

Body mapping

Description

Body mapping is an exercise focused on personal experiences and embodied memory, developed by feminist movements and inspired by old medical research methods. The idea is to collectively elaborate in a visual exercise the memories of our bodies. Through this practice, participants can reflect, locate and discuss different embodied memories of neo-colonial and other discriminatory experiences.

The main purpose of this activity is to facilitate a space to reflect on and share personal and intimate experiences from an embodied perspective. Visualizing it on paper by drawing and writing, allows the participants to reflect on space, geography and social relations by giving relevance to the body parts where those memories or emotions are ingrained. Considering gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, age, nationality, cultural background, etc.

Key questions for the discussion

- How do you experience living in Zürich?
- Under what circumstances did you come to Zurich and how long have you been living here?
- What factors played a role in you choosing your current living situation?
- Do you feel at home in the place you live?
- How do you feel in public spaces? Are there places where you feel exposed or vulnerable?
- Has your personal experience of Zürich changed over time (positively or negatively)? If yes, in what ways has it changed?
- How do you describe yourself? How do other people describe or read you?
- How do you negotiate or subvert interpretations you cannot identify with?
- Do you remember an experience in which someone else was treated negatively or differently because of their appearance, spoken language, gender, age, what they were doing, etc? If yes, where did it happen and how did you react to it?
- What makes you angry?
- What makes you happy? (about living in Switzerland)



Materials

A roll of paper (or individual big format pieces)

Pencils, markers, watercolor painting, and brushes

Instructions

Let's begin with an exercise to relax and get into a good state of mind. In silence, close your eyes and reflect on how your body, emotions, and memories are connected. We invite you to reflect on your body in relation to your home, neighborhood, city, region, and country. It is important to acknowledge the different forms of colonialism related to your personal and familiar history: culture, geography, gender, privilege, education, and so on. Let your senses guide you. Touch and feel the parts in your body that resonate with a specific memory and emotion.

1. Open your eyes and find a partner to work with. This activity was designed to be done in teams of two persons.
2. Choose the materials you would like to work with.
3. Draw outlines of each other's bodies on the piece of paper. If you feel comfortable, we recommend you to lay down on the paper while your partner draws your silhouette with a marker or pen. It is up to both of you to decide how to represent yourselves. You can think of color codes to identify emotions and/or places, or you can divide your drawing in two or more parts as a way of representing different times or space layers.
4. Describe and represent yourself considering your own narrative and identity. You can consider the following inputs: profession, cultural background, hobbies, gender identity, age, name and so on. It is important to think about what your personal narrative cannot lack. All that without you couldn't be who you are.
5. Share and discuss what you have written and/or drawn with your partner, and develop questions that are meaningful to both of you.
6. Describe/represent yourself acknowledging the way you have been treated and categorized by other people in Zurich. You can choose one specific situation you recall and describe it as detailed as possible. Consider concepts and issues like migration, inequalities, sexuality, privilege, health, and gender as key aspects to depart from. If you like, you can describe the context and the place it happened, the date and persons involved, who they were (if you know), and how you and others around reacted to it. And don't forget to connect your memory to specific places and spots in the city (whether public or private space).
7. For every shared experience and memories, describe the way you faced it and your emotions in that moment. Think about what else you could have done in that situation.

References

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