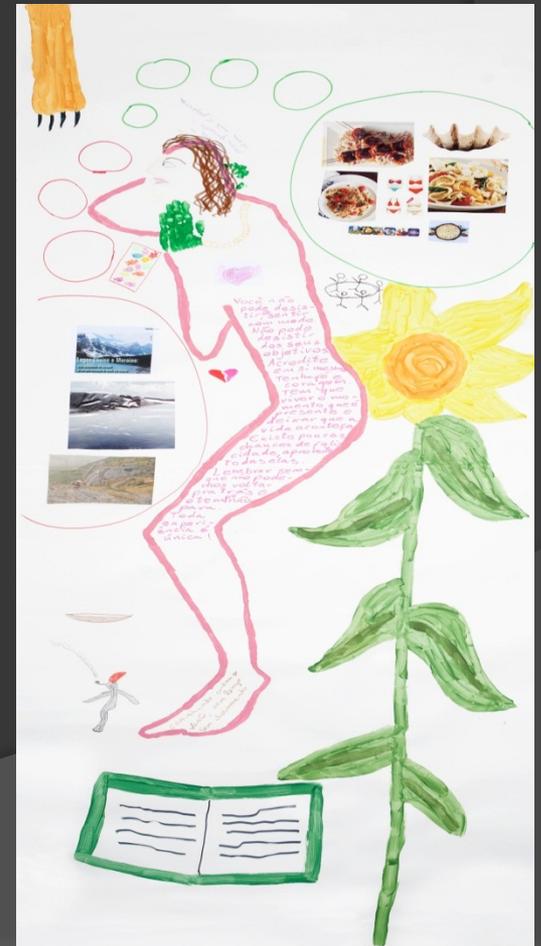


Body-map storytelling as research: Documenting physical, emotional and social health as a journey

Denise Gastaldo, PhD

Associate Professor, Faculty of
Nursing, Associate Director, Centre
for Critical Qualitative Health
Research, University of Toronto

CQ Seminar September 26, 2012



Publication

- Body-Map Storytelling as Research
www.migrationhealth.ca/undocumented-workers-ontario/body-mapping
- Entangled in a Web of Exploitation and Solidarity (study report)
www.migrationhealth.ca/undocumented-workers-ontario/summary-findings
- **Co-Authors**
 - Denise Gastaldo, Co-Principal Investigator
 - Lilian Magalhaes, Co-Principal Investigator
 - Christine Carrasco, Research Coordinator
 - Charity Davy, Research Assistant

Acknowledgements

- ⦿ Research participants, for their generosity and courage.
- ⦿ Community Partners:
 - Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples (CSSP)
 - Centre for Support & Social Integration Brazil-Canada (CAIS)
- ⦿ Advisory Board members:
 - Cathy Tersigni, Community Health Officer, Toronto Public Health
 - Jussara Lourenço, Counsellor, St. Christopher House
 - Gerardo Betancourt, AIDS Community Educator, Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples
 - Celeste Joseph, HIV/AIDS Counsellor, Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples
 - Juliana Ferreira, Coordinator, Centre for Support & Social Integration Brazil-Canada
- ⦿ Study funded by CIHR, Institute of Gender and Health

A story about storytelling and qualitative research

Principles

- ① Scientific discourse as a form of literature: mathematics, statistics, descriptions, case studies, visual studies as narrative styles
- ① Doing research to understand and potentially change the world
 - Science as an approach to acquire in-depth understanding
 - Science as a political exercise
- ① Doing research to create new ways to think and speak about a phenomenon (challenge established truths and promote emergent discourses)
 - Move away from notions of autonomy and agency that disregard historical and economic conditions; to make 'the personal' political and global; to study the SDH

Principles (2)

Critically thinking about storytelling (Chamberlin, 2004):

- If this is your land, where are your stories? (Glitksan elder)
- “Conflict is at the heart of the way language works, and therefore the way stories work as well” (p.25)
- “Just as we learn how to read, so we learn how to listen [to other oral traditions]; and this learning does not come naturally” (p. 21)
- Goals: to create a new language to speak about “illegals”, to diminish the gap between “us and them”, to tell stories of assets and resilience as well as exploitation
- Not an “applied”, “useful” research according to the current health care utilitarianist epidemic: perhaps, idle, slow; telling stories to think differently and find common ground

Context

- One of the effects of the intensification of globalization in the last two decades has been a call for the migration of cheap, flexible, and mobile labour to high-income countries (the New South). This phenomenon was not accompanied by changes in regulatory migration provisions in host nations, leading into the undocumentedness of large groups of workers who do not have a legal pathway to regularize their status.
- Health care is not a human right in Canada but rather a documented-citizen right

Challenge – beyond interviews

- To capture a journey, movement, evolving subjectivities
- To help to describe a transnational existence, multiple identities
- To let the participant narrate experiences in a non-chronological order and from multiple places
- To make these workers visible as human beings (e.g. dreams, relationships)
- To facilitate the description of physical, emotional and social health

In search of...

- *Why use a visual methodology?*

“(...) we need research which is able to get a full sense of how people think about their own lives and identities, and what influences them and what tools they use in that thinking, because those things are the building blocks of social change.” (Gaunlett & Holzwarth, 2006, p.8)

Study Methodology

Methodology

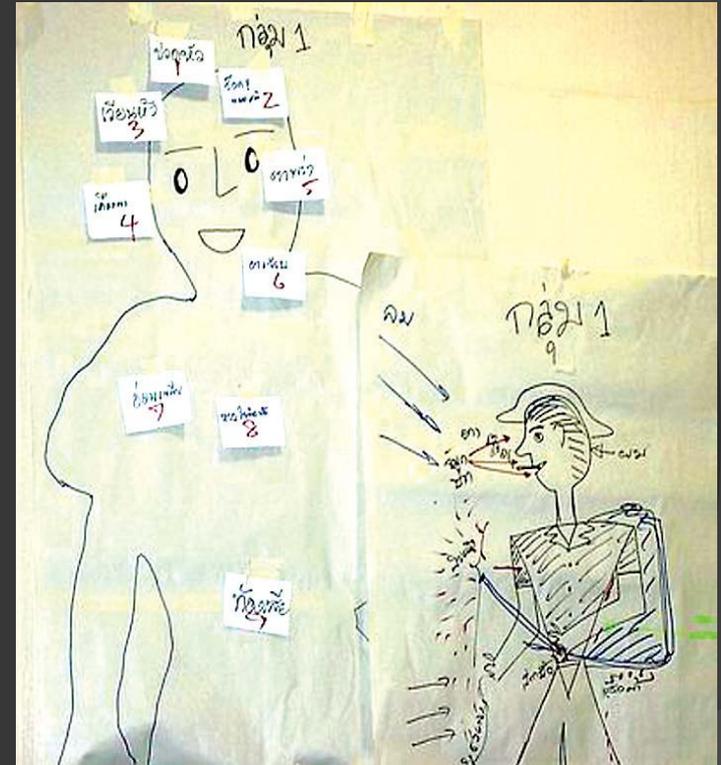
- Study conducted between 2009-2012
- **Participants:**
 - Latin American migrant workers who lived and worked undocumented in the GTA (from 18 months to 10 years)
 - Diverse occupations
 - 22 participants
- **Data Generation:**
 - 3 meetings per participant (average 2 hours each), including semi-structured interviews and body-map storytelling (62 interviews, 20 body maps completed)
- **Data Analysis:**
 - Discourse analysis and visual analysis

What are body maps?

A tool for documenting working conditions and physical health, a strategy for therapy, for biographical work, and for research as well.

Multiple uses (1)

- The term body mapping has been used in the context of occupational health and safety for almost 50 years as a mode of participatory research and awareness raising to identify occupational risks, hazards, and diseases that manifest in the workplace (Keith & Brophy, 2004; Keith, Brophy, Kirby, & Roskam, 2002).
- *Body mapping for clinical practice has been used for mapping pain, musculoskeletal problems, etc.*
- In therapy, it is a tool for helping clients to explore particular aspects of their lives (e.g. who are their support systems, self-image, etc).
- Picture – Rural workers map signs and symptoms of pesticide poisoning (Danida Union Newsletter, 2002, Thailand)



Multiple uses (2)

Arts-based body mapping originated in South Africa as an art-therapy for women living with HIV/AIDS (Devine, 2008; MacGregor, 2009; Weinand, 2006). Jane Solomon (2002) adapted this technique and developed a facilitation guide for art-therapy.

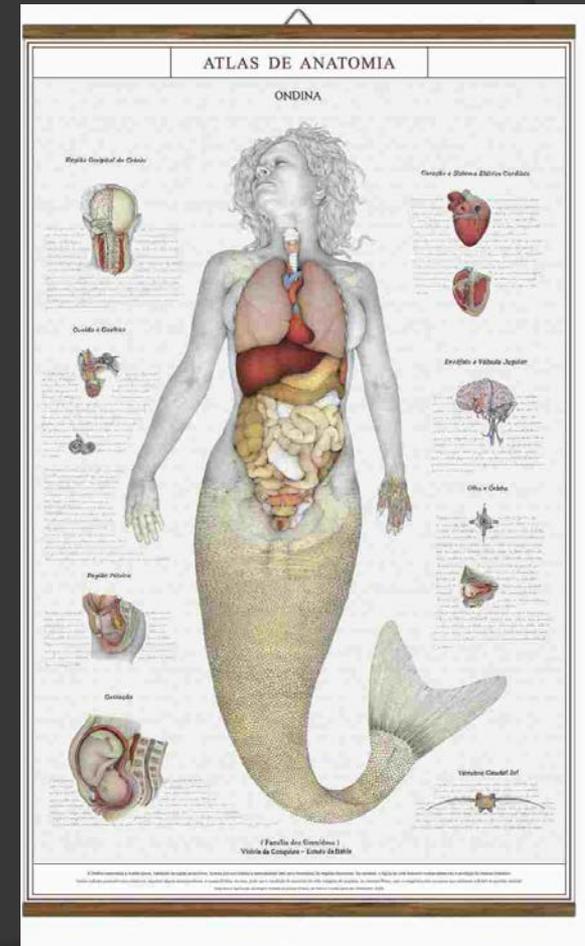
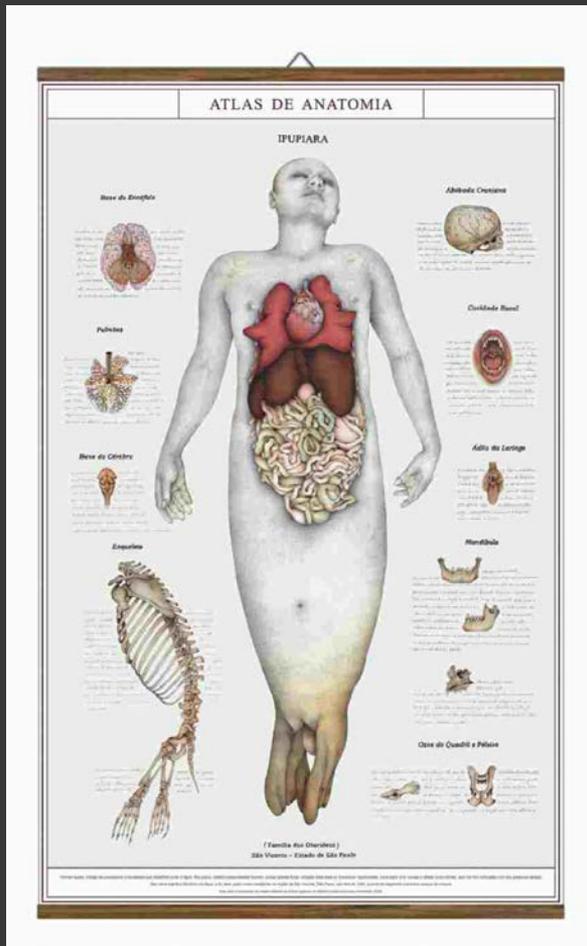
Picture: Mock body map developed by our research team to practice the technique



Artistic use of body maps

Ipupiara and Ondina, 2007

Walmor Correa, Brazilian artist



Using body maps for research

Most: Mapping physical spaces, body and health issues

Our approach: Visually and orally narrating journeys through an arts-based approach

The body-mapped storytelling method

Body maps

- *Body maps* can be broadly defined as life-size human body images created through drawing, painting or other art-based techniques to visually represent aspects of people's lives, their bodies and the world they live in.
- Body mapping is a way of telling stories, much like totems that contain symbols with different meanings, but whose significance can only be understood in relation to the creator's overall story and experience.
- Body maps can be created for different purposes, but the ones presented here were conceived for knowledge production and dissemination.

SER OPTIMISTA

META

SEGURIDAD

TRABAJO

INGLES

Estatus

IDO X X X X

MI VIDA EN CANADA

Quito

MENSAJE AL PUBLICO:

A FE QUE FAZ OTIMISTA DEMAIS...

MENSAGEM P/ PESSOAS NO BRASIL

QUERIA QUE ELES FESTIVESSIM AQUI. ESTOU BEM. NAO LARGUEI NA DA MINHA ESCOLA FOI VIAJAR

50%

MENSAGEM PARA VIAJANTES BRASILEIROS

BUSQUEM ESTAR EM BOA COMPANHIA. MANTENHAM O BOM HUMOR. ACREDITEM NAS ESCOLAS QUE FAZEM

Definition

- ⦿ Body-map storytelling is primarily a data generating research method used to tell a story that visually reflects social, political and economic processes, as well as individuals' embodied experiences and meanings attributed to their life circumstances that shape who they have become. Body-map storytelling has the potential to connect times and spaces in people's lives that in traditional, linear accounts are seen as separate and distal.
- ⦿ The final outcome of the body-map storytelling process is a mapped story composed of 3 elements:
 - life-size body map
 - testimonio (brief story narrated in first person)
 - key to describe each visual element of the map

Rationale for Use

- There are particular assumptions about research participation as an intellectual activity and participants' contribution to research that support body map storytelling. Like other creative visual methodologies, it offers participants a means to communicate ideas, experiences, meanings, and feelings, acknowledging that there is a need for reflexivity for the production of quality data.
- Gaunlett & Holzwarth (2006, p. 83-4) state that a creative methodology “offers a positive challenge to the taken-for-granted idea that you can explore the social world [by] just asking people questions, in language”. The exercise of creating an artifact during a few sessions is a prolonged invitation to think; “people think about things differently when making something, using their hands – it leads to a deeper and more reflective engagement” (Gaunlett & Holzwarth, 2006, p. 89).

Rationale for Use (2)

- ① A second assumption that supports body-map storytelling is that participants are seen on a positive light, as people who have a contribution to offer to the social and health sciences. This is congruent with the principle of employing asset-based methodologies. As researchers, we offered participants a means to facilitate their reflexive process and be challenged (e.g. questions asking for symbols, homework on messages to share with the public); knowing they have a particular form of expertise and interest in sharing their experiences.
- ② By bringing the body to the centre of this representational space, we helped participants engage in a conversation about experience and perceptions as lived in an embodied manner, rather than in a temporal or spatial way.

Materials, Place, Time

Table 3 – Basic Materials and Supplies Needed

- Large sized paper for body mapping (life size)
- Scrap paper for draft sketches or to check color
- Crayons or pencil crayons (do not use waxed crayons if you plan to laminate)
- Markers
- Pencils
- Paint (washable)
- Paintbrushes
- Jugs (to be filled with water for washing paint brushes)
- Glue
- Scissors
- Coloured paper
- Magazines (make sure that the images represent your population)
- Gloves
- Mirror
- Tape recorder
- Notepad for analytical observations
- Anatomical diagrams to use for reference

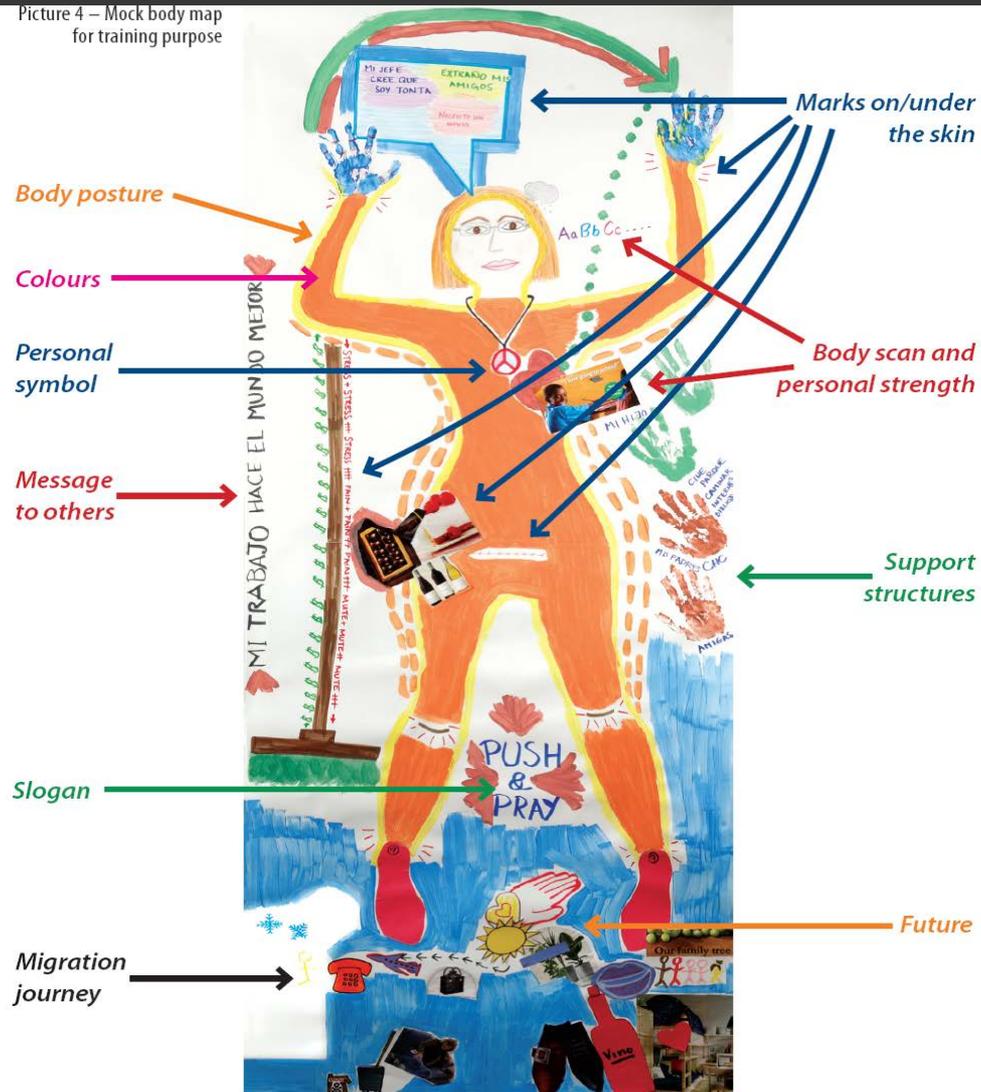
Guiding Exercises

Table 2 – Selected, Adapted, and Added Body Mapping Exercises

Original Exercises Selected (Solomon, 2002)	Adapted Exercises	Added Exercises or Style
General introduction before you begin Exercise 1: Body tracing Exercise 2: Highlighting your body shape Exercise 4: Personal print Exercise 6: Journey map	Meeting 1: Introduction to body mapping Exercise 1: Body tracing Exercise 2: Migration journey	Homework Activity 1: Create a personal symbol and slogan
Exercise 8: Creating a personal symbol Exercise 9: Drawing a self-portrait Exercise 10: Creating a personal slogan Exercise 11: Marks on the skin Exercise 12: Marks under the skin	Meeting 2: Exercise 1: Personal symbol and slogan Exercise 2: Marks on/under the skin Exercise 3: Self-portrait	Homework Activity 2: Prepare message to others
Exercise 5: Painting in your support Exercise 7: Body scanning – marking the power point Exercise 14C: Message to the general public Exercise 15A: Decorating your body map Exercise 15B: Finishing off	Meeting 3: Exercise 1: Message to others Exercise 2: Body scanning for difficulties and strengths Exercise 3: Support structures Final Exercise: Decorating/Finishing off	Exercise 4: Drawing the future Exercise 5: Participant narrative about the story the body map tells

Key Elements

Picture 4 – Mock body map for training purpose



Benefits

- For health studies, body-map storytelling can disclose multiple social determinants of health or focus on particular determinants and their intersectionalities (in our case, gender and working conditions).
- When studying the relationship between health and working conditions, we found body-map storytelling to be a very helpful method because it increases the quality of participants' description, makes the biological, emotional and social body vivid in their narratives and supports their visualization of problems faced and sources of strengths.
- In the international literature, body maps have been described as a powerful tool for eliciting perceived health status and for promoting self-assessment in the identification of health and safety issues (Keith & Brophy, 2004; Keith et al., 2001; O'Neill, 1998). We found that concrete questions on working conditions and their impact on the body helped participants map the health consequences of their precarious work and life circumstances.

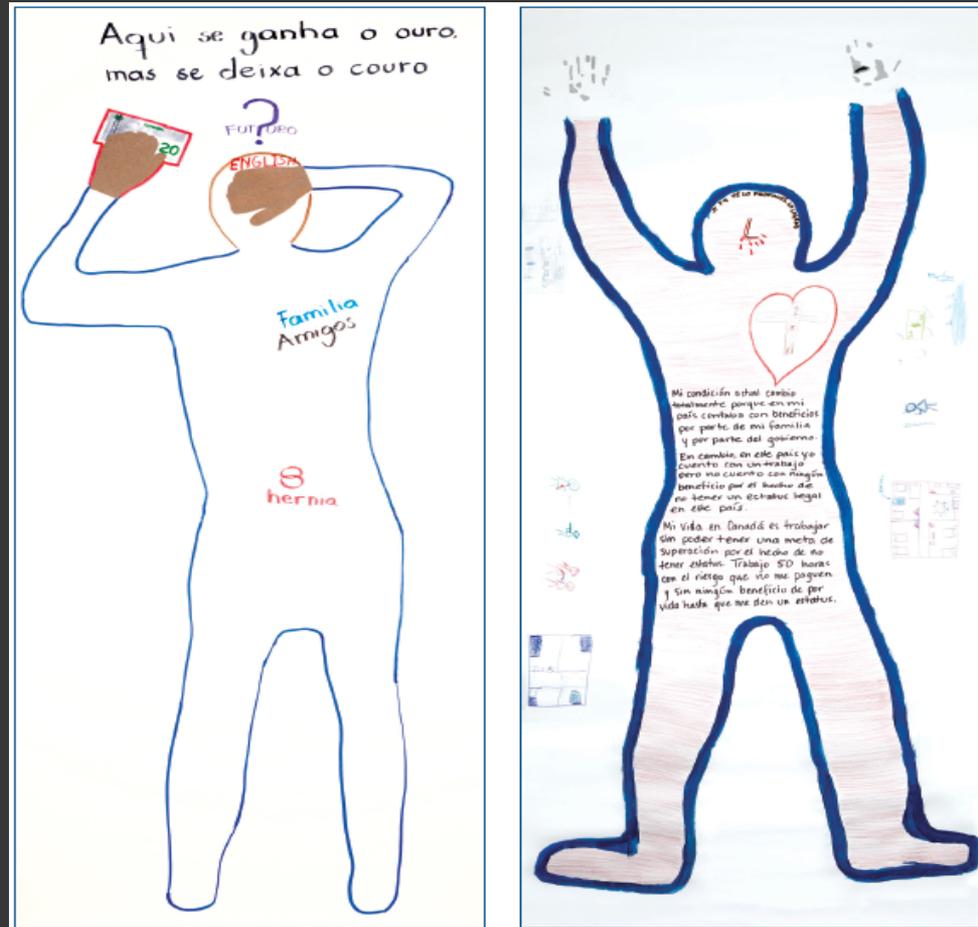
Challenges

- ⦿ Moderator's artistic skills
- ⦿ Participants' limitations and interest
- ⦿ Data generation vs. knowledge translation
- ⦿ Duration of each session
- ⦿ Space to store materials and let body maps dry
- ⦿ Magazine pictures represent a celebration of capitalist consumption, able-bodies, youth, and whiteness
- ⦿ Visual analysis

Ethical Concerns re. Body Maps

- Anonymity: some participants wanted to reveal their identity, others were comfortable with remaining anonymous through the confidentiality of the study
- Confidentiality: In this study, the body maps and *testimonios* are stripped of significant identifiers and, when in doubt, we eliminated information, sometimes losing interesting data (education, professions, number of children, ages, cities, countries) to protect participants' identity
- Ownership: it is important to decide a priori who keeps the original body map at the end of the project

Outcomes – Limited artistic engagement



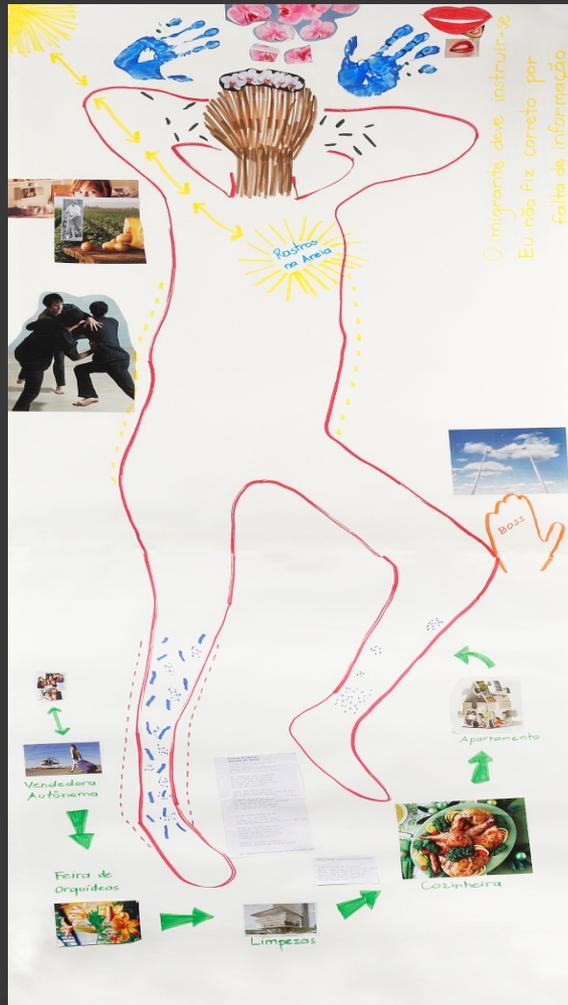
Picture 5 – Fabio's (left) and Rafael's (right) body maps represent examples of limited artistic engagement with the activity

Outcomes – Arts-oriented participants



Picture 6 – Lina's (left) and Maya's (right) body maps represent examples of arts-oriented participants

Valeria's body-mapped story



I'm Valeria, a cook and a single mom. I have 2 children back home. I came here to make money to buy a home for us after I saw how much money I could save when I worked in the US. In the first 2 years, I worked 3 jobs, 7 days a week, and I slept 3 hours a night. I was tired all the time and when I was at work, I would even peel potatoes asleep! Now, the apartment is finally paid off and I have money to go back and get surgery for my varicose veins. My legs are very swollen because I'm the only cook for the lunch and dinner shifts. Kitchen work is really hard! You have to lift huge pans, chop meat and bones, and you do this all standing up! I believe God has given me the strength to do this hard work all these years. I wish someone would record a day in my life so that my children could see how much their school and our home have really cost me. Now, my only hope is that my children will forgive me for leaving them behind and that we can live happily together in our new home.

Analysis

- ⦿ Mapped stories should be analysed in their integrity, which includes the process of creating it (verbatim and fieldnotes), the body map itself, and the narratives that accompany it (*testimonio and key*).
- ⦿ The purpose of the analysis is not to psychologically evaluate the participants through their art, but to gain insight into certain aspects of their logic, aspirations, desires, material circumstances, and ways of handling particular issues.
- ⦿ Some visual representations of physical and psychosomatic diseases were very helpful to describe in a straight forward manner the health consequences of undocumented work.
- ⦿ Yet as researchers, we are confronted with the challenge of how to move from a descriptive to a critical interpretation of mapped stories.

Analysis (2)

- The creation of all three elements that compose the mapped stories is in itself the first level of analysis, an interpretative exercise conducted in partnership with the participants. Facilitator and participant discuss visual representations of ideas and creation of slogans and jointly interpret what is being said visually (e.g. a glossy-magazine picture of an expensive bag may just mean a suitcase for travelling) or through key words and short sentences added to the body map. After the body map is ready though, an additional level of analysis is required. There are several possibilities on how to move into this second phase. For example, body maps may be analyzed one by one as cases or a comparative strategy may be employed.

Comparative, descriptive analysis



See Nelson's body map: the ship on top of his head which represents his desire to see the world and his personal slogan found on his chest, which reads, "navegar é preciso" (to sail is necessary).



See Elena's body map: her personal slogan found written across her chest, which reads, "todos somos ciudadanos del mundo" (we are all citizens of the world).



See Pepe's body map: ladder to the right represents the potential danger of falling from a height.



See Nelson's body map: chair represents how Nelson enjoys his job building furniture and rarely sees any risk involved.

Commonalities: We are citizens of the world

Differences: Risky and safe work environments

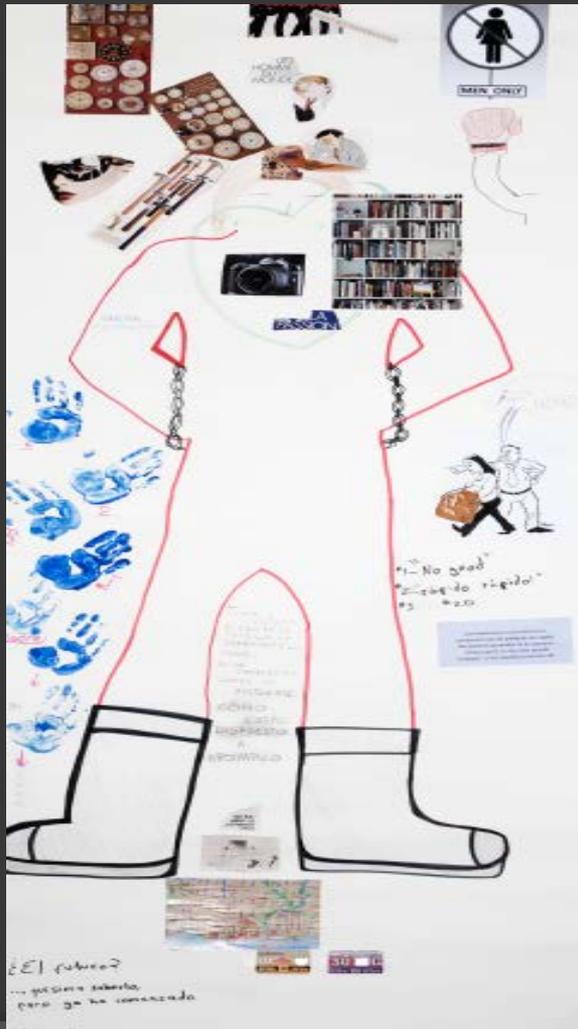
Analysis (3)

- Adopting a critical lens from postcolonial theory helped us to see participants' lives as highly entangled in socio-political-economic circumstances, making us challenge the notion of autonomy and decision-making commonly used to support policy and legal thought. In terms of self-representation issues, participants showed awareness about “talking” to the public and dominant social discourses, such as disapproval for sex trade work (e.g. former owner of a striptease bar visually representing herself as a small business owner) or being provocative and presenting the idea of illegality as a product of capitalist societies, as neocolonial relations support new forms of exploitation.

Analysis (4)

- ◎ Another analytical element to have in mind is how researchers think about body maps. They can be considered as an identity card, a fixed description of who people are as individuals and as a collective. Despite the potential use of such characterization for knowledge translation, analytically, it is important to understand that body maps capture a moment in people's lives and offer a picture of a given time and locations, when they are asked to talk about a particular element of their lives, like in our case, being an undocumented worker. However, these are people in movement, creating and thinking about their subjectivities and the health consequences of their work as they interact with the researchers. This sense of movement and transitory reality should not be lost by the "definite" images body maps seem to portray.

The future has already started



¿El futuro?
... quisiera saberlo,
pero ya ha comenzado.

Tool for KTE



Pictures 7, 8, and 9 – Exhibition at Toronto City Hall, June 25-28, 2012.

Some potential translational uses of body maps include: art exhibits, short films,

political action, publications, or other creative mediums (e.g. social media).