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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Epistemic injustices and participatory research: A research agenda at the crossroads of university and community

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Abstract

This article presents an innovative framework to evaluate participatory research. The framework, comprising both a methodology and a self-assessment tool, was developed through a participatory approach to knowledge production and mobilisation. This process took place over the last two years as we, a multidisciplinary team made up of researchers and community-based organisation members from the *Groupe de recherche et de formation sur la pauvreté au Québec*, were building a scientific program on social injustices and participatory research.

We argue that participatory research can help provide a university-community co-constructed response to epistemic injustices embedded within the processes of knowledge production. From our perspective, the mobilisation of knowledge from the university and the community, initiated at the earliest stages of the creation of a research team, is part of a critical approach to the academic production of knowledge. It also constitutes a laboratory for observing, understanding and attempting to reduce epistemic injustices through building bridges between team members.

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The article focuses on two dimensions of the framework mentioned above: (1) The methodology we established to build co-learning spaces at the crossroads of university and community-based organisations (recruitment of a coordinator to organise and facilitate the workshops, informal and friendly meetings, regular clarification of the process and rules of operation, time for everyone to express themselves, informal preparatory meetings for those who wanted them, financial compensation where required, etc.); and (2) A self-assessment tool available in open access that we built during the process to help academics and their partners engage in a reflexive evaluation of participatory research processes from the point of view of epistemic injustices. Throughout we pay particular attention to challenges inherent in our research program and our responses, and finish with some concluding thoughts on key issues that emerged over the course of two years' research.

Keywords:

Epistemic injustices; participatory research; co-learning process; inequalities in knowledge production; community-based groups; reflexive evaluation

Introduction

This article presents an innovative framework, based on the concept of epistemic injustices, for evaluating participatory research. Consisting of a methodology and a self-assessment tool, the framework was developed through a participatory approach to knowledge production and mobilisation that took place over the last two years as we, a multidisciplinary team made up of researchers and community-based organisation members from Quebec (Canada), were working on social injustices and participatory research. We argue that participatory research can help provide a university-community co-constructed response to a certain type of social injustices – namely epistemic injustices – embedded within the processes of knowledge production.

The first author of this article has been working for the last 10 years at the *Centre de recherche de Montréal sur les inégalités sociales, les discriminations et les pratiques alternatives de citoyenneté* (Montreal Research Center On Social Inequalities, Discrimination and Alternative Practices of Citizenship), located in downtown Montreal. With a group of colleagues, he has conducted a varied range of participatory research with different health and social services professionals and community-based groups of people stigmatised according to their social status, gender, age or race (for example, see Godrie et al. 2018). This practice has shaped a critical perspective on knowledge production and mobilisation in the context of social inequalities.

In October 2017, three of the authors (BG, SD and SB) received a one-year grant from the research centre to support the creation of a research team on *Epistemic injustices and participatory research*. This grant provided an opportunity to bring together researchers and social justice activists experienced in participatory research in the field of poverty to share our practices and challenges in current and past research projects on knowledge production and its use in challenging inequalities. We were already aware of the well-known barriers to participatory research, such as the lack of appropriate funding and time, and the differences in organisational culture between university and community-based organisations. For these reasons, we specifically aimed to investigate the challenges connected to hierarchies of

knowledge and status in knowledge co-production processes, and ways to reduce them where appropriate.

This article presents our methodology for building co-learning spaces at the crossroads of university and community-based organisations and some of the challenges inherent in our research program, and also provides a self-assessment guide to epistemic injustices and participatory research that we collectively built during this process. We are not drawing upon empirical studies directly, but rather are reflecting upon our research and knowledge mobilisation process, while also relating our work to the existing scientific literature on participatory research and epistemic injustices.

A Research Program on Epistemic Injustices and Participatory Research

PLURALISTIC AND NON-HIERARCHICAL EPISTEMOLOGIES

Participatory research encompasses a broad range of methodological approaches on a spectrum of engagement, such as participatory action research, collaborative research, engaged scholarship, community-based participatory research, practitioner inquiry, and public sociology. Broadly speaking, participatory research brings together people/groups from different backgrounds, as opposed to traditional research which involves professional researchers only. Coming from different backgrounds, these people/groups do not speak the same language as the researchers and do not see the issues from the same angle, which leads to constant clarification, debate and redefinition of the terms that are taken for granted by each party. For example, the term 'autonomy' refers to different realities for a 15-year-old girl still under parental authority, a professional of a home-care support unit for the elderly or a researcher interested in the impact of a reform on the decision-making power of managers. These different community members may have an active role in several or all stages of the research process, but are usually confined to collecting data and disseminating findings. In this scenario, the research process is usually characterised by an 'ontological separation between scientific knowledge and people's knowledge without interrogating the validity or social-situatedness of science itself' (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil & Powell 2008, p. 48).

In an arguably more participatory approach to knowledge production, participants are recognised and treated as effective knowledge producers and included throughout the research process. They are co-investigators, rather than merely 'research subjects', sources of data or knowledge recipients, leading, for instance, to the establishment of ethical guidelines on the collective ownership of knowledge and recognition of them as co-authors of what is produced. In this instance, participatory research is a process that allows its participants to question the power relationships in the production of scientific knowledge, as well as the boundary between what is recognised as scientific knowledge and what is not. In this sense, participatory research is crucial in supporting reflexivity and enables critical awareness of hierarchies and power relations that are otherwise taken for granted. Reflexivity refers, here, to continuous attention and reflection upon the social practices of positioning and differentiation during the research process (including the positioning of the researchers), as well as analytic reflection upon epistemic, social and political struggles (Carstensen-Egwuom 2014).

This approach stems from a Global South tradition of academics throughout Latin America, Asia and Africa, initiated in the 1970s (Fals Borda & Rahman 1991; Freire 1982; Gélineau, Dufour & Bélisle 2012; Reason & Bradbury 2001). Academics and

communities rooted in this tradition are still active in various regions and fields such as Indigenous studies, adult education and rural studies. This kind of research challenges the monopolisation of the research process by career researchers and criticises the European and North American scientific normative frameworks, favouring pluralistic and non-hierarchical epistemologies (Connell 2007; Smith 2012; Tandon 2002). Other prominent attributes of this participatory research perspective are: a clear commitment to social justice; an attention both to intersectionality and positionality, and the way they shape knowledge hierarchies and production; research as knowledge-merging practice (not appropriation practice); and work that disrupts power structures and transforms social reality through knowledge and collective action (Ávila Penagos 2005; Contreras 2002; Merçon et al. 2014; Godrie et al. 2018; Merçon 2018). We distinguish intersectionality and positionality according to Yep and Mutua (2016, p. 85), who write, 'Intersectionality is a concept that illustrates the multiplicity of social forces that shape our situated experiences and identities, whereas positionality points out the fact our identities are always relationally shaped within hierarchies of power'. Our group aligned itself with this participatory research perspective, while also acknowledging some shortcomings of the tradition, especially the 'tendency towards essentializing or romanticizing the knowledge of certain groups' that we noticed in some cases (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008, p. 48).

EPISTEMIC INJUSTICES AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

The relationships between social inequalities and knowledge production are particularly well analysed by feminist and decolonial frameworks (Code 1991; Harding 1998; Santos 2006, 2016; Smith 2012; Visvanathan 2009). Several studies show that members of certain historically stigmatised social groups see their testimonies and knowledge discredited from the outset when they express themselves on a subject (Godrie & Dos Santos 2017). Even though communities have experienced/witnessed and reflected upon this for a long time, the formalisation of this concept is attributable to English philosopher Miranda Fricker who, in her book, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (2007), examines the role of social perceptions and prejudices in credibility judgements and testimonial exchange situations. Fricker distinguishes two types of epistemic injustices. The first injustice refers to our capacity to make sense of our own social experiences, especially of the injustices and inequalities we experience because 'the powerful have an unfair advantage in structuring collective social understandings' (Fricker 2007, p. 147). The second injustice refers to our capacity to convey knowledge to others by testifying.

Fricker defines these two injustices using the example of sexual harassment in the workplace. According to Fricker, before this concept was coined in the 1970s in the United States, women who were experiencing these injustices were isolated and did not have the interpretive resources to name and make sense of these abusive situations. Physical and verbal aggression against women by men in the workplace was not considered a societal issue of concern. Women who experienced these situations spoke little about them and, when they did, they could face several negative reactions from people around them who could justify these behaviors as 'flirting' and experience guilt when they were blamed for lacking a sense of humour and 'asking for it'. These situations sometimes led women to either endure these attacks or to leave their jobs. Fricker (2007, p. 151) refers to these situations in which a 'gap in collective interpretive resources places someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to reporting on their social experience' as hermeneutical injustice. In the case of sexual harassment, the interpretative resources did not exist for either the aggressors or the victims, even if this void was especially detrimental to the latter since they felt guilty ('Maybe I am

responsible for this') and isolated, and thus remained vulnerable to harassment. For this reason, when experiencing hermeneutical injustices, people are less likely to publicly expose such violence and to have the structural supports in place (for instance, women in leadership to influence change in workplace culture) to collectively put an end to it. More generally, hermeneutical injustices occur when the knowledge of some groups simply cannot find its way into public debates because it does not fit into dominant paradigms – colonialist, productivist, medical, positivist, sexist – that are usually used to understand the world.

Secondly, Fricker (2007, p. 20) characterises what she calls 'testimonial injustice' as a 'wrong that specifically affects someone in their ability as a knower'. She also states that testimonial injustice occurs 'when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word' (p. 1). The term 'injustice' emphasises that the difference in consideration given to the speech and knowledge of members of social groups results from their location in the hierarchy of credibility and legitimate knowledge, i.e. from unequal social relations between minority and majority groups. In particular, injustice related to testimony is a form of inequality emanating from harmful and wrongful treatment of a person's speech because they belong to a historically marginalised social group (Fricker 2007, p. 150). Returning to the example of harassment, it may be the situation of a woman who is sexually harassed and who is not believed by her relatives or by the people who register her complaint. In this case, even if the members of the group have the interpretative resources to account for the systemic experience of oppression, this interpretation is kept at the margins, if not rendered invisible. This denial of credibility can itself be experienced as a form of violence. It can also produce a loss of self-confidence and self-exclusion from social interactions. This type of injustice is produced and maintained because of a hierarchy of legitimacy and knowledge based partly on stereotypes and dominant ideas that naturalise and legitimise the existing social order. For example, meritocracy and individualisation reinforce the idea that those at the top of the social scale owe it solely to their individual skills and efforts. In some other cases, knowledge is ignored or set aside because of lack of time or because people do not have the appropriate training to reveal it and take it into account.

At a deeper level, these situations of epistemic injustice can lead already oppressed groups to internalise historically and socially produced cognitive biases about their intellectual capacities. These epistemic injustices are systemic in two ways. First, they strike people whose rights have been historically denied, that is to say their membership of a group suffers from a 'negative identity prejudice' (Fricker 2007, p. 27). Second, they are accompanied by a set of inequalities that affect other spheres of these people's lives, whether it be access to decent employment or the possibility of walking safely in a public space.

THEORETICAL APPLICATION IN THE FRAMEWORK

Although not investigated by Fricker, these two types of epistemic injustices may also arise during the research process between researchers and participants. Researchers have their own prejudices, or mental representations, that can lead to discrediting social groups and their members. Researchers can invalidate their world view and knowledge by labelling them as opinions, superstition, symbolic constructions, beliefs or feelings. A whole set of situations of epistemic injustice falls outside the categories proposed by Fricker. For example, a person who has to write a scientific paper in a secondary or tertiary language suffers an epistemic injustice compared to someone writing it in their mother tongue. And this injustice is reinforced by the fact that the most highly valued languages in the scientific world – English, French, Spanish – are the languages of the colonising countries. As a result, some research (and the

regions of the world in which it takes place) is given a lot of visibility and other research is invisible because it is not published or published in languages considered peripheral. The structure of the academic world, itself, and its writing and publishing norms can contribute to systematic epistemic injustice by excluding forms of knowledge that fail to conform to propositional knowledge. Indeed, many choices are not questioned or discussed with research participants when it comes to negotiating the traces that will be left by action research projects (books, scientific articles, reports, blogs, posts) and the questions they raise: Signed by whom? Published where and how? In which language?

Most importantly, marginalised group members whose voices are often not heard are not always in a position of constructed ignorance or denied the possibility to develop their own understanding of their situation. They may recognise the injustices they suffer and have their own interpretation of why they are being oppressed. However, the problem might be that their understanding is not heard, taken into account, or publicly discussed. In this respect, rather than establishing a dialogue with marginalised groups, or including them in formal knowledge production, scholars are more often 'in conversation with previously published research that … itself excludes the knowledge, interests, and concerns of those communities' (Glass & Newman 2015, p. 32).

Although a philosopher preoccupied with ethics and social justice, Fricker does not mention the potential for participatory research between scholars and communities to reduce epistemic injustices. In considering individuals outside the academy as knowledge bearers and knowledge producers and 'embracing a plurality of knowledge from diverse perspectives of legitimate epistemic agents who enter into dialogue with one another within a research relationship' (Paphitis 2018, p. 364), this type of research, if done well, might contribute to what Visvanathan (2009) calls cognitive justice.

Participatory research is not just a way to work towards cognitive justice, it's also a way to produce research results with a high level of contextual validity. This context sensitivity is, according to McCollum (2012, p. 199), a component of hermeneutical justice because 'it serves the social scientist well to realize that studies take place in an always already stratified context but also against a theoretical backdrop that must be amended to bring the complexities of social interaction to light, especially in the service of the disadvantaged'. Knowledge produced through participatory research is not only reliable, it's also 'socially robust [because] validity is no longer determined solely, or predominantly, by narrowly circumscribed scientific communities, but by much wider communities of engagement comprising knowledge producers, disseminators, traders, and users' (Nowotny, Scott & Gibbons 2003, pp. 191–92, in McCollum 2012, p. 197). And arguably more relevant to address the issues of community members themselves.

Co-learning Space at the Intersection of University and Community

As we have seen above, participatory research aims to produce knowledge by establishing fairer relationships between all types of knowledge and their holders. Despite this ideal, we – the co-authors of this article – knew from our research experience that some participatory processes could maintain or even increase epistemic injustices between participants. Our aim was therefore to critically examine the relationships between different participatory research philosophies and practices and the possibility of reducing epistemic injustices during the process of knowledge production itself or as an outcome of the research process. Our focus

was on the following questions. To what extent do participatory research processes constitute laboratories for the production of knowledge in more egalitarian relationships? Do these processes provide a space to challenge the reproduction of hierarchical relationships between knowledges, for example, through the renewal of the division of labour in writing, analysis and dissemination of knowledge? Or, do they neutralise and depoliticise the knowledge they incorporate, particularly due to the institutionalisation of participatory research practices in universities (Hall & Tandon 2017)? Did the research project make it possible to hear voices or knowledge previously absent from the public space? Despite some articles cited in the previous section on the subject, a literature review led us to share Paphitis's (2018) statement that questions of epistemic injustice in relation to community engagement activities have rarely been interrogated.

METHODOLOGY

To answer these questions and develop a research program on this topic, it seemed important to us to develop a methodology that allowed dialogue between different experiences, knowledge, academic and professional disciplines, and positionality. To be consistent with our topic, we wanted to open a co-learning space at the intersection of university and community-based organisations that could help us gradually build our research program by accumulating exchanges with a diversity of people from various backgrounds over time. According to Tineke et al. (2017, p. 492), a dialogical model of co-learning, as opposed to a linear knowledge transfer process, has the potential to reduce epistemic injustices between participants by considering them as knowers and learners:

> **Such collaboration supports the creation of meaningful dialog, and the variety of stakeholder perspectives in the dialog can broaden the scope and place possible understandings and solutions within a larger societal framework. In other words, such collaboration can lead to the development of a range of solutions, if stakeholders are willing to see many different types of knowledge and information as being valid.**

Below, we identify the eight main elements characterising the co-learning approach we developed from November 2017 to June 2018.

(1) In November, we contacted and gathered together a group of 10 people belonging to three categories that were not mutually exclusive: social activists living in poverty and members of a community-based organisation called *Groupe de recherche et de formation sur la pauvreté au Québec* (GRFPQ) (Research and training group on poverty in Quebec), a non-profit organisation based in Montréal (Québec), whose mission is to contribute to the advancement of knowledge about the causes of poverty and its consequences for people experiencing it; social work professionals from various fields (mental health, homelessness, advocacy) offering community-based services; and academics from a range of disciplines (sociology, anthropology, philosophy, nursing, community health). All were experienced in participatory research and/or had theoretical knowledge and/or lived experience of epistemic injustices. In our view, a small group would facilitate exchanges by maximising speaking time for each person and reducing the possibility of intimidating anonymous meetings, as is often the case when there are many more participants.

(2) The research grant allowed us to hire a research coordinator for two days a week for a year, whose mandate was to organise our meetings. His prior experience (training in

social work, work experience in the GRFPQ, particularly in a participatory research project, and his knowledge of the academic world as a masters student) identified him as an ideal candidate to facilitate the dialogue. His work consisted of logistics (booking rooms, providing virtual solutions for participants who were unable to travel and who wished to participate remotely), keeping in touch with the participants (taking people's pulse via email and telephone contact between our encounters) and scientific tasks (taking notes, compiling cross-cutting issues arising from the discussions).

(3) Before starting our series of co-learning meetings, the research coordinator conducted six interviews with a small number of the participants (four researchers and two members of the GRFPQ). The interviews helped identify a number of questions and challenges, and helped shape the case case study, definitions and references related to the group's research topic, as well as set an agenda of themes and determine the people in charge of facilitating each co-learning session. These interviews were transcribed, and the ideas were organised into a working plan for the coming year that was then shared and discussed with the rest of the participants.

(4) We planned five co-learning sessions (November 2017, January, February, April and May 2018). These sessions were three hours long. Each had a different theme that was presented in turn by one or two participants. For instance, the topics covered the history of participatory-action research, cognitive justice in relation to open access science, and diversity of knowledge in relation to the issue of relativism in social sciences, which helped us focus on and discuss the following questions: What counts as data and who owns it? When does the research process seek to mitigate systemic inequalities? To what extent do researchers have to meet university norms for warranted standards of evidence and arguments when working toward epistemic justice with communities? What hermeneutical resources do we need to understand various possible perspectives that are both epistemically correct and just? For each session, two texts were sent two weeks in advance to help participants prepare for each meeting. On this point, in our review of the process at the end of the year, we realised that almost all the references sent were to scientific articles and that it was hard to find articles in French (our primary language). If we reproduce this format in the future, we will definitely include a diversity of formats (audio, video, movie or novel extracts, testimonials, art).

(5) Because the texts sent were academic articles and GRFPQ members were not used to reading such texts, we organised preparatory meetings a week before the work meetings. These preparatory meetings were intended to bring together those who wished to do so in order to prepare for the theme of the co-learning session, to discuss in advance the issues and questions raised by the texts and to allow GRFPQ members, especially, to feel more legitimate in their exchanges with the other participants. We found this approach worked better too with community researchers, who often felt uncomfortable speaking up in researcher dominated meetings, but would have lots to say when we would talk to them.

(6) During the first co-learning session, we shared our experiences and personal commitments regarding the theme of participatory research and epistemic injustices. It seemed important to us not only to share our professional or personal experiences, but also to clarify our positionality at the crossroads of different characteristics and intersectionality (economic situation and social status, gender, age, level of education, etc.) and its impact on our points of view. We established a common commitment that our discussions and work would have a political dimension, i.e. contribute to the

reduction of epistemic injustices and, more broadly, of all other systemic inequalities. This involved, first of all, creating a safe space for participants, speaking to the 'I' by referring to his or her readings and personal and professional experiences, and listening and exchanging respectfully without invalidating the point of view of others. This was made possible by, in particular, a facilitation which ensured that everyone spoke at least once during the exchanges, either on the content of the topic or on the process, and through a friendly atmosphere. It was particularly important to us to recognise that it was normal to make mistakes, to hesitate, not know, and to express ideas, intuitions, emotions and life stories without being afraid of being hurt. Popular education methods helped facilitate the sessions and fostered a diversity of points of view. We had a check-in after each session and the coordinator would later have a regular follow-up (phone calls and emails) with us. However, this did not prevent some members from experiencing epistemic injustices. For example, despite the inclusive environment, highlighted by many participants, one person shared with us that she felt her point of view was not taken into account and that the person leading the discussion in the subgroup was too prescriptive.

(7) The exchanges were recorded in order to produce a faithful and exhaustive account of them. This document was produced by the coordinator and the co-facilitators of the meeting, and then shared as a Google doc with the rest of the participants for additions/validation. All these documents allowed us to accumulate a set of issues, references and research questions that would contribute to our research agenda. The drafting of these documents, reflecting the diversity of exchanges, debates and points of view, served as a basis for our scientific presentations and the drafting of the plan for this article. Subsequently, the first author of this article prepared a working version for the co-authors. The proposal was improved and validated collectively. In our discussions with non-academic participants of our group, it was clear from the outset that putting them in a position to write parts of the article was an unfair burden because, unlike the academics, they were not paid to do so, did not have the appropriate training and could not spend as much time on it.

(8) Finally, the research grant allowed us to allocate a financial compensation of $100 for each three-hour session (including preparation). This compensation was given to each of the GRFPQ members to recognise their time and the value of their contribution to the exchanges, and in the context of the other team members being there as part of their job as researchers or as students working on closely related topics. These amounts certainly did not recognise the true value of the GRFPQ members' contributions, but we consider that they were a step in that direction.

By September 2018, the research grant was coming to an end and we could no longer hire the coordinator on a part-time basis. In addition, we wanted to open our meetings to more people in order to create a space in Montreal where people interested in or practising participatory research could exchange, with the same spirit of cross-fertilisation of knowledge and viewpoints that had guided our co-learning sessions so far. Since September 2018, we have organised four seminars on topics that were put forward during the first year: 'The Analysis in Participatory Research: What Co-analysis Practices Open this Last Bastion of Research?' (January 2019); 'Decentralizing Research and Co-constructing Knowledge Outside University' (March 2019); 'Towards More Symmetrical Relationships? Strategies for Collaboration Between Community Organizations and Academia' (June 2019); and 'Authorship Practices in Participatory Research and Epistemic Injustices' (November 2019).

These seminars were held at the Research Centre on Social Inequalities (Centre de recherche de Montréal sur les inégalités sociales, les discriminations et les pratiques alternatives de citoyenneté, CREMIS), were open to all, publicised through a mailing list of our contacts and on social media, and brought together around 20 to 30 people each time (see photo). They comprised a presentation by two or three interlocutors from the university and community-based organisations, workshops in small working groups, and plenary sessions. The seminars were oriented towards the presentation of case studies and supported the development of participatory research to challenge epistemic inequalities.

Seminar on practices of co-analysis in participatory research, Montreal, January 2019

SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE ON EPISTEMIC INJUSTICES AND PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Despite some shortcomings, highlighted above, we believe that this methodology helped create a polyphonic space respectful of the diversity of socially situated positions, and fostered our capacity to reduce some asymmetries in terms of social status and perception of legitimacy among the participants.

In June 2018, we presented our work during a study day on 'Epistemic injustices and participatory research' that brought together 30 people, including 11 employees or members of various community-based organisations in the field of social justice (*Front commun des personnes assistées sociales du Québec*, *Clinique SPOT*, *Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté*, *ATD Quart Monde*, *Relais Femme*, etc.), as well as researchers and students. A buffet was served, and we split the transport and compensation fees of the community participants with the community-based organisations. As we are aware that academic language can be one of the sources of production or maintenance of epistemic inequalities, and that some people may feel intimidated or be afraid of being judged, we wanted the participants to be able to interact

through art. In the morning, in subgroups of five or six people, they identified and discussed situations in which they had experienced epistemic injustices, and then performed a small play. The day also aimed at mobilising research projects in which participants had taken part, identifying the most promising research strategies for reducing epistemic inequalities and creating research-community groups interested in the epistemic dimensions of participatory research.

From the very beginning, we wanted our reflections to lead to new collaborations and have a concrete impact, without really knowing exactly what it might be. The researchers, however, expressed a need to publish the group's reflections on epistemic inequalities and participatory research in order to establish a dialogue with the scientific community. Community-based organisation members especially, and some researchers, stressed the importance of making the results of our exchanges accessible not only to researchers, but to community-based organisations in order to attract better recognition of their knowledge of participatory research. That is why we opted to produce a variety of texts in various languages (English, Spanish and French) targeting different audiences, such as peer-reviewed academic journals, professional magazines of social and health practitioners, and posts on action-research blogs.

As the exchanges progressed during the first year, the idea emerged of a tool that could help academics and their partners to engage in a reflexive evaluation of participatory research processes from the point of view of epistemic injustices with groups whose members are seldom heard. To our knowledge, none of the tools and guides already available to support researchers and their community-based group partners had targeted this specific angle. We decided it would take the form of a reflexive tool that would summarise the main challenges identified during our co-learning sessions. This document (see Appendix) is a self-assessment guide organised into seven sections, each containing several questions that members of a participatory research project can answer. While the guide does not retain Fricker's definition of epistemic injustices, it does allow those who use it to question consideration of testimonial and hermeneutical injustices during the research process and from the perspective of results from different participants or social groups. The definition of epistemic injustices used in the guide is deliberately broad and refers to a particular type of inequality related to access, recognition and production of knowledge.

This current guide can be applied to ongoing or already completed projects. The current version is the result of a process of ongoing exhanges. The first version was produced in May 2018 by two of the authors and was then validated by the other participants. It was then applied to two participatory research projects during a co-learning session in May 2018. Subsequently, a version was discussed and enriched during several events, including the study day in June 2018 and a symposium on Epistemic Injustices and Participatory Research held on 7 and 8 February 2019 in Namur, Belgium. During these two events, the guide was divided into several parts and distributed to sub-groups who discussed its form and content. On the first occasion, all the groups shared their comments in a plenary session and, on the second occasion, we collected all the written comments made by each sub-group. Occasionally, people sent their comments or suggestions directly via emails to the first author.

These exchanges led to several improvements to the initial version. For example, after a seminar held at the CREMIS where we discussed the OCAP (ownership, control, access and protection) principles, developed by the Indigenous communities to decolonise research (First Nations Information Governance Centre 2014), we included questions such as 'Who has the right to mobilize the research results?' and 'Who participates in the knowledge mobilization process?' in the fourth section of the guide (Knowledge production) and fifth section

(Knowledge mobilisation). On many occasions, members of several community-based groups argued that access to the knowledge produced during the research process, for example, via printed or pdf copies of published documents, or access to videos and photos taken during the process, was also a key action to increase epistemic justice. Participants at the symposium in Namur stressed the importance of short-circuiting the emphasis on academic and professional knowledge in exchanges, allowing time for testimonies, storytelling and lay references, e.g. folk wisdom and proverbs (see section 3: Participants and their knowledge). The current version is the third version and future versions will be developed according to the uses and feedback made by users. The document is under a creative commons CC BY 4.0 license, which allows it to be freely shared and adapted subject to crediting the original source.

Conclusion

In this article, we have presented a participatory approach to knowledge production and mobilisation on epistemic injustices and participatory research, focusing on the methodological, theoretical and epistemological components of our research. In conclusion, we reiterate the essential elements of our approach, hoping they might inspire other groups of researchers and members of community-based organisations.

In our view, participatory research constitutes a laboratory for observing, understanding and challenging epistemic injustices through building bridges between participants and their knowledge. The dialogical relationship between social scientists and community-based organisation members whose voices are often not heard seems to be a necessary component of testimonial and hermeneutical justice (McCollum 2012).

We believe that participatory research processes have this potential since they aim to clarify tensions and bridges between distinct points of view that in turn become new sources of ideas and practices. Participatory research also leads to questioning the division of tasks and the nature of the knowledge used and produced. This type of research is likely to allow its participants to 'move from consensus based on dominant knowledge, or shared assumptions about knowledge in action, to allow new understandings to emerge' (Cook et al. 2019).

However, the relationship between participatory research and the reduction of epistemic injustices is neither obvious nor necessary. Working to establish more horizontal relationships between the different types of knowledge and their holders requires constant attention, especially since researchers have not been trained for this at university. The challenge is all the more important in the case of participatory research with stigmatised groups who may have had negative experiences with researchers in the past, as particularly highlighted by Smith (2012), and for the community-based groups participating in our seminars who may have had a sense of being instrumentalised for the benefit of a researcher's career, of having participated in research without ever having any news of the results, or of having wasted valuable time addressing the concerns of academics who, however, have no understanding of their daily life and living conditions.

Hence we gave special attention to the following issues during the building of our research agenda on epistemic injustices and participatory research over the last two years:

- Situating our reflection on epistemic injustices in an academic and activist framework, recognising in particular the intellectual traditions and social movements at the origin of these concepts.

- Explaining our values and positionality regarding the theme and what each of us would gain (for example, making visible the unequal social relations in the production of knowledge, publishing articles) and potentially risk by participating in this project (for example, exposing oneself to situations of epistemic injustices). In our experience, the constant explanation and discussion of our positionality became an epistemic resource to push our thinking further. The co-learning space was intended from this point of view to create what Nicholls (2009, p. 121) calls a 'liminal, in-between space, decentering themselves by challenging traditional notions of objective control between researchers and research participants'.
- Having an impact beyond the members of our group. This led us to create seminars in Montreal that are ongoing. This is also why we decided to produce a guide that would allow researchers and community-based groups to assess participatory research experiences in the light of epistemic inequalities and that would support them to reflect on egalitarian relationships in research.
- Seeking to maximise the spaces where we could test the relevance of this guide in order to develop it over time in a non-linear process of knowledge transfer. From our perspective, the mobilisation of knowledge coming from the university and the community-based organisations, initiated at the earliest stages of the creation of the research team, was part of a critical approach to the academic production of knowledge (Hall & Tandon 2017). This participatory knowledge transfer is not only a technical activity, as pointed out by Tineke et al. (2017, p. 501), but also a 'socio-political activity … embedded in heterogeneous societal networks with many different stakeholders'.
- Integrating this tool and research agenda in our research practices and respective classes because university curricula in social sciences in Quebec do not currently train students in these participatory practices and epistemic challenges. For instance, one of the authors created a three-hour workshop for PhD students in her classes.

We hope this work may assist the future work of others undertaking similar processes and contribute to the research agenda on epistemic injustices and participatory research.

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