Participatory dissemination: bridging in-depth interviews, participation, and creative visual methods through Interview-Based Zine-Making (IBZM)

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In this article, I make the case for an underexplored research practice – participatory dissemination – and reflectively introduce a new research method, IBZM (Interview-Based Zine-Making), which I developed in my fieldwork research on the gentrifying neighborhood of Bushwick, Brooklyn, in New York City. Participatory dissemination is a practice that engages research participants in the interpretation of preliminary research findings, and through art-based methods, leads to the coproduction of visual outputs and research communication for diversified audiences, especially those beyond solely academic readers. Participatory dissemination has received little attention within academic debates thus far. The paper addresses this gap in the literature by outlining the rationale and potential for incorporating participatory processes within research dissemination, even where so-called traditional (non- or less-participatory) research methods are used. IBZM follows the technique of zine-making (that is, the practice of cutting, rearranging, and creatively pasting printed materials in a new pamphlet), but instead of using media texts and pictures as raw materials, IBZM works with transcribed texts from researcher-conducted interviews. The aim is to let the research participants (zine-makers) engage with the perspectives of the interviewees and find assonances, disagreements, and connections with their own thoughts. The output is a collectively produced zine to be further disseminated. IBZM offers a means of combining traditional detached research methods, such as interviews, with participatory and creative/visual research methods. As such, participatory dissemination can be helpful in bridging literatures and debates on participatory and traditional research methods, providing new avenues for researchers working primarily with the latter to incorporate participatory elements into their research process and outputs.

Keywords: zines, participatory dissemination, participatory methods, visual methods, member-check, slow scholarship

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Introduction

Participatory approaches and methodologies have become more and more common among geographers in the effort to make knowledge production processes more relevant, just, inclusive, and equal and to prompt social change (Borda 2001; Wynne-Jones *et al.* 2015). Often, participation is pursued by using creative and visual research methodologies, contributing to what has been argued to constitute a 'creative turn' in geography (Hawkins 2019; de Dios & Kong 2020), as "geographers long fascinated with the practices of poetry, visual art, photography, performance, dance, cabaret, story-telling and more, are becoming creators and collaborators (rather than simply analysts)" (Hawkins 2019, 963).

Sharing the same ethos, participatory approaches in geography take up a range of forms, including "participatory action research (PAR), action research (AR), participatory/empowerment evaluation, community-based participatory action research (CBPAR), participatory rural assessment, inclusion research, and participatory development (PD)" (Janes 2016, 72). Although "semantically and operationally distinct" (*ibid*., 72), participatory geographies generally aim at generating socio-spatial knowledge(s) in more inclusive ways, as in, ways that challenge the researcher–research participant hierarchy to include communities and individual research participants in the setting of research goals, in the formulation of research questions, and in the co-creation of knowledge aimed at social change. To this end, a growing number of geographers have deployed visual methodologies, such as visual elicitation and arts-based methods. Their aim is to engage research participants and elicit the production of qualitative data beyond textual forms to include multiple types of knowledge in decision-making processes and to multiply possibilities for meaningful relationships among stakeholders that might not have otherwise interacted, such as researchers, decision-makers, youth, communities, and individuals (Bagnoli 2009).

Although it has been argued that participatory approaches should ideally engage participants in all phases of research, from research design to dissemination, in practice, we find that research processes can be participatory to different extents and at different stages (Elwood 2006; Jazeel & McFarlane 2010; Bell & Pahl 2018). Most often, participation seems to stop at the data-gathering phase (Caretta 2016; Nguyen 2018), where participatory data collection is considered to empower marginalized voices and strengthen the validity of results (Greenwood *et al*. 1993; Borda 2001; Kesby *et al*. 2007; Mackenzie *et al*. 2012; Kemmis *et al*. 2013). Recently, some studies have highlighted the potential and challenges of incorporating levels of participation in the *interpretation* of preliminary data through member-checking (that is, the practice of sharing and testing some preliminary findings with research informants) to strengthen validity and reflexivity (Frisina 2006; Caretta 2016; Caretta & Pérez 2019). Instead, far less attention has been dedicated to the question of participation in the phase of the writing-up and *dissemination* of research findings (for exceptions see Cahill 2006, 2007a; Evans 2016). Notably, participatory practices for the dissemination of results stemming from 'non-participatory' or 'less-participatory' research processes are a possibility yet to be discussed among geographers and other social scientists, which I bring to the fore in this contribution.

In this article, I make the case for what I call 'participatory dissemination' – a process that engages research participants in the interpretation of preliminary research findings, and through art-based methods, leads to the coproduction of visual research outputs and communication for diversified audiences, especially beyond academic readership (see also Evans 2016). Starting from the practical example of my own fieldwork research, I argue that the communication and dissemination of a research result *can* become participatory even when the research process has been conducted in a researcher-led (less participatory) way, for example, when it is the researcher who sets the research goals and methodology, formulates the questions, and gathers the data. Although not fully complying with the impossible-to-achieve (Elwood 2006; Janes 2016) ideal of a wholly horizontal PAR, Evans (2016, 8) explains that "participatory dissemination nevertheless offers a means of engaging young people, community members, policymakers, and practitioners in dialogue, which in turn may lead to societal impacts". Via creative and visual methodologies, participatory dissemination contributes to bridging literatures and debates on participatory and traditional research methods, thus providing new avenues for researchers working primarily with the latter to incorporate participatory elements into their research process and outputs. This approach contributes to the effort of providing resources and inspiration for incorporating participation to a diversified range of researchers, particularly those

who may not have engaged with activist research before, or, as put by Taylor (2014, 305), "who may be 'put off' by narrow notions of 'capital A' activism". Ultimately, this is an additional, underexplored strategy for making research relevant and socially impactful outside academia (Brewer 2013; Bastow *et al*. 2014). In addition, it serves as a method for testing, validating, and deepening research data and therefore deserves further exploration.

To provide an applied example of what a participatory dissemination process may look like, I here introduce a creative method for participatory dissemination and data gathering developed in my research fieldwork that I refer to as 'interview-based zine-making' (IBZM). IBZM uses the technique of zine-making, as in, the practice of cutting, rearranging, and creatively pasting printed materials in a new pamphlet, but instead of using media texts and pictures as by tradition, the starting raw materials for IBZM consist of transcribed texts from researcher-conducted interviews. The output is a collectively produced zine to be further disseminated via different academic and non-academic outlets. Arguably, IBZM combines the insightfulness of in-depth interviewing with a participatory interpretation (member-checking) and the dissemination of research findings through visual media. This method directly uses the researcher's privilege of having accessed interlocutors in different hierarchical positions (Katz 1992) in addition to the benefits of anonymity and confidentiality that allow for the richness and depth of interviews (Song & Parker 1995), to create communicative bridges between individuals that might not otherwise interact. At the same time, IBZM involves a higher extent of community participation, not only as an audience for research results but also in the interpretation, selection, nuancing, reframing, and communication of the researcher's collected insights. Finally, IBZM is a tool for sharing co-produced research in immediate and accessible ways, multiplying the possibilities for the interpretation of empirical data and expressions through diversified channels. Therefore, IBZM promises to become a novel addition to the methodological toolbox of geographers and other scholars who want to engage with the participatory dissemination of their research results and who share the collective feminist ethics of care in a slow-scholarship ethos (Mountz *et al*. 2015).

This article continues with an introductory reflection on participatory dissemination. Thereafter, the new method of IBZM is introduced in the following way: 1) an overview of relevant related methods such as zine-making, focus group discussions, and workshops is given; 2) the origins and development of the method in the context of my empirical research in Bushwick is outlined; and 3) critical reflections on key issues regarding the researcher's role, sampling, group interactions, potential, and limitations are discussed. The article concludes with some final remarks with ideas for possible future methodological developments.

Participation, member-checking, dissemination, and participatory dissemination

Participatory research projects face several challenges. Even when the participatory intent is clear, the degree of participation actually achieved in any particular project is the multiparty result of the nature of the problem itself, preliminary contextual conditions, resources of the research team, characteristics of the research participants, and ethical challenges (Borda 2001; Kesby *et al*. 2007; Mackenzie *et al*. 2012; Kemmis *et al*. 2013; Yang 2015; Burke *et al*. 2017). It is also worth noting that even when the loftiest goal is to contribute to social change, as David (2002, 13) puts it, "To adopt other less participatory methods is not intrinsically unprincipled or unacceptable". This particularly goes for cases where the researcher's and the 'researched' group's agendas may collide or when the participants' points of view may not align and/or the researcher's views diverge to the extent that a PAR (or similar) approach would not be feasible. Moreover, community-based participatory methodologies may not be suited to preserving anonymity, which is considered as one of the main strengths of other researcher-led methods such as interviews or surveys.

Some of the limitations to PAR might be circumvented or smoothened by adopting levels of participation that are situated in-between the two ends of covert expert research and activism and that could combine the two models in different phases of the research design. While PAR is strongly process-orientated, more traditional research methods such as interviewing can provide the quality, richness, depth, and breadth of information achievable with anonymized data collection. In fact, through their role as an institutionally supported 'professional expert', trained researchers hold the

privilege of being able to partially overcome structural constraints and have access to different kinds of people at different times, locations, and diversified social positions (Katz 1992). This vantage point may be used to bridge these diversified perspectives in a staged, contained setting and can therefore represent an advantaged position for working toward social change and action. In Katz's (1994, 72) words, working in "spaces of betweenness" allows "to frame questions that are at once of substantive and theoretical interest as well as of practical significance to those with whom we work".

One way to make use of the advantages of researcher-led methods, strengthening their validity and reflexivity while at the same time increasing participation and empowerment, is *member-checking*, which is increasingly recognized as an ethical requisite of social research (Valentine 2003). Feminist geographers have argued that member-checking "create(s) a space for inclusion, discussion and reciprocal learning, leading to collective reflexivity and catalytic validity by empowering participants and re-orienting the researcher" (Caretta 2016, 305). Similarly, Frisina (2006) claimed that making room for a further research stage that she calls "back-talk" – where the research participants get an opportunity to discuss and reinterpret the researcher's findings – would represent a step toward decolonizing the discourse of the 'other', thus improving research reflexivity and empowering research participants. Usually, even when adopting member-checking, the responsibility and actions of communicating research findings falls back to the researcher, who may or may not choose to disseminate research beyond academic outlets.

Disseminating research outputs to a more-than-academic audience is also a tool for increasing the social impact of research. The efforts of editorial teams and authors publishing in non-profit, peer-reviewed, open-access geography journals like, for example, *Fennia* and *ACME* are directed toward making geographical research available to potentially anyone who can access a computer. More and more researchers also engage with non-traditionally academic channels, such as the popular knowledge press, magazines articles, and social media, in addition to using visual media like videos, comics strips, theater pieces, artworks and so on (Keen & Todres 2007; Hawkins 2019). In this case, when a PAR approach is not adopted, the research process might still be researcher-led, with the researcher eventually translating (part of) the results into a more easily accessible language, sometimes in collaboration with other professionals such as artists, video makers, and others. The interpretation of research findings and their communication to broader audiences is, in this case, conducted by the researcher and possibly by their collaborators. Yet, although overlooked, there is a spectrum of participation levels in the process of research dissemination itself, in which the researcher's voice could be diluted in favor of a more shared and participatory approach in the fundamental questions of what, why, and how the research findings will be communicated. In the dissemination phase, as I will show, it is possible to include research participants and other community members in the analysis, interpretation, meaning-making, and further communication of the data collected by the researcher in earlier phases, even when this is carried out through more traditional research methods like, in my case, one-to-one, in-depth interviewing.

Participatory dissemination embraces the ethics of member-checking in the attempt to include and empower participants and re-orientate the researcher in the interpretation of data and combines it with a participatory communication ethos and creative visual methods. This approach is not widespread; however, there are inspiring examples of participatory methods for communicating and disseminating research outputs being used in PAR projects with (marginalized) youth. Evans (2016), Yang (2015), and Van Blerk and Ansell (2007) incorporated youth-(co)produced visual material and videomaking in the dissemination phase of their action-oriented research projects with youth in diverse African contexts. Cahill and the Fed-up Honeys, a group of young women of color in a gentrifying area in New York City, created spaces of critical self-representation in the gentrification debates that largely overlooked their perspectives (Cahill 2006, 2007b). These researchers regarded participatory dissemination as empowering processes that would enable young people and children's voices to interpret research findings and actively engage in policy dialogues (see also Alderson 2001; Coad & Evans 2008; Stoudt *et al*. 2016). Doing research and using visual media with minors, especially those in 'vulnerable' social conditions, arguably enables a "feminist practice of looking" that may challenge conventional power relations in the geographical research's gaze (Kindon 2003). However, it also opens a series of ethical considerations that go beyond the scope of this article but have been

at the core of the accounts produced by these geographers. Nevertheless, participatory methods for dissemination of research on and with adults are basically missing from the conversation.

A new method for participatory dissemination: IBZM

In the process of gathering data for research on the ongoing gentrification of Bushwick by using in-depth interviewing, the concern for an ethics of immediate reciprocity (Gillan & Pickerill 2012) arose. Struck by precarious and sometimes conflictual communication among the different social groups in the neighbourhood that emerged in my interviews, I looked for a research practice that would allow me to further validate my preliminary results and share them in an immediate way to make them useful in the Bushwick local communities. To this end, I developed the method of IBZM with the help of local activists and the engagement of a group of residents.

I will provide more details about IBZM later in this section, but first I situate IBZM in relation to associated methods of zine-making, workshops, and focus groups that have previously been used by geographers and social researchers. IBZM draws on the technique of zine- and collage- making with the difference that IBZM uses transcribed texts from researcher-conducted interviews instead of using media texts. IBZM is process-oriented and based on the interaction of research participants engaging in a common discussion (like in focus groups) and a creative process of co-production (like in workshops).

After a brief account of these associated methodologies, I will describe the origins and implementation of the method within my research on Bushwick and provide more detail and critical discussion of the limits, potential, and ethics involved by drawing on literature on the associated methods.

Associated methods – zines, focus groups and workshops

Since the 1990s, *focus groups* has been a popular method in geographical and social research. Focus groups encompass a variety of discursive practices. These span from structured group interviews around delimited topics within a limited period of time to more informal, open-ended conversations which start around a topic and can evolve freely in unanticipated paths (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis 2013). The participants may know each other or be strangers, and ideally, the conversation should be as free-flowing as possible with limited input from the moderator (Morgan 1997). Focus group discussion is accepted more and more as a performative moment, that is, not only as a tool for gathering information but rather as an analytical tool to explore socially shared knowledge: when people talk and think together in dialogue, they produce meaning and social knowledge which is embedded in language, history, and culture (Marková *et al*. 2007). One of the strengths of using focus groups is the emergence of power dynamics and multiplicity of views in collective meaning-making processes (Barbour & Kitzinger 1998; Wilkinson 1998). Group dynamics generate heterogeneous meanings in virtue of situated power plays.

Interestingly, it has been noted that focus group techniques are undergoing progressive hybridization with *workshops* techniques (Caretta & Vacchelli 2015), as they increasingly make use of visual elicitation, art-making, or activity-orientated questions to elicit group discussions (Chambers 2002; Colucci 2007; Cooper & Yarbrough 2010; van der Vaart *et al*. 2018). Given these hybrid forms and their performative nature, focus groups and workshops are widely deployed in PAR: through these moments, participants enact mutual learning and social knowledge which can in turn prompt social change in their larger communities.

Zines (from *fanzine*) are self-published booklets crafted by drawing, writing, and the cutting and pasting of text and images from newspapers, magazines, or other printed materials, which are then put together in a master flat for photocopying and distribution (Fig. 1). Zines played a key role in promoting the emerging music scene of the punk subculture in the 1970s (Duncombe 2008) and gained momentum in feminist movements like *Riot Grrrl* in the 1990s as an alternative outlet to the male-dominated print media. Zine-making is a "practice of creating and sharing" often where "you cut, paste and repurpose images from dominant-print media to tell your own idiosyncratic story" (Bagelman & Bagelman 2016, 366). Today, there are zine fairs and swaps organized around the world, but zines are also distributed digitally through *ad hoc* websites (see e.g. the anarchist sproutdistro.com).

Fig. 1. Example of fanzine. Source: Denver Public Library.

Previous studies on popular youth culture, anarchism, feminist research, participatory action research, and pedagogics (Duncombe 2008; Guzzetti & Gamboa 2004; Houh & Kalsem 2015; Bagelman & Bagelman 2016; Böder & Scheurer 2017) show the significance of zines as both a product and a process, as they constitute an empowering tool for self-expression, and alternative knowledge production and sharing. In particular, three aspects of zine-making received academic attention: zines as alternative cultural production, as a pedagogical tool, and as a research method.

Researchers focusing on zine-making *as a cultural product* explored the negotiations and performance of subjectification processes of the subgroups or underground cultures in which this communication tool emerged and developed. From the self-publications of readers' responses to science fiction comics in the 1930s, where the term *fanzine* stems from, zines have evolved to encompass a variety of themes, from subcultural interests like punk music and skateboarding, to silenced local histories (Clark 2006) to political zines (Wertham 1973; Gunderloy & Janice 1992; Duncombe 2008). As a hybrid between personal and public writing, a large part of contemporary zines focuses around narrative identity construction and identity politics, often subculture, youth, feminist, queer, and marginal identities (Gillilan 1999; Piepmeier 2009). In this sense, the production and distribution of zines is at the same time a moment of self-reflexion and self-exploration, as well as "a politically and emotionally charged act which aims to create change" (Guzzetti & Gamboa 2004, 436).

Zines have also been used as an unconventional academic *pedagogical* tool (see Wan 1999; Congdon & Blandy 2003; Creasap 2014; Desyllas & Sinclair 2014), one that would engage in a feminist and crafty "slow pedagogy" (Bagelman & Bagelman 2016), and a creative one, by encouraging the students "to break with the structures of writing formal papers, and (...) to link images and text towards the expression of ideas in a free-form and intuitive manner" (Congdon & Blandy 2003, 44). Finally, and more closely connected to the purpose of this article, there are few examples of zine-making *as a research method*. Stanley (2015) explored zine-making as an autoethnographic method. She contended that zine-making as autoethnography "allows for catharsis, for exploration, for emotional disclosure and rawness, and for a bridging between 'what happened' and 'how [it] felt'" (*ibid*., 12). As such, autoethnographic zines can provide the researcher with a bridging

step between the lived experiences, personal journal annotations, data analysis and formalized research dissemination. Although she did not label it as "zine", Fall (2021) also brilliantly demonstrated that research articles themselves can take the form of a zine and that comics can enhance geographical thinking (Fig. 2).

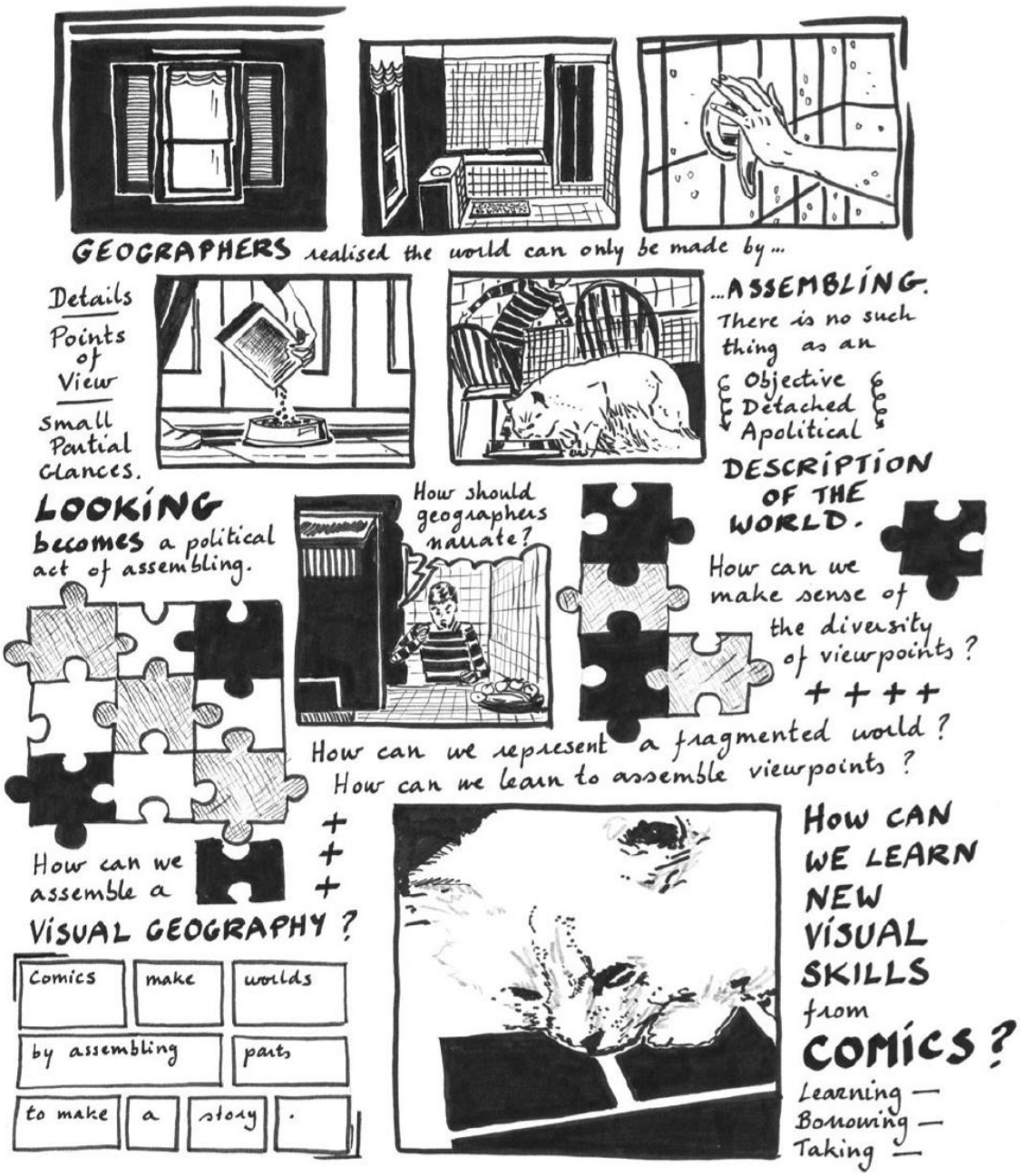

Fig. 2. Screenshot from Fall, Juliet J. (2021) Worlds of vision: thinking geographically through comics. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies 20(1).*

Zine-making often combines writing and drawing with *collage-making* techniques (cutting and pasting found images from magazines, brochures, photographs and the like). As a research method, collage-making allows one to go beyond verbal communication and therefore has proven to be helpful in mapping young people's and vulnerable groups' experiences (Butler-Kisber & Poldma 2011; MacKenzie & Wolf 2012; Vacchelli 2018). As with zine-making, in collage-making, the research participants have time to express feelings and ideas and specifically, as they aim to provide a material visual outcome, these methods provide "the setting to actually think about and make choices on how the contents can be communicated" (Caretta & Vacchelli 2015, 9). As such, zine- and collage-making techniques can potentially represent valuable tools for implementing co-produced processes and outputs for participatory research dissemination.

Having defined what is meant by zine-making, focus groups, workshops and collage-making, I will now move on to introduce in more detail the new method of *Interviews-Based Zine-Making* and how I developed it in the context of my doctoral research on the study of gentrification. Thereafter, I critically discuss the potential, limitations, ethical considerations, and possibilities for the future development of IBZM.

The origin of IBZM: The 'Bushwick gentrification zine'

Over a 7-month period during 2013–2014, I conducted qualitative research on the rapidly gentrifying neighbourhood of Bushwick in the northern part of Brooklyn, New York City. From being one of the poorest and most segregated city areas in the 1970s until the 1990s, Bushwick has in recent years swiftly become one of the latest artistic hubs of the city and a touristy hipster destination (Zukin & Braslow 2011; Valli 2021).

A recent report by the NYU Furman Center (2016) classifies Bushwick as one of fifteen gentrifying neighborhoods in NYC based on two criteria: 1) the neighborhood had a low median income in 1990 (half the city average), and 2) it experienced an above-average rent growth between 1990 and 2014, with a 44% increase compared with 22% in NYC as a whole. At the time of my fieldwork, Bushwick was also undergoing rapid ethnic change. The largest share of the population was Hispanic or Latino, comprising 65% of the population. The second largest group was black or African American (with 17%), followed by white (10%) and Asian (5%) (Coredata.nyc). The share of the white population was still lower than in other gentrifying areas, where whites represented on average 21% of the population (NYU Furman Center 2016). However, between 2000 and 2014, the number of white residents in Bushwick showed a 322% increase (from about 3,000 to nearly 13,000 white residents), accompanied by a general increase in young adult households (18–35 years old) and households without children (Census).

In the first phase of fieldwork, I conducted approximately 40 in-depth semi-structured interviews with individuals living and/or working in the neighborhood, with an equal representation of long-time residents and newcomers. Aiming for richness and variation in the material rather than nominal representation, I sought maximum diversity in terms of gender, income, ethnicity, profession, age and duration of residency in the neighbourhood among the interviewees. With the interviews, I was interested in exploring: 1) how long-time residents experienced and made sense of the process of gentrification underway in their neighbourhood and if and how they were trying to resist it, and 2) how the new residents, particularly members of the bourgeoning local art-scene, made sense of their own role within the process of gentrification, how they related to the long-time residents and if and how they were trying to resist gentrification (Valli 2017).

My research and research from other scholars show that the ongoing place transformations in Bushwick have created different kinds of conflict. Increased housing unaffordability and drastic changes in public spaces and places of consumption, combined with a continuing social disinvestment are accompanied by an increased criminalization and dehumanization of communities of color (Cahill et al. 2019). The symbolic violence of gentrification (Valli 2020) in Bushwick like elsewhere in the US is rooted in a history of class and racial inequalities and disinvestment (Hernandez 2019), which results in the material and emotional displacement of long-time residents (Valli 2015, 2020).

But before formulating my findings in these terms through theoretical elaborations while doing fieldwork, I found myself confronted with what increasingly appeared to be a profound cultural, social,

and economic divide between different social groups in Bushwick, particularly between the long-time residents and the newcomers. Through my initial fieldwork and preliminary analysis of the collected data, it became evident that, while there was a general awareness about what gentrification meant and how it commonly operated in the city, what people were eager to know more about was *what their neighbors were thinking*. In several interviews, the respondents asked me what I had found out about what the imagined 'others' were saying about Bushwick and about 'them'.

As a researcher working from a 'space of betweenness' (Katz 1994), I had the capacity to communicate relatively easily with all sides of the divide, and I wanted to use this vantage position to 'be useful' (Taylor 2014) without waiting for the lengthy process of writing and the publishing result through traditional academic venues. Therefore, I decided to apply the knowledge I had collected in my in-depth interviews to do something that would hopefully be generative in a closer connection with issues of everyday significance. I felt that what I could do as a researcher was act in facilitating communication between different groups by sharing the knowledge I had collected through my research. This intention was enacted through a set of actions that I called 'Human Geographies of Bushwick' and two key initiatives: 1) a zine co-production workshop (IBZM), and 2) participation in 'Bushwick Community Day'.

The open IBZM workshop was organized at a local non-profit art gallery with two volunteers from the artists' collective that ran the gallery. For this event, we set up an interviews' exhibition (Fig. 3) and the IBZM workshop (Fig. 4). With the aim of offering thought-provoking insights and an arena for discussion, I decided to share (selected) data I had collected through the in-depth interviews in a way that would: 1) disclose the greatest range of perspectives and points of view, and 2) leave interviewees' voices as 'raw' as possible. Accordingly, I selected 16 interviews which in my view provided distinctive perspectives on gentrification, either because they were representative of widespread feelings or because they presented arguments that diverged from them in distinct ways. Once I had selected the interviews, I summarized them using original wording (with some minor polishing for clarity's sake) but in an open text form, as in, without the typical quotation marks, as fluid continuous text, to ease readability and to sketch a comprehensive narrative about each interviewee's point of view. I made the text anonymous by changing names and personal information that would make the interviewees recognizable but provided basic information about their age, gender, profession, ethnic background, and duration of residency in Bushwick as a basic guide to the narrator's background and experience. I edited each interview in a different typographical font so that they would be recognizable as different sources in the final zine and then printed them out in two formats: A3-sized posters that we displayed on the gallery walls as a small 'interviews exhibition' (Fig. 3) and A4 pages to be used for the zine's production (Fig. 4).

Fig. 3. 'Human Geographies of Bushwick' Interviews exhibition at Silent Barn, Bushwick, NYC, 2014.

At the event, there was a good turnout of people who engaged in reading the interviews on display. Five people took part in the zine-making workshop, of which, two had already been interviewed in the first phase of fieldwork, and three were new participants. I sat at the table with the workshop participants and conversed with them, but I did not interfere with the actual production of the zine. The unfolding of the workshop was quite organic. I had no idea how many people would show up but imagined that we would have a common discussion and that each participant would make their own individual zine. Instead, the participants spontaneously decided to work together on one collective zine, which indeed made the process more interesting, as this stimulated discussion. I did not introduce the participants to any key themes (besides the general topic of the research project – perceptions of gentrification in Bushwick) and I asked them to use the interviews, pens, and papers to form their own zines about Bushwick. The goal was to present the interviewees' voices as raw as possible.

After the workshop, I took care of the final assembly of the zine pages, photocopied them and then distributed it in different public spaces in the neighborhood. Moreover, I participated in a local 'community day' where I distributed the zines and engaged in conversations about my research with several residents and community organizers. All the events and research outputs were promoted and documented through a dedicated Facebook page.

The IBZM workshop discussions were audio recorded, and afterwards, I wrote notes to inform project outputs, but I did not use any quotations from the workshop as direct research results. I used these conversations more as tool to test some of my interpretations (member-checking), but, as I will reflect upon in the coming section, this could have been done differently and with the specific purpose of collecting data.

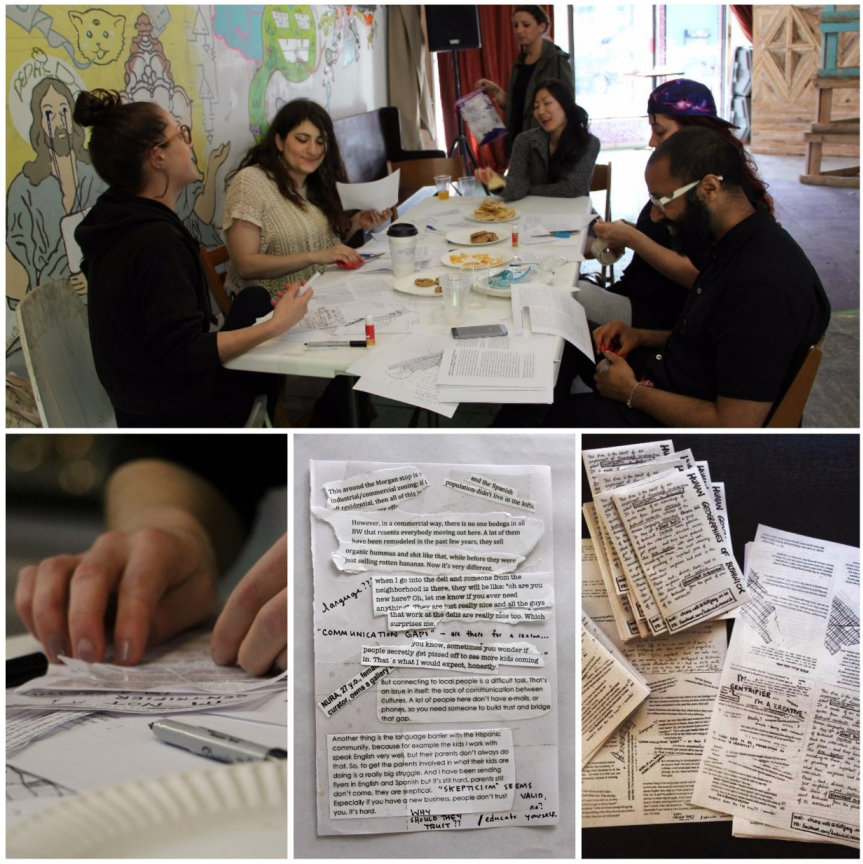

Fig. 4. 'Human Geographies of Bushwick' Interviews-based zine making (IBZM) workshop at Silent Barn, Bushwick, NYC, 2014.

To sum up, the nuts and bolts of IBZM are the following: 1) in a first phase, the researcher conducts in-depth interviews with research participants; 2) the researcher transcribes the interviews; 3) the researcher selects a number of interviews which are particularly representative, meaningful, relevant, or controversial in relation to the researched theme and summarizes them (about one page) without overly affecting the language, for the sake of clarity; 5) the researcher prints out the interviews, possibly with different text fonts or colors to distinguish them from one another; 4) the researcher, possibly together with facilitators, sets up a workshop with old (already interviewed) and/or new participants; 5) the workshop participants, researcher, and facilitators read and discuss the summarized interviews; 6) the workshop participants create a zine together by cutting and pasting quotations from the printed interviews and possibly adding new texts and drawings; and 7) the researcher assembles the zine, prints several copies and distributes them through different channels.

Learning from the 'Bushwick gentrification zine' – some critical reflections

It is important to note that, as many feminist scholars have pointed out, multivocal methodologies such as workshops and focus groups are not inherently empowering or emancipatory, as group dynamics and interactions may reproduce structural power imbalances, with some voices prevailing over others (Wilkinson 1998; Baker & Hinton 1999; Kitzinger 2005; Zorn *et al*. 2006; Marková *et al*. 2007). At the same time, the researcher nevertheless has the power to select and silence certain narratives via the initial selection of interviews and the final assemblage of the zine, which reaffirms a traditional hierarchy over the process. This power, however, can and should be used toward rectifying bias and power imbalances as much as possible, both in terms of representation conveyed in the interviews and zines, and within the zine-making practices themselves. I hereby reflect on some challenges I met and how I attempted to address power imbalances in the Bushwick IBZM process.

Sampling

For the workshop and exhibition, I deliberately selected 16 of the 40 interviews I had collected, looking for richness and variations of perspectives while at the same time maintaining a manageable number of interviews. The selected interviewees belonged to diversified ethnic backgrounds and genders and were in equal numbers new-comers and long-time residents. Moreover, I cut-and-pasted what I considered to be the most meaningful sections of the transcribed interviews to reconstruct a legible narrative. These selection processes are forms of sampling that add on to the initial sampling of interviewees. As researchers have long acknowledged, sampling practices always entail discretion from the researcher and are always subject to bias and limitations (Baxter & Eyles 1997). Therefore, the multiple moments of choosing, selecting, and sampling during an IBZM process require careful self-reflection. In my case, in hindsight, making the sampling process more transparent could have strengthened the impact of the method for zine-makers as well as the broader audience. For instance, one zine-maker made the following remark:

> You know, I was intending to make a snippet of perspectives tied to backgrounds, but my sample selection is all newcomers. And 5/6 of them are very out of touch, or at least unaligned with other voices. That's 83%. It's important that we make sure, if we are working on cultural development in Bushwick and building valuable infrastructure for it, that we don't waste the potential of the work by leaving 100% of the control of it to newcomers. 83% of that control will get it worse and damage Bushwick. (Zine 2014; Appendix 1)

Although the zine-maker was reflecting about his own selection process and about his work as a cultural producer in Bushwick, this quotation is a reminder of the power of representation and visibility. My choice of presenting both newcomers' and longstanding residents' voices in equal number was an attempt to prompt a staged, contained ideal dialogue by overcoming the obstacles that the interviewees faced on a daily basis by virtue of belonging to different social groups. Yet, this '(un)equal' selection might have unwittingly reproduced the same patterns of affirmation of the relatively more privileged voices occurring in the neighborhood transformation, based not only on class and ethnicity but also on signs, visuality, and self-representation (Valli 2020, 2021).

Recruitment

The issue of sampling in IBZM does not concern only interviewees and interviews. Workshop participants' sampling also needs to be evaluated in each research setting in accordance with what kind of discussion is expected and the sensitivity of its contents as well as more mundane logistical matters.

As the Bushwick zine workshop was a first experiment with IBZM, the invitation to participate was open-ended, and my collaborators and I did not know beforehand who and how many people would participate. Fortunately, the pool of participants was large and variegated enough (comprising both long-time residents and newcomers) to make a good exchange possible. However, open-ended recruiting always presents the risk of unbalances and bias, risking drawing already active/activist participants, and therefore not making a representative or 'rigorous' sample. IBZM's application should be calibrated and modified keeping in mind the ambition of representativity and the specific role it is supposed to take up in the overall context of each research process. In this sense, targeted (as opposed to open-ended) sampling might be deployed to increase rigor and representativity.

Possible hierarchies within the group need to be properly addressed by the researcher and their collaborators during the workshop. The role of the researcher/moderator in IBZM is also about making sure that group interactions are as fair and balanced as possible, that all participants feel comfortable expressing their opinions and contributing to the production of the graphic output. Depending on the study case and the overall research framework, the participants might be purposefully selected to ease such interactions. Most focus group researchers have shown that homogeneity among the group participants (in terms of gender, age-range, and ethnic and social class background) helps ease trust and interactions, and allows for the opening up of people's shared experiences (Krueger 2014). Yet, it might be advantageous to bring together a diverse group if the aim is to maximize the elicitation of different perspectives (Kitzinger 2005).

Anonymity

Questions of anonymity and confidentiality represent sensitive issues in IBZM, arguably even more than in traditional communication of research. If the participants know each other, or know some of the interviewees, their narratives might be recognized even if made anonymous by the researcher, and depending on the sensitivity of the information, this might become an issue, as it could expose interviewees and compromise the trust between interviewees and researcher. This risk might be avoided by selecting participants who do not know one another or the interviewees; however, this might not be possible or recommendable for other reasons of homogeneity and group dynamics. As there is no universal nor straightforward answer regarding the best approach for recruiting workshop participants, this choice needs to be negotiated and carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Moderation and collaborators

Another central aspect in the organization of IBZM is collaboration with facilitators. Additional moderators besides the researcher can provide further facilitation in the discussion, function as gatekeeping, create trust, and help address problematic group dynamics. In my case, the help of two collaborators was fundamental, in particular, by providing invaluable help with the logistical aspects of the organization (booking the space, publicizing the event through their on- and off-line networks, thinking through the operational aspects). Also important was that co-organising the workshop together with two local residents allowed me to root my research activities deeper into the context, reach out to a broader audience, and build a stronger sense of trust among the participants. Also, unlike me, the two local residents were born and raised in the United States and therefore shared a familiar cultural background with most of the workshop participants. For example, at some point, the co-organizers engaged the other workshop participants in conversations about the history of some buildings in the neighbourhood. This first-hand local knowledge elicited interactive narrations of lived experiences of neighborhood change, which in turn established connections with and cast new light on some interviews displayed in the workshop which I had not seen in my preliminary analysis.

Validation

In addition to its use as 'participatory dissemination', IBZM can also be used as a form of collective 'member checking', as it represents an opportunity "of finding out whether the data analysis is congruent with the participants' experiences" (Curtin & Fossey 2007, 92). Like other multivocal methods, IBZM benefits from group interactions and communication to generate additional data and to nuance the interpretation of previously collected data. Nevertheless, in this case, the validation is not only about the personal perspective of the individual participant, but also, as there are many submitted interviews for checking, this method helps the interpretation of data more broadly. It can bring to light conflicts, contradictions, nuances, and interpretations that may have gone unnoticed by the researcher. Moreover, as it is a collective operation, it helps minimize the bias of the researcher as well as contextualize (and to some extent validate) the experiences of individual participants. As formulated by Frisina (2006), in member-checking "What is at stake is the possibility to add the voice of the participants to the researcher's interpretations and to open the text to multiple interpretations". As illustrated by Caretta and Pérez (2019), participants may not always agree with the researcher's interpretations, and therefore, challenges to the research epistemology might emerge. IBZM can constitute a tool for the validation of the gathered data not simply through consensus around the data, but above all by offering an arena for the emergence of contrasting views and interpretations, as in, an arena to host plural and agonistic (Mouffe 2005) conversations that might nuance and strengthen the validity of the research.

The "right to interpretation"

In the Bushwick gentrification zine, no particular conflicts or disagreements among workshop participants emerged, and the conversations were instead centered around dis/agreements with the interviewees' perspectives. However, this may have been impacted by the open recruitment process, while a more targeted recruiting process might have changed this outcome. In hindsight, and in different practical circumstances and time/space constraints, several workshops could have been organized inviting diverse groups (for example, groups made only of newcomers or longstanding residents, or groups divided by age). It is possible that the reading of the interviews may have prompted different reactions and self-reflections. Also, I would like to stress that I did not interpret the zine as an outlet for my own interpretations and analysis (which I have published in traditional academic articles and a dissertation) but rather as a parallel, complementary outlet directed to a beyond-academic audience. Because of the nature of the zine format, as in, an idiosyncratic and very personal repurposing or reconstruction of materials that does not need to respond to any rigid internal logic, the existence of contradictions and conflicting interpretations and messages would not be problematic for this format but rather enhance its value. Zines are made of a series of (not always connected) reactions, questions, and feelings, in which coherence is underplayed and responses, reactions, and provocations come to the fore. Therefore, if the researcher and the participants, or different participants, disagree on something, the zine-makers have the ultimate right to interpret and represent the given materials as they wish. Such interpretations can contain paradoxes and contradictions. The researcher's interpretations which are mediated by the complexity of theory and academic insights, as well as a specific positionality within geographical and social spaces, will be put forward through other channels such as traditional academic papers, and such interpretations have also been formed, shaped, and validated by the IBZM process.

Conflict risks

Crucially, IBZM is a method that could just as easily provoke conflict and anger as mutual understanding. In fact, although the aim is to deepen and provide nuance to the understanding of coexisting perspectives, the act of presenting barely contextualized statements from other research participants can be a risky move. For example, I remember thinking that some statements in the interviews I had selected explicitly conveyed privilege, which indeed provoked some (rather outraged) reactions at the

workshop. The point with including these interviews was not to increase sympathy toward some gentrifiers' perspectives but rather to flesh them out, to unpack them and improve our collective understanding of gentrification dynamics in their cultural context as passing through attitudes and personal behaviors (on top of the more obvious urban political economic aspects). The fact that the interviews were anonymized and that the workshop participants also partially belonged to the group that by many would be viewed as "gentrifiers" helped curb possible conflicts. The workshop in Bushwick arguably represents a constructive example of how such an activity (that is, reading and discussing controversial statements from members of one's social group) can help prompt self-awareness about possibly detrimental behaviors/attitudes. However, I see how this could have taken a different direction, amplifying conflicts. IBZM is a practice that needs to be carried out with great sensitivity toward the local community. Understanding the sociocultural context and paying careful consideration to local power dynamics are of primary importance for involving residents in IBZM and other participatory dissemination practices. After a careful analysis of possible conflicts, the researcher should also have a plan for how to attend to conflicts in case they arise. A strategy would be to engage with "local" facilitators who have a deeper understanding of microlocal dynamics, and who could perhaps read the materials in advance and co-reflect with the researchers about these issues.

Accessibility

It is also important to acknowledge the further challenges of a visual approach that relies so strongly on text and language in contexts where there are low levels of literacy, for instance, when working with children or with people who speak other languages from the dominant language and who may not be able to easily read transcripts. The tactile nature of zines moreover can be a powerful mode of communication but also one that sparks challenges for some participants, and this aspect must be considered to avoid an ableist bias. It is possible that other alternative or complementary approaches to dissemination could be developed that do not rely on printed written interviews but rather on photographs, audio materials, or even performances. For instance, the transcribed interviews could be read out loud by third readers (the researcher herself or someone else, if the original audio recordings of the interviews cannot be disclosed to preserve anonymity) and reproduced in a kind of voice-interview exhibition. Interview materials could even be used to develop theater pieces (see for example the theater project "The mental states of Gothenburg" from director Mattias Andersson, where nearly 90% of the play's text was comprised of direct quotes from interviews of a sociological research project). Such interplay of art, performance, and academic research raises of course deep questions of representation and right to interpretation, as sensibly expressed by Holgersson (2010).

Slow scholarship

Finally, when it comes to organizational aspects, it must be noted that IBZM entails a substantial investment of effort and time. The logistical aspects are significant and benefit from the involvement of collaborators (like, in my case, local activists). These aspects may challenge the broader applicability of the method, as the encompassing imperative of high productivity in compressed timeframes of the neoliberal university create an uneven burden on academic staff. However, spending time in the processes of care and collective creativity of IBZM can be seen as a commitment to PAR approaches and a practice of resistance as part of the 'slow scholarship movement', in the conviction that " 'good scholarship requires time to think, write, read, research, analyse, edit, organise' – and we might add to do, make and create" (Mountz *et al*. 2015, 1236; in Hawkins 2019).

Conclusion

In this article, I made the case for 'participatory dissemination' as an approach that combines the advantages of researcher-led methodology with participatory research and the communication of research results outside the academic audience. While participation in the research design and data gathering phases of research have received much attention by geographers, participation in the

interpretation and communication of research results have so far been substantially neglected. This article is an attempt to address that gap. Specifically, I put forward and discussed an experimental approach for participatory dissemination I call 'interview-based zine-making' (IBZM). Traditional zine-making overturns the meaning and content of media texts and images and makes them instrumental to the expression of a marginalized individual's voice (that of the zine maker). IBZM uses the technique of zine-making but with two major twists. First, instead of using media texts, the starting raw materials for IBZM are transcribed texts from researcher-conducted interviews. The scope is to let the zine makers (who are also research participants) engage with the perspectives of the interviewees and find assonances, disagreements, dissonances, and connections with their own sentiments. The output will be a collectively produced zine to be further disseminated. Second, all the phases of the zine-making process – information gathering, elaboration, creation and communication, with one communal zine as the outcome – are conducted collectively in, for instance, workshops and focus groups methodologies. The process of co-producing a zine, rather than the actual output, is at the core of this method. In fact, IBZM in my Bushwick research functioned as a form of member-checking and nuanced my empirical interpretations. Most importantly, by being further distributed, the co-produced zine represented a non-traditional research communication outlet, which was designed directly by the research participants with a minimal contribution from the researcher in the assemblage and final editing. As such, IBZM proved to be a valid tool for making research available beyond academia in an immediate and participatory way.

As this has been my first foray into alternative participatory dissemination, the process has been very experimental. Certainly, as I have discussed in the article, this trial method presents room for improvement and may be refined and further developed in future projects. For instance, IBZM may be used not only in the final phases of research with the goal of participatory dissemination but also, like other art-based elicitation methods or focus groups discussions and workshops, it may be used to produce data. For qualitative researchers, the above methodology can potentially provide in-depth understanding of the discursive patterns of the research participants and how they evaluate and make sense of different experiences and shared issues, and hence offer a thicker and multifaceted overview of the conflictual, dialectical dimensions of social reality. Importantly, as a highly collective process, IBZM allows for both researchers and non-researchers alike to activate their variegated skills and expertise as well as interpretative and communicative perspectives. Moreover, by using digital media and the internet, the boundaries of cut-and-pasted printed material might be overcome, making zines into full-fledged multimedia products to be distributed to a much extensive outreach.

Like any methodological innovation, participatory dissemination and zine-making more specifically, need to be critically scrutinized in terms of the opportunities they open and their pitfalls. In fact, researchers who engage with visual and creative methods have been raising concerns about their intellectual and creative labor becoming co-opted into neoliberal practices within and outside academia, and they highlight the urgency to question complicity with these mechanisms (De Leeuw *et al*. 2017; McLean 2017; de Dios & Kong 2020; McLean & de Leeuw 2020). However, Hawkins (2019, 983) points out that the specific practice of zine-making might challenge these instrumentalizations because of its contents and material forms: "The making and circulation of zines, with their low-cost easily reproducible forms beloved of the feminist movement, critique our standard publication registers and publications practices". In this sense, practices grounded in an amateur, DIY, low-tech ethos, such as with zine-making, have the potential to be tools of resistance and political critique not so easily co-opted into marketization strategies and be an instrument for 'slow-scholarship' aiming at cultivating caring academic cultures and practices (Mountz *et al*. 2015; Bagelman & Bagelman 2016; Bagelman *et al*. 2017).

Ultimately, beyond methodological discussions, by making the case for participatory dissemination and by sharing the specific way I have pursued it, I hope to contribute to the work of a growing number of researchers that stretches beyond conventional approaches of research dissemination and that adopts creative, dynamic, and collaborative forms to bring the political to the fore (see e.g. Bagelman *et al*. 2017). When I started playing with the idea of creating a space of dialogue and empowerment with what I later called 'participatory dissemination' and started experimenting with IBZM, I followed activist researcher Routledge (1996, 403) suggestion to "live theory as a series of practices – experimental, experiential, imaginative". Rather than proposing a rigorous how-to-do

guide to the method, I presented here a reflexive account of how I operationalized participatory dissemination through IBZM, in the hope that this will inspire others, particularly those who do not already identify with PAR, to experiment with creative and visual methods to increase their impact, validity, and popular engagement with research outputs. Ultimately, with this article, I tried to reiterate what Hawkins (2019, 984) argued for, namely, that "we can and should understand the possibilities of the creative (re)turn [in geographical research] as an inspiration not just for how it opens up possibilities to do research differently, but also for the resources it offers us to remake worlds, our own academic worlds included".

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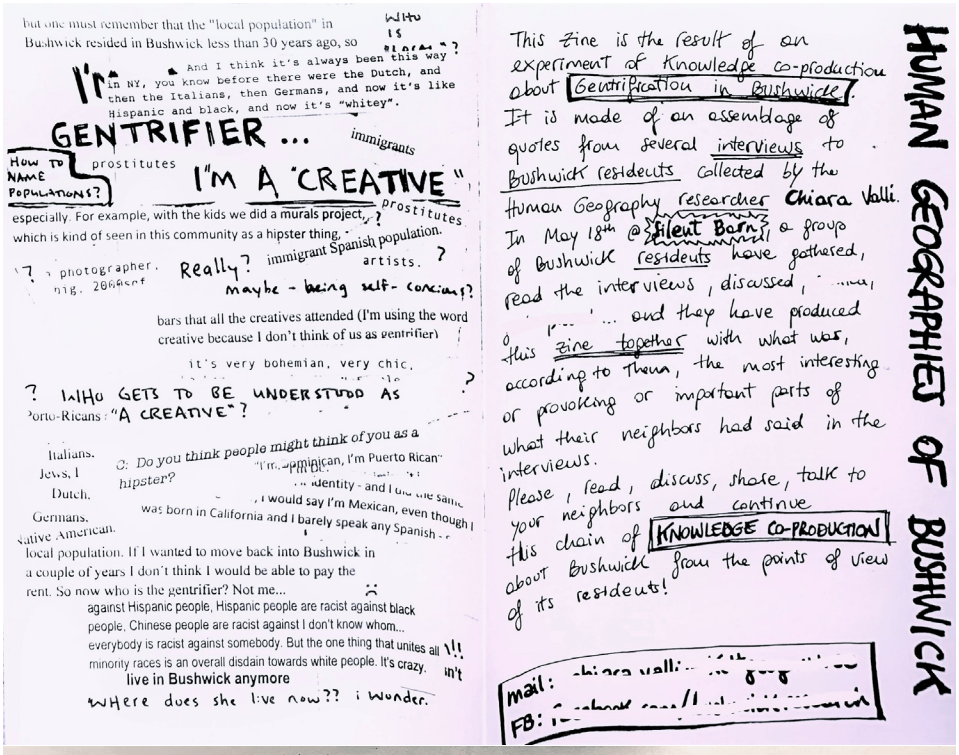
Appendix 1. The 'Bushwick gentrification zine', Interviews-based Zine. Bushwick, New York City, 2014.



I moved here 8 years ago from Vermont, I worked in a restaurant back there and I came here hoping to open a small café.

You know the history of Bushwick, there was the fire and it was desolated and scary, so if people want to make it better, it's cool, right?

I moved here in 2005 and the reason was because at that time I was looking for an affordable place. I don't mind having more traffic, more people. Because to survive, as gallery owners, we need more traffic. So I'm more for progressing.

I came to Bushwick in 2007 and opened my gallery in 2008.

...ere. It doesn't matter what you do or what color you are,

GENTRIFIER AGAINST GENTRIFICATION

I came to Bushwick in 2008.

If I wanted to move back into Bushwick in a couple of years I don't think I would be able to pay the rent. So now who is the gentrifier? Not me...

I don t think gentrification is gonna happen here. I think community building is gonna happen. But only if we can stop that whole victim mentality of being a person of color and instead knowing your rights.
A lot of people lack confidence and that´s a big problem.

There are a lot of people that are self-defeating people in this area, a lot. There are a lot of black people with self-defeating mentality, but it´s not really about your color. You become a person of a certain kind of color when you start acting like a person of a certain kind of color. When you are a black person and you are acting like a freaking idiot, you are the same gentrifier yourself. You could be a white person and say "hey what do you need me to do to help with what you are doing? What can we do as a community?".

There is too much hypocrisy in conversations about gentrification. Let it be, it boosts the economy, it attracts more people, it brings more business to all the restaurants and companies... So what is it that you can do to make it a better community instead of whining and complaining about it?

To them it's like these people (new-comers) don't even exist. They turn them out. They are like:

"They are not us; they don't want to be with us, so why should I make any kind of effort to get to know them?"

They say to themselves: "what are these young kids going around all day doing nothing when they have to pay 3000$ a month rent?" To them they are not real people.

nobody seems to work 9-6, people are out any hour any day, I'm interested in trying to portrait that.

I moved here three years ago, I moved here because I was graduating from art school and I didn't know what I wanted to do but I knew I wanted to live in a city. I went to a small college that really fostered DIY, the idea of making your own fun, setting up shows, and all that stuff that you could do as a student.

They are just really nice and all the guys that work at the delis are really nice too. Which surprises me, you know, sometimes you wonder if people secretly get pissed off to see more kids coming in. That´s what I would expect, honestly.

I have been living in Bushwick for 6 years and had this art gallery for two.

The biggest conflict I personally feel is: how can I love place and make it even more beautiful and celebrate ~~without parting it and raising the rent~~? How do I make the murals and beautify this environment without raising the rent?

you know, I was intending to make a snippet of perspectives tied to backgrounds — but my sample selection is all new-comers.

And 5/6 of them are very out of touch, or at least unaligned with other voices and perspectives). that's 83%. It's important that we make sure, if we are working on cultural development in Bushwick, and building valuable infrastructure for it - that we don't waste the potential of our work by losing 100% of the control of it to new-comers. 83% of that control will get it wrong, and damage much

This around the Morgan stop is s... industrial/commercial zoning; if t... all residential, then all of this le... are effe...

and the Spanish population didn't live in the lofts.

However, in a commercial way, there is no one bodega in all BW that resents everybody moving out here. A lot of them have been remodeled in the past few years, they sell organic hummus and shit like that, while before they were just selling rotten bananas. Now it's very different.

language ??

when I go into the deli and someone from the neighborhood is there, they will be like: "oh are you new here? Oh, let me know if you ever need anything" They are just really nice and all the guys that work at the delis are really nice too. Which surprises me, you know, sometimes you wonder if people secretly get pissed off to see more kids coming in. That´s what I would expect, honestly."

"COMMUNICATION GAPS" - are there for a reason...

NURA, 27 y.o., fema... curator, owns a gallery

But connecting to local people is a difficult task. That's an issue in itself: the lack of communication between cultures. A lot of people here don't have e-mails, or phones, so you need someone to build trust and bridge that gap.

Another thing is the language barrier with the Hispanic community, because for example the kids I work with speak English very well, but their parents don't always do that. So, to get the parents involved in what their kids are doing is a really big struggle. And I have been sending flyers in English and Spanish but it's still hard, parents still don't come, they are skeptical. "SKEPTICISM" SEEMS VALID, Especially if you have a new business, people don't trust you. It's hard.

WHY SHOULD THEY TRUST ??

no?

I educate yourself