

# Researching Otherwise? Autoethnographic Notes on the 2013 Stockholm Riots

Critical Sociology

1–12

© The Author(s) 2020



Article reuse guidelines:

[sagepub.com/journals-permissions](https://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)

DOI: 10.1177/0896920520978482

[journals.sagepub.com/home/crs](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/crs)**Paulina de los Reyes**

Stockholm University, Sweden

**Markus Lundström** 

Uppsala University, Sweden

## Abstract

Market adaptation, fragmentation and precariousness have been widely documented as problematic features of knowledge production processes in the university. This article follows an undercurrent of critical scholarship to explore how paths of resistance can be opened up by researching otherwise. The article builds on autoethnographic notes from a collective and non-funded research project aimed at gathering in situ narratives from people who experienced the 2013 Stockholm Riots. The research strategy behind this project, its organization as well as its results and reception, is here used as a point of departure to scrutinize the conditions of the possibility of critical knowledge production. The article draws attention to a critical place for doing research – in the cracks of the university – which arguably complicates the academic–public divide and keeps open discursive spaces during troubling moments of closure.

## Keywords

community-based research, action research, participatory research, neoliberal university, labour, resistance, social movements, urban riots

## Introduction

As too many of us may have experienced, critical research is not always encouraged in the university. Whether we have tenured positions, or in the lack thereof are involuntary members of the academic precariat (Nöbauer, 2012; Standing, 2011), current conditions often make it difficult to intervene in society as critical intellectuals. A growing body of scholarship has noted how corporate

---

### Corresponding author:

Paulina de los Reyes, Department of Economic History, Stockholm University, Universitetsvägen 10A, Stockholm, 106 91, Sweden.

Email: [paulina.de\\_los\\_reyes@ekohist.su.se](mailto:paulina.de_los_reyes@ekohist.su.se)

interest structures the production of knowledge and how the demands of the market define the boundaries of what is considered to be valuable research (Davies and Bansel, 2007; Giardina and Newman, 2014; Giroux, 2014b). These boundaries operate to guarantee that scholars are, as Edward Said (1994: 55) points out, ‘marketable and above all presentable, hence uncontroversial and unpolitical and “objective”.’ The commodification of knowledge, and of academics themselves, segregates the academic community from other parts of society (Canaan and Shumar, 2008; Rustin, 2016). The university solidifies a departmental division of labour, fueled by the logic of disciplinary specialization (Nash, 2018; Wallerstein and Gulbenkian Commission, 1996). Neoliberal productivity goals are also propelled by what we painfully recognize as the ‘publish or perish’ decree. This structure dictates that we produce rapidly and copiously (Taylor and Lahad, 2018; Wolfe and Mayes, 2019), disregarding the severe risk of thus dumping half-hearted contributions into an infinite sea of scientific publications. As James Scott pessimistically notes (2012: 112), ‘more than half of all scientific publications, after all, seem to sink without a trace; they aren’t cited at all, not even once! Eighty percent are only cited once, ever’. All the more remarkable then that this ocean of publications is so inaccessible, secured from external communities, not merely by language barriers, but primarily by subscription fees that, once again, mainly universities pay.

While the boundaries of the university risk isolating the scholarly community from other parts of society (Breeze et al., 2019), internal reward systems also condition the very possibility of doing research. In Sweden, as in many other countries, the assignment of research grants and the evaluation of academic excellence relies almost exclusively on a scholar’s publication record in international peer-reviewed journals (such as this one). There are limited opportunities to develop research agendas in dialog with social movements and produce publications aimed towards audiences outside of academia. Accordingly, the promotion of internationalization and the spreading of research outcomes occur primarily within closed academic communities, thus risking detachment of knowledge production from its social context.

It is against this backdrop that we understand Stuart Hall’s statement that ‘the university is a critical institution or it is nothing’. In this article we will tap into that undercurrent of critical scholarship to explore how paths of resistance can be opened up by what we call *researching otherwise*. We intend here to explore not the solidity of current structures, but the cracks, within what is, in many respects, our disheartening academic reality. The point of departure is simply that university boundaries – like other unwanted borders – are constantly defied and breached. In recent years we have seen reassuring tendencies, movements really, striving to transform higher education, breaking away from its colonial legacy and logic by re-forming the university into a space that is accessible to marginalized peoples (Bhambra et al., 2018; Mbembe, 2016). There are similar urgings to do research more collectively (Alfrey et al., 2017; Museus, 2020), and in a creatively playful way (Hartung et al., 2017), in order to foster an ‘academic opportunity structure’ to empower progressive student activism (Reger, 2018). As argued by Arturo Escobar (2007: 179), such striving may in fact ‘craft another space for the production of knowledge’. In the article *Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise*, Escobar reports how a Latin American modernity/coloniality research program opened up discursive space for critical knowledge production.

The struggle to find ways of *researching otherwise*, to paraphrase Escobar, has empowered critical scholars in sociology, and social science overall, to overcome not only epistemological barriers but also spatial and social divides between academic practices and community movements (Tilley, 2017). One example is the body of scholarship stemming from Kurt Lewin’s ‘action research’ (1946), an approach that construes social research as an intervention marked by a collaborative knowledge production between academic and non-academic spaces (Bradbury, 2015; Eikeland, 2015). This body of scholarship, which is often engaged in exploring or magnifying marginalized voices (Fine, 2006; Krumer-Nevo, 2009), also includes a more explicit activist-scholar approach

that places political conviction as starting point for social movement studies (Guajardo et al., 2017; Gutierrez and Lipman, 2016; Jeppesen and Sartoretto, 2020). In a similar vein, and much inspired by Paolo Freire (2005), lies the branches of community-based and participatory research (Cross et al., 2014; Hacker, 2017; Murphy, 2014), approaches that emphasize community power and ownership in the process of knowledge production between academia and other communities (Elder and Odoyo, 2018; Museus, 2020) – research endeavours that also have been integral to feminist methodologies (Jagger, 2013; Lykes and Hershberg, 2012; Maguire, 1987).

The critical practice of including community members in scholarly knowledge production has proven especially fruitful for analysing a most stigmatized social event: the riot. Literature on the politics of social contention intensified as clashes between police and protesters – pejoratively typified as ‘riots’ – has a long tradition in the social sciences (Rudé, 1964; Thompson, 1971), which in recent years has become revisited (Clover, 2016; Mayer et al., 2016; Winlow, 2015). Situations mediated in terms of riots, which typically turn ‘voices into noises’ (Dikeç, 2007: 152), make up one particular field in which engaged and participatory research shows true potential (see Benwell et al., 2020). A major research intervention by this token is the collaboration between *The Guardian* newspaper and the London School of Economics that set out to document voices from the 2011 England riots. In this study, 270 people that had been directly involved in the riots were interviewed in order to document the causes and consequences of the disorder in a context where rhetorical devices dominated the public debate and the police continued to arrest and prosecute rioters. Research findings were first presented in the accessible online report *Reading the Riots* (Lewis et al., 2011), and soon thereafter as a series of scientific articles, most notably in a special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* (112:3).

In the pages that follow we will give an autoethnographic account of a similar project, though non-funded and much more modest, of researching otherwise in the immediate contexts of social and discursive contention (Adams et al., 2015: 2). Taking stock on the ethical and epistemological implications of researching otherwise (Escobar, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2013; Tilley, 2017), we will discuss the possibilities of doing research as scholars in the university by exploring and expanding its cracks. We will reflect upon a research project that opened up a discursive space for silenced voices within a moment of closure and thereby defied practices of academic segregation and social disentanglement. Our research project, launched in the spring of 2013, uncovered the longstanding conflicts, racialized representations, and deep inequalities behind the intense social uprisings that broke out in the impoverished city district of *Husby*, and eventually spread throughout Stockholm and Sweden (de los Reyes and Hörnquist, 2016).

The following section provides a short account of the events that, starting in the neighborhood of *Husby*, became internationally known as the ‘Stockholm Riots’ or ‘Husby Riots’. It presents autoethnographic notes on the organization of the research team and the ethical and methodological considerations that guided our research strategy. A central point here is to reflect upon the production of legitimated knowledge spaces while at the same time safeguarding ethical principles in order to protect the integrity of all research participants. In the third section, we discuss the outputs of our specific project in a Swedish context of academic disciplining, market adaptation and precarity. By then revisiting the rich tradition of critical research, we discuss researching otherwise in terms of resistance. In the concluding section, we summarize our arguments and stress the urgency of always finding new ways of resisting the operations of power in the contemporary university.

## Mapping the Husby Riots

During some intense nights in May 2013, numerous cars were set on fire in an organized attempt, as one of our interviewees explained, to ‘get to the police’. As the police were indeed attacked, one

of the fiercest police interventions in Swedish history was played out; 500 armed police officers violently entered Husby, blocking the streets and beating up community residents, all accompanied by overtly racist insults (de los Reyes and Hörnquist, 2016; de los Reyes et al., 2014; Lundström, 2018). The people of Husby, themselves out on the streets trying to secure social order, were centre stage in this confrontation (Gonzalez, 2016). But their experiences of police violence were neglected, and their voices remained unheard amidst the public noise. While the reasons for the riots remained unexplained, the public debate was soon dominated by the usual tropes about this supposedly poor, criminal and dangerous immigrant area. Young males living in these areas were rapidly singled out as instigators of political violence in line with stereotyped representations of migrant men in the suburbs. The confrontational social uprisings, framed in the media as urban riots, led to an official debate in the Swedish parliament, generating a cross-political consensus of structural reasons such as deficient education, absence of work opportunities and lack of social responsibility (Boréus, 2016; de los Reyes et al., 2014; Lauri, 2016).

Local people told a different story. One week before the riots, as had also been reported in the national media, a tragic police shooting had taken place in Husby. Sixty-nine-year-old Lenine Relvas-Martins was killed by the police and his death was deliberately covered up. When the police reported on their official website that Relvas-Martins had been wounded and transported in an ambulance to hospital, shocked neighbors witnessing this incident reported that, in fact, he had been carried out on a stretcher and placed in a hearse, obviously killed by the police in his own home.

Local organizations and social movements swiftly organized a demonstration to denounce, and protest against, police violence. The demonstrators demanded an independent investigation into the circumstances leading to the killing of Relvas-Martins and a formal apology to the family and community. For community organizers in Husby, the following violent clashes with the police came as no surprise. As a reaction to the hard confrontations between local youth and the police, and anticipating the possibility of new victims and new lies from the police, a local organization named *Megafonen* called for a press conference, in Husby, to offer a locally rooted contextualization of the so-called riots. *Megafonen* construed the events as being the result of inevitable frustrations about 'blocked democratic channels', and open and enduring conflicts, as they put it, 'between the police and the residents of Husby' (quoted in de los Reyes, 2016: 168).

The prompt initiative of *Megafonen* – to broadcast a locally rooted account ahead of acclaimed experts – certainly forced journalists to search for stories complementing the typical criminalizing explanations. The unusual press conference, its detailed account of the recent events and its coherent argumentation, anchored in both research reports and direct testimonies, has generated scholarly interpretations of the *Megafonen* phenomenon in terms of an emerging urban movement (Rosales and Ålund, 2017; Schierup et al., 2014; Sernhede et al., 2016), one that takes stock from traditional labour movement struggles and translates them into a community-based context (Schierup et al., 2020). However, differences between the rioters and the organized local voices that provided political contextualization must be kept in mind; no organization or group took responsibility for the riots, but the organizers of *Megafonen* offered a local political analysis while simultaneously distancing themselves from violence and vandalism.

At the same time that *Megafonen* was providing a local explanation for the Husby events, an official – and quite different – narrative began to take form. On May 21st, after two intense nights of violent confrontations in Husby, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt declared his antipathy towards 'groups of young men who believe they can and should change society using violent means'. The police, less subtle still, stated that 'stone-throwers pose a severe threat to democracy' (Lundström, 2016: 27). The media soon perpetuated that same narrative. Although it had previously been questioned whether *Megafonen* could be considered a legitimate local representative, the Swedish

media soon conditioned their legitimacy into a relentless condemnation of the violence directed towards the police. This media logic, supported by the government, created a closure that made any critical interpretation of the riots impossible and erased all scrutiny of the police. *Megafonen* insistently refused such one-dimensional positioning, instead putting forward their own analysis, before finally becoming disqualified as a useful representative for the national media (de los Reyes, 2016). In a swift discursive closure, *Megafonen* became that very subaltern voice that speaks but cannot be heard (de los Reyes, 2016; Spivak, 1988).

It was before this moment of closure that we decided to intervene. Frustrated at being, as historian Howard Zinn (1997: 491) puts it, ‘isolated in the library or the classroom while the cities burn’, we recognized the similarities with comparable events in other countries, and we were much inspired by the research intervention performed in the wake of the 2011 riots in England. We saw that also in Sweden the interpretative frame installed by the media and official spokespersons was compatible with established discourses about marginalized urban places in the Global North. Husby is located in an area of Stockholm that is clearly stamped with what Loïc Wacquant calls ‘territorial stigmatization’, an attribute that has accompanied ‘the emergence of zones reserved for the urban outcasts’ (2007: 68). This concept is particularly useful here, not in its confining sense, but rather, as Kate Cairns (2018) demonstrates, to capture how the working of territorial stigmatization in itself produces contention and struggles to re-articulate the local on its own terms. Although territorial stigmatization generates what Wacquant (2007: 69) depicts as ‘the dissolution of “place” [. . .] the loss of a humanized, culturally familiar and socially filtered locale’, it too produces a counter-force *in defense* of place and community (Kirkness and Tijé-Dra, 2017). It is precisely these voices that we set out to document in our research intervention – the counter-discourse broadcast from within the community itself.

### *The Research Intervention*

While reports of cars still burning dominated in the media, a number of scholars affiliated to Stockholm University met to discuss a joint research intervention. We were 10 researchers, a mixture of female and male, senior and junior scholars, from different backgrounds and disciplines, meeting for the first time only a week after the fires across Sweden had slowed down. Much in the vein of Michael Burawoy’s (2013) call for the transdisciplinary production of critical knowledge, our research group was not based upon disciplinary boundaries nor departmental affiliations. Yet, we had experience of working with critical theory, and ethnographic methods, within our respective disciplinary fields (criminology, political science and economic history). Our common interest was in delivering empirically based knowledge and alternative interpretations in a situation where dominant discourses were once again silencing subaltern voices. Our ad hoc research group thus orbited around the joint purpose of documenting emic views on the ‘Husby Riots’. And since that had to be done immediately, or at least while people’s memories of past events were still fresh – and while the official narrative had not yet stabilized – the time-consuming and highly uncertain activity of applying for research funding was out of the question. To do this research, we had to start right away.

Our first collective effort was to define a research strategy that would allow for flexibility and coordination between our individual contributions. We very soon found that, with our limited resources, it would be impossible to conduct a large survey. We also found that our different pathways into the Husby events soon had to converge in order to define which data could best achieve our ends and also to produce suitable instruments for data collection. We finally concluded that in-depth interviews with a few open questions gave us the best opportunities to capture the testimonies, thoughts and experiences of the residents of Husby. The finalized interview guide had

open, non-leading questions that at the same time proved fruitful for producing thoughtful reflections about the Husby events and the area's local-historical background.

The second step was to find suitable interviewees. Our ambition was to interview people of different ages, gender and occupations who could give us personal accounts of their experiences during the riots. This proved to be a significant methodological challenge. The recent conflicts, along with the ongoing juridical processes, made Husby residents extremely reluctant to share information and experiences with strangers. During those dramatic days in May, when the riots played out, national and international media more or less invaded Husby, eagerly speculating about the intentions and forces that had prompted the riots (although the police eventually represented the largest source in media reports, despite the dense journalist presence in Husby) (Boréus, 2016: 74–75). Since our question-asking agenda paralleled the inquiries being made by the police, our research instead had to be conducted *together with* the local community.

Due to their engagements in research on racism and structural discrimination, two members of the research group were already known in Husby through their participation in locally organized workshops and seminars. Thus, this previous collaboration with the community provided a crucial entrance point to set up an initial meeting with Husby residents to learn what the community would want from a research intervention. In this way, our status as researchers could be endorsed by local organizations. In our contacts with Husby residents, it became clear that the position of researcher was more reliable than, for instance, municipal officers or other representatives of the authorities. It was, however, not easy to proceed from this point onward; many people came to change their minds about being interviewed along with the deployment of a stigmatizing media discourse. Our selection criterion hence crystallized into people who had been on site when confrontations unfolded – that is, *participants*, in one way or another – who could share personal experiences of the events. That gave us the opportunity to capture broad and cross-community views on the 'riots' and also to identify its different phases. Although our initial aim was to conduct 50 interviews, we eventually found that 30 were enough for a saturated qualitative study.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, our research project was conducted in dialogue with organizations in Husby. Alongside the interviews, we attended meetings with governmental officials and participated in activities carried out by different community organizations. Our contacts with the community, and our collection of testimonies in situ, opened up opportunities for doing research within what Les Back calls 'the social relations of sound, smell, touch and taste' (Back, 2009: 16). After producing our initial empirical findings (from individual analyses of all the interviews, text drafting and collective discussions), we publicly announced a meeting in Husby's civic hall to enable community residents to comment on our analysis. After disseminating our results in this setting, we returned to the writing procedure with important verifications, and revisions, of the stories we were about to tell. A year after the Husby Riots, we presented the empirical findings that were compiled and summarized in our report at a well-attended public meeting in Husby, which enabled us to register further localized comments on our analyses. Thus, our commitment with researching otherwise acknowledged our informants as knowledge subjects and nurtured a continuous dialogue with the local community in order to avoid what Lisa Tilley (2017) calls 'piratic practices' that sustain the political economy of knowledge.

### *Opening Up New Discursive Spaces*

In the scholarly vein of critical research, and particularly inspired by *Reading the Riots* and the basic principles of action and community research, our aim was to produce knowledge relevant to the people living in Husby. Accordingly, an important challenge was to present the results of our study in an accessible report that was freely available online. We therefore chose to

include extensive quotes from the interviews and photos of the neighborhood to convey a glimpse of everyday public life in Husby. We were greatly benefitted from the comments and feedback we received during our meetings with the local community. For instance, many accentuated the inaccuracy of media and governmental representations of Husby in unanimous terms and recognized their own experiences in the testimonies we had collected. Other comments pointed to the diversity of individual and organizational voices, articulated along a variety of religious, political and cultural axes. One of the most important aspects highlighted by the people of Husby was the fear that their community would once again be represented precisely as homogeneous, silencing its complex register of diversities. As we then returned to the University – this time to write scientific texts – we tried to better acknowledge this heterogeneity of voices (as suggested by Mertens, 2014).

As scholars, we had the ability, perhaps even the professional obligation, to read the riots through theoretical lenses and to situate the Husby events within the context of previous research on ‘urban riots’. Fortunately, we had an outlet with the non-profit publisher *Stockholmia*, who agreed to review and publish our study as an edited collection (de los Reyes and Hörnqvist, 2016). In this joint volume, each individual contributor had the opportunity to advance their various disciplinary, epistemological and theoretical viewpoints. The combined output of a popularized report and an academic book hence enabled us, as Henry Giroux (2014a: 25) puts it, to ‘write for multiple audiences, expanding public spheres’. This multiple-audience approach also took the form of a panel discussion led by two invited scholars at Stockholm University. Moreover, some of us also distilled individual publications from our joint empirical study, thereby addressing an international scholarly audience (Hörnqvist, 2016; Lundström, 2018).

Still, the primary stakeholder in our research project was the local community in Husby. As mentioned above, academic products typically suffer from being narrowly circulated within the walls of universities without reaching a broader audience. This tendency is particularly common in the university, where the demands of writing for peer-reviewed, ‘international’ journals restrict the opportunities for producing knowledge that is accessible or relevant to social movements. We, therefore, tried to use our privileged position as academics to challenge territorial stigmatization by disclosing our findings in the leading daily newspapers, on the Swedish Radio, and to governmental officials and social workers active in the relevant areas.

## Researching Otherwise

While the university restricts critical research, its operation is never absolute. The rich and vivid tradition of critical scholarship, engaged in *researching otherwise*, suggests that the university produces its own pockets of resistance. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2004: 103) argue that the university ‘needs labor power for [its] “enlightenment-type critique” but, somehow, labor always escapes’. Academic work, like other forms of labour, is never far away from the ability and creativity of the workers. Harry Braverman (1974) once anticipated the consequences of a work organization that appropriated and fragmented the production process. Subsequent research has revealed that the deskilling and degradation following working processes under capitalism have been resisted, often by individual practices but also through collective actions that delay, disturb or create time pockets in work routines (Paulsen, 2014; Prasad and Prasad, 1998). James Scott (1990) has demonstrated the potential of shifting focus from overt, protest-style collective action to low-intensity, hidden and everyday forms of resistance. A common characteristic of these actions is a profound determination to reclaim spaces of control over current working conditions, revealing an inherent desire to preserve the values of professional and intellectual integrity. Time, and the use of time for one’s own ends, appears in these analyses as the space where resistance is deployed. Jacques Rancière (2012) reminds us that such activities are not at all novel; they follow the

emergence of capitalism and the colonizing of people's lives through the commodification of labour. Moreover, as Rancière shows, the reading of proletarian texts reveals not only a desire to reclaim stolen time but also a need to articulate visions of a world in which moral, material and social emancipation can converge.

These examples, in line with a Foucauldian conceptualization, show that productive operations of power always create pockets of resistance. Even though most analyses today point to an increased tendency towards disciplining and domesticating the production of knowledge in academia, the critical tradition of researching otherwise indicates that it is possible to create spaces for exploring alternative knowledge practices (Muhammad et al., 2014). Drawing on this tradition, we can intervene in a situation of discursive closure to provide a scholarly account that could challenge hegemonic narratives about racialized suburbs. Where neoliberal decrees push us to produce knowledge for the market, for the operation of business organizations, or for the state, there is also this scholarly undercurrent that seeks out knowledge production together with people in situations of repression, distress and stigmatization. Whereas project ideas typically need to undergo long, tedious and bureaucratic processes, we could also carry out research instantly, in the midst of political contingency.

At the same time, researching otherwise also risks exclusion from belonging, privileges and rewards, which accrue more easily from institutionalized knowledge production. But such a marginal position also allows closer examination of the cracks within the university, an exposure that in itself could energize the art of resistance. John Holloway writes in *Crack Capitalism* (2010) that exploring precisely these spaces – the cracks – strengthens our agency; it turns our ambiguous experiences of 'misfitting' into a productive point of departure. In this way, our collective 'no' to the neoliberal operations of the university 'opens to a time-space in which we try to live as subjects rather than objects' (Holloway, 2010: 19).

Researching otherwise, we would argue, involves more than practices performed outside the academic order. It signals, as Rancière's account of the proletarians' nights tells us, openings to other possible futures. The cracks within the university, its conflicts, contradictions and shortages, can also be taken as a productive space in which resistance can grow. It is within these cracks that new subjects of knowledge can bridge the unfortunate divides between academic and public space, and different kinds of knowledge can be articulated in collective efforts. In the same moment as we denounce the neoliberal workings of the university, we also invoke our urge to create something completely different. Researching otherwise is not only desirable, it is also possible; and it may contribute to resist confining imperatives of the university.

## Conclusion

Regarding the boundaries of the 'neoliberal university', Henry Giroux declares that 'resistance is no longer an option, it is a necessity' (2014b: 57). In this article, we have discussed the viability of such an endeavour, through autoethnographic reflection on an immediate, non-funded and collective research project, which set out to document local reflections on the 2013 Stockholm Riots. Our experience of *researching otherwise* had some limitations; it was time-consuming and surrounded by practical obstacles, which delayed us from finalizing quickly enough to maximize its intended impact. Working under regular conditions, that is, with the support of external funding or faculty support, we could have developed a different and more comprehensive research design and also been freed from teaching obligations, administration and research assignments. On the other hand, the immediacy of our research project also allowed for a timely intervention in a moment of discursive closure. Bypassing the tedious and uncertain grant-seeking stage, we were able to conduct interviews only days after the riots took place, that is, in a discursive setting that was still comparatively open. This allowed us to capture local versions of events before the official narrative was



established, and then to permanently destabilize this official narrative by systematizing, situating and publishing these local voices.

In this sense, we benefitted from the experience of working together with the people living and working in Husby, documenting their rich variety of reflected contextualization. But we also learned that by working together, amongst ourselves, we traversed not only scholarly disciplines, but also the hierarchies inherent in the university meritocracy. This provided important synergies in designing a fruitful interview guide and deploying a flexible specialization; we had our political motive and ethnographic experience as a common denominator, while still being epistemologically and theoretically diverse. Additionally, the heterogeneous composition of the research team facilitated contact with the community and opened up access to different networks. This joint commonality and diversity became an important asset during the project's final stage of writing for multiple audiences. Through our extensive group discussions on research design, along with the collective fieldwork, we were able to crystallize the overarching themes for the popularized report that aimed to assist the Husby community. In our scholarly work, we then also had the opportunity to expand our individual foci and expertise.

In this article, then, we have detailed our own experiences of researching otherwise and located them in the ungovernable undercurrent of subversive knowledge production. We have argued that, in critically analysing the operations of power, agency is crucial for recognizing and acknowledging contention, controversies and cracks within the university – and then to venture into these cracks to find a critical place for operating both within and against it.


### Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

### Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### ORCID iD

Markus Lundström  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3579-2143>

### References

- Adams T, Holman Jones S and Ellis C (2015) *Autoethnography*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Alfrey L, Enright E and Rynne S (2017) Letters from early career academics: the physical education and sport pedagogy field of play. *Sport, Education and Society* 22(1): 5–21.
- Back L (2009) Researching community and its moral projects. *Twenty-First Century Society* 4(2): 201–214.
- Benwell M, Davies A, Evans B, et al. (2020) Engaging political histories of urban uprisings with young people: the Liverpool riots, 1981 and 2011. *EPC: Politics and Space* 38(4): 599–618.
- Bhambra G, Gebrial D and Nişancıoğlu K (2018) Introduction. In: Bhambra G, Gebrial D and Nişancıoğlu K (eds) *Decolonising the University*. London: Pluto Press, 1–5.
- Boréus K (2016) Husbyhändelserna i nyheter och politisk debatt. In: de los Reyes P and Hörnquist M (eds) *Bortom kravallerna: Konflikt, tillhörighet och representation i Husby*. Stockholm: Stockholmia, 69–100.
- Bradbury H (2015) Introduction: how to situate and define action research. In: Bradbury H (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research*. London: Sage Publications, 381–390.
- Braverman H (1974) *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
- Breeze M, Taylor Y and Costa C (2019) Introduction. In: Breeze M, Taylor Y and Costa C (eds) *Time and Space in the Neoliberal University*. Cham: Springer, 1–14.

- Burawoy M (2013) Sociology and interdisciplinarity: the promise and the perils. *Philippine Sociological Review* 61(1): 7–19.
- Cairns K (2018) Youth, temporality, and territorial stigma: finding good in Camden, New Jersey. *Antipode* 50(5): 1224–1243.
- Canaan J and Shumar W (2008) Higher education in the era of globalization and neoliberalism. In: Canaan J and Shumar W (eds) *Structure and Agency in the Neoliberal University*. New York: Routledge, 1–28.
- Clover J (2016) *Riot. Strike. Riot.: The New Era of Uprisings*. London: Verso.
- Cross J, Pickering K and Hickey M (2014) Community-based participatory research, ethics, and institutional review boards: untying a Gordian knot. *Critical Sociology* 41(7–8): 1007–1026.
- Davies B and Bansel P (2007) Neoliberalism and education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 20(3): 247–259.
- de los Reyes P (2016) Husby, våldet och talandets villkor. In: de los Reyes P and Hörnqvist M (eds) *Bortom kravallerna: Konflikt, tillhörighet och representation i Husby*. Stockholm: Stockholmia, 155–186.
- de los Reyes P and Hörnqvist M (2016) *Bortom kravallerna: Konflikt, tillhörighet och representation i Husby*. Stockholm: Stockholmia.
- de los Reyes P, Hörnqvist M, Boréus K, et al. (2014) “Bilen brinner. . . men problemen är kvar”: Berättelser om om Husbyhändelserna i maj 2013. Stockholm: Stockholmia.
- Dikeç M (2007) *Badlands of the Republic: Space, Politics and Urban Policy*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Eikeland O (2015) Praxis retrieving the roots of action research. In: Bradbury H (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research*. London: Sage Publications, 381–390.
- Elder BC and Odoyo KO (2018) Multiple methodologies: using community-based participatory research and decolonizing methodologies in Kenya. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 31(4): 293–311.
- Escobar A (2007) Worlds and knowledges otherwise. *Cultural Studies* 21(2–3): 179–210.
- Fine M (2006) Bearing witness: methods for researching oppression and resistance—A textbook for critical research. *Social Justice Research* 19(1): 83–108.
- Freire P (2005) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Giardina M and Newman J (2014) The politics of research. In: Leavy P (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 699–723.
- Giroux H (2014a) *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.
- Giroux H (2014b) Public intellectuals against the neoliberal university. In: Denzin N and Giardina M (eds) *Qualitative Inquiry Outside the Academy*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 35–60.
- Gonzalez A (2016) Husby, mostånd och gemenskap. In: de los Reyes P and Hörnqvist M (eds) *Bortom kravallerna: Konflikt, tillhörighet och representation i Husby*. Stockholm: Stockholmia, 51–68.
- Grosfoguel R (2013) The structure of knowledge in westernised universities: epistemic racism/sexism and the four genocides/epistemicides. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 11(1): 73–90.
- Guajardo M, Guajardo F and Locke L (2017) An introduction to ecologies of engaged scholarship: stories from activist-academics. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 30(1): 1–5.
- Gutierrez RR and Lipman P (2016) Toward social movement activist research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 29(10): 1241–1254.
- Hacker K (2017) *Community-Based Participatory Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hartung C, Barnes N, Welch R, et al. (2017) Beyond the academic precariat: a collective biography of poetic subjectivities in the neoliberal university. *Sport, Education and Society* 22(1): 40–57.
- Holloway J (2010) *Crack Capitalism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Hörnqvist M (2016) Riots in the welfare state: the contours of a modern-day moral economy. *European Journal of Criminology* 13(5): 573–589.
- Jagger A (2013) *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Jeppesen S and Sartoretto P (2020) *Media Activist Research Ethics: Global Approaches to Negotiating Power in Social Justice Research*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kirkness P and Tijé-Dra A (2017) In: Kirkness P and Tijé-Dra A (eds) *Negative Neighbourhood Reputation and Place Attachment: The Production and Contestation of Territorial Stigma*. London: Routledge, 1–9.

- Krumer-Nevo M (2009) From voice to knowledge: participatory action research, inclusive debate and feminism. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 22(3): 279–295.
- Lauri M (2016) Vad är problemet med Husby? In: de los Reyes P and Hörnquist M (eds) *Bortom kravallerna: Konflikt, tillhörighet och representation i Husby*. Stockholm: Stockholmia, 101–132.
- Lewin K (1946) Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues* 2(4): 34–46.
- Lewis P, Newburn T, Taylor M, et al. (2011) *Reading the Riots: Investigating England's Summer of Disorder*. London: The Guardian/London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Lundström M (2016) Det demokratiska hotet. In: de los Reyes P and Hörnquist M (eds) *Bortom kravallerna: Konflikt, tillhörighet och representation i Husby*. Stockholm: Stockholmia, 25–50.
- Lundström M (2018) *Anarchist Critique of Radical Democracy: The Impossible Argument*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lykes B and Hershberg R (2012) Participatory action research and feminisms: social inequalities and transformative praxis. In: Hesse-Biber SN (ed.), *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 331–367.
- Maguire P (1987) Doing participatory research: a feminist approach. *Participatory Research & Practice* 1.
- Mayer M, Thörn C and Thörn H (2016) *Urban Uprisings: Challenging Neoliberal Urbanism in Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mbembe J (2016) Decolonizing the university: new directions. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 15(1): 29–45.
- Mertens D (2014) Ethical issues of interviewing members of marginalized communities outside academic contexts. In: Denzin N and Giardina M (eds) *Qualitative Inquiry Outside the Academy*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 197–203.
- Moten F and Harney S (2004) The university and the undercommons: seven theses. *Social Text* 22(2): 101–115.
- Muhammad M, Wallerstein N, Sussman A, et al. (2014) Reflections on researcher identity and power: the impact of positionality on Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) processes and outcomes. *Critical Sociology* 41(7–8): 1045–1063.
- Murphy J (2014) *Community-Based Interventions: Philosophy and Action*. New York: Springer.
- Museum SD (2020b) Humanizing scholarly resistance: toward greater solidarity in social justice advocacy within the neoliberal academy. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 33(2): 140–150.
- Nash J (2018) *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Nöbauer H (2012) Affective landscapes in academia: emotional labour, vulnerability, and uncertainty in late-modern academic work. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion* 5(2): 132–144.
- Paulsen R (2014) *Empty Labor: Idleness and Workplace Resistance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Prasad A and Prasad P (1998) Everyday struggles at the workplace: the nature and implications of routine resistance in contemporary organizations. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* 15(2): 225–257.
- Rancière J (2012) *Proletarian Nights: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France*. London: Verso.
- Reger J (2018) Academic opportunity structures and the creation of campus activism. *Social Movement Studies* 17(5): 558–573.
- Rosales RL and Ålund A (2017) Renaissance from the margins: urban youth activism in Sweden. In: Ålund A, Schierup C-U and Neergaard A (eds) *Reimagining the Nation: Essays on Twenty-First-Century Sweden*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 371–374.
- Rudé G (1964) *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730–1848*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Rustin M (2016) The neoliberal university and its alternatives. *Soundings* 63(63): 147–176.
- Said E (1994) Representations of the Intellectual: the 1993 Reith lectures. London: Vintage.
- Schierup C-U, Ålund A and Kings L (2014) Reading the Stockholm riots: a moment for social justice? *Race & Class* 55(3): 1–21.
- Schierup C-U, Ålund A and Kellecioglu I (2020) Reinventing the people's house: time, space and activism in multiethnic Stockholm. *Critical Sociology*. DOI: 10.1177/0896920520957066. 0896920520957066.
- Scott J (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

- Scott J (2012) *Two Cheers for Anarchism: Six Easy Pieces on Autonomy, Dignity, and Meaningful Work and Play*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sernhede O, Thörn C and Thörn H (2016) The Stockholm uprising in context: urban social movements in the rise and demise of the Swedish welfare-state city. In: Mayer M, Thörn C and Thörn H (eds) *Urban Uprisings: Challenging Neoliberal Urbanism in Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 149–173.
- Spivak GC (1988) Can the subaltern speak? In: Nelson C and Grossberg L (eds) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture: International Conference: Selected Papers*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Standing G (2011) *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Taylor Y and Lahad K (2018) Introduction. In: Taylor Y and Lahad K (eds) *Feeling Academic in the Neoliberal University Feminist Flights, Fights and Failures*. Cham: Springer, 1–15.
- Thompson EP (1971) The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century. *Past & Present* 50(1): 76–136.
- Tilley L (2017) Resisting piratic method by doing research otherwise. *Sociology* 51(1): 27–42.
- Wacquant L (2007) Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality. *Thesis Eleven* 91(1): 66–77.
- Wallerstein I Gulbenkian Commission (1996) *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Winlow S (2015) *Riots and Political Protest*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Wolfe M and Mayes E (2019) Response-ability: re-E-valuing shameful measuring processes within the Australian academy. In: Breeze M, Taylor Y and Costa C (eds) *Time and Space in the Neoliberal University*. Cham: Springer, 277–298.
- Zinn H (1997) The uses of scholarship. In: Zinn H (ed.), *The Zinn Reader: Writings on Disobedience and Democracy*. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 499–508.

## Author Biographies

Paulina de los Reyes is Professor of Economic History at Stockholm University. She has conducted research on gender, racism and intersectionality with special focus on working life inequalities. Her research areas also include feminist theory, postcolonial feminism and the political economy of social reproduction. Among her publications are “When Feminism Became Gender Equality and Anti-racism turned into Diversity Management” and “Hegemonic Feminism revisited: On the promises of Intersectionality in Times of the Precarisation of Life (with Diana Mulinari).

Markus Lundström is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Uppsala University. His research focuses on political thought and practice of extraparliamentary social movements. He is the author of “The Making of Resistance: Brazil’s Landless Movement and Narrative Enactment” (Springer 2017) and “Anarchist Critique of Radical Democracy: The Impossible Argument” (Palgrave Macmillan 2018).