwork, international collaboration, the creation of networks and the progressive consolidation, legitimisation and maturation of narrative approaches.

This account demonstrates vividly the construction and maintenance of carefully nurtured research relationships spanning diverse continents and shows, too, the enormous importance of empathy and respect, candour and humility necessary for the lasting care of such webs of intellectual and emotional collaboration. José Monteagudo's vignettes of Gaston Pineau and the French school of 'histoire de vie', of the biography network in ESREA, and in particular of the recently deceased Pierre Dominicé, are complemented by his review of the major paradigms of biography research under the lens of the path he followed. The 'shifts' in his trajectory can be thought of as ever-widening ripples, as he explored new networks from land to land and, more importantly, from language to language (and thus, booklist to booklist), widening his space of research practice and the communities of researchers he collaborates with.

Alcides Monteiro (University of Beira Interior, Covilhã, Portugal) shows how the paths through research practice and theory are made up of childhood memories of a small village in the interior of Portugal, political events, and the family environment.

The request to write about himself generates uncertainty, for he has no experience of writing about himself. Further, he feels unsure of the "rhythm and tone" this kind of text should have. The fact is, he is a sociologist and sociology, he asserts, "has that beauty of being the matrix of my ego, or the filter that stands between me and what surrounds me". We recall perhaps the similar thrill in Bourdieu's reference earlier on to the "pleasure and extraordinary joys [of] the magic and perfect world of science" (Bourdieu, 2004: 91). In fact, Alcides Monteiro's account is centred on his encounter with Sociology, which he recognises as having been indelibly prepared by the social environment in which he grew up, the discussions with his father, and by the Revolution of 1974, as a result of which politics and social engagement burst into his life. And the discovery of Sociology is also indelibly linked to "a mental place", the Istituto Universitário de Lisboa, where electing to study Habermas, Bauman, Mead, Goffman, Blumer and others proved to be "happy choices that have greatly influenced my career". Yet, despite the importance of English as the linguistic 'cross-roads' for much international research practice, including his own, Alcides stresses the 'nearness' and affinities between the social realities discussed and researched by French writers in their research and he has drawn upon them consistently.

Regarding his evolution as a researcher and his 'shifts' over time, he maintains that he is a creation of "a slow time", interested in delving deeper into the debates he is

involved in and in remaining attentive to the challenges people pose him, remaining in dialogue, and taking the time to do it.

Marcin Gołebniak (University of Lower Silesia, Wrocław, Poland) – in this piece we have the author tracing the re-invention of his culture as a researcher within and beyond the borderlands and boundaries of the semi-periphery which has shaped (so far) his trajectory as a researcher. Writing in this text a 'letter' from the semi-periphery means, for Marcin Gołebniak, writing from "a peculiar place" with a distinct language and research traditions, embedded in the historical, cultural, and now postcolonial reality of central and 'Eastern' Europe, and the impact of the 'internationalisation of science' on the institutions, research and himself. As a trained anthropologist, finding remoteness and distance, and getting closer to his object of study, are what give him the possibility to perceive the peculiarities and assumptions of his own and other cultural practices. This has led him to interpret the exploration of 'foreign' or 'local' phenomena through the anti-discriminatory lens of his research discipline as a reason for defining himself an anti-xenophobe and anti-racist "by profession".

Marcin locates the most significant turn in his professional-biographical trajectory in a turn to anthropology *at home*, as opposed to *'in the field'*, with a concomitant turn to "practical problems", to doing ethnographies of a collective nature with students, focusing on ethnographic and auto-ethnographic recognitions.

He sees himself not as a neutral observer of his own culture, but actively participating in its construction. Marcin opens his paper with a quote from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, in which we read: "No, I don't like work – but I like what is in the work – the chance to find yourself. Your own reality – for yourself, not for others!". Writing his letter from the same geographical cat's cradle as that of Joseph Conrad, Marcin defines himself a *Krojcok* – culturally crossed.

Laura Formenti (University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy) has made her way via significant moments of decision, collaboration, rupture and encounters, learning about stories – her own and those of others. As she has recognised, telling your life is a "cultural thing", revealing the contexts where you come from and belong, and in this text she has only these words, in this 'foreign' language, which she has learnt to use "mostly by working and reading academic stuff", not with the language of family, love or poetry, for example. And in this process of tracing her path to today, she has learnt from Gregory Bateson and Humberto Maturana that "we take our form (formation) – by living and we learn how to shape our discourse on ourselves by languaging". Thus, writing about herself is automatically about the world she lives in, the people she has met, the books she has read and the environment that shapes her and from which she depends.

Laura recognises that our epistemology can change. The theoretical clothing in which we started out can be radically changed, in something of a conversion, a reframing of

perspectives. Her transformation took her from Italy to Switzerland, and back to Italy, moving from jobs, moving from being a family therapist to research on organisations, to the psychology of education, crossing disciplinary boundaries, cultural borders and having to deal with the mutual intolerance of academic systems and values. Pushed by her supervisor to attend the very first meeting of the ESREA Life History and Biography Network in Geneva, she encounters two figures – Pierre Dominicé and Marie-Christine Josso – who were in the process of developing a method of collective biographic enquiry with groups of educators and students which became a model for her PhD.

There has been much opposition in her path, dismissal of her work, and incomprehension, but she has learnt to use her voice more, she says, as it is "necessary to say out loud who you are". The ongoing process of self-reflexivity learnt when reading Bateson years before has taught Laura Formenti "to be, how to become, how to communicate" and how to learn to "embrace all my selves".

Finally, **Linden West** (Canterbury Christchurch University, UK) is on his way home from home, from the "good enough research home" which colleagues from many countries helped him to find in the '90s – an "expansive, multi-disciplinary trans-European research community" (ESREA), which has provided for decades a research family that was diverse, dialogical and challenging. He is on his way home, too, to a radically different way of seeing, encompassing subjective and unconscious life, as well as a perception of language that embraces notions that earlier "would have seemed vaguely religious and strange", such as awe, mystery, yearning or wonder, all absent in a scientific language rooted in the detached reason of *logos*. Finally, he found his way home, "returning to the place where I was born, historical and contemporary".

Changes in direction, shifts to other places of experience and recognition, come not only from the external encounters with peers or seminal texts, but from example, and often from within the research experience itself. As Linden relates, when the dry precepts of calculatory, monocausal data-collection are questioned, and the supposedly ethically and methodologically 'empowered co-researchers' raise their heads and say: "and what about us?" the clanking train of research aims and outcomes can come to a rapid halt. And the researcher is forced to ask: who am I for them? Who are they for me? "Good enough research", Linden West repeats, "is profoundly relational in its capacity to empower our subjects, and ourselves".

Linden thinks of research today as more of a pilgrimage or quest. Along the way he encountered people or writings – Pierre Dominicé, Donald Winnicott, Axel Honneth – as well as himself, leaving his place of origin and returning there again, and rediscovered the significance of the idea of conviviality and educated democracy in the work of R H Tawney, for example, and in the relevance of a lost working-class culture for today's troubles. The research journey takes time, even a lifetime.

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