Article title: EMOTIONAL COMMUNITIES: An Understanding of Situated Collective Knowledge and Action

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Emotional Communities: An Understanding of Collective Situated Knowledge and Action

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Emotional Communities: An Understanding of Collective Situated Knowledge and Action

Abstract

The concept of *Emotional Communities* has been a fruitful category for understanding the collective action of grassroot organisations in Bogota, Colombia. We developed our own approach of the concept thanks to the input from many authors who have used it as well as from our empirical findings in research. In this paper, we first introduce our epistemological position on emotions and allow ourselves to contribute the concept of *corpo-emotional processes* to the debate; Second, we concentrate on a discussion about emotional communities and the most relevant perspectives nurturing our own conceptualisation, which we offer lastly as another contribution to the field of Sociocultural Studies of Emotions.

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Emotional Communities: An Understanding of Collective Situated Knowledge and Action

Our entrance to the experience of global neoliberalism in Latin America was not smooth. During the cold war, our countries were in the middle of two oppositional aesthetic, ethic, and political forces wanting to change our hearts and souls, like Thatcher (1981) pictured it:

What's irritated me about the whole direction of politics in the last 30 years is that it's always been towards the collectivist society. People have forgotten about the personal society. And they say: do I count, do I matter? To which the short answer is, yes. And therefore, it isn't that I set out on economic policies; it's that I set out really to change the approach, and changing the economics is the means of changing that approach. If you change the approach you really are after the heart and soul of the nation. Economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul.

Today we have embraced global neoliberalism and the market and its fictions. As Santamaría has depicted, it became the limit and the funding tenet of relations (2018, 33). In such a project, “changing the approach” also means recognizing the crucial role that emotions play in all interactions. The embodiment of this project holds a subject in a constantly competitive, individualistic, non-conflictive, and depoliticised confrontation while navigating through low-intensity-citizenship waters to perform the new corporeal order driven towards the accumulation of wealth and personal success via the entrepreneurial model (Santamaría 2018, 63-72).

There is growing evidence that the promise of this approach, with economics –and its affective realm- as a method, was not able to ease the historical inequalities and systems of

discrimination in the Global North. On the contrary, they have worsened. Bauman paid close attention to these effects of modern life and consumerism, and called the experience of those who were unnecessary or could not find a way to become meaningful in the market, “wasted lives” (Bauman 2005, 58). But what about the Global South? Are there any particular effects within this global phenomenon? How could we apprehend the specificities of the experience and understand the struggles and responses to the relations of power threatening the extermination of their heart and soul as their communities know them?

The ‘wasted lives’ metaphor in Latin America has a very complex form. The Argentinian sociologist, Adrian Scribano, has described neoliberal capitalism as a “predatory machine” that feeds from corporeal energy and needs to continuously redefine the mechanisms of social bearability and the devices for sensation regulation (Scribano 2007, 121). Pain and violence become the main affective framework for the survival of those outside the privileged, formal, and global market. But the desire to belong and be respected becomes the fuel for the creation of alternative means of empowerment and capital accumulation. The role of the Global South, besides the extraction of natural resources, is to offer products and services for a market – a gore market-demanding illicit drugs, sexual exploitation, organ trafficking, intimidating violence, or contract killings, among many others. Mexican transfeminist philosopher Sayak Valencia (2016) has referred to this model as *gore capitalism*. Within this approach, social pain and precariousness is understood as a condition of self-failure; they are the effects of one’s own actions, decisions, and passions. But Judith Butler (2017) reminds us that this meaning has been set by the modern/colonial individualist ethics supporting the latest change of heart and soul project.

But this landscape, which we could call ‘the hegemonic framework’ in our interacting social relations and emotions, in both urban and rural contexts, shares space with other aesthetics

of feeling. Aesthetics and ethics defending communality, cooperation, solidarity, and resistance against the dismantling of the ancestral and traditional forms of relations. Therefore, our study group on Emotionalities and Social Change at *Centro de Educación para el Desarrollo, S.P.* (CED)¹ in Bogotá, Colombia, was compelled to understand and put into dialogue the experience we had working with grassroots organizations in Bogotá for over ten years. We also wanted to follow Haraway's sensibility towards a different approach to make sense of historical challenges and our responsibility in making rational knowledge claims on people's lives:

So, I think my problem, and "our" problem, is how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own "semiotic technologies" for making meanings, and a non-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a "real" world, one that can be partially shared and that is friendly to earth wide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering, and limited happiness (Haraway 1988, 582).

Her critical view of the hegemonic claims of scientific objectivity as a distant understanding of what is called "reality", from above, from nowhere, trying to explain the world in universal terms through a split of subject and object, mind and body – as if one could ever be split that way—, gave her the possibility to bring forward a proposal of feminist objectivity. It means a vision within a limited location, a situated knowledge founded in embodiment, not thought as a fixed location

¹ CED or Center of Education for Development at Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios in Bogotá, Colombia, leads the student's Practices in Social Responsibility with the collaboration of more than 60 social and grassroots organisations throughout the city. The learning and reflecting processes aim at developing creative spaces of exchange of experiences between the students and the context where the organizations are located. The process takes emotions into account to dismantle the fears and prejudices that build our imaginaries towards some people, or communities and their knowledges. CED works with ca. 1,200 students each semester.

in a reified body, but the body as an agent, as objects of knowledge with material-semiotic generative nodes. In our projects, we have followed these epistemologies of positioning, of situating, and we have found in the field of emotions our way to make rational knowledge claims on people's lives through “the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity” (Haraway 1988, 589). In our research, we have made ourselves explicit in the construction of knowledge, along with all participants and contexts they are in. We are all bodies of knowledge.

Within the study of emotions, there is an increasing interest to understand them outside the individual experience, and some of us, in the field of sociocultural studies of emotions in Latin America, have deepened into their collective and social dimensions. Throughout this paper, our study group aims to contribute with a relevant discussion on this field with concepts developed in their research projects², namely *corpo-emotional processes* and *emotional communities*.

Our effort in this research is the understanding of grassroot organisations and the people and context they work for as emotional communities that generate and share an *affective habitus* of their own. It develops as such, thanks to the practices taking place in the specific spaces facilitated by such organisations. While trying to understand the ethical and aesthetic grammars that come about there, we are seeking to comprehend the ways in which their emergent emotional structures respond to the surrounding context and how they enter the dispute over the regulation of sensitivities and affectivities within and without the community, and the continuities or discontinuities with the hegemonic affective culture.

² The group has conducted two research projects on Emotions and Collective Action within the organizations. The first one was called *Social and Grassroots Organisations in Bogotá Understood as Emotional Communities*; and the latest research is *Emancipatory Emotional Communities: An Approach to the Political Practices, Ethics, and Aesthetics in Grassroots Organisations in Bogotá*.

First, we introduce our epistemological positioning on emotions and allow ourselves a contribution with the concept of *corpo-emotional processes*; Second, we concentrate on a discussion about Emotional Communities and the most relevant perspectives nurturing our own conceptualisation. Last, we would like to offer a deepening of this concept, built from the situated knowledge gathered through our research and we offer it as another contribution to the field of study.

1. Corpo-emotional processes: how we get affected and affect our environment

The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision

Donna Haraway, 1988

From the so-called affective turn, there are epistemological tendencies which, on one hand, explain emotions as social constructions, placing them outside the individual; or on the other, they concentrate on the biological processes and neuropsychological terms, placing them inside the individual. Our study group has located itself in a more relational trend which strives not to distort any of these two imagined extremes, and rather explains them through their relationship. Among these positions, we have found very fruitful insights in Goffman's symbolic interactionism represented by Arlie Hochschild and Randal Collins and in Argentinian sociologist, Adrian Scribano who argues that there should not be a sociology of bodies and of emotions separately,

but on the contrary, their relationship should be more explicit³. Also, the more praxeological approach of Sara Ahmed and Andreas Reckwitz have nurtured our relational perspective and informed our sensing-thinking on emotions. We feel they have given us tools to observe and analyse fluxes, tensions, and complements in the resonances between old time dichotomies such as, materiality/culturality, subject/object, inside/outside, and bodies/emotions.

Within this same spectrum of feeling, our study group also uses the terms "emotions" and "affections" interchangeably. Some positions think of affections as "intensities" or "suspense zones", even meta-linguistic (Massumi 2002), and that emotions are the enunciation, the reasoning of what has been sensed, the mediation by culture. For other positions, the most relational ones, emotions and affections are dynamic movements that align or mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, the individual and the collective, therefore, their indistinct use is possible.

To understand these dynamic movements, Sara Ahmed (2014) shows us the aesthetics behind the word *Emotion*, which comes from the Latin word *emovere*, a word that explains a directed exiting movement, an eviction, an outward movement, and is used to express those movements from one habitual state to another. Emotions then move, but they are not only movements, they are also attachments or fixations that can connect us with other bodies. What *moves us* makes us static or stuck at the same time to an object and its place, we are embraced by that object and place, they give us a dwelling place. Thus, when we recognise we have been “moved” by something, it means fixing that body as “other” and transforming it into an object of feeling charged with accumulated affective value. In that reading my (re) action is to connect with

³ He offers us an alternative term: the sociology of bodies/emotions

that object or reject it, emotions are then the orientation of that movement and that fixation. Fixations build history and inherit stories, but they cannot occur without a space to appear.

Our study of emotions does not ignore the biochemical and neurophysiological processes of "impressions" and reactions, but we have decided to focus on their socio-cultural construction, their performativity in the framework of social norms and values, of ethical principles and morals, of customs, traditions, beliefs around bodies/emotions themselves, of ideology and local cultural practices that promote certain emotions and limit other ones (Rosenwein 2006; Luna Zamora 2010; López Sánchez 2011).

Together with Scribano we understand the body in three dimensions: the *individual body*, the *subjective body*, and the *social body*. This is only an analytical division of the same unit. The first one refers to physio-social processes and places where perception connects with the subjective body, that "locus" where the "I" is experienced; the social body is the articulation of the first two in relation to the social structures incorporated and that complete the circle for a "life-lived-with-others and for-others" (Scribano 2012-2013, 101). From this analytical matrix, to feel (in) the world through the body then implies a dynamic process of tensions between distance and proximity within these three body dimensions, which allows us to "move from the experiences we sense to the sense making of the experiences" (Scribano 2012-2013, 102-104). This dynamic process, says Scribano, is a continuous mobilisation between organic senses and social sense making resulting in emotions.

For this reason, Monique Scheer states that we do not have emotions, but they are made (2012, 220) and they make worlds in the form of knowledge, words, habits and interactions that necessarily involve the body, says Ahmed (2014, 12). Emotions are *praxis*, they are orientations

that alert the individual to his historical future. These constant continuities and discontinuities of experience we have called the, corpo-emotional processes.

Corpo-emotional processes inform us of these dynamic intersubjective and interobjective movements that take part in the identification process and make sense of, organize, and regulate practices in an ethical and normative way. They are processes that affect and are affected by the objects that take part in the interaction and weave the fabric we call the emotional cultural matrix. When the individual and collective normative orders meet, this matrix is revealed by the production of moral and ethical sanctions, solidarity, codes of conduct, values and systems of loyalties or distrust between subjects, communities, and artefacts. Corpo-emotional processes then inform us about the political dimension of social interaction, because life is a place of political struggle, disputes, conflicts and negotiations both inside and outside the subjects and groups.

Understanding corpo-emotional processes as praxis means broadening the boundaries with which social practices have been understood. Following Andreas Reckwitz (2012), human bodies constitute one of the material anchors for practices, but the other is provided by non-human artefacts such as the objects we create, like spaces, for example. Bodies as objects of knowledge, materially and semiotically, are generative nodes; their borders materialise in social interaction (Haraway, 1988). Thus, emotions are neither in the individual nor in the social aspect but produce the surfaces of the borders that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they were objects (Ahmed 2014, 10). Therefore, sociability and emotionality cannot be reduced to the field of *intersubjectivity*. This expansion of borders then refers to understanding them from the notion of *interobjectivity*, which means that “the social is both evolving and reproducing within networks between humans and objects that allow for the emergence of practices” (Reckwitz 2012, 251).

Introducing the notion of *corpo-emotional habitus* from this precise epistemology, means

to understand it as a continuous relationship of the reproduction and construction of practices and meanings, towards a positioning in the social realm, but also within spaces and atmospheres. On one hand, we agree with Le Breton's definition of affective culture when he says that every culture is an affective culture and all emotion is relational: emotions are ways of affiliating with a social community, a way of recognizing and being able to communicate together, under a close emotional background (2013, 73). In this sense, the emotional dimension is understood as one of the binding forces of social relations that, in interdependence with the cognitive dimension, comprise the binding quality of sociocultural life. However, this position continues to maintain an intersubjective relationship of affectivity.

On the other hand, we are interested in highlighting that a corpo-emotional habitus includes, in addition to the above, our positioning among artefacts, and the aesthetic relationship built up by all its actors. Since environments of space constitute crucial constellations for social and cultural reproduction in general and the evolution of affective relationships in particular, the exercise of the epistemic border expansion that Reckwitz invites us with the relational idea of interobjectivity allows us to feel the affective culture typical of space (Reckwitz 2012, 256). The “emotional” or “affective” culture, he states, is understood as a fabric made of networks involving artefacts, subjectivities, forms of perception and sensation, routine activities, knowledge and implicit schemes, physical changes and, also, of course, the discursive practices about emotions that make up a recognisable pattern (2012, 251).

All this weave of social practices forms the aesthetic dimension of reality in its broadest sense, not the one coming from the narrow definition of aesthetics that refers to art and beauty. The Greek root of 'aesthesis' expands the meaning to “the routine ways in which things are bodily and mentally sensed and perceived and to the pleasant or unpleasant ways in which these sensations

and perceptions affect the respective bodies and minds” (Reckwitz 2012, 250). This experience of commonly shared affection due to proximity which produces an aesthetic aura that secretes a situated ethic, Michel Maffesoli (2004) has called it *emotional communities*.

2. Interdisciplinary perspectives on emotional communities

In this section, we will discuss the most relevant elements in which historian Barbara Rosenwein, anthropologist Myriam Jimeno, philosopher Victoria Camps, and sociologist Michel Maffesoli have given shape to the concept of Emotional Communities.

Rosenwein has developed the concept in the field of the History of emotions with her book *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (2006). In her concept, she invites the researcher to understand social communities from what she calls their *emotional systems*: everything that the community, and the individuals in it, define and judge either as valuable or despicable; their appreciations about emotions, their understanding of the feelings of others; that is, the emotional links between subjects and what they perceive and define as values; as well as fulfilling the community’s expectations, demands, and limits with a particular way of expressing feelings (Rosenwein 2006, 11). She emphasizes that these are historical repertoires, there are styles, each group has its own modes and differences and, therefore, she combines these systems of feeling in the idea of “communities”, because she wants to emphasize the social and relational nature of emotions (Rosenwein 2006, 25). She also highlights that emotional communities can be small or large and several co-exist at the same time; Even in the modern world, a nation — or “imagined community” (Anderson 2016) - could be such (Rosenwein 2010, 12).

From her proposal, we have understood our responsibility to disaggregate the elements of the emotional systems shared within the social organisations we work with, to give an analytical framework to what we call the emotional cultural matrix of the organisations. This has enabled us to comprehend their collective action and the context they are in. We have also seen that emotional communities are situated, contextualised, and that their constitution as such come from the processes of emotional identification in which the subjects involved engage.

Colombian anthropologist Myriam Jimeno has reached her conceptualisation with Max Weber's *Gemeinde* discussion on the subject (Jimeno 2017). The sources for her reflections regarding emotional communities come from the living elements of narrative and testimony. She aims to understand how local communities experiencing the current Colombian context of violence and forced displacement have reconfigured their ways of collective existence. With this at the core, she develops her conceptualisation to explain the number of ways in which civil society shares 'the truths' within and surrounding the acts of violence in recent years and how they are translating them into actions of citizenship. Along the way, she states that the category of 'victim' and his or her personal testimony becomes the *locus* of a civil ethics with possible political effects.

This statement is possible for Jimeno, because the category of 'victim' is emotional in nature and all testimonies carry within them a moral/immoral load, which according to their intensity in the story, makes the listener identified with the pain or rage experienced individually. In this fabric of senses, what has been a personal experience becomes a common history with the ability to call upon other different contextualised emotions, including solidarity. They together articulate a blend of common feelings for moral repudiation, which could then be translated into actions of claim and reparation.

This ability to weave identity bonds is unprecedented in the contemporary history of Colombian violence: ‘These bonds are publicly acted in the form of mobilisations and shared images. Thus, the language of personal testimony forms communities around feeling, “emotional communities,” I call them, which are moral communities, based on an ethics of recognition’ (Jimeno 2010, 7). For Jimeno, this ethics of recognition takes form when the listener recognises the victim, the damage, the suffering lived, the violation of his or her rights; It is that bridge that emerges within the narrative ‘between pain as a subjective feeling and pain as a political feeling that is publicly shared’ (Jimeno, Varela Corredor and Castilla Ardila 2015, 250).

Among the contributions of Jimeno’s conceptualisation, we highlight, on one hand, the foundational place she gives to feelings in the formation of a community. In her case, the establishment of bonds has a moral origin, which activates the frameworks of the injustice shared. The bonding occurs when moral harm is recognised, and it mobilises individual emotional identification into a collective dimension. On the other hand, she makes evident, with empirical support in her work, the possibility to transcend from this point towards a political collective action to affirm civility. To further into the ethical and political elements behind Jimeno’s ‘recognition,’ we bring in philosopher Victoria Camps to the discussion.

Camps tries to reconstruct the close relationship that exists between emotion and reason, not only in the conformation of knowledge, but also in the constitution of moral sensibility. Therefore, *emotional education* is central to her thinking. For Camps, emotions are forms of knowledge and valuation about reality: ‘educating is the raising of appropriate emotions to achieve certain ways of seeing and appreciating things’ (2011, 266). The education of emotions is not reduced to a psychological issue (individual dimension), but it is especially a moral issue (collective dimension). In fact, cultivating emotions is ‘the public ethical condition’ (2011, 273),

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4 because they move us to action, and these actions have consequences for society as a whole. Then,
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6 channelling emotions is to provide them with meaning so humanity and coexistence between
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8 people do not deteriorate (2011, 273).
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11 Thanks to Camps we can better understand the ethical function of emotions for our
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13 research. She refers to Hannah Arendt to state that the opposite of the emotional is not the rational,
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15 but the inability to feel affected (Camps 2011, 18) and this ability or disability is a display of the
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17 moral education of the subject. The person with moral sensitivity always reacts affectively to a
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19 violation of the basic moral rules incorporated, so he or she feels outrage or anger at immoral acts
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21 – as in the case of the victim’s testimonies that Jimeno illustrates—. On the contrary, who is not
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23 affected, lacks the moral meanings summoned within the act and responds with indifference
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25 towards the structure of good and evil to which he or she has been exposed. So, the ethical function
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27 of emotions or feelings is to serve as the basis of knowledge for good and evil.
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34 When Jimeno states that emotional communities are “moral communities based on an
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36 ethics of recognition” (2010, 7), it means, first, that the act/personal testimony triggers the moral
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38 education structure of the subject, and the recognition of harm produces a reaction of some kind -
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40 solidarity, for example. Then, by recognising/feeling the authenticity of the other’s feelings, he or
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42 she recognises the most appropriate sensitive response, which is publicly embodied – repudiation,
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44 for example—. Empathy with each other’s feelings is the moral root that recognises us as human,
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46 while indifference/lack of awareness of the other’s pleasure or pain, we recognise it as inhuman
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48 (Camps 2011, 18).
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54 Camps’ meaning of what she calls a community of feelings (for her, feelings and emotions
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56 are indistinct) comes from the ethical commitment that society should have at structuring a moral
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58 education that summons and makes us partakers of the same humanity, by encouraging emotions
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that should concern us above all. For that community of feelings to be built, we would have to distinguish between what inevitably happens and what does depend on us and it is in our hands to change.

In her distinction, Camps has also managed to show us the political function of emotions because, although they serve as the basis of knowledge of good and evil, they are also the vehicle that mobilises action after judgment. There is a necessity to achieve that the economist vision of a human being socially developed within the market (*homo economicus*) and the vision of a human being socially developed in a participatory and deliberative democracy (civic perspective) gets reinforced by the "emotional bond" between the members of society. For her, this current social state needs the assurance of a sociability for its proper functioning. That is, to go in search of a moral education that fosters civic virtues, which are dispositions towards commitment to public interests (Camps 2011, 275).

Each of the authors have provided insights into the concept of emotional communities. From Rosenwein's more general range that presents them as adhesions to the different possible emotional systems according to context and interests; passing through Jimeno's ethics of moral recognition between events and groups; and arriving in Camps's moral education and the importance of building communities of feelings as an effort to become part of the same humanity that promotes socially useful emotions for coexistence. In this way, we have been able to understand some of the cultural, historical, ethical and political dimensions of emotional communities.

However, crucial elements for understanding affective production and reproduction continue to be lacking. From the understanding of the authors, it seems that emotionality occurs only between subjects, as a subjective exchange. But when emotionality is reduced to

intersubjectivity, 'affects become interest of analysis only when affect is in relation between subjects' (Reckwitz 2012, 254). The relationship we establish with the world through our practices are not of a two-dimensional but three-dimensional kind. Space and artefacts with which we enter into relation, also affect and are affected by the subject; interobjectivity Reckwitz calls it. Therefore, we need to bring the spatial dimension of the practices forward into the discussion.

Gammerl (2012) points out some inaccuracies that arise from Rosenwein's concept when applying it in a framework of the modern history of emotions. For example, the subject's possibility of simultaneous ownership to several communities seems unclear. Nor is there an explanation of the role of power relations between hegemonic and subordinate emotional communities. Finally, there's a question that remains regarding the congruence of the emotional repertoire of a community with the pre-existing characteristics of social groups (Gammerl 2012, 163-164); but, apart from this, he especially concentrates on the failure to read the reorientations of the emotions given by our contact with space.

In his discussion, Gammerl (2012, 165) brings out three main research relational analysis between affection and space in human geography: first, those about spaces with a high emotional load (Anderson and Smith 2001) and those separating the public from the private and intimate (Robinson 2005; Lupton 1998, 156-160). Second, the emotional burdens within the establishment of borders that reinforce stratifications, an inclusion/exclusion relation (Bondi, Davidson and Smith 2005). Finally, the relevance of media in the production of affective spaces and their political implications (Thrift 2004).

A fourth research axis between emotional styles and spatial constellations comes from the praxeological proposal of Andreas Reckwitz, which has been one of the most fruitful insights for our research and has supported our entire epistemological and methodological project strategy. It

is an understanding that sees affectivity from both sides of the contact relationship and not only from within the subject, from where it has always been looked at. It stands in the perpetual interaction of practices and the dynamic webbed relations of affection (the fact that something affects and is being affected). We have already affirmed that emotions are praxis and make worlds.

With Reckwitz we can understand the material aspects of emotional practices, which always involve a whole network of bodies and artefacts in a continuous interdependent dynamic that call for constant reconfigurations among themselves. This causes the emergence of routine affective modes (affective *habitus*) of coexistence, but with the possibility of giving shape to new emotional forms that last over time, since the organization of artefacts results from the stabilization of the reproduction of affective cultures (Reckwitz 2012, 252).

Let us return then to the proposed discussion on the conceptualization of emotional communities and the contributions from these different authors. The previously exposed present proposals from the notions of belonging, of identity, and therefore generate an aura of long-lasting emotionalities regardless of the space where the subject is embedded (Gammerl 2012). Meanwhile, the relation between communality and space offered by the subsequent authors makes evident the existing difficulty of separating the emergence of a particular emotional style within communities if we overlook the impact of spaces and other artefacts on that production.

From this point of view, Michel Maffesoli's proposal gave us a relevant discussion on space for our conceptualisation. For him (2004, 64), every social group has a strong content of feelings lived in common, which are anchored in space and the conditions they share to evolve into that space. These feelings provoke a search for a 'different morality,' which he calls the ethical experience: 'groups emanate ethics that are fundamentally empathic, proxemic (*Einfühlung*). History could promote a moral (politics), while space can favour, in turn, an aesthetic which

secretes an ethics' (2004, 62). His 'aesthetic paradigm' expresses the sense of experiencing or feeling in common, which requires undifferentiation or 'losing yourself' within a collective subject (2004, 55-56). This experience privileges not what everyone voluntarily adheres to (contractual perspective), but what is emotionally common to all (sensitive and organic perspective) (2004, 66). To this experience of the production of an aesthetic aura that secretes an ethics thanks to being affected in common by proximity, Maffesoli has called it emotional communities.

3. Emotional communities as collective situated knowledge

Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals.

The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular

(Haraway 1988, 590)

Below, we present our understanding of emotional communities as a contribution to the conversation. We have reached this conceptualisation based on the empirical data collected in our research. Although this is not a space to be extended in the methodological approach⁴, we make it explicit that the construction occurred in the constant overlapping between the corpo-emotional processes shared by the participants from the social organisations with the photovoice technique and those of the researchers themselves in every encounter, even now while writing about it. This

⁴ Our methodological approach for research through the observation/collection/analysis model is called *Performative Triad*. It was designed to create dynamic and creative encounters among the different *interlocutors* of the research through *three strategies* that end up mobilizing *corpo-emotional processes* around a topic. The model is a complex structure that blends methodology, theory and epistemology to approach the sociocultural matrix that constitutes all the social organizations of the study as emotional communities. In this way, we could understand the multiple reciprocities entangling their members with the context they act upon. The techniques are: performative individual and group narratives, photovoice, and corpo-emotional observation. Further details on the model could be found in Spanish in the article by Baquero & Peláez (2017) called "Reflexiones epistémicas y metodológicas en torno al estudio de las acciones colectivas de organizaciones sociales desde los cuerpos/emociones. La propuesta de la Tríada Performativa", published in *Revista de estudios sobre las culturas contemporáneas*, Universidad de Colima, México.

has formed a network of senses and feelings that contributed to this densification of the concept of emotional communities.

Following Collins, ‘the micro-translation of macro-concepts are emotions’ (2004, 103). This network of senses and feelings shows that emotions and emotional communities are objects of study for the construction of situated knowledge from localities producing their own knowledge and powers, historicized and contextualised in the bodies and practices of those involved. This rationale manages to resonate at meso and macro levels, since emotionalities reveal to us, from social interaction at the micro level, the macro social structures that form it (2004, 103).

At the macro level, a type of hegemonic affective framework is evident in Latin America, which some of us have recognised in the triad known as neoliberal capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism (Escobar 2011 [1994]), from where we could locate a dominant emotional community. At the meso level we can see the ways in which social organisations constitute an aesthetic of feeling (Maffesoli 2004), a halo of emotional energy of its own that not only contrasts and transgresses, but also reproduces dominant emotionalities. All the above materialises at the micro level, on which this research is based, as well as in the corpo-emotional processes of the actors, from which we get information about the other two levels previously mentioned.

As a start, it is necessary to understand emotional communities as an analytical category, for it serves as a revealer of present situations (Maffesoli 2004, 57). Our conceptual framework is intended to be open and dynamic; in it, we provide some heuristic principles shaping a canvas for the continuous construction derived from many other locations. This category helps us focus on the emotional cultural matrix of social movements and organisations to make evident their symbolic, relational, situated, and contextualised nature. From this point of view, *emotional communities are experiences of unity emerging from the network of affection produced and*

reproduced in common by proximity, in which an aesthetics of feeling takes place and generates an ethics of its own for collective action.

Let us illustrate the various analytical dimensions of emotional communities for their understanding: aesthetic, ethical, political, spatial, temporal, and sociocultural.

3.1 Aesthetic Dimension

To understand the aesthetic dimension, we bring Collins and his concept of Interaction Ritual Chains, as it brings us closer to that continuous affective fabric (affecting and being affected) of evolving into practices. For Collins, we all enter a ritual with a particular emotional energy. Once we focus our attention around an object of emotion, a signifier, a practice, emotions begin to flow or circulate around that focus. When that energy is aligned with that of the participating bodies, the ritual produces shared feelings, such as trust, solidarity, companionship, appreciation, respect, admiration, joy, even domination. If there was no alignment and there is no evolving into apparent unity, it is rather an experience of distance, separation, boredom, rejection, among many others.

Aesthetics materialises in practices, in the form they take – prayer groups, dance rehearsals, concerts, community workshops, to name some—; in what they do and don't do; in oral, written, bodily expressions, the symbols they build, and the marks which bodies and other objects carry. Colours, smells, sounds, all types of vibration territorialise the spaces and the bodies occupying the web of affective circulation in common and accumulate history, provisionally or in the long term, depending on the purpose of the organisation - we will elaborate on this in the description of the temporal dimension—.

6.2 Ethical dimension

Collective action generates its own aesthetics and ethics that enter the arena of disputes over meaning, where it seeks to *preserve, annul, provoke* or *transform* the hegemonic representations that hold and legitimise power. Thus, the ethical dimension of emotional communities refers to the appropriation, incorporation, and production of those meanings that reveal a common emotional cultural matrix in the interaction between participants, as well as the knowledge they allow themselves to follow or reject as managers of good or evil, of truth or falsehood, in their actions. This does not mean that there is total consensus or that they are free of conflict (internal or external), since the subjects inside are in constant negotiation between the dominant representations of hegemonic emotional capital, and the ones at group and individual levels. This element shows us that representations are always embedded in power relations.

6.3 Political dimension

They say autonomy or guardianship. We say relational and distributed agency (...).

They say power. We say potency.

They say integration. We say proliferation of a multiplicity of techniques to produce subjectivity.

(Preciado 2013, 11)

Emotional communities produce cognitive and corpo-emotional codes and symbols from which they enter the dispute to participate in the construction of social meaning and order. It is in this dispute scenario where we locate the political dimension of emotional communities. From

1
2
3
4 within the aesthetics of feeling they emanate, they seek to overcome individual atomisation and
5
6
7 provoke other possibilities of feeling in common and being together, which could become civic
8
9 virtues, although not necessarily. Emotionalities are territories of struggle and the aesthetic forms
10
11 of feeling can range from domination and coercion to force others to action according to their own
12
13 interests; they could also take the form of trusting that allows negotiations, horizontal or
14
15 reciprocities with an aim at undoing hierarchies; and even the acceptance of forced or voluntary
16
17 submission.
18
19
20

21 Social relations are power-status relations, where we see actors positioning themselves –
22
23 getting closer or separating, coercing or obeying— in relation to other subjects or objects in space
24
25 and communicating their power and status in their practices. Also, interactions maintain
26
27 continuous creative tensions between the historical and affective conservation of the terms forming
28
29 social stratification and the possibility of changes and transformations in their valuation, since they
30
31 are not universal judgments. Therefore, although emotionalities are reproductive of the established
32
33 socio-cultural mandates and hierarchies held within and without, they are also contact zones
34
35 opened to creative possibilities towards other affective *habitus* to respond, confront or change
36
37 relations of domination. Emotionalities are potency and vulnerability, as they are increasing or
38
39 decreasing currents responding to the multiple encounters and compositions of the affective web
40
41 (Vacarezza 2010).
42
43
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48 The political dimension of emotions lies in that continuous area of exposure to the world,
49
50 the power of its orientations takes shape there, the ways in which movements drive, ethically and
51
52 aesthetically, the connections or fixations it makes to endow practices with meaning and value.
53
54 Emotionalities are historically situated and contextualised in the power relations that converge in
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56 spaces, but their potency of circulating and not being a fixed or essentialist object, generates the
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possibility for change. Larry Grossberg has already expressed it when he says that modern ways of belonging are not the only ones that exist: ‘There always has to be a way both to accept the reality that people live identity but also that there's always the potential for the actualisation of other imaginations, of other ways of belonging, of identification, of community’ (Grossberg 2010, 325). However, we must remember that these habit changes do not only occur by just changing emotional discourses, but we must expand it to the reconfiguration of spaces and artefacts that surround our transformative practices to really impact the emergence of other sensitivities and emotions.

6.4 Spatial dimension

For their sustainability over time, emotional communities require material support, so that is where spatial dimension comes into play. It is characterised by the production of distinctions or styles that respond to localities or social environments, loading them with history and contexts that produce aesthetics of feeling with deeply empathic ethics based and maintained by proximity. In this space-time relationship, we might think of a very basic distinction between emotional communities based on the effort they make to sustain themselves over time: provisional and lasting.

As provisional, we could define those emotional communities that share an object of emotion, a common focus of attention, and manage to communicate and produce an emotion that connects the participating bodies and drags them towards actions that extend the group membership in time, but whose temporality fails to transcend the spontaneous appropriation of the spaces that embrace them. In the case of demonstrations in streets and squares, for example, material environments are a part and support of the action. Moving bodies meet with each other

and claim a specific space as public because these bodies are performing it as such, building a ground of their own, animating and reorganising the architecture in that continuous affective relation between affecting and being affected (Butler 2017, 76).

However, sustaining this location for action over time, in the case of streets and squares, would require many other material resources, such as those in the *Indignados Movement* in Spain or *Occupy Wall Street* in New York. Even so, we all observed the disintegration of this political, ethical, and aesthetic bet; although they took other forms and other spaces, some of them virtual. For there to be sustainability over time, we require the assurance of material supports.

Reckwitz's inter-objectivist approach makes evident the interdependencies between the material and the cultural, the external and the internal, the objective and the subjective, and any pursuit of change and transformation necessarily implies a spatial reorganisation between the bodies, which would cause the emergence of new affective cultures:

Not only the discursive transformations, but also changing assemblages of artefacts in space provide impulses for shifting the forms of sensual perception and of affective saturation. Of course, new technological and architectural constellations do not determine affective structures. They rather provide quite incalculable incentives for building novel atmospheres, which in the long run might help to develop new affective cultures and a different affective habitus (Reckwitz 2012, 256).

In our case, all the social organisations we worked with had the opportunity to tell us about their process of settlement, growth and sustainability of that material support they call today their own space, so they would fall into the category of durable or lasting emotional communities. The way

in which their stories develop is usually quite emotional. The narrative reveals the pain of the possible loss and hardships. There is also hope and solidarity when they describe how the community gets involved, donates, or builds with them.

6.5 Temporal Dimension

Localised, yet perishable, emotional communities depend on ritualised interaction to comfort the feeling that a given group has of itself and that makes it share a common ethos or aura: “the ritual reminds the community that it “takes shape”” (Maffesoli 2004, 65). Collins shows us from his proposal of the interaction ritual chains, that rituals are characterised by the dynamic, changing, and ephemeral nature of encounters. Each of them has historical accumulation qualities of emotional energy and varying degrees of intensity. This makes us not essentialise emotional communities. They feed on the quality or success of each encounter, seen as ‘the processes in which the participants develop / define a mutual point to focus their attention and allow themselves to be dragged by the body's micro-rhythms and the emotions produced by all the bodies involved’ (Maffesoli 2004, 47).

Each encounter produces individual emotional energy and symbols, which, if they get in tune or align with those of other bodies thanks to a successful communication, they could become collective. Collins defines this effect as collective consciousness using Durkheim’s category. From sharing the same focus of attention or object of emotion, as Ahmed would call it, an emotional drag begins throughout the interaction process, which has ephemeral durability and requires the effort of bodies to maintain it. As we have stated before, efforts to maintain an emotional community do not only require making it emotionally productive. They should develop special

care in finding a balance between positive and negative emotions, as a minimum requirement for them to be sustained over time — it is clear that, if negative emotions prevail over the positive ones, the emotional community and its political action would disintegrate—. But also, they must also guarantee it over time through artefacts and other material objects such as a workspace, which, in the usual precarious conditions of grassroot organizations, this becomes one of the biggest challenges to face.

To last over time, the community uses up its energy in its creation and recreation. Among the emotions that are generated in the reproduction of life and spaces we found a lot of suffering, fatigue, pain, but at the same time, that sustainability is rewarded in long-standing solidarity and reciprocity that maintain the meaning of its actions.

6.6 Sociocultural Dimension

The sociocultural dimension corresponds to that continuous construction of the emotional community where complex representations of the individual and the collective take place; therefore, they form symbolic boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in social interaction. Hence, they do not refer to homogenising, pre-existing and idealised generalisations. They refer to processes of emotional self-definition among its members from within and in relation to other emotional communities from the outside. In the same way, they are being defined from the outside (hetero-inscription) in accordance to the repertoire coming from normative representations.

Emotional communities not only produce a potentialised emotional energy within the community participants, while carrying symbols of highly affective load - even sacred ones - ,

generating new shared and prolonged emotions, but they can also extend its scope and "touch" other communities in a type of collective effervescence.

In what ways have these social organizations developed an affective *habitus* of their own? Within them, we have identified a commitment to the ethics of recognition and interdependence as a significant value in their work. These are experiences that understand that the subjects in these territories live in painful contexts with material deficiencies, within hostile atmospheres and dominated by dis-affection and even devaluation. In all the organisations studied, they seek in different ways, to develop the potential of the subject becoming something else, not only in the ways expected by the hegemonic structure of territorial domination and the *Gore* market, as Valencia (2016) has called it, but from practices that revolve around artistic creativity, reading, playing, dancing, the exchange of diverse knowledge, music, listening, praying, ceremonies, concerts, care and self-care, and history and self-history –*Autohistoria*, in Anzaldúa's terms (2015)—.

Conclusions

From these practices, the organisations come to dispute meanings and feelings for other possible worlds, other forms of relationships, other subjectivities, other sensibilities. From their different commitments, they seek to move the fibres that transfer us from this inherited individualistic and blaming structure, towards one where 'the incomplete, interdependent and connective character is accepted through differences in age, race, sexuality, skills, financial needs, and social status' (Gibson-Graham 2011, 337). These organisations offer matrices towards an

emotionality that promotes contact to recognise that ‘other’ is what makes ‘self’ possible and whose bet is to leave the transactional and utilitarian relationships behind, moving over towards ones with a more long-term reciprocity.

Along this path, interdependence does not mean absence of conflict. Following Butler, we need to recognise and make building a presence a priority ‘and persist against the forces that seek to weaken or eradicate it’ (Butler 2017, 87). Also, to understand that, given the precarious conditions, the survival of others is also mine. To make presence, we need material support that activates mobilisation. The role of space, let us remember, is to embrace this staging. So, changes in both emotional discourses and constellations between artefacts and spaces, impact the possibility of emerging new sensibilities and emotions of other affective *habitus*. Bifo Berardi has already pointed out: ‘Our strength can no longer be based on youth momentum, male aggressiveness, battle, victory, nor violent appropriation, but on the joy of cooperation and sharing. Restructuring the field of desire, changing the order of our expectations, redefining wealth, is perhaps the most important of all social transformations’ (Berardi in Fernández-Savater 2014).

It is then our responsibility to pay attention and be aware of the sensitivities that we reproduce or repress when being in contact with other subjects and artefacts. We also need a wider understanding of our (re) actions and those of others; they have a history and produce history within us, just as we inscribe history on them too. Emotional communities carry situated collective knowledge. Our purpose in recognising this would be by renewing, restoring, and healing social relations with everyone and with everything as a political priority. To understand this, we share some final words by one of the participants of our project, from a community library:

For me everything is a political act. This is what political is about: allowing children to access books, political is that children have spaces for participation; political is to empower

ourselves in the territory and say: you do not pass [*to street cars*], because children are crossing over and we come first! Political is: neighbour, what is this? Tell the kids. Everything is a political act! (Participant, performative narrative, 2016).

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